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IQBAL REVIEW
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IQBAL'S PERSPECTIVE ON ISLAMIC ESCHATOLOGY AND PERSONAL EGO

Dr. Abdul Khaliq

ABSTRACT

This article explores the Islamic belief in the resurrection and the afterlife, a fundamental aspect of faith that emphasizes personal accountability and the inevitability of life after death. The Qur'an's perspective on resurrection is presented not as a logical proof but as a concept grounded in faith and emotive conviction. The article delves into the philosophical and metaphysical discussions surrounding the afterlife, particularly examining Sir Muhammad Iqbal's views on personal immortality, ego, and the moral implications of the afterlife. Iqbal critiques various thinkers, including Ibn Rushd and Kant, who offer different interpretations of immortality, contrasting their views with the Qur'anic vision of a personal, individual afterlife. Iqbal argues that the human ego's immortality is not automatic but must be achieved through moral and spiritual effort. Additionally, the article discusses the distinction between personal immortality and the eternity of God, highlighting Iqbal's belief in continuous spiritual growth in the afterlife. The article concludes by addressing modern philosophical interpretations and Iqbal's perspective on the symbolic nature of eschatological descriptions in the Qur'an, emphasizing the role of moral endeavor in shaping one's eternal destiny.

Resurrection and immortality are central themes in Iqbal's perspective on Islamic eschatology, where he intertwines the Qur'anic worldview with his philosophical insights on the personal ego. Iqbal rejects the notion of immortality as a passive state and emphasizes that it is not merely a right but an achievement through personal effort. He asserts that the human ego, rather than dissolving into a universal collective or losing individuality, continues its journey after death, evolving toward higher levels of moral and spiritual excellence. According to Iqbal, the Qur'an envisions resurrection as the continuation of the ego's development, where both heaven and hell serve as states rather than physical locations, reflecting the soul's progress or failure in attaining Divine proximity. He stresses that personal immortality is tied to the individual's deeds in this world, with the afterlife representing a dynamic process of self-realization rather than a static existence.

In Islam it is recognized as one of the fundamental, indispensable articles of faith that man, after his physical death in this world, which is bound to occur sooner or later, will be reborn in a world that is yet to be — a world 'much superior in respect of degrees and much superior in respect of excellence'.¹ No one can be truly a *mo'min* without subscribing to this article. This incident of resurrection, according to the Qur'anic scheme of things, must necessarily be in store for men so that they meet, in the big, the final and the total way, rewards or punishments for their various deeds, good or bad. The Hereafter has been called 'the domain of recompense' (*dar al-jaza'*), the world here and now being 'the domain of action' (*dar al-'amal*):

So he, who does an atom's weight of good, will see it
And he, who does an atom's weight of evil, will see it.²

However, the Qur'an has not furnished any premises which could provide conclusive evidence for the rebirth of man as it does not, in general, do for any one of the eschatological realities or metaphysical truths including the existence of God Himself. Firstly, no 'proofs' — in a strictly logical sense of this term — appear to be possible in this area of speculation; and secondly, if at all proofs had been possible and actually given also, that would have robbed man of the privilege to make existential choices between various alternatives. Man's

freedom to choose and freedom to believe are so immensely valuable in the estimation of God that He would not like at all to bind him down to irresistible conclusions. So, the Qur'anic appeal in such cases is primarily to an intuited assurance in man of, and emotive faith in, the all-powerfulness of God, His justice etc. For this it resorts to passionate gestures, rhetorical invocations or, at the most, to various stances of analogical reasoning. For the phenomenon of resurrection, in particular, look at the Qur'anic mode of inference:

See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, is able to create the like of them? And He has appointed for them a term, whereof there is no doubt. But the wrongdoers consent to naught but denying³

And says man: When I am dead, shall I truly be brought forth alive?
Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing? So, by thy Lord! We shall certainly gather them together...⁴

From it We created you, and into it We shall return you, and from it raise you a second time.⁵

See they not that Allah, Who created the heaven and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye, He is surely Possessor of power over all things.⁶

Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation.⁷

And so on. That conviction in the hereafter is structured on emotions rather than logic is what Iqbal also subscribes to. In one of his letters he says:

The cast of my emotional life is such that I would not have lived a single moment without a strong faith in the immortality of human consciousness. The faith has come to me from the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) of Islam. Every atom of me is brimming with gratitude to him...⁸

On the same subject, he writes in another letter:

... In this regard there are many facts which are beyond the ken of human reason. An awareness about them grows from certain sources which have nothings to do with philosophical understanding.⁹

The question arises why is there so much emphasis in the overall Qur'anic worldview on the prospect of resurrection or rebirth in the hereafter, the next world — *al-akhirah*, in the terminology of the Qur'an. The answer is that, for one thing, it helps man towards a moral and spiritual uplift here and now. Clear and transparent descriptions of the extremely fascinating paraphernalia of heaven and of the most dreadful upheaval that characterizes hell are meant for persuading individuals to lead a good life in this world and deterring them from the evil ways. In the hereafter, it has been promised, the principle of personal accountability and equitable justice will reign

supreme. No proxy will be permitted and no sharing of burdens will be allowed. Every individual will be treated strictly in accordance with his own deeds alone and on the behest of the deeds of no one else. The Qur'an says:

I will not suffer the work of any worker among you to be lost.¹⁰

Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to his own detriment only does he go astray. And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another.¹¹

Leave Me alone with him whom I created.¹²

At length when the Deafening Cry comes, the day when a man flees from his brother and his mother and his father and his spouse and his sons. Every one of them, that day, will have enough concern to make himself indifferent to others.¹³

Iqbal, during his discussion of the problem of immortality in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, has described and examined the views of a number of Eastern and Western thinkers so as to be in a position to formulate his own standpoint in the richest possible perspective. The frame of reference and the subjacent current of his entire critical examination of these views necessarily happens to be his own firm commitment to the insistent standpoint of the Qur'an, delineated in the verses just quoted, that man's immortality is uniquely individual and personal in character. This would immediately refute the doctrine of metempsychosis or, what has more commonly been known as, the 'transmigration of souls' as well as the view that the immortal life of an individual consists in his ultimately becoming a part and parcel of the totality of existence like a drop of water which eternalizes itself by getting submerged in the expanses of an ocean. The former, for example, was the view of Buddhism in India and of the Hindus who accepted the Buddhist impact. The latter was, for one thing, accepted by a number of Muslim mystics who subscribed to a pantheistic metaphysics partly due to the inherent logic of mystic experience itself and partly due to certain alien influences.

The first thinker whom Iqbal critically examines in his *Reconstruction* and finds reasons to refute is Ibn Rushd who, according to him, had propounded the doctrine of 'collective immortality'. To being with, Ibn Rushd did not subscribe to the conviction in bodily resurrection which the orthodox had built upon the basis of a literalist understanding of the Qur'an: al-Ghazali in his *Tabafut al-Falasifah* defended this conviction and declared it as one of the basic articles of faith in Islam. Ibn Rushd, in his powerful poser *Tabafut al-Tabafut*, refuted al-Ghazali on this point as he chose to de-allegorize

— like Farabi and Ibn Sina before him — the relevant Qur'anic verses instead of understanding them in their plain, lexical meanings.

Ibn Rushd had made a distinction between sense or mind, on the one hand, and intelligence, on the other — presumably corresponding to the two Qur'anic terms *nafs* and *ruh*. Mind, according to him, depends for its operation and in fact for its very existence on the data received through the sense organs of the body. It is the principle of individuality in man. Being entirely dependent on the body, it dies with the physical death of man. *Ruh*, on the other hand, he believes, is independent of the body. It is the principle of universality and collectivity. Though residing in each particular body, it only temporarily resides there as a representative of the Universal Soul or Universal Intellect or Active Intellect to which alone belongs immortal existence. Universal Intellect may be taken to symbolize the entire human race. So not man as an individual person but the human race, in general is bound to survive for all times.

Iqbal raises at least three objections to Ibn Rushd's point of view. Firstly, Ibn Rushd is wrong when he appears to hold that the Qur'anic words *nafs* and *ruh* are the sort of technical terms used for two distinct elements in the human organism which are opposed to each other in character: the former being privately and indissolubly attached to the body; the latter being universal and transcendent and so essentially independent of any physical substratum. Qur'anic concept of the human person, Iqbal, instead, rightly emphasizes is that of an indissoluble organic unity. Secondly, this point of view fails to prove immortality for the human persons as a class: it only proves continued existence for the human race or may be only for the human civilization and culture. Thirdly, it "looks like William James' suggestion of a transcendental mechanism of consciousness which operates on a physical medium for a while and then gives it up in pure sport"¹⁴ and thus it fails to give due importance to the primal, unique individuality of the human person as such.

Kant has dealt with the problem of immortality in both of his *Critiques*. The general tenor of his argument is moral. The observation that can be quoted as the basic intuition of his entire reasoning is available towards the end of his *Critique of Practical Reason*:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heaven above and the moral law within... I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my experience.

In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant argues that in this world virtue and happiness are two mutually divergent notions. Our reason

demands that they should meet so that virtue is rewarded with happiness. Given the different natures of both, this meeting is not possible in the limited span of an individual's life in this world. It needs an additional other world to eventualize. Hence the inevitability of the life hereafter. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* he proceeds a little differently. Under the auspices of the Moral Law we are duty-bound to be perfect. Now any duty, by virtue of its very connotation, has to be carried out. Perfection to be attained being total and absolute this would not be possible within the limited period of time available in this world. It necessarily needs an unlimited time and so an immortal life.

To the line of argument adopted by Kant Iqbal has some objections specially insofar as it tends to belittle the importance of the present world for the realization of the moral ideal. Further, if it is granted that virtue and happiness are mutually incongruent notions, how can even an unlimited period of time make them meet together. Iqbal is of the opinion that Islam's view of this worldly life is different from that of Christianity which Kant might have in mind. According to Christianity man has been thrown into this world as a package of punishment for the original sin committed by Adam. Being a pit of damnation, this world cannot be the proper place where man can possibly attain the ideal of moral and spiritual excellences. This attainment is to be entirely postponed to the next world. For Islam, on the other hand, the present world plays a positive and constructive role in this connection. It is man's actions here and now that serve to secure higher and higher perfection for the ego and this progression continues on to the life hereafter also. Iqbal's attitude to this world is neither optimistic nor pessimistic but rather melioristic so that the ideals of moral perfection are neither completely realizable nor absolutely unrealizable here: a meaningful progress can of course be made towards their realization.

Besides these points of criticism we can raise an objection against the argument on another count also. Kant seeks to draw a factual judgement as a conclusion from an evaluative judgement: 'Virtue *ought* to be rewarded with happiness; therefore life hereafter *exists* for this reward'. Or, 'it, is our duty to be perfect; therefore there will be an immortal life in the hereafter in which it will be possible to carry out this duty'. But it is just a matter of simple understanding that 'is' by no trick of logic or even imagination, can be deduced from 'ought', as also 'ought' too would be incapable of being deduced from 'is'.

William James tried to build up a case for immortality by refuting the point of view of the Darwinians and the materialists that mind or consciousness is only a productive function of the brain and so, according to them, when body dies, mind goes into non-existence alongwith it. This was, in general, the standpoint of the school of Psychology known as Behaviorism. William James observes that mind is rather the transmissive or permissive function of the brain so that it essentially transcends the brain. It only employs the brain temporarily for its neural contact with the body; so by virtue of its nature it is capable of surviving the cessation of bodily existence. Iqbal, however, objects to this view by saying that it appears to be similar to that of Ibn Rushd insofar as it easily boils down to the point of view that consciousness is a cosmic, universal element which uses the individual brain as an instrument for a limited period of time and then, after the extinction of the brain, lives on as ever before. It does not admit of, or guarantee, personal immortality.

Another thinker whom Iqbal mentions and mentions in some detail is Nietzsche with his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Nietzsche believed that the world comprises centers of energy which are limited in number because the quantum of energy is fixed once for all; it neither increases nor does it decrease. It is the diverse combinations and recombinations of energy centers which make up the entire furniture of the universe. As time is infinite according to Nietzsche, all such combinations have been exhausted in the past: have in fact been repeated a number of times. There is no happening in the universe which can be declared as totally novel. Whatever happens has already happened repeatedly in the past and will continue to happen an infinite number of times in the future. Hence immortality as a patent, cosmic fact! This incidentally would provide a wide scope for the continuing, periodic emergence of the ideal human person whom he calls the 'superman'.

Iqbal rejects this doctrine as a sort of sheer mechanical arrangement based not on any established fact but on just a working hypothesis of science. Movement of time as circular— instead of being linear — in which various events simply continue repeating themselves infinitely makes immortality monotonous and intolerable. Nietzsche seems to have had some realization of this implication as he himself described his doctrine not as of immortality but rather as a view of life which would make immortality endurable. This endurability is, according to him, due to the expectation that the energy centers will some time in future enter into the ideal combination known as the 'Superman' as they have been doing so in

the past. This expectation, says Iqbal, is only a passive expectation of the irresistible and does not involve any active progression towards a stage of existence really new. It is only the latter that would be the essential spirit of the concept of personal immortality as conceived and idealized by the Qur'anic teachings. Nietzsche's view, he says, is a kind of fatalism worse than that implied in the word *qismat* which, according to the orthodox interpretation, means that the entire life schedule, to the minutest details, of every individual was pre-determined and in fact written down on the *lawh-e mahfuz* (the guarded tablet) before he was actually born. "Such a doctrine, far from keeping up the human organism for the fight of life, tends to destroy its action-tendencies and relaxes the tension of the ego"¹⁵

After criticizing various Eastern and Western doctrines of immortality from his own characteristic standpoint, let us see now how does he put forth his own point of view. There are three basic facts which, he says, are emphasized by the Qur'an in this regard. These are as follows:

1. Human ego has a beginning in time and did not pre-exist its emergence in the present spatio-temporal order. Iqbal quotes in favour of this the following verses:

And certainly We created man of an extract of clay; then We placed him, a small life-germ in a firm resting place; then We made the life-germ a clot of blood; then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made the lump of flesh into bones; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We caused it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators.¹⁶

However, elsewhere, word of the Qur'an does describe the phenomenon of the pre-existence of human souls — may be in their disembodied form. It says:

And when thy Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness about themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes; we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: we were unaware of this.¹⁷

In view of the literal meaning of this verse which, according to most of the commentators, suggests that each and every individual in the entire posterity of Adam had had a distinct existence even before the appearance of the first man in the present spatio-temporal context and a covenant was taken from all of them *en masse* that is binding accordingly on each human individual."¹⁸ This is by and large the orthodox view among the Muslims. Iqbal's thesis may appear to be in contradistinction with this view; however, it can duly be justified in either of the two ways: either Iqbal would accept only a symbolic interpretation of this verse and understand by it that faith in God is

embedded in the primordial nature of man¹⁹ and now needs to be simply revived by observing His signs spread throughout the universe; or maybe he proposed to emphasize only that aspect of the Qur'anic idea according to which — despite the 'pre-existence of souls' that may perhaps be granted — personalities who possessed the quality of being fortified or weakened by various sets of behavior patterns did not exist prior to their emergence in this world. The Qur'an, I hold, has a provision for both these modes of justification.

2. There is no possibility of a return to this earth after one is dead and removed from the scene. The Qur'an has many verses emphasizing this point, for instance:

Until when death overtakes one of them he says: My Lord send me back that I may do good in that which I have left. By no means! It is but a word that he speaks. And before them is a barrier, until the day they are raised.²⁰

And by the moon when it grows full. That you shall certainly ascend to one state after another.²¹

3. Finitude is the essential character of the destiny of man. Every person shall meet God in the hereafter strictly in his capacity as an individual person with a unique sense of accountability for his and his own deeds alone. Finitude is not a misfortune either. It is rather a matter of respect, dignity and honor for the human individual. The higher is the stage of his moral and spiritual evolution, the more well-knit and disciplined his personality becomes. It is only such an ego who will be able to stand the catastrophic upheaval that the Day of Judgement will be and only he will be able to face God with composure and confidence. The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is the embodiment of this ideal of perfect manhood in Islam. On the occasion of *Mir'raj* (the Supreme Ascension), when he was not face to face with God, 'his eye turned not aside, nor did it wander'.²² This would be an impossibility in the case of pantheistic metaphysics according to which the individual egos get obliterated in the Supreme Ego just as the rivers flow into, and get indistinguishably mixed up with, the sea waters or just as the light of a candle gets immersed in the daylight when the sun rises. Mansur Hallaj's ejaculation "*ana'l-Haq* (I am the Truth), which is generally understood pantheistically, was, according to Iqbal, the affirmation by Mansur of a strictly theistic state of affairs. He only meant to declare that his ego had acquired a veritable truth and a robust authenticity by the assimilation of Divine attributes or that — in the words of the Qur'an — it had been soaked in the Divine colour, better than which no colours are available.²³

Connected with the last point above is Iqbal's primary thesis that immortality is closely relevant to the moral endeavors of the individual self or ego. "There are no pleasure-giving and pain-giving acts; there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts. It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution or disciplines him for a future career ... personal immortality, then, is not ours as a right it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only a candidate for it".²⁴ That is to say, he has to work and work seriously for its attainment. Referring to *barzakab*, a term available in the Islamic literature for the stage between death and resurrection, Iqbal says it would not be a merely passive state of expectation but rather a state of consciousness characterized by change in the ego's attitude to the new spatio-temporal order that he is going to encounter in the next world. "It must be a state of great psychic unhingement, specially in the case of full-grown egos who have naturally developed fixed modes of operation on a specific spatio-temporal order, and may mean dissolution to less fortunate ones. However, the ego must continue to struggle until he is able to gather himself up and win his resurrection. The resurrection therefore is not an external event. It is the consummation of a life-process within the ego".²⁵ This activity process in the career of the ego never stops, not even after resurrection, according to Iqbal. Neither hell is a pit of eternal damnation nor heaven a perpetual holiday. Both are only stages — one earlier; the other later — in the he eternal, unending continuation comprising the development of the ego. The former is a creative, purifying mechanism; the latter too is characterized by a gradual, on-going journey towards the realization of higher and higher levels of excellence. The orthodox have always held that the life hereafter will be a life of almost passive inactivity, the one involving only different levels of recompense in terms of rewards and punishments: those in hell will be subjected to the severest pangs and tortures as if these were ends in themselves whereas the residents of heaven will have all kinds of pleasures readily available to them without the involvement of any effort on their part. Iqbal, for whom Islam invariably emphasizes deed more than idea, regards life as a continuum, a perpetual moral struggle without a holiday either here or there. Hell, he says, is a transitional phase. Being 'the painful realization of one's failure as a man' it provides an occasion to 'make a hardened ego once more sensitive to the living breeze of Divine grace'. He will be Involved In a constant effort to "march always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality (Who every moment appears in a new glory²⁶)."²⁷ "Every act

of a free ego creates a new situation and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding”.²⁸ Iqbal concludes that “heaven and hell are states and not localities“. i.e. their nature is mental, ideational and subjective rather than geographical, independently tangible and objective. The Qur’an says:

No soul knows what is hidden for it of that which will refresh the eyes: a reward for what they did.²⁹

An explanation of this verse by the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is recorded in *Sahih Bukhari* as: Allah says, “I have prepared for my righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard and what the mind of man has not conceived”.³⁰ Similarly Ibn ‘Abbas is reported to have said that “nothing that is in paradise resembles anything that is in the his world except in name”.³¹

In view of the above Iqbal at least appears to be right at least when, he says that the eschatological descriptions by the Qur’an involving references to the so-called physical objects and situations are all of them symbolic in nature. In this he was not alone. It were the Mu’tazilites, we know, who for the first time regularly resorted to this mode of interpretation. However, if such an interpretation seeks to completely transform the character of existence from physical to mental, that would be going too far. Comparatively less resistant hypothesis would be to say that it may possibly be ‘physical’ but in the sense that suits the requirements of its incumbents. Obliquely speaking, Iqbal seems to accept this latter hypothesis because “ego as an individual”, he says, “is inconceivable without some kind of local reference or empirical background”.³² After all it is the human ego himself for whom heaven and hell have been prepared. Mawlana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi who, by and large, is sympathetic to Allama Iqbal’s concept of immortality, had to say that where the Allama wrote that ‘heaven and hell are states not localities’ he should have added the word ‘only’ at the end. “It is not at all impossible”, the mawlana said, that if he had revised his Lectures he would have actually done so.”³³

By the way, irrespective of the Qur’anic standpoint and its various interpretations, it may be remarked just in the passing that modern researches in parapsychology have indicated the possibility of disembodied existence. In the phenomenon of thought-transference, for example, there is mind-to-mind traffic and consciousness is found to operate independently i.e. without any material reference. The reported incidents of visitations by the souls of the dead also tends to establish the existence of individuals without physical garbs — the so-called astral bodies. However, all these Researchers are

hypothetical so far and do not at all actually occupy any stance of authenticity to be seriously reckoned with.

Another objection against Iqbal's concept of 'immortality' is very serious. "Personal immortality", he says. "Is not our as of right: it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only a candidate for it."³⁴ Qur'an, we know, clearly upholds that each and every person does not simply have a right (which may sometimes be denied to him!) to, nor does he claim simply a candidature (which he himself may sometimes withdraw if he so chooses) for, resurrection; he is rather bound as a rule to be resurrected and to consequently become immortal in hell or in heaven or, 'in the latter, after a temporary stay in the former'. To this rule there is absolutely no exception. If, for a moment it is supposed, that, in the quotation given above, 'immortality' is used as a qualitative term meaning a perpetual life in heaven only then, of course, it has to be won by an individual as a result of his personal effort comprising good actions etc. in the present world; but no such 'personal effort' will be spent by the residents of hell, who, after a Divinely engineered corrective process comprising punishments of various kinds doled out to them, will be allowed to go to heaven.

The view that the concept of hell specifically be demythologized as to mean a corrective process, as Iqbal holds, rather than a purely and entirely punitive measure, has not been maintained by very many thinkers: only a few have done this. These few thinkers, one tends to feel, do so primarily on the basis of considerations over and above those of the strictly Qur'anic text — certain hopes and aspirations, an overall optimism about human destiny and even some sayings said to be reported from the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). According to the plain Qur'anic text itself immortality is not an honorific term, as Iqbal sometimes appears to hold, because the inmates of both hell and heaven will equally have, according to it, an immortal lease of existence.

According to Iqbal, the term "immortality" is reserved for the ever-progressing life of the human ego in heaven, where, over time, the ego moves closer to God, the Ultimate Reality. This raises a question: if the human ego is immortal in heaven, does this contradict the Muslim belief in God's singular eternity? The Qur'an clarifies this issue by stating that everything except God is destined to perish.³⁵ This truth is affirmed in three ways. First, in this world, all creatures and things will eventually perish until human beings are resurrected on the Day of Judgment for recompense. Second, in heaven, it is the Divine that will undergo self-realization, as the

temptation toward evil—the element of non-divinity referenced in the Qur’anic phrase “except God”—will no longer exist. In this sense, God’s singular eternity, which He does not share with anything or anyone else, is upheld. Third, and most crucially, God’s eternity is fundamentally different from human immortality; they belong to entirely different categories. Eternity refers to timelessness, while immortality involves a continuous, non-ending sequence of time.

Notes and Reference

¹ Qur’an, 17:21

² *Ibid*, 99:7-8

³ *Ibid*, 17:99

⁴ *Ibid*, 19:66 -68

⁵ *Ibid*, 20:55

⁶ *Ibid*, 46:33

⁷ *Ibid*, 50:15

⁸ Quoted in ‘Zia Bar’, Iqbal Number, p.50

⁹ Sayyid Nazir Niazi (ed.) *Maktabat-e Iqbal*, p.74

¹⁰ Qur’an, 3:195

¹¹ *Ibid*, 74:15

¹² *Ibid*, 74:17

¹³ *Ibid*, 80:34 -37

¹⁴ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.89

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.92

The mechanism of the nature of afterlife as put forth by Nietzsche, has, incidentally, an analogy in the doctrine of the ‘transmigration of souls’, also known as ‘reincarnation’ or ‘metempsychosis’ which is traceable in a number of ancient religions. According to this doctrine the soul that survives the physical death of a living organism continues to migrate from one body to the other without retaining any remembrance of its previous existence.

¹⁶ Qur’an, 23:12 -14

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 7:172

The verse refers to what in orthodox literature has been called ‘*ehd-e alast*’ (the primordial coverage)

¹⁸ Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an* (text, translation and Commentary), One-Vol. edition, p. 395, note no.1146

¹⁹ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur’an – Arabic Text, English translation and commentary*, p. 356, note No.958

²⁰ Qur’an, 23:99 – 100

²¹ *Ibid*, 84:18 -19

²² *Ibid*, 57:17

²³ *Ibid*, 2:38

²⁴ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.95

- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p.96
²⁶ Qur'an, 55:29
²⁷ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.* p.98
²⁸ *Ibid*
²⁹ Qur'an.
³⁰ Cf. Mawlana Muhammad Ali, *op.cit.* p XXVIII
³¹ *Ibid*.
³² Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.97
³³ *Khutbat-e Iqbal per Aik Nazar* (Urdu), p.55
³⁴ *Ibid*, p.95
³⁵ Qur'an, 28:88

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN BY
MUHAMMAD ASAD: CRITICAL STUDY

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sultan Shah

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the life and contributions of Muhammad Asad, a prominent 20th-century Muslim thinker, journalist, diplomat, and translator. Born Leopold Weiss in 1900, Asad came from a Jewish background but later embraced Islam after traveling through the Middle East and gaining insight into Arab culture and Islam's spiritual strength. He spent significant time in Arabia, studying Islamic texts and becoming a key figure in Islamic scholarship. Asad's most notable work includes his translation and commentary on the Qur'an, *The Message of the Qur'an*, which reflects his rationalistic approach to Islamic eschatology, creation, and metaphysical subjects. Asad often interpreted Qur'anic miracles and metaphysical concepts through a scientific lens, diverging from traditional exegeses by rejecting supernatural elements and favoring intellectual analysis. His rationalist stance on issues such as the miracles of Jesus, the finality of prophethood, and the creation of man set his work apart from traditional Islamic scholars. Although his translation has been praised for its literary quality and modern insights, his unorthodox interpretations have also garnered criticism, particularly from more conservative circles.

Muhammad Asad's name features prominently on the roll of 20th-century English-language Muslim thinkers. He was a journalist, social traveler, critic, linguist, thinker, reformer, diplomat, political theorist and translator. He was born Leopold Weiss in July 1900 in the city of Lwów (Lemberg), Galicia, now in Poland, and then part of the Austrian Empire.¹ The second of three children, he was the descendant of a long line of rabbis, which was broken only by his father who did not enter the rabbinate but became a barrister. Asad himself received a thorough religious education that would qualify him to keep alive the family's rabbinical tradition. At an early age, he had become proficient in Hebrew and was also familiar with Aramaic. He had studied the Old Testament in the original as well as the text and commentaries of the Talmud: the *Mishna* and *Gemara*. He also had delved in the intricacies of Biblical exegesis: the *Targum*.² His family moved to Vienna, where fourteen-year-old Asad ran away from school and tried unsuccessfully to join the Austrian army to fight in the First World War; no sooner had he been finally officially drafted, than his juvenile expectations of military glory faded with the collapse of the Austrian Empire.³

After the War, he pursued philosophy and the history of art at the University of Vienna, but these studies failed to quench his spiritual thirst and he abandoned them to seek fulfilment elsewhere.⁴ Asad left Vienna in 1920 and travelled in Central Europe, where he did "all manner of short-lived jobs" before arriving in Berlin. Here, he ingeniously secured entry in the world of journalism, when his determination led him to a scoop that revealed the presence in Berlin of Maksim Gorky's wife who was on a secret mission to solicit aid from the West for a Brobdingnagian famine ravaging Soviet Russia. At this stage, Asad, like many of his generation, lived in the depths of agnosticism, having drifted away from his Jewish beliefs despite his rigorous religious studies. He left Europe for the Middle East in 1922, where he came to know and like the Arabs and was struck by how Islam shone on their everyday life with existential meaning, spiritual strength and inner peace. He now became—at the incredibly young age of 22—a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, one of most prestigious newspapers of Germany and Europe. As a journalist, he travelled extensively, intermingled with the common man, held discussions with the Muslim intelligentsia, and met several

regional heads of state, in “the countries between the Libyan Desert and the snow-covered peaks of the Pamirs, between the Bosphorus and the Arabian Sea”: Palestine, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.⁵ Asad became a Muslim in 1926 while he was in Berlin.⁶ Asad regarded Islam as a way of life for all times. According to him “Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other; nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking; and the result is a structure of absolute balance and solid composure”.⁷

Asad spent almost six years in Arabia, where he was received warmly by the King ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Sa‘ūd (d. 1373/1953), the founder of modern Saudi Arabia. He spent considerable time in the holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah, where he studied Arabic, the Qur‘ān, the *Ḥadīth* and Islamic history. Those studies led him to “the firm conviction that Islam, as a spiritual and social phenomenon, is still, in spite of all the drawbacks caused by the deficiencies of the Muslims, by far the greatest driving force mankind has ever experienced” and from that time, his interest was “centred around the problem of its regeneration”. His academic knowledge of classical Arabic—made easier by familiarity with Hebrew and Aramaic, sister Semitic languages—was further enhanced by his wide travels and contacts in Arabia with Bedouins.⁸

To study Muslim communities and cultures further east, such as those of India, Eastern Turkestan, China and Indonesia, Asad departed Arabia for India in 1932. There he met the celebrated poet-philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1357/1938), the towering Muslim thinker of the modern era and the spiritual progenitor of Pakistan. Iqbāl persuaded Asad to change his plans and stay on in India “to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state which was then hardly more than a dream in Iqbāl’s visionary mind”. Asad soon won Iqbāl’s admiration and wide public acclaim among educated circles with the publication of a perceptive monograph on the challenges facing modern Muslims. But Asad’s freedom was curtailed when the Second World War broke out in 1939. Ironically, though he had refused to accept a passport from Nazi Germany after it had annexed Austria in 1938 and insisted on retaining his Austrian citizenship, the British Rāj imprisoned him on the second day of the War as an “enemy alien” and did not release him till its end in 1945.⁹

He moved to Pakistan after its creation in 1947, and was charged by its Government with setting up a Department of Islamic Reconstruction whose task was to formulate the ideological foundations for the new state. He is credited with drafting the

objective Resolution, which became the preamble to the Constitution of Pakistan. Later he was transferred to the Pakistan Foreign Ministry to head its Middle East Division, where he endeavoured to strengthen Pakistan's ties to other Muslim countries. He capped his diplomatic career by serving as Pakistan's Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations. He resigned this position in 1952 to write his autobiography, a work of stunning ingenuity and unrivalled literary effect.¹⁰ He left New York in 1955 and finally settled in Spain. He died on February 23, 1992 and was buried in the Muslim cemetery of Granada.¹¹

Muhammad Asad published the following books:

- Unromantisches Morgenland [The Unromantic East]
- The Road to Mecca
- The Message of The Qur'ān
- Translation and commentary on the Sahīh Bukhārī entitled Sahīh al- Bukhārī: The Early Years of Islam
- This Law of Ours and other Essays
- Islam at the Crossroads
- The Principles of State and Government in Islam
- Edited journal "Islamic Culture" Hyderabad from January 1937 to 1938 after the death of Pickthall.
- Brought out a journal during 1946-47 "Arafāt: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought".

Apart from other works, his translation and exegesis of the Qur'ān will be discussed under the following topic.

The Preface:

Most translators of the Holy Qur'ān like to begin by explaining their reasons for doing so. To justify his "translation," Asad argues that "the Qur'ān itself has never yet been presented in any European language in a manner which would make it truly comprehensible".¹² Criticizing Asad on this sentence, Kenneth Cragg remarks that this 'verdict which, if taken too pessimistically, must cast doubt on the present venture also!'¹³ (Asad's own translation). He distinguishes between the two types of scholars of Arabic who have translated the Holy Qur'ān. First, there are those Muslims and non-Muslims "who acquired their knowledge of Arabic through academic study alone. ... none of [whom], however great his scholarship, has ever been familiar with the Arabic language as a person is familiar with his own".¹⁴ According to Asad, such a person's mastery of the grammar and acquaintance with the literature are not sufficient for the translation of the Qur'ān. Second, there is the person (the educated

Arab) who acquires an ability to comprehend the language fully and, consequently, to understand the method of the “*i’jāz*” of the Qur’ān “almost automatically, by a process of mental osmosis, from his early childhood”.¹⁵ This gift, however, does not necessarily come to the modern Arabs of the cities whose “daily speech has become ... largely corrupted and estranged from pristine Arabic.” Asad claims that only the “bedouin of the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly those of Central and Eastern Arabia” (an area in which he spent ten years) possess the requisite “feel” for the Arabic language. Hanna E. Kassis, a reviewer, questions Asad’s argument. First, one of the basic rules of translation is that the translator should have a native familiarity with the language into which he is translating, it being assumed that he has a command over the language of the original text. Full comprehension of the Arabic text is to be matched by a native and erudite knowledge of the English language, in the case of an Arabic-into-English translation. Second, this reviewer believes that an undue emphasis is being placed on the “purity” of bedouin Arabic. It could be argued that the vocabulary of the Qur’ān is that of the mercantile centres of the Arabian Peninsula (during the age of the Prophet) and not that of “bedouin” society. The argument that the “Arab” in question has uniquely preserved the “feel,” nuances, and subtleties of the Arabic of Quraysh---certainly not a society of bedouin---requires linguistic evidence. Third, the reviewer cannot accept the claim to purity of the Arabic language put forth by the translator. Arabic is a Semitic language, as the translator courageously states in the face of known opposition in some limited though vocal circles. But to argue that it is “the only living language which has remained entirely unchanged” is a contradictory statement and defies evidence to the contrary. To adopt the translator’s argument is to subscribe to an untenable assumption that the meaning of the Holy Book avails itself more readily to an Arab (with the qualifications listed by the author) than to any other.¹⁶

John Haywood congratulated Asad on his eight-pages foreword who considered it ‘a perceptive analysis of the problem of translating the Qur’ān’.¹⁷

Sources of ‘The Message of the Qur’ān’:

Muhammad Asad was such a scholar who could consult the primary sources of hadith, sirah, tafsir, history and fiqh. Among all translators of the Holy Qur’ān into any Western language, he was unequalled in his command over Arabic language. He has himself mentioned the books consulted by him for writing exegetical notes under title “Works of Reference”.¹⁸ Among *hadith* literature, he referred to six authentic hadith collections of Bukhārī, Muslim,

Tirmidhī, Nasa'ī, Abu Da'ūd and Ibn Mājah. He has also consulted ḥadīth collections compiled by other traditionists like al-Muwattā' by Mālik b. Anas, al-Musnad by Ibn Hanbal, Kitāb as-Sunan by Bayhaqī, Dārmī and Dārquṭnī, Mustadrīk by al-Hākīm, and Faḥ al-Bārī by Ibn Hajar al-Asqālānī. He has referred to Arabic commentaries by Zamakhsharī, Baghawī, Baydawī, Rāzī, al-Tabarī, Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. He relied on Suyūṭī's al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān for the Qur'ānic sciences. For the biography of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), he has benefited from Wāqidi's Kitāb al-Maghāzī and Ibn Hishām. His historical sources include the books of Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Athīr and Ibn Sa'd. For lexicographical discussion, he has relied on Tāj al-'Arūs by Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī, Rāghib's Mufradāt, Firūzābādī's Al-Qāmūs, Jawharī's Tāj al-Lughah and Lisān al-'Arab. He has also consulted Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon. He has alluded to Bidāyat al-Mujtahid, and Muhallā and Mughnī for discussion pertaining to Fiqh.

Literal Meaning of Arabic Words:

Muhammad Asad attempted to understand the actual meaning of Arabic words, various shades of meaning of a word and then to use the suitable equivalent in his translation keeping in view the context. He consulted famous lexicons of Arabic like al-Qāmūs, Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, Lisān al-'Arab and Tāj al-'Arūs. He also depended on Hadīth and exegetical literature for elucidation of various words. He has quoted famous philologists to elucidate certain words like Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah, Qatādah and Aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk. For example, in the verse 2:29, he has explained the word *sama'* in the following way:

The term *sama'* ("heaven" or "sky") is applied to anything that is spread like a canopy above any other thing. Thus, the visible skies which stretch like a vault above the earth and form, as it were, its canopy, are called *sama'*: and this is the primary meaning of this term in the Qur'ān; in a wider sense, it has the connotation of "cosmic system". As regards the "seven heavens", it is to be borne in mind that in Arabic usage - and apparently in other Semitic languages as well - the number "seven" is often synonymous with "several" (see Lisān al-'Arab), just as "seventy" or "seven hundred" often means "many" or "very many" (Tāj al-'Arūs). This, taken together with the accepted linguistic definition that "every *sama'* is a *sama'* with regard to what is below it" (Rāghib), may explain the "seven heavens" as denoting the multiplicity of cosmic systems.¹⁹

He has explained some words with by quotation from hadīth literature. In the verse 5:3, he elucidated *al-nusub* as follows:

The *nusub* (sing. *nasibah*) were the altar-stones set up in pre-Islamic times around the Ka'bah on which the pagan Quraysh used to sacrifice animals to their idols. However, from the story of Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn

Nufayl (Bukhārī) it appears that not only sacrificial animals but also such as were, destined for common consumption were often slaughtered there for the sake of a supposed “blessing” (see Fathāh-Bārī VII, 113). Some philologists consider the form *nusub* a singular, with *ansab* as its plural. In either case the term denotes an association with all manner of practices which could be described as “idolatrous”, and should not be taken merely in its literal sense.²⁰ In the same verse, he referred to Edward William Lane for explanation of *tastaqimū bil-aḥlām* which means “to aim at divining [the future] by means of arrows”. According to him, this is a reference to the divining-arrows without a point and without feathers used by the pre-Islamic Arabs to find out what the future might hold in store for them. (A comprehensive description of this practice may be found in Lane III, 1247.)²¹

In Sūrah al-Ikhlās, he has rendered *aṣ-ṣamad* into “the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being”. Justifying his translation he tells his readers that this rendering gives no more than an approximate meaning of the term *aṣ-ṣamad*, which occurs in the Qur’ān only once, and is applied to God alone. It comprises the concepts of Primary Cause and eternal, independent Being, combined with the idea that everything existing or conceivable goes back to Him as its source and is therefore, dependent on Him for its beginning as well as for its continued existence.²²

Asad has quoted Muslim philologist for elucidation of Arabic words. For instance, he explains the term ‘kawthar’ as an intensive form of the noun *kathrah* (Zamakhsharī), which, in its turn, denotes “copiousness”, “multitude” or “abundance”; it also occurs as an adjective with the same connotation (Qāmūs, Lisān al-Arab, etc.). In the above context, which is the sole instance of its use in the Qur’ān, *al-kawthar* obviously relates to the abundant bestowal on the Prophet (peace be upon him) of all that is good in an abstract, spiritual sense, like revelation, knowledge, wisdom, the doing of good works, and dignity in this world and in the hereafter (Rāzī); with reference to the believers in general, it evidently signifies the ability to acquire knowledge, to do good works, to be kind towards all living beings, and thus to attain inner peace and dignity.²³

Sometimes, Asad tries to interpret certain words metaphorically. e.g. Consider his explanation of the titles of the Prophet, upon whom be peace and greeting, in the beginning of surah 73 and 74. He writes:

The expression *muḥḥammil* has a meaning similar to that of *muddaththir*, which occurs at the beginning of the next *sūrah*: namely, “one who is covered [with anything]”, “enwrapped” or “enfolded [in anything]”; and, like that other expression, it may be understood in a concrete, literal sense - i.e., “wrapped up in a cloak” or “blanket” - as well as

metaphorically, i.e., “wrapped up in sleep” or even “wrapped up in oneself”. Hence, the commentators differ widely in their interpretations of the above apostrophe, some of them preferring the literal connotation, others the metaphorical; but there is no doubt that irrespective of the linguistic sense in which the address “O thou enwrapped one” is understood, it implies a call to heightened consciousness and deeper spiritual awareness on the part of the Prophet.²⁴

Asad has translated *kalimah* as “promise”²⁵ in verse 4:171 instead of “word” which, according to Hanna E.Kasis, seems to be influenced more by an English idiom than by Arabic lexicography.²⁶

Use of Brackets in Translation:

Asad has used brackets in his translation to differentiate such words which do not have any equivalent in the Arabic text. Some orientalists like George Sale have put these additional words in italics but Asad followed his Muslim predecessors like Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall and ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali. These bracketed words are helpful for full comprehension of the text by such people who lack knowledge of Arabic language. For instance, look at the translation of verses 108:2-3 quoted below:

Hence, pray unto thy Sustainer [alone], and sacrifice [unto Him alone].
Verily, he that hates thee indeed be cut off [from all that is good].²⁷

In these two verses, Asad has used brackets thrice to clarify that bracketed words are not translated of the text but added by him to complete the sentence.

Language of the Translation:

Muhammad Asad produced his translation and exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in very beautiful language. Though English was not his mother tongue but he mastered it to the extent that he surpassed many native English writers. This reminds us of the Polish Joseph Conard (1857—1924) who is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of English. A.R.Kidwai says:

The Message of the Qur'an by Muhammad Asad represents a notable addition to the body of English translations couched in chaste English.²⁸

According to Kenneth Cragg, the usages such as “nay,” “withal,” “behold” (for “see”), and “thou” and accompanying verbs “dost” etc. give a certain archaic flavour to the English. Very occasionally there is an infelicity....Some readers would wish that Dr. Asad had, at least in places, let himself “go” more fluently in English, since translation has equal obligation to the language of receiving as to the language of origin.²⁹

Bu with all this Asad says:

I make no claim to having reproduced anything of the in describe rhythm and rhetoric of the Qur'ān. No one who has truly experience d its majestic beauty could ever be presumptuous enough to make such a claim or even to embark upon such an attempt.³⁰

Elucidation of Arabic Syntax:

Asad was great scholar of Arabic who spent considerable time in Arabia. In his exegetical notes he has given discussion on Arabic syntax .For example consider verse 2:30.

And Lo! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: “Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it.

Elucidating *idh* Asad writes:

The interjection “lo” seems to be the only adequate rendering, in this context, of the particle *idh*, which is usually -and without sufficient attention to its varying uses in Arabic construction - translated as “when”. Although the latter rendering is often justified, *idh* is also used to indicate “the sudden, or unexpected, occurrence of a thing” (cf. Lane 1, 39), or a sudden turn in the discourse. The subsequent allegory, relating as it does to the faculty of reason implanted in man, is logically connected with the preceding passages.³¹

In verse 7:54 he has explained, “The conjunctive particle *thumma* which precedes this clause does not always denote order in time (“then” or “thereupon”). In cases where it is used to link parallel statements it has often the function of the simple conjunction *wa* (“and”).³²

The footnote on 4:29 is an excellent example of Asad’s command on Arabic syntax:

If the particle *illā* preceding the above clause is given its usual meaning of “except” or “unless it be”, the phrase ought to be rendered thus: “unless it be [an act of] trade based on mutual agreement”. This formulation, however, has baffled many a commentator: for, if taken literally, it would imply that wrongful profits from trading based on mutual agreement are excepted from the general prohibition, “Devour not one another’s possessions wrongfully”- a supposition impossible to maintain in view of the ethics postulated by the Qur’ān. To obviate this difficulty, most of the commentators express the opinion that the particle *illā* has in this context the meaning of “but”, and that the clause ought to be understood as follows: “but it is lawful for you to profit from one another’s possessions by way of legitimate trade based on mutual agreement”. However, quite apart from the fact that this interpretation is highly laboured and artificial, it does not explain why “legitimate trade” should have been singled out here as a sole means of lawfully deriving economic benefits from one another - for, as Rāzī rightly points out in his commentary on this verse, “it is no less lawful to benefit economically through a gift, a bequest, a legal inheritance,

alms, a dower, or an indemnity for injuries received: for there are, aside from trade, many ways of acquiring possessions [lawfully]”. Why, then, should trade alone have been stressed? - and, moreover, stressed in a context not particularly devoted to matters of trade? A really satisfactory answer to this puzzle can, in my opinion, be obtained only through a linguistic consideration of the particle *illā*. Apart from its usual connotation of “except” or “unless it be”, it has sometimes - as has been pointed out in both *Qāmūs* and *Mughnī* - the meaning of the simple conjunction “and” (*wa*); similarly, if it is preceded by a negative clause, it can be synonymous with “nor” or “and neither” (*wa-lā*): as, for instance, in 27:10-11, “no fear need the message-bearers have in My Presence, and neither (*illā*) need he who...”, etc. Now if we apply this particular use of *illā* to the passage under consideration, we arrive at the reading, “nor [shall you do it] by means of trade based on mutual agreement”, or simply, “not even by way of trade based on mutual agreement” - whereupon the meaning immediately becomes obvious: the believers are prohibited from devouring another person’s possessions wrongfully even if that other person - being the weaker party - agrees to such a deprivation or exploitation under the stress of circumstances. The reading adopted by me logically connects, moreover, with verse 32, which admonishes the believers not to covet one another’s possessions.³³

Originality of the Work

A close examination of different English translations of the Qur’an reveals that many translators have borrowed a lot from their predecessors but the Message of the Qur’an is an original work. Asad’s writing style and vocabulary is unique and the translation of many verses is entirely different from his predecessors. His exegetical notes reveal his independent opinion in many issues. Unlike many translators, he published the Arabic text because without it the translation is likely to jeopardise the purity of the text. He has avoided retaining Arabic words whose equivalents exist in English. He has transliterated the names and Arabic words adopting the best system of transliteration in use. Asad’s originality is evident from the translation of *basmalab*:

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.³⁴

Interpretation of Disjoined Letters:

Asad has explained *al-muqatta’āt* in appendix ii and also added footnotes in his translation where these disjoined letters occur. According to him, out of twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, exactly one-half—that is, fourteen—occur in this position, either singly or in varying combinations of two, three, four or five letters. There is no evidence of the Prophet’s having ever referred to them in any of his recorded utterances, nor of any of his companions

having ever asked him for an explanation. He does not agree to the suggestion advanced by some Western orientalists that these letters may be no more than the initials of the scribes who wrote down the individual revelations at the Prophet's dictation, or of the companions who recorded them at the time of the final codification of the Qur'ān during the reign of the first three caliphs. Asad concludes that 'We must content ourselves with the finding that a solution of this problem still remains beyond our grasp. This was apparently the view of the four Right-Guided Caliphs, summarized in these words of Abū Bakr: "In every divine writ (kitāb) there is [an element of] mystery—and the mystery of the Qur'ān is [indicated] in the openings of [some of] the surahs."³⁵

The author of "the Message of the Qur'ān" had commented disjointed letters *Ta-Ha* that occur in the beginning of Surah 20 in the following passage:

According to some commentators, the letters t and h (pronounced ta ha) which introduce this surah belong to the group of *al-muqatta'at* -the "single [or "disjointed"] letters"-which are prefixed to a number of the Qur'ānic surah. However, in the opinion of some of the Prophet's Companions (e.g., `Abd Allāh ibn `Abbās) and a number of outstanding personalities of the next generation (like Sa`īd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid, Qatādah, Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī, `Ikrimah, Aḍ -Daḥḥāk, Al-Kalbī, etc.), ta ha is not just a combination of two single letters but a meaningful expression of its own, signifying "O man" (synonymous with *ya rajul*) in both the Nabataean and Syriac branches of the Arabic language (Tabarī, Rāzī, Ibn Kathīr), as well as in the-purely Arabian-dialect of the Yemenite tribe of `Akk, as is evident from certain fragments of their pre-Islamic poetry (quoted by Tabarī and Zamakhsharī). Tabarī, in particular, gives his unqualified support to the rendering of ta ha as "O man."³⁶

He is different to his predecessor Muslim exegetes that tried to translate these words in some surahs. He rendered Yā-Sīn into "O Thou human being!" Commenting on it he observes:

Whereas some of the classical commentators incline to the view that the letters y-s (pronounced Yā Sīn) with which this surah opens belong to the category of the mysterious letter-symbols (*al-muqatta'at*) introducing a number of Quranic chapters. `Abd Allāh ibn Abbās states that they actually represent two distinct words, namely the exclamatory particle yā ("O") and sin, which in the dialect of the tribe of Tayy is synonymous with *insān* ("human being" or "man"): hence, similar to the two syllables ta ha in surah 20, Yā Sīn denotes "O thou human being!" This interpretation has been accepted by Ikrimah, Aḍ -Daḥḥāk, Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī, Sa`īd ibn Jubayr, and other early Qur'ān-commentators (see Tabarī, Baghawī, Zamakhsharī, Baydawī, Ibn Kathīr. etc.). According to Zamakhsharī, it would seem that the syllable sin is an abbreviation of

unaysin, the diminutive form of *insān* used by the *Ṭayy* in exclamations. (It is to be borne in mind that in classical Arabic a diminutive is often expressive of no more than endearment: e.g., *yā bunayyā*, which does not necessarily signify “O my little son” but, rather, “my dear son” irrespective of the son’s age.) On the whole, we may safely assume that the words *Yā Sīn* apostrophize the Prophet Muḥammad, who is explicitly addressed in the sequence, and are meant to stress - as the Quran so often does - the fact of his and all other apostles’ humanness.³⁷

The Quranic Oaths:

In the Qur’ān, two Arabic letters ‘*ta*’ and ‘*waw*’ have been used as *ḥarf qasm*; the former is only used with God but the latter is used to swear things other than God. Abdullah Yusuf Ali³⁸ and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall³⁹ translate both these letters as “By” like many other translators but Asad has rendered *tallabi(ta+Allah)* into “By God”⁴⁰ and ‘*waw*’ is translated as “consider”.⁴¹ According to him the adjectival particle *wa* is used in the sense of a solemn oathlike assertion and it is to give weight to a subsequently stated truth or evidence of truth.⁴² Abdullah Yusuf Ali translates *Lā uqsimu* as “I do call to witness”⁴³ which is translated as “Nay, I call to witness”⁴⁴ by Muhammad Asad. For detail discussion of the topic please consult “Oaths and Adjuries in the Qur’ān” by Yusuf Ali.⁴⁵

Introduction to each Sūrah

Each Surah is preceded by a brief introduction and is copiously annotated. The introductory remarks give the usual explanation for the title of the surah, an indication of its chronological position, and a comment on the religious theme(s) running through it. Asad seems to adhere closely to the Cairo (“Royal,” according to Asad) Edition as far as the names of the surahs are concerned. In some-unfortunately not all-cases he mentions alternative names given to some of the surahs. Missing are references to the following: Surah 25, al-Furqān, is also entitled al-Khalas; Surah 41, Fussilat, is also entitled as- Sajdah; Surah 111, al-Masad, is also entitled Tabbat and al-Lahab; Surah 112, al-Ikhlās, is also known as at-Tawḥīd. In addition, it should be mentioned that Surah 94, ash- Sharh, is also known as al-Inshirah and Surah 96, al-’Alaq, is sometimes called Iqrā’. Similarly, Asad adopts the chronological preferences arrived at in the Cairo Edition although, from time to time, he offers an alternative point of view referring to differences of opinion among authorities but without consistently naming his sources. It should be borne in mind that the difference between the Cairo Edition and others lie mainly in the titles of some of the Surahs and, rarely (Surah 18), in the verse numbering.⁴⁶

He has briefly mentioned the chronological order of many surahs. About Surah Muzzammil, he writes, “This surah is almost certainly the fourth in the order of revelation. Although some of its verses may have come at a slightly later date, the whole of it belongs to the earliest Mecca period.”⁴⁷

In introduction to Surah al-Muddaththir he has mentioned the Prophet’s earliest revelation consisting of the first five verses of *surah* 96 (“The Germ-Cell”) that was followed by a period elapsed during which he received no revelation at all. The length of this break in revelation (*fatrat al-wahy*) cannot be established with certainty; it may have been as little as six months or as much as three years. At the end of this intermission the Prophet had a vision of the Angel Gabriel, “sitting between heaven and earth”. Almost immediately afterwards, the present *surah* was revealed; and from then on, in Muhammad’s own words, “revelation became intense and continuous” (Bukhārī, *Bad’ al-Wahy* and *Kitāb at-Tafsīr*; also Muslim). Although some verses of this *surah* may have been revealed at a slightly later time, there is no doubt that all of it belongs to the earliest part of the Mecca period, that is, to the very beginning of Muhammad’s mission. In this way some of these introductory notes are helpful for knowledge pertaining to *sūrah*.⁴⁸

Asad has mentioned the places of revelation of some surahs. He considers *Sūrah Muḥammad* as the earliest revelations of the Medina period which may have been revealed during the Prophet’s hijrah.⁴⁹

He has also given the reasons of nomenclature of some surahs. About *Sūrah al-An’ām*, he suggests that its title is derived from several references in verses 136ff. to certain pre-Islamic superstitions concerning animals.⁵⁰ About *Surah Muḥammad* he says that the title is based on the mention of the name of the Prophet Muḥammad in verse 2.⁵¹

Discussing the period of revelation of *Surah Kawthar*, he states that Ibn Kathīr considers it most probable that it was revealed at Medina. The reason for this assumption (shared by many other scholars) is to be found in an authentic *hadith* on the authority of Anas ibn Mālīk, who narrates - with a good deal of circumstantial detail - how the *surah* was revealed “while the Apostle of God was among us in the mosque” (Muslim, Ibn Hanbal, Abū Da’ūd, Nasā’ī). The “mosque” referred to by Anas can only have been the mosque of Medina: for, on the one hand, Anas - a native of that town - had never met the Prophet before the latter’s exodus to Medina (at which time Anas was barely ten years old); and, on the other hand, there had been no mosque - i.e., a public place of congregational worship -

available to the Muslims at Mecca before their conquest of that city in 8 H.⁵²

He has also discussed the controversy that Sūrah Quraysh and Sūrah al-Fīl are considered as one surah by some of the Companions of the Prophet and several learned men of the next generation.⁵³

In introductory notes to some surahs, he has also told the importance and reward of its recitation. About Sūrat al-Ikhlās he tells his readers, “As reported in a great number of authentic Traditions, the Prophet was wont to describe this *surah* as “equivalent to one-third of the whole Qur’ān” (Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Hanbal, Abū Dā’ūd, Nasā’ī, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)⁵⁴ About al-Isrā he says, “According to `A’ishah, the Prophet used to recite this surah every night in his prayer (Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī and Ibn Hanbal)”⁵⁵

Circumstances of Revelation:

Muhammad Asad has described circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of some sūrahs, extracts and verses. About surah 111, he has recounted the occasion on which it was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the following way:

As reported by several unimpeachable authorities - Bukhārī and Muslim among them - the Prophet ascended one day the hillock of Aṣ-Safā in Mecca and called together all who could hear him from among his tribe, the Quraysh, When they had assembled, he asked them: “O sons of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib! O sons of Fihri! If I were to inform you that enemy warriors are about to fall upon you from behind that hill, would you believe me?” They answered: “Yes, we would.” Thereupon he said: “Behold, then, I am here to warn you of the coming of the Last Hour!” At that, Abu Lahab exclaimed: “Was it for this purpose that thou hast summoned us? May thou be doomed?” And shortly afterwards this *surah* was revealed.⁵⁶

Asad has told the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of the Sūrah 111 as, “As reported by several unimpeachable authorities—Bukhārī and Muslim among them—the Prophet ascended one day the hillock of As-Safā in Mecca and called together all who could hear him from among his tribe, the Quraysh. When they assembled, he asked them: “O sons of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib! O sons of Fihri! If I were to inform you that enemy warriors are about to fall upon you from behind that hill, would you believe me?” They answered: “Yes, we would.” Thereupon he said: “Behold, then, I am here to warn you of the coming of the Last Hour!” At that Abu Lahab exclaimed: “Was it for this purpose that thou hast summoned us? May thou be doomed!” And shortly afterwards this surah was revealed.”⁵⁷ About the verses from 96:9 to the end of surah, he writes that most of the classical commentators see in this passage an allusion to Abu Jahl, the

Prophet's bitterest opponent in Makkah, who persistently tried to prevent Muhammad and his followers from praying before Ka'bah.⁵⁸

Dignity of Almighty God:

Asad was very careful in translating the verses pertaining to Almighty Allah. Two examples quoted below will make it clear.

1. The verse 3:141 has been translated by Muhammad Ali, an Ahmadi translator, as follows:

Do you think that you will enter the garden while Allah has not yet known those who strive hard from among you, and (He has not) known the patient?⁵⁹

But Muhammad Asad translates it in a very careful manner as follows:

Do you think that you could enter paradise unless God takes cognizance of your having striven hard [in His cause], and takes cognizance of your having been patient in adversity?⁶⁰

2. Some translators were mistaken while rendering the word "*makara*" occurring at more than one place in the Qur'an. Abdul Majid Daryabadi has translated verse 3:54 as follows:

And they plotted, and Allah plotted, and Allah is the Best of plotters.⁶¹

Daryabadi's translation is inappropriate but Asad has translated the same verse very carefully as "And the unbelievers schemed [against Jesus]; but God brought their scheming to nought: for God is above all schemers."⁶²

Veneration for the Prophet Muhammad:

Asad is very careful in translating the verses pertaining to the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him). For instance, he translates verse 93:7 as follows;

And found thee lost on thy way, and guided thee?⁶³

The British translators alleged the Prophet to be a sinner on the basis of this verse. The translation of some orientalist is as under:

And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided thee into the truth? (George Sale)⁶⁴

And found thee erring and guided thee. (J.M.Rodwell)⁶⁵

And (did He not) find thee erring, and guide thee. (E.H.Palmer)⁶⁶

Like some other modernists, Asad has not written *salat wa salam* with the name of Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) and has not added any explanatory note to the divine injunction pertaining to it.⁶⁷ When he translated Al-Jam 'al-*Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imam Bukhārī, he left out "*Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*" untranslated that occurs in Arabic text.⁶⁸

Reference to Hadith Literature:

Hadith is the fundamental source of the Qur'ānic exegesis and Muhammad Asad was a scholar of Hadith. He has not only translated *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī in 1938, but also wrote its explanation between 1935 and 1938. He published the first five of forty projected instalments of al-Bukhārī's book.⁶⁹ He consulted hadith literature throughout in his exegetical notes and has mentioned 14 hadith collections in his "Works of Reference".⁷⁰

Asad has referred to hadith literature in his explanatory notes. In a footnote to verse 4:34 he has referred to Bukhārī, Muslim, Tirmidhī, Abū Dā'ūd, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Bayhaqī, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hibban and Hākim.⁷¹

Reference to Sirah:

Most of the translations of the Holy Qur'ān are preceded by a short biographical sketch of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) but Asad has not done so. It was pointed out by Dr Rashid Ahmad in his review as follows: "A sketch of the Prophet's life is necessary at the beginning of the book."⁷² But it was ignored when the complete and exegesis was published. However, Asad has referred to the relevant events of sirah in many explanatory notes and in introduction to some surahs. He has referred to the Prophet's treatment of the deputation from Christian Najran in the year 10 H. They were given free access to the Prophet's mosque, and with his full consent celebrated their religious rites there, although their adoration of Jesus as "the son of God" and of Mary as "the mother of God" was fundamentally at variance with Islamic beliefs.⁷³ Asad has mentioned the battle of Badr while commenting on the verse 3:13. According to him it is generally assumed that this is an allusion to the battle of Badr, in the third week of Ramadan, 2H., in which three hundred and odd poorly-equipped Muslims, led by the Prophet, utterly routed a well-armed Meccan force numbering nearly one thousand men, seven hundred camels and one hundred horses; it was the first open battle between the pagan Quraysh and the young Muslim community of Medina. According to some commentators, however (e.g., *Manar* III, 234), the above Qur'ānic passage has a general import and alludes to an occurrence often witnessed in history - namely, the victory of a numerically weak and ill-equipped group of people, filled with a burning belief in the righteousness of their cause, over a materially and numerically superior enemy lacking a similar conviction. The fact that in this Qur'ān-verse the believers are spoken of as being faced by an enemy "twice their number" (while at the battle of Badr the pagan Quraysh

were more than three times the number of the Muslims) lends great plausibility to this explanation - and particularly so in view of the allusion, in the next verse, to material riches and worldly power.⁷⁴

Commenting on the verse 3:121, Asad has described the battle of Uhud which includes holding of a council, decision to fight in open area, defection of some three hundred men led by ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy, posting of archers on a hill by the Prophet, death-defying assault upon superior forces by Muslims, advantage over enemy, misunderstanding of the archers who abandoned their position, attack of Makkian cavalry from the rear, rumour of the Prophet’s martyrdom, how the Muslims rallied round him and began the counter-attack and the enemy’s retreat.⁷⁵

Asad has mentioned all events that led to the truce of Hudaibiyyah in the introduction of Surah al-Fath. He has mentioned that the Prophet had a dream in which he saw himself and his followers entering Mecca as pilgrims. He decided to perform, accompanied by his followers, the “lesser pilgrimage” or “pious visit” (umrah) to Mecca. Although for nearly six years there had been a more or less permanent state of war between the Muslim community at Medina. Thus, the Prophet’s party which set out for Mecca consisted of only 1400-1500 men, all of them dressed in the pilgrim’s garb (ihram) and, apart from their sheathed swords, unarmed.

On learning of the Prophet’s approach, the Meccans decided - against all Arabian tradition - to oppose the entry of the pilgrims by force of arms. Then Asad has described how the Prophet and his companions alighted on the plain of al-Hudaibiyyah and Uthman was sent as envoy to negotiate the Makkans. The events following the rumour of Uthman’s murder include “Pledge of the Tree (bayt al-ridwan), negotiation with representative of Makkans and agreement on a truce called Truce of Hudaibiyyah.⁷⁶

Reference to the Earlier Scriptures:

Asad has referred to the Bible in his exegetical notes. He has made allusion to the books of the Old Testament and New Testament. As he was a formerly Jew, he had good knowledge of the Old Testament. His footnote contains many references to Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, I Chronicles, Ezekiel, Revelation of St. John.⁷⁷ His commentary on the verses pertaining to Jesus is equally readable. The Holy Qur’ān has confirmed what was foretold in earlier scriptures in the following verses:

And [this happened, too,] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said: “O children of Israel! Behold, I am an apostle of God unto you, [sent] to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah, and to

give [you] the glad tiding of an apostle who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.” But when he [whose coming Jesus had foretold] came unto them with all evidence of the truth, they said: This [alleged message of his] is [nothing but] spellbinding eloquence!⁷⁸ Muhammad Asad has commented on these verses as follows:

This prediction is supported by several references in the Gospel of St. John to the *Parakletos* (usually rendered as “Comforter”) who was to come after Jesus. This designation is almost certainly a corruption of *Periklytos* (“the Much-Praised”), an exact Greek translation of the Aramaic term or name *Mambamana*. (It is to be borne in mind that Aramaic was the language used in Palestine at the time .of, and for some centuries after, Jesus, and was thus undoubtedly the language in which the original - now lost - texts of the Gospels were composed.) In view of the phonetic closeness of *Periklytos* and *Parakletos* it is easy to understand how the translator - or, more probably, a later scribe - confused these two expressions. It is significant that both the Aramaic *Mambamana* and the Greek *Periklytos* have the same meaning as the two names of the Last Prophet, *Muhammad* and *Ahmad*, both of which are derived from the verb *hamida* (“he praised”) and the noun *hamd* (“praise”). An even more unequivocal prediction of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad - mentioned by name, in its Arabic form - is said to be forthcoming from the so-called Gospel of St. Barnabas, which, though now regarded as apocryphal, was accepted as authentic and was read in the churches until the year 496 of the Christian era, when it was banned as “heretical” by a decree of Pope Gelasius. However, since the original text of that Gospel is not available (having come down to us only in an Italian translation dating from the late sixteenth century), its authenticity cannot be established with certainty.”⁷⁹ His Biblical knowledge is manifest from his explanation of “Ashab Al-Ukhduh” in Surah al-Buruj as follows:

In order to explain this parabolic passage, the commentators interpret it - quite unnecessarily - in the past tense, and advance the most contradictory legends meant to “identify” those evildoers in historical terms. The result is a medley of stories ranging from Abraham’s experiences with his idolatrous contemporaries (cf. 21:68-70) to the Biblical legend of Nebuchadnezzar’s attempt to burn three pious Israelites in a fiery furnace (The Book of Daniel iii, 19 ff.), or the persecution, in the sixth century, of the Christians of Najran by the King of Yemen, Dhu Nawas (who was of Jewish creed), or the entirely apocryphal story of a Zoroastrian king who burnt to death those of his subjects who refused to accept his dictum that a marriage of brother and sister was “permitted by God”; and so forth. None of these legends needs, of course, to be seriously considered in this context. As a matter of fact, the very anonymity of the evildoers referred to in the above Qur’anic passage shows that we have here a parable and not an allusion to “historical” or even legendary events. The persecutors are people who, having no faith whatsoever, hate to see faith in others (see verse 8

below); the “pit of fire” is a metaphor for the persecution of the latter by the former: a phenomenon not restricted to any particular time or to a particular people but recurring in many forms and in varying degrees of intensity throughout recorded history.⁸⁰

Reference to Historical Events:

The author of “The Message Of the Qur’ān” has described many historical events in his commentary. Commenting on the verse 2:125 he has told about the Ka`bah. Referring to Bukhārī’s *Saḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-‘11m, Tabarī’s *Tarīkhkh al-Umam*, Ibn Sad, Ibn Hishām, Mas’ūdī’s *Mūraj adh-Dhahab*, Yāqūt’s *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, and other early Muslim historians he has told about Makkah, Ka`bah, the Well of Zamzam, Abraham and his wives Sārah and Hagar.⁸¹ Asad has provided historical background of the Queen of Sheba in exegesis of the verse 34:15. According to him, the kingdom of Sheba (Sabā in Arabic) was situated in south-western Arabia, and at the time of its greatest prosperity (i.e., in the first millennium B.C.) comprised not only the Yemen but also a large part of Hadramawt and the Mahrah country, and probably also much of present-day Abyssinia. In the vicinity of its capital Marib - the Sabaeans had built in the course of centuries an extraordinary system of dams, dykes and sluices, which became famous in history, with astonishing remnants extant to this day. It was to this great dam that the whole country of Sheba owed its outstanding prosperity, which became proverbial throughout Arabia. (According to the geographer Al-Hamdānī, who died in 334 H., the area irrigated by this system of dams stretched eastward to the desert of Sayhad on the confines of the Rub al-Khalī). The flourishing state of the country was reflected in its people’s intense trading activities and their control of the “spice road” which led from Marib northwards to Mecca, Yathrib and Syria, and eastwards to Dufar on the shores of the Arabian Sea, thus connecting with the maritime routes from India and China.⁸²

The footnote in the beginning of Sūrah Ar-Rūm elucidates the defeat and victory of Byzantines as follows:

During the early years of the seventh century the Persians conquered parts of Syria and Anatolia, “the lands close-by”, i.e., near the heartland of the Byzantine empire; in 613 they took Damascus and in 614, Jerusalem; Egypt fell to them in 615–16, and at the same time they laid siege to Constantinople itself. At the time of the revelation of this surah - about the seventh year before the hijrah, corresponding to 615 or 616 of the Christian era - the total destruction of the Byzantine Empire seemed imminent. The few Muslims around the Prophet were despondent on hearing the news of the utter discomfiture of the Byzantines, who were Christians and, as such, believed in the One God. The pagan Quraysh, on the other hand, sympathized with the Persians

who, they thought, would vindicate their own opposition to the One-God idea. When Muhammad enunciated the above Quran-verses predicting a Byzantine victory “within a few years”, this prophecy was received with derision by the Quraysh. Now the term bid (commonly rendered as “a few”) denotes any number between three and ten; and, as it happened, in 622 – i.e., six or seven years after the Quranic prediction - the tide turned in favour of the Byzantines. In that year, Emperor Heraclius succeeded in defeating the Persians at Issus, south of the Taurus Mountains, and subsequently drove them out of Asia Minor. By 624, he carried the war into Persian territory and thus put the enemy on the defensive: and in the beginning of December, 626, the Persian armies were completely routed by the Byzantines.⁸³

His Views about Mysticism:

Asad was such intellectual who was guided by reason .According to Murad Hofmann, he was sceptical of Sufism.⁸⁴ He did not refer to mystic literature produced by Sufis throughout his exegesis. When some part of his translation and commentary was published by Islamic League of Makkah, it was reviewed by Dr. Rashid Ahmad Jullundhari in the Islamic Quarterly London who suggested Asad to consult *Tafsīr Qāshānī* by Sūfī commentator ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī.⁸⁵ But the suggestion was just to derive a rationalistic exegesis of verses pertaining to the miracles of Jesus .Asad’s views about Sufism can be read in the introduction of Surah al-Kahf:

The story of the Men of the Cave - from which the surah takes its title - illustrates (in verses 13-20) the principle of world-abandonment for the sake of faith, and is deepened into an allegory of death, resurrection and spiritual awakening. In the story of Moses and the unnamed sage (verses 60-82) the theme of spiritual awakening undergoes a significant variation: it is shifted to the plane of man’s intellectual life and his search after ultimate truths. Appearance and reality are shown to be intrinsically different -so different that only mystic insight can reveal to us what is apparent and what is real. And, finally, the allegory of Dhu ‘I-Qarnayn, “the Two-Horned One”, tells us that world-renunciation is not, in itself, a necessary complement of one’s faith in God: in other words, that worldly life and power need not conflict with spiritual righteousness so long as we remain conscious of the ephemeral nature of all works of man and of our ultimate responsibility to Him who is above all limitations of time and appearance. And so the surah ends with the words: “Hence, whoever looks forward to meeting his Sustainer let him do righteous deeds, and let him not ascribe unto anyone or anything a share in the worship due to his Sustainer.”⁸⁶

Rationalistic Approach and Denial of Miracles:

According to Asad the metaphysical ideas mentioned in the Qur’ān relate to a realm beyond the reach of human perception or experience which are underlined in the book by means of loan-

images derived from our actual –physical or mental-experiences.⁸⁷ Relying on this idea, he interpreted the miracles mentioned in the Qur’ān in a different way. The Qur’ān has mentioned the miracle of Jesus in verse 3:49. Asad has translated the verse as follows:

“And [will make him] an apostle unto the children of Israel” “I have come unto you with a message from your Sustainer. I shall create for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of [your] destiny, and then breathe into it, so that it might become [your] destiny by God’s leave; and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by God’s leave; and I shall let you know what you may eat and what you should store up in your houses. Behold, in all this there is indeed a message for you, if you are [truly] believers.”⁸⁸

In this verse the miracles are interpreted by Asad in a rationalistic way. The first miracle of making a living bird out of clay is taken as destiny of his people. According to him, the noun *ṭayr* is a plural of *ṭā’ir* (“flying creature” or “bird”), or an infinitive noun (“flying”) derived from the verb *ṭara* (“he flew”). In pre-Islamic usage, as well as in the Qur’ān, the words *ṭā’ir* and *ṭayr* often denote “fortune” or “destiny”, whether good or evil. He also opines that it is probable that the “raising of the dead” by Jesus is a metaphorical description of his giving new life to people who were spiritually dead. The “healing of the blind and the leper” has a similar significance: namely, an inner regeneration of people who were spiritually diseased and blind to the truth. Saying of Jesus that he would tell his people what they eat and what they store is interpreted as “what good things you may partake of in the life of this world, and what good deeds you should lay up as a treasure for the life to come”.⁸⁹

The translation and interpretation of the above-mentioned verse by other translators and commentators is different from Asad’s.

And will make him a messenger unto the Children of Israel, (saying): I come unto you with a sign from your Lord. I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird, and I breathe into it and it is a bird, by Allah’s leave. I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah’s leave. And I announce unto you what ye eat and what ye store up in your houses. In this verily is a sign for you, if ye are to be believers----. Pickthall⁹⁰

“And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message): “I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah’s leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah’s leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe.-----Yusuf Ali⁹¹

I have come to you with a sign from God: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird; I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life with God's permission; I will tell you what you may eat and what you may store up in your houses. There truly is a sign from your Lord.----- Abdel Haleem⁹²

Criticizing Asad's translation of verse 3:49, Dr. Rashid Ahmad Jullundhri⁹³ has following reservations on his rendering:

1. It is hard to translate the word *Tā'ir* as used in this verse as 'destiny'. The structure of the sentence does not allow it. The presence of the verbs 'to fashion', 'to breathe', and 'to be' rule out *Majāz*.
2. Jesus was described by his opponents as a sorcerer. One wonders what was justification for this, if his miracles were merely spiritual miracles.
3. Jesus' first listeners were common people and villagers. It would be difficult to claim, therefore, that he employed highly idiomatic language.
4. Even by 1922 a study called 'Miracles and the New Psychology' was able to declare that in the Gospels the particulars of the miracles of healing upon which most reliance can be placed are not themselves incompatible with the view that such healing was accomplished the agency of ascertainable psychological laws.

Being a rationalist, he accepts the theory of human evolution. Commenting on verse 71:17 "And God has caused you to grow out of the earth in[gradual]growth" he states:

It alludes to evolution of the human species, which starting from the most primitive organisms living on earth has gradually ascended to ever higher stages of development until it has reached that complexity of body, mind and soul evident in the human being.⁹⁴

In Surah al-Kahf, according to Asad, the parable of Moses and his quest for knowledge (verses 60-82) has become, in the course of time, the nucleus of innumerable legends with which we are not concerned here. We have, however, a Tradition on the authority of Ubayy ibn Ka'b (recorded in several versions by Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī), according to which Moses was rebuked by God for having once asserted that he was the wisest of all men, and was subsequently told through revelation that a "servant of God" who lived at the "junction of the two seas" was far superior to him in wisdom.⁹⁵

In Sūrah al-Fīl "the stones of sijjil" is explained by Asad as follows: the particular chastisement to which the above verse alludes seems to have been a sudden epidemic of extreme virulence:

according to Wāqidī and Muḥammad ibn Ishāq - the latter as quoted by Ibn Hishām and Ibn Kathīr - “this was the first time that spotted fever (hasbah) and smallpox (judarī) appeared in the land of the Arabs”. It is interesting to note that the word hasbah - which, according to some authorities, signifies also typhus - primarily means “pelting [or smiting] with stones” (Qāmūs). - As regards the noun ṭā’ir (of which ṭayr is the plural), we ought to remember that it denotes any “flying creature”, whether bird or insect (Tāj al-’Arūs). Neither the Qur’ān nor any authentic Tradition offers us any evidence as to the nature of the “flying creatures” mentioned in the above verse; and since, on the other hand, all the “descriptions” indulged in by the commentators are purely imaginary, they need not be seriously considered. If the hypothesis of an epidemic is correct, the “flying creatures” - whether birds or insects - may well have been the carriers of the infection. One thing, however, is clear: whatever the nature of the doom that overtook the invading force, it was certainly miraculous in the true sense of this word - namely, in the sudden, totally unexpected rescue which it brought to the distressed people of Mecca.⁹⁶

Asad has referred to even Mu’tazilites in his footnotes, e.g. Qur’ānic Commentary of Abu `Ali al-Jubba’i, the famous Mu’tazili scholar who died in 303 H., which corresponds to 915 or 916 of the Christian era.⁹⁷ This has made his translation and commentary not acceptable for orthodoxy.

His Views on Crucifixion of Christ:

Muhammad Asad’s views regarding the end of worldly life of Jesus are different from viewpoints of orthodoxy. Both the Jews and the Christians believe in crucifixion of Jesus and they possess faith in his death on the cross but Ahmadis believe in his natural death. Muhammad Asad also holds the similar views regarding the death of Jesus. He translates verses 4:156-58 as follows:

And for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they utter against Mary, and their boast, “Behold, we have slain the Christ Jesus, son of Mary, [who claimed to be] an apostle of God!” However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so; and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: nay, God exalted him unto Himself - and God is indeed almighty, wise.⁹⁸

Commenting on these verses he says that the Qur’ān categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment

God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Qur'an or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators must be summarily rejected. They represent no more than confused attempts at "harmonizing" the Qur'anic statement that Jesus was *not* crucified with the graphic description, in the Gospels, of his crucifixion. The story of the crucifixion as such has been succinctly explained in the Qur'anic phrase *wa-lakin shubbiba lahum*, which I render as "but it only appeared to them as if it had been so" - implying that in the course of time, long after the time of Jesus, a legend had somehow grown up (possibly under the then-powerful influence of Mithraistic beliefs) to the effect that he had died on the cross in order to atone for the "original sin" with which mankind is allegedly burdened; and this legend became so firmly established among the latter-day followers of Jesus that even his enemies, the Jews, began to believe it - albeit in a derogatory sense (for crucifixion was, in those times, a heinous form of death-penalty reserved for the lowest of criminals).⁹⁹

Asad has translated the first portion of verse 3: 55 in the same way as Ahmad is interpret it. His translation runs: "Lo! God said: "O Jesus! "Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto Me."¹⁰⁰

According to Asad the verb *rafa abu* (lit., "he raised him" or "elevated him") has always, whenever the act of *raf'* ("elevating") of a human being is attributed to God, the meaning of "honouring" or "exalting". Nowhere in the Qur'an is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has "taken up" Jesus bodily, in his lifetime, into heaven. The expression "God exalted him unto Himself" in the above verse denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's special grace - a blessing in which all prophets partake, as is evident from 19: 57, where the verb *rafa nahu* ("We exalted him") is used with regard to the Prophet Idris. (See also Muhammad 'Abduh in *Manar* III, 316 f., and VI, 20f.) The "nay" (*bal*) at the beginning of the sentence is meant to stress the contrast between the belief of the Jews that they had put Jesus to a shameful death on the cross and the fact of God's having "exalted him unto Himself".¹⁰¹

Muhammad Ali, a Lahori Ahmadi, has translated this verse as follows:

When Allah said: O Jesus! I shall cause you to die and exalt you in My presence.¹⁰²

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan has translated the verse as follows:

Allah reassured Jesus: I shall cause thee to die a natural death, and shall exalt thee to Myself.¹⁰³

Many Muslim scholars have translated the above-mentioned text in a different way.

(And remember) when Allah said: O Jesus! I am gathering you and causing you to ascend to Me.”-----Pickthall¹⁰⁴

Behold! God said: “I will take thee and raise thee to Myself...”. A. Yusuf ‘Ali¹⁰⁵

God said, ‘Jesus, I will take you back and raise you up to Me.’ ----- Abdel Haleem¹⁰⁶

Asad and Orientalists:

It is strange that Asad has avoided mentioning Western scholars who have levelled false charges against the Qur’anic revelation and its recipient. He had read orientalists but never referred to them. In ‘Works of Reference’ he has only three Western sources. i.e., Authorized King James Version of the Bible, Encyclopaedia of Islam and Edward William Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon.¹⁰⁷ He has alluded to Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon in his exegetical notes as well.¹⁰⁸ Hanna E. Kassis criticizes Asad because he ‘overlooks Western scholarship’ notably Theodor Noldeke’s work which does not appear even in the Bibliography.¹⁰⁹ Actually Asad never mentioned Noldeke but he has referred to Suyūṭī’s “Al-Itqān fī Ulūm al-Qur’ān”¹¹⁰ for deriving his discussion pertaining to chronology of surahs. However, he has analysed the Western approach towards the Qur’ān in his “Foreword” and differentiates between response of a non-Muslim Westerner and a believer in the following words:

Where the believer, reading the Qur’ān in Arabic, sees beauty, the non-Muslim reader often claim to discern “crudeness”; the coherence of the Qur’anic world-view and its relevance to the human condition escape him altogether and assume the guise of what, in Europe’s and America’s orientalist literature, is frequently described as “incoherent rambling” and passages which, to a Muslim, are expressive of sublime wisdom, often sound “flat” and “uninspiring” to the Western ear.”¹¹¹

The Qur’anic Philosophy:

Muhammad Asad possessed philosophical and rationalistic thinking. That is why, he has elucidated the philosophy of some Qur’anic commandments. Commenting on verse 5:4 he writes that the permission to partake of the food of the followers of other revealed religions excludes, of course, the forbidden categories of meat enumerated in verse 3. As a matter of fact, the Law of Moses, too, forbids them explicitly; and there is no statement whatsoever in the Gospels to the effect that these prohibitions were cancelled by Jesus: on the contrary, he is reported to have said, “Think not that I

have come to destroy the Law [of Moses]. .. : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew v, 17). Thus, the latitude enjoyed by post-Pauline followers of Jesus in respect of food does not correspond to what he himself practiced and enjoined.¹¹²

Asad explains the reason why Muslim men are allowed to marry women from among the followers of another revealed religion but Muslim women are not permitted to marry non-Muslims: the reason being that Islam enjoins reverence of all the prophets, while the followers of other religions reject some of them e.g., the Prophet Muhammad or, as is the case with the Jews, both Muhammad and Jesus. Thus, while a non-Muslim woman who marries a Muslim can be sure that - despite all doctrinal differences-the prophets of her faith will be mentioned with utmost respect in her Muslim environment, a Muslim woman who would marry a non-Muslim would always be exposed to an abuse of him whom she regards as God's Apostle.¹¹³

About permission of polygamy and prohibition of polyandry Asad has given the following justification:

As regards the permission to marry more than one wife (up to the maximum of four), it is so restricted by the condition, "if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then [marry only] one", as to make such plural marriages possible only in quite exceptional cases and under exceptional circumstances. Still, one might ask why the same latitude has not been given to women as well; but the answer is simple. Notwithstanding the spiritual factor of *love* which influences the relations between man and woman, the determinant *biological* reason for the sexual urge is, in both sexes, procreation: and whereas a woman can, at one time, conceive a child from one man only and has to carry it for nine months before she can conceive another, a man can beget a child every time he cohabits with a woman. Thus, while nature would have been merely wasteful if it had produced a polygamous instinct in woman, man's polygamous inclination is biologically justified. It is, of course, obvious that the biological factor is only one - and by no means always the most important - of the aspects of marital love: none the less, it is a basic factor and, therefore, decisive in the institution of marriage as such. With the wisdom that always takes human nature fully into account, Islamic Law undertakes no more than the safeguarding of the socio-biological function of marriage (which includes also care of the progeny), allowing a man to have more than one wife and not allowing a woman to have more than one husband at one time; while

the spiritual problem of marriage, being imponderable and therefore outside the scope of law, is left to the discretion of the partners.¹¹⁴

In verses 81:8-9 the Holy Qur'ān has referred to the pre-Islamic cruel custom of burying young daughters alive as follows:

And when the girl-child that was buried alive is made to ask for what crime been slain¹¹⁵

Commenting on the verses he has elucidated the motives of this barbaric action and also mentioned the efforts to save innocent girls by some kind-hearted Arabs:

About burying alive of girl-child, he thinks that the barbaric custom of burying female infants alive seems to have been fairly widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia, although perhaps not to the extent as has been commonly assumed. The motives were twofold: the fear that an increase of female offspring would result in economic burdens, as well as fear of the humiliation frequently caused by girls being captured by a hostile tribe and subsequently preferring their captors to their parents and brothers. Before Islam, one of the foremost opponents of this custom was Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, a cousin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and spiritually a precursor of Muhammad (cf. Bukhārī, *Fada'il Ashāb an-Nabī* on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar); he died shortly before Muhammad's call to prophethood (*Faṭḥ al-Barī* VII, 112). Another man, Sa'sa'ah ibn Najīyah at-Tamīmī - grandfather of the poet Farazdaq - achieved equal fame as a saviour of infants thus condemned to death; he later embraced Islam. Ibn Khallikān (II, 197) mentions that Sa'sa'ah saved about thirty girls by paying ransom to their parents."¹¹⁶

Finality of Prophethood:

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the last apostle of God. The holy Qur'ān has underlined in it in al-Ma'idah 5:3 as follows:

Today have I perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me shall be your religion."¹¹⁷

Commenting on this verse Asad writes:" According to all available Traditions based on the testimony of the Prophet's contemporaries, the above passage - which sets, as it were, a seal on the message of the Qur'ān - was revealed at 'Arafat in the afternoon of Friday, the 9th of Dhu '1-Hijjah, 10 H., eighty-one or eighty-two days before the death of the Prophet. No legal injunction whatsoever was revealed after this verse: and this explains the reference to God's having perfected the Faith and bestowed the full measure of His blessings upon the believers. Man's self-surrender (islam) to God is postulated as the basis, or the basic law, of all true religion (din): This self-surrender expresses: itself not only in belief in Him but also in obedience to His commands: and this is the reason why the

announcement of the completion of the Qur'ānic message is placed within the context of a verse containing the last legal ordinances ever revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.”¹¹⁸

In Surah al-Ahzab33:40, it has been underlined that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Khatam al-Nabīyyīn. According to Asad it means the last of the prophets, just as a seal (Khatam) marks the end of a document; apart from this, the term khatam is a synonymous with khitam, the “end” or “conclusion” of a thing: from which it follows that the message revealed through Muhammad—the Qur'ān—must be regarded as the culmination and end of prophetic revelation.¹¹⁹ Muhammad Asad has commented on verse 2:252 that ‘this appears to be an allusion to Muhammad inasmuch as he was the Last Prophet and the bearer of a universal message applicable to all people and to all times.’¹²⁰ Asad has spent a long time in the Indian subcontinent and was familiar with so-called ‘apostolic prophet’ of Punjab whose name was Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani. He emphasised the belief in the finality of prophethood and rejected any claim for the office of prophethood after the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace and greeting.

Scientific Translation and Interpretation of Certain Verses:

Muhammad Asad was a rationalist who has translated and interpreted the verses pertaining to cosmology, zoology, botany, physics, astronomy and other sciences in a scientific manner. The Holy Qur'ān has mentioned certain facts which have only recently been discovered by scientists. In verse 41:11, the origin of the universe has been underlined as follows:

And He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke; and He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!¹²¹

Asad has interpreted smoke (*dukḥān*) as a gas—evidently hydrogen gas, which physicists regard as the primal element from which all material particles of the universe have evolved and still evolve.¹²² About the creation of the universe from homogeneous mass the Holy Qur'ān has told in the verse 30 of *Sūrah al-Anbīya'* as:

Are, then, they who are bent on denying the truth not aware that the heavens and the earth were [once] one single entity, which We then parted asunder?¹²³

Asad commented on this verse as follows: “It is, as a rule, futile to make an explanation of the Qur'ān dependent on “scientific findings” which may appear true today, but may equally well be disapproved tomorrow by new findings. Nevertheless, the above unmistakable reference to the unitary origin of the universe—metonymically modern astrophysicists that this universe has

originated as one entity from one single element ,namely ,hydrogen, which became subsequently consolidated through gravity and then separated into individual nebulae ,galaxies and solar systems, with further individual parts progressively breaking away to form new entities in the shape of stars, planets and the latter's satellites.”¹²⁴

Just to compare the scientific translation of Muhammad Asad, consider the following translation of verse 51:47 by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall:

“We have built the heaven with might, and We it is Who make the vast extent (of it).”¹²⁵

Now read Asad's rendering of the verse:

And it is We who have built the universe with [Our creative] power; and, verily, it is We who are steadily expanding it.¹²⁶

According to Asad the last phrase “*inna la-musi'un*” clearly foreshadows the modern notion of the “expanding universe”---that is, the fact that the cosmos, though finite in extent, is continuously expanding in space.¹²⁷

Here Asad's translation and commentary coincides with modern knowledge of cosmology but the translation by other translators only gives the literal meaning of the verse. About the creation of heavenly bodies it has been underlined in verses 71:15-16:

‘Do you not see how God has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another, and has set up within them the moon as a light [reflected] and set up the sun as a [radiant] lamp?’

Asad tells his readers that the sun is described as “a [source of] radiant light” (*ḍiyā'*) and the moon as “light [reflected]” (*nūr*).¹²⁸

In the first revelation the word “*al-'Alaq*” has been translated as blood-clot or congealed blood by most of the translators but Asad has rendered it into English as follows: “Read in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created – created man out of a germ-cell!”¹²⁹

Asad's comments on these verses are worth-reading: “The past tense in which the verb *kbalaqa* appears in these two verses is meant to indicate that the act of divine creation (*kbalaq*) has been and is being continuously repeated. It is also noteworthy that this very first Qur'ānic revelation alludes to man's embryonic evolution out of a “germ-cell.’ - i.e., out of a fertilized female ovum - thus contrasting the primitiveness and simplicity of his biological origins with his intellectual and spiritual potential: a contrast which clearly points to the existence of a conscious design and a purpose underlying the creation of life.”¹³⁰

Holy Qur'ān has enumerated stages of in vivo human development in *Sūrah al-Mu'minūn* 23:12-14. Asad has rendered these verses into English as follows:

Now, indeed, We create man out of the essence of clay, and then We cause him to remain as a drop of sperm in [the wombs] firm keeping, and then We create out of the drop of sperm a germ-cell, and then We create out of the germ-cell an embryonic lump, and then We create within the embryonic lump bones, and then We clothe the bones with flesh - and then We bring [all] this into being as a new creation: hallowed, therefore, is God, the best of artisans.¹³¹

According to Asad the frequent Quranic references to man's being "created out of clay or out of dust" or (as in this instance) "out of the essence (*sulalah*) of clay point to the fact that his body is composed of various organic and inorganic substances existing on or in the earth, as well as to the continuous transmutation of those substances, through the intake of earth-grown food, into reproductive cells (Rāzī - thus stressing man's humble origin, and hence the debt of gratitude which he owes to God for having endowed him with a conscious soul. The past tense in verses 12 - 14 (lit., "We have created", "We have caused him to remain", etc.) emphasizes the fact that all this has been ordained by God and has been happening again and again ever since man was brought into being by Him; in the above context, this recurrence is brought out best by the use of the present tense. Asad elucidates '*aḥsan al-khāliqīn*' as the best of creators. Quoting Tabarī he points out that the Arabs apply the designation "creator" to every artisan (*sani*) - a usage also current in European languages with reference to the "creation" of works of art and imagination. Since God is the only Creator in the real, primary sense of this word, the phrase *aḥsan al-khāliqīn* must be understood in this secondary sense of the term *khāliq*.¹³²

God has told about the organs producing male and female germ cells in *Sūrah at-Tāriq*. Consider the translation of verses 86:5-7:

Let man, then, observe out of what he has been created: he has been created out of a seminal fluid issuing from between the loins [of man] and the pelvic arch [of woman].¹³³

The plural noun *tara'ib*, has been rendered by Asad as "pelvic arch"¹³⁴ but other translators told its meaning as 'ribs'¹³⁵ It has also the meaning of "ribs" or "arch of bones"; according to most of the authorities who have specialized in the etymology of rare Quranic expressions this term relates specifically to *female* anatomy.¹³⁶

About creation of primordial man and his mate, God said in the opening verse of *Sūrah an-Nisā'*:

O mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women.¹³⁷

Commenting on the verse Asad observes: "Out of the many meanings attributable to the term *nafs* - soul, spirit, mind, animate

being, living entity, human being, person, self (in the sense of a personal identity), humankind, life-essence, vital principle, and so forth - most of the classical commentators choose “human being”, and assume that it refers here to Adam. Muḥammad ‘Abduh, however, rejects this interpretation (*Manār* IV, 323 ff.) and gives, instead, his preference to “humankind” inasmuch as this term stresses the common origin and brotherhood of the human race (which, undoubtedly, is the purport of the above verse), without, at the same time, unwarrantably tying it to the Biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve. My rendering of *nafs*, in this context, as “living entity” follows the same reasoning - As regards the expression *zanjaba* (“its mate”), it is to be noted that, with reference to animate beings, the term *zanj* (“a pair”, “one of a pair” or “a mate”) applies to the male as well as to the female component of a pair or couple; hence, with reference to human beings, it signifies a woman’s mate (husband) as well as a man’s mate (wife). Abu Muslim - as quoted by Razi - interprets the phrase “He created out of it (*minha*) its mate” as meaning “He created its mate [i.e., its sexual counterpart] out of its own kind (*min jinsiba*)”, thus supporting the view of Muhammad ‘Abduh referred to above. The literal translation of *minha* as “out of it” clearly alludes, in conformity with the text, to the biological fact that both sexes have originated from “one living entity.”¹³⁸

In verse 36:80, it has been told: “He who produces for you fire out of the green tree, so that, lo! you kindle [your fires] therewith.”¹³⁹

According to Asad, the ancient Arabian proverb, “In every tree there is a fire” (Zamakhsharī): evidently an allusion to the metamorphosis of green - i.e., water-containing - plants into fuel, be it through desiccation or man-made carbonization (charcoal), or by a millennial, subterranean process of decomposition into oil or coal”.¹⁴⁰

God has told about occurrence of pairs in the verse 36:36 as follow:

Limitless in His glory is He who has created opposites in whatever the earth produces, and in men’s own selves, and in that of which [as yet] they have no knowledge.¹⁴¹

According to Asad, it is a reference to the polarity evident in all creation, both animate and inanimate, which expresses itself in the existence of antithetic and yet complementary forces, like the sexuality in human beings, animals and plants, light and darkness, heat and cold, positive and negative magnetism and electricity, the positive and negative charges (protons and electrons) in the structure of the atom, and so forth. (It is to be borne in mind that the noun

zawj denotes both “a pair” and “one of a pair”. The mention of “that of which they have no knowledge” evidently relates to things or phenomena not yet understood by man but potentially within the range of his comprehension: hence my interpolation, between brackets, of the words” as yet”.¹⁴²

Scholars' Views About “The Message of the Qur'an”:

Professor Isma'il Ibrahim Nawwab praises Muhammad Asad as follows:

He rose to unparalleled eminence among Western Muslims because none has contributed more than Asad to elucidating Islam as an ideology and conveying its quintessential spirit in contemporary terms to Muslims and non-Muslims alike—not even Pickthall (d. 1355/1936), “an Englishman of the English”, who can easily be credited with the most widely read translation of the Qur'an undertaken by any English-writing convert, with brilliant writings on Islam and with wide-ranging services to the Muslims, sometimes rendered at great personal sacrifice.¹⁴³

Hanna E. Kassis says about Asad's translation of the Qur'an: The ability and erudition of the translator are evident throughout this book, which is addressed by a man of faith to those Muslims and non-Muslims who are incapable of reading the Holy Book in its Arabic original.¹⁴⁴

A.R. Kidwai observes in his article on survey of English translations of the Qur'an: The Message of the Quran by Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar, 1980) represents a notable addition to the body of English translations couched in chaste English. This work is nonetheless vitiated by deviation from the viewpoint of the Muslim orthodoxy on many counts. Averse to take some Qur'anic statements literally, Asad denies the occurrence of such events as the throwing of Abraham into the fire, Jesus speaking in the cradle, etc. He also regards Luqmān, Khizr and Dhulqarnain as ‘mythical figures’ and holds unorthodox views on the abrogation of verses. These blemishes apart, this highly readable translation contains useful, though sometimes unreliable background information about the Qur'anic Sūras and even provides exhaustive notes on various Qur'anic themes.¹⁴⁵

Gai Eaton who is a leading British thinker, has pointed out some of the limitations of Asad's rationalistic approach but he has praised “The Message of the Qur'an” in the following way:

In practical terms this is the most helpful and instructive version of the Qur'an that we have in English. This remarkable man has done what he set out to do, and it may be doubted whether his achievement will ever be surpassed.¹⁴⁶

Murad Hofmann (b.1931) remarked about The Message of the Qur'ān:

It was the best, next only to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's and Marmaduke Pickthall's translations which are the most remarkable among the contemporary efforts to convey the message of the Qur'ān into English. Asad's...translation...has been further translated en toto into several languages such as Turkish and Swedish. His work is particularly appreciated for lucidity and precision of its commentary, based on his stupendous command of Bedouin Arabic. Readers appreciate perhaps most that Asad treats them as grown-ups. He exposes the root of the translation problem, relates other options (and the reasons given up for choosing them), and then explains reason(s) he preferred in his particular translation.¹⁴⁷

Abdin Chande wrote an article entitled "Symbolism and allegory in the Qur'ān: Muhammad Asad's modernist translation" in which he observed:

Muhammad Asad brings a modernist perspective to his translation of the Qur'ān, which at certain points diverges from traditional Muslim understandings of the text.¹⁴⁸

Khaleel Mohammed writes in his article "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'ān", "It remains one of the best translations available, both in terms of its comprehensible English and generally knowledgeable annotations."¹⁴⁹

Malise Ruthven has paid a glowing tribute to Asad's translation in the following way, "Muhammad Asad...has come as near as anyone to making the divine text intelligible to modern readers of the English language. That is an achievement for which future generations of Muslims and non-Muslims must always be grateful."¹⁵⁰

Dr Rashid Ahmad Jullundhri thinks that "Asad has successfully avoided the serious errors which other translators have made".¹⁵¹

The Asad's translation of the Holy Qur'ān is regarded as 'a labour of love' by J. Wansbrough¹⁵² and 'a valuable contribution' by John Haywood¹⁵³ While according to Neil Robinson, Muhammad Asad is scientific rationalist.¹⁵⁴

Kenneth Cragg states that every fair-minded reader will esteem Dr. Asad's labour of love and learning. In the growing number of English versions of the Muslim Book it will find a sure place and students will be well advised to take the plural opportunity they afford, thus to attain the unattainable.¹⁵⁵

According to Professor M.A.S. Abdel Haleem "Asad is one of the most original translators, who did the background research for himself in the original lengthy Arabic exegeses. His language and choice of words too are original, but he inserts many bracketed

explanatory words which, though useful, make his sentences cumbersome. Also his 'rationalistic' approach leads him to translations that some Muslim theologians disagree with."¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

Muhammad Asad was an unparalleled scholar of Arabic language in the contemporary Western world. He possessed vast knowledge of *tafsir* and *hadith* literature. Being from the Jewish tradition with religious background he was also acquainted with the knowledge of previous scriptures. "The Message of the Qur'an" is a combination of *tafsir bi'l-rivāyah* or *tafsir bi'l-mathbūr* (interpretation by transmission) and *tafsir bi'l-dirāyah* or *tafsir bi'l-rā'y* (interpretation by sound opinion). In his exegetical notes, he mostly relied on famous commentators and substantiated his point of view by quoting from them. However, he deviated from exegetical tradition in his footnotes on such verses in which the Prophetic miracles or super natural events have been underlined. He based such discussions on intellect rejecting any possibility of such events which is beyond the realm of cause and effect. Some of his explanatory notes on verses underlining scientific facts are worth reading but when he accepts theories as scientific facts, it becomes difficult for readers to agree with him. He was a modernist but different from modernists of Indian subcontinent who have rejected *hadith* literature altogether in their exegeses. For instance, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān and Ghulām Ahmad Parvez did not rely on *hadith* for interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. Asad's views on creation of man, miracles, night journey (*isrā'*) of the Prophet (peace be upon him), jinn and allegory in the Qur'an are based on intellect where he put *tafsir* and *hadith* literature aside. His rationalistic approach in such discussions has made his work unacceptable for orthodox scholars.

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RECONCILING SOCIAL UNITY AND
CULTURAL PLURALITY: AN ORGANIC
AND IDEALISTIC APPROACH^{*}

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^{*} M. Maruf, "Organismic Model: Mutuality and Harmony between Men and with Nature", ISM Meeting, July 19-22, 1980, Section III, London.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the complex relationship between social unity and cultural plurality, emphasizing the need to approach society through an organic model and culture through an idealistic perspective. It critiques the mechanical and rigid views of social organization, highlighting their failure to foster genuine social unity. Instead, it advocates for a dynamic, interactive society where components, such as individuals, are fluid and capable of internal interaction. The article also discusses the diversity and integration of cultures, challenging Oswald Spengler's rigid views on cultural isolation and promoting the idea that cultures evolve and interact with one another. It concludes that societal unity and cultural plurality can coexist when approached with a fluid, organismic view of society and an idealistic, integrative view of culture, as emphasized by thinkers like Allama Iqbal. The concept of "unity in diversity" is essential for a harmonious and progressive society, supported by cultural interactions and shared human experiences.

This article explores the implications of 'SOCIETY AND UNITY'. The subject is a complex one consisting of two seemingly disparate concepts, i.e., 'SOCIAL UNITY' and 'CULTURAL PLURALITY' with a conjunction between them. At the very outset the two concepts put me in mind of two theories which have been quite popular to this day: I mean, the mechanical Model of the Society¹ as regards 'SOCIAL UNITY', and Oswald Spengler's view of the Relations between the Cultures² in connection with 'CULTURAL PLURALITY'. I propose to base my discussion on an examination of these two theories in the main. The validity of the topic for discussion will be determined by whatever view of 'Society' and 'Culture' do we take. In the sequel, then, I choose to begin with a discussion of these two concepts.

Society and 'Social Unity'

There are three kinds of views on Society' or 'Social Organization': (i) the mechanical or materialistic view of Society, including its mildest form, Epiphenomenalism; (ii) the Mentalist or Spiritualist view of 'Society' advocated by George Berkeley through to the recent idealists: and (iii) the Organic or 'Organismic view of thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Lester Ward, Adolf Meyer, the Social Darwinists through to Allama M. Iqbal in our own times.³ Of these, the most rigid view of Social Unities has been offered by the Mechanical Model. The model under consideration presents the type of Society marked by 'rigidity', and in extreme cases leading to complete 'preclusion' of interaction between various social units (i.e., Leibnizean model). It cannot lead to social unity, but to social diversity, for without mutual interaction no wider social organization can emerge. Even the Organismic view⁴, fails to serve its 'organizational purpose so long as the units, individualistic or ecological, remain 'fixed' and 'rigid'. Mario Bunge has subjected the Organismic view of Mach to criticism on the ground that for him 'interdependence' meant "mutual dependence among the existents, a static net of reciprocal dependence like that among the parts of a steel frame".⁵ Thus, so long as the reference is structural rather than functional and "fluid", any model is destined to fail in doing justice to the question of 'social organization'. No introduction of concepts like 'equifinality' and 'multifinality', of purpose and goal-seeking, self-regulation and adaptation will help

to retrieve the situation, for it will not yield a truly Organismic Model of the Society.⁶

A truly Organismic society, i.e., the one which can guaranty a genuine social organization', calls for the following pre-conditions: (i) the Society is conceived as an organic whole wherein the parts as well as the whole mutually and continually interact, unfettered within any 'fixed' boundaries; (ii) the components of the whole, which are individuals in the last resort, are themselves conceived as 'fluid and capable of internal' interaction; (iii) these components, in order to fulfil the above pre-conditions, should themselves be conceived as mental or 'spiritual' entities, with 'body' serving for the mere 'local reference'; and (iv) there exists intimate relationship of mutual invasion between the Society and the environment, causing 'tension' and leading to the emergence and sharpening of the sense of 'self-awareness', which serves to determine an individual as well as a society.⁷ Now, a society so determined is one which is free of all territorial, linguistic, nationalistic, and 'blood' relationships: in short, a universal society or the 'Kingdom of God on earth'⁸ envisaged by all the great religions of the world. Only such a society can present a model of genuine 'Social Unity' or Organization. In the words of the Holy Quran, He created you from a single being...⁹ However, over- organization of society as envisaged by the Marxists, is neither in point nor desirable, for it involves its own nullity. Any society which admits of indefinite expansion and progress consists of constituents, which are both homogeneous and heterogeneous.

What is Culture?

In its broadest sense, culture may be described as all that achievement or progress of man which is not the result of 'maturation only. having a social import. According to Salvador Giner, culture entails two things: (i) it entails a learning process (IV, 3) which takes place through human interaction",¹⁰ and (ii) it "is shared by groups, collectivities and members of institutions". However, one of the most classical definitions of the word 'culture' comes from Sir Edward Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture*. For him it is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society",¹¹ This 'complex whole', however, is not something consciously acquired; it is rather the result of a long process of 'incubation', which is most of the part going on under the superficial conscious levels over centuries in the life of a

community or society. P.G. Grasso makes it more certain when he defines 'culture' as "a relatively integrated set of ideas, values, attitudes and norms of life which possess a certain amount of stability in a given society,..."¹² The process which leads to the emergence of culture is psychologically known as 'culturation'.

Diversity and Integration of Cultures

Since there are degrees of 'culturation', there are levels of culture, for like an individual the society also passes through a continuous process of 'culturation',¹³ and at any given period of time in the history of mankind different societies betray varying levels or stages of the attainment of its fruits. This variation in attainment begets a diversity of cultures. Ruth Benedict, a recent writer on Sociology, in *Patterns of Culture*, expounds the diversity of cultures through an Indian chief who, after comparing culture of a people to a cup, beautifully remarks, "They all dipped in the water, but their cups were different".¹⁴ However, the most rigid view on the diversity of cultures comes from Oswald Spengler in his classic *The Decline of the West*. His basic thesis is that each culture is a 'specific organism' having no inter-connection with cultures preceding or succeeding it.¹⁵ Regarding the seeming inter-connection Spengler argues, "Since every young Culture superficially shows form-elements of older Cultures, these elements are supposed to have had continuing effect (fortgewirkt), and when a set of such effects has been strung together, the historian regards it with satisfaction as a sound piece of work".¹⁶ He holds that this mode of treatment rests upon the idea, which inspired the great Gothics long ago, "of a significant singleness in the history of all mankind".¹⁷ Spengler concludes his discussion thus: "Searching through all Cultures, then, one will always find that the continuation of earlier creations into a later Culture is only apparent, and that in fact the younger being has set up a few (very few) relations to the older being, always without regard to the original meanings of that which it makes its own".¹⁸ As Allama Iqbal, in his lecture on "The Spirit of Muslim Culture", has pointed out, Spengler has advocated this rigid view simply to preclude any possibility of the modern culture being indebted to the Islamic culture.¹⁹ He quotes from the opposite views of another renowned European historian Dr. Robert Briffault who in his book *The Making of Humanity* acutely remarks, "Science is the most momentous contribution of Arab civilization to the modern world, Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life".²⁰ It was not only an

indirect impact, he admits; a direct influence came to Europe through its scholars like Roger Bacon (d. 1294) and Francis Bacon (d. 1626), who brought to the West not only findings of the Muslims, but also the experimental method itself.²¹ In fact, such a rigid view as advocated by Spengler finds little backing today. As Salvador Giner, a living sociologist, has remarked, “Rigidity is often a sign of vulnerability”.²² If there were no cultural interaction, the history of human culture would have been long ‘dead’.

The facts of ‘paranormal’ and ‘extra-sensory’ phenomena like telepathy, clairvoyance, etc. have convincingly proved that human mind or thought, which is the highest product of ‘culturation’, cannot remain confined within narrow human circuit; the same phenomena prove that the facts of culture cannot remain fettered within any territorial, national or temporal limits, it rather tends to overflow into the universal realm. In fact, human mind or thought can hardly be fettered within physical or national limits inasmuch as its waves tend to disperse and dissipate like waves in a vast ocean. It tends to become cosmopolitan and universal which is the very essence of mind. Consequently, culture which is the highest manifestation of human mind or thought can hardly be fettered within any physical or national (ideological) bounds. Cultures are not like ‘windowless monads of Leibniz, they do interact, and they interact in a variety of ways. In the case of culture I tentatively agree with the advocates of ‘perennial philosophy, who liken philosophy, which is the pith of culture, to a ‘road’, having no beginning and end, and passing through different parts of the world at different periods. Ruth Benedict believes in the evolution of cultures and argues, ‘It is one of the philosophical justifications for the study of primitive peoples that the facts of simpler cultures may make clear social facts that are otherwise baffling and not open to demonstration’.²³ She suggests that in the study of our own cultural mechanism, “We need all the enlightenment we can obtain from the study of thought and behaviour as it is organized in the less complicated groups”.²⁴

Culture is an organic whole’, consisting of ‘traits’. Each culture is marked by its specific ‘traits’ which, “having no intrinsic relation one with the other, and historically independent, merge and become inextricable, ...”²⁵ This phenomenon accounts for the ‘integration’ of culture which is made possible by the fact of ‘assimilation’. In the words of Ruth Benedict, each culture is not only characterised by certain behaviour patterns and purpose, it selects some ‘traits’ in the surrounding region which it can use.²⁶

The process of assimilation' may, perhaps, never be conscious, but it is 'integrative beyond all doubt. "The integration of culture is not in the least mystical", Ruth adds. "It is the same process by which a style in art comes into being and persists".²⁷ She explains cultures on the pattern of great art-styles'.²⁸ All cultures do not attain to the same degree or level of integration, but cultures which have achieved it 'are more or less successful attainments of integrated behaviour, ..."²⁹ Ruth has stressed upon the importance of, what she calls, "characteristic configurations"³⁰ of the 'traits' which go to form cultures of different regions and tribes. While discussing "integration and configuratin', she compares a culture to an individual; just as an individual interacts with his environment and 'assimilates' what is useful, and betrays" a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action";³¹ similarly, culture interacts with other, simultaneous and successive, cultures and shows a similar consistent pattern'. Thus, a culture grows like an individual and requires the same necessary conditions for life and action. The Book of God³² emphasizes both 'diversity' and 'integration as two necessary aspects of human life and culture, expounding them as the Will of God, a part of the Plan of God.

Society and Culture

Society and culture are reciprocal and inter-dependent. However, metaphysically speaking, we may approach from culture to the society. Each culture is marked by "its own world view, system of knowledge, mentality, moral standards, sense of the holy, and predominant forms of social relationships"³³ On the basis of these characteristics, Pitirim Sorokin makes a tentative distinction between two extreme types', i.e. 'Ideational culture' and 'Sensate Culture'; from a mixture of which evolves a third type, i.e., the 'Idealistic type'.³⁴ Of these, (i) the Ideational type, which perceives nature as non-material and basically spiritual, is found in most of the Eastern societies, and in all traditional societies; (ii) the Sensate type has its best manifestation in the present-day Western society which is through and through empirical and 'materialistic'; and (iii) the Idealistic type is a mixture of the two, and is marked by a balance between the spiritual and the temporal. Islamic society, at least, is one such society (the society envisaged by Islam and not the one found in Muslim countries), in so far as, in the words of Iqbal, the Quran "regards experience within and without as symbolic of a reality described by it as the First and the Last, the visible and the invisible' ".³⁵ Again, in the words of the Quran, "We will show them Our Signs in all the regions of the earth and in their

own souls, ...”³⁶ Both the Ideational and the Sensate types of culture are one-sided and abstract; it is the Idealistic type only which is concrete and comprehensive. Sensate culture, however, shares one very important characteristic with the Idealistic type, i.e., “Reality is not static being, but process, change, evolution, transformation”.³⁷ Such a view of culture ipso facto leads to an Organismic view of Society.

The above discussion shows that the paradoxical look of the subject ie, ‘SOCIAL UNITY and CULTURAL PLURALITY’, can be retrieved only if we take an ‘organic’ view of Society coupled with the Idealistic view of Culture (Idealistic in the sense discussed above). Unless the two are taken in a ‘fluid’ and dynamic sense, Social Unity and Cultural Plurality cannot go hand in hand.

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THOUGHTFUL INTELLIGENCE:
CULTIVATING MORAL DEVELOPMENT
IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Dr. Musarrat Jabeen

ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of thoughtful intelligence, which is described as the ability to reflect deeply on the consequences of one's thoughts, words, and actions on individuals, societies, and nations. Thoughtful intelligence is a learned skill that fosters moral development and equips individuals to navigate complex social and global issues. It emphasizes the significance of thoughtful perspectives, such as sustainability, nature, social, economic, political, juridical, and global thought. The article critiques modern challenges, including the impact of media and globalization on youth, and promotes an organic connection to nature, social relationships, and thoughtful consumption. Drawing from Islamic teachings, the Quran, and Iqbal's philosophy, the article encourages individuals to cultivate thoughtful intelligence by aligning their actions with universal moral values, thereby contributing to personal growth and societal harmony.

Thoughtful Intelligence and Moral Development in a Globalized World emphasizes the importance of developing a higher order of thinking that allows individuals to reflect deeply on the moral impact of their thoughts, words, and actions. In today's interconnected global society, thoughtful intelligence equips individuals to navigate complex social, political, and economic challenges by fostering an understanding of how their choices affect both immediate and distant communities. This concept encourages aligning personal and societal actions with universal moral values, promoting sustainability, justice, and empathy across borders. Drawing on philosophical, spiritual, and ethical foundations, such as the teachings of Iqbal and Islamic principles, thoughtful intelligence seeks to nurture a sense of responsibility that transcends cultural and geographic boundaries, enabling individuals to contribute to a more compassionate and morally grounded world. In an era where globalization often leads to moral ambiguity, thoughtful intelligence offers a framework for conscious, purposeful living that strengthens both individual character and global harmony.

Thoughtful intelligence is the higher order of thinking to train the mind-set to produce intention and actions. Thoughtful intelligence can be struggled for and acquired. It comprises of capacity to understand and realize the impact of one's thoughts, words and actions on the survival, dignity¹ and development of individuals, groups and nations. The impact can be realized in 'Time' (for how many days, weeks, months or years the impact will continue) and 'Space' (for how far geographical land with or without human beings will be effected). It establishes thoughtful thoughts. Per the inner paradigm²: Thoughtful intelligence establishes and defends moral values in the individual against internal and external threats. This defense includes detection, prevention and response to threats through the use of moral beliefs, values, rules and practices. Thoughtful intelligence visions the eyes to observe and gives the courage³ to understand befittingly suited to difficult times; and reveals compassion⁴ for moral development.

Khizra's mentor Qareeb shows his concern about the moral development in the premises of globalization⁵ through high-tech media⁶. The kind and quality of thoughts being boosted over the young mind-sets lead to unlimited mental and material pursuits.

The scenario challenges the capacity of the youth to process the information available to respond because they are connected with the two societies; a society where they exist actually and the other where they are connected virtually. A *thoughtful individual knows the diverse modes of discourse* in the sciences, social sciences and humanities. He knows the indifferent discourses the people define.... debate and solve the problems. Thoughts structure the vision; where there are no thoughts people perish. Furthermore the mode and style of thought matters.

Iqbal says:

آزادی افکار سے ہے اُن کی تباہی
رکتے نہیں جو فکر و تدبّر کا سلیقہ

Free thinking can bring about the ruin of those whose thoughts are low and mean:

They don't possess the mode and style of thought that may be chaste and clean.

ہو فکر اگر خام تو آزادی افکار
انسان کو حیوان بنانے کا طریقہ!

If thoughts are raw and immature no good accrues to man in least: The utmost that such thoughts can do is change of man to state of beast⁷.

Here I present the thoughtful thoughts in seven perspectives.

- I. Sustainability thought
- II. Nature's thought
- III. Social thought
- IV. Economic thought
- V. Political thought
- VI. Juridical thought
- VII. Global thought

To struggle thoughtful intelligence thoughtful thoughts should park in the mind. Now from inner travel I interlock you to outer travel through the thoughts which you may bereft with the external travel to connect to ultimate being of the unlimited universe composed of past-present and future. Iqbal's following couplet gives us strength to concrete thoughtful thoughts:

Iqbal says:

جرات ہے تو افکار کی دنیا سے گزر جا
ہیں بحر خودی میں ابھی پوشیدہ جزیرے

Transcend the intellect if you have courage to do so: There are islands hidden in the ocean of the self as yet.

کھلتے نہیں اس قلزم خاموش کے اسرار
جب تک تو اسے ضربِ کلیسی سے نہ چیرے

The secrets of this silent sea, however, do not yield until you cut with blow of the Moses' rod⁸.

I. Sustainability thought

How can/should we ensure our sustainability?

A person exists to the extent of his deeds. Each individual believes that a day of expiry will come. The real belongings are the deeds. The deeds survive as per quantity of practices by the heirs⁹. Thoughtful intelligence enhances the capacity to understand and realize the impact of one's thoughts, words and actions on the survival, dignity and development of others. Deeds make the man immortal.

Iqbal says:

ہو اگر خود نگر و خود گر و خود گیر خودی
یہ بھی ممکن ہے کہ تو موت سے بھی مر نہ سکے

If the ego is self-preserving, self-creating and self-sustaining, Then it is possible that even death may not make you die¹⁰.

Sustainability thought depends on: Faith in the unseen, Faith in the finality of Prophet-hood, and Faith in the hereafter.

Faith¹¹ in the unseen and the life hereafter: "This is the scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God, who believe in the unseen, keep up the prayers and give what we have provided for them; those who believe in the revelation sent down to you (Muhammad) and what was sent before you, those who have firm faith in the hereafter. Such people are following their Lord's guidance and it is they who will prosper¹²."

Iqbal says:

خودی کا سر نہاں لا الہ الا اللہ
خودی ہے تیغ، فساں لا الہ الا اللہ

The secret of the Self is hid, In words "No God but Allah alone".

The Self is just a dull-edged sword, “No God but He”, the grinding stone¹³.

The Hereafter is for one who does not seek superiority. It is self-evident that an ignorant person will not benefit from the next world’s positions because: **”Are those who know equal to those who do not know?”**¹⁴ The scholars are the ones who always remember Allah. This world will remain more important than the hereafter to an ignorant person.

Iqbal says:

یقین پیدا کر اے نادان یقین سے ہاتھ آتی ہے
وہ درویشی، کہ جس کے سامنے جھکتی ہے نفوری

O fellow stupid, get firm belief, For faith upon you can bestow
Dervishhood of such lofty brand, For which the mighty monarchs
bow¹⁵.

Moral: Good deeds ensure the sustainability of each individual.

Exercise

Always keep on observing that what impact your each thought, word and action will create in your life and after your death.

II. Nature’s thought

How can/should we connect to nature/natural resources?

Nature impacts the human thoughts. Nature is the most beautiful and precise. The sunrise constantly reminds us of our pact with the nature. In the morning the individual should glow and be generous like the sun. In the evening the individual should moderate and be kind like the moon.

Plato’s theory of knowledge – his epistemology – can best be understood through thinking about beauty. We are born with all knowledge, he says, but when our soul became trapped in our body at birth, we forgot this knowledge. Learning, then, is similar to remembering. And here on earth, beauty is the easiest way for us to first do that. We can all recognize individual beautiful things... flowers, sunsets, music, people. Recognizing these things is the first rung on the ladder to the *knowledge of Beauty*, which for Plato is the Ideal form of Beauty. **Recognizing these individual beautiful things is the world we all live in most of the time.**

The question then is; whether there is something in common that makes all of these things beautiful? **The next step is recognizing what all beautiful things share in common.** What they have in common is the ‘Ideal Form of Beauty’. The top rung of the ladder, ‘true wisdom’ is to know Beauty.

Buckle had tried to write the history of human civilization in the light of scientific knowledge to fashion a few ‘laws’ based on inclusive reasoning, for example the law of seasons that showed that the physical environment greatly affected human culture¹⁶. The earliest recording of the 7th Generation¹⁷ principle dates back to the ‘Great Law of Peace of the Iroquois Confederacy’ created in the 12th Century. When US Founding Fathers looked for the examples of effective government and human liberty upon which to model a Constitution to unite the thirteen colonies, they found it in the government of the Iroquois Nation, which stood for hundreds of years. The “7th generation”¹⁸ principle taught by Native Americans says, “Every decision, be it personal, governmental or corporate, we must consider how it will affect our descendents seven generations into the future. So that the pristine sky, field and mountains in the photo still be there for them to enjoy”. Long before environmentalists got thinking about “carbon footprints” and “sustainability,” indigenous peoples lived in balance with the world around them. Ironically, in drafting US constitution, the founders left out one of the essential principles of the Great Law of Peace: the 7th Generation principle.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (رسول الله خاتم النبيين صلى الله عليه وعلى آله واصحابه وسلم) says:

“إن الله جميل يحب الجمال”

Allah is beautiful He loves beauty.

Quran says:

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ ۗ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَآيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۝

“And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: Behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect¹⁹.”

May you have always have walls for the wind, a roof for the rain, tea beside the fire, laughter to cheer you. Those you love near you, and for every storm, fascinating heavenly rainbow.²⁰

Moral: Nature/Beauty is the easiest place to start the road towards ‘Knowledge’ of thoughtful intelligence.

Exercise

What is the most beautiful thing you’ve ever seen? Share a picture along with your explanation in the comments with your friends and family. Get inspiration from nature: Nothing in nature lives for itself. Rivers don’t drink their water. Trees don’t eat their own fruit. The sun doesn’t shine for itself. A flower’s fragrance is not for itself.

Living for each other is the rule of nature. Watch scenic beauty before going to bed; you would have beautiful dreams.

III. Social thought

How can/should we relate to human resources?

Social relationships refer to the connections that exist between people who have recurring interactions that are perceived by the participants to have personal meaning. This includes relationships between family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and other associates. A person is known to the extent of his style of behavior with parents, sisters/brothers, neighbors, and opposite sex in paradigms of appreciation and condemnation leading to purity.

Basic questions to construct relational senses

- What task do you give to your eyes to see?
- What task do you give to your ears to listen?
- What task do you give to your hands to do?

Quran says, “How prosperous are the believers. Those who pray humbly, who shun idle talk, who pay the prescribed alms, who guard their chastity except with their spouses. Who are faithful to their trusts and pledges and who keep up their prayers will rightly be given paradise as their own. There to remain²¹.”

The Last Prophet of Allah (صلى الله عليه وعلى آله واصحابه وسلم) says:

باب الْمُسْلِمِ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ

“A Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands²².”

Exercise

Refrain idle talk. Guard chastity. Refrain from back biting. Refrain spying: Quran says, Believers avoid too many assumptions –some assumptions are sinful and do not spy on one another or speak ill of people behind their backs.

Family: The first ever relationship was of wife and husband. The desire to touch the opposite sex is human. One should not refrain from marriage because this has been ordered against. The Prophet of Islam says, “Marriage is a good custom (*sunnah*) and something that I have done. One who does not act according to my customs is not from me²³.” Refraining from marriage all together is a form of negligence. It is necessary for one’s soul to make a family. One finds perfection after dealing with the difficulties of marriage and childbearing. Religious decrees are related to man’s nature and instincts. One who acts in excess or refrains from satisfying his desires is not only acting against the divine orders but he also suffers

from spiritual and physical diseases. He loses the blessings of having a household which provides him with a satisfaction not only on physical level but also on the spiritual level.

Unmarried couples: The people known as unmarried couples deviate from dignity and responsibility called upon by the human civilizations for male female relationship. They enjoy the relationship without responsibility and get frustrations for rest of the life.

Romantic and Real Love: Commenting on this phenomenon, Professor Saul Gordon, said, "When you are in love; to you the whole world revolves around this person whom you love. Marriage then comes to prove the opposite and destroy all your perceptions. This is because you discover that there are other worlds that you have to be aware of. It is the world of humans, *the world of concepts, values and habits* to which you have paid no attention before." "Romantic love is very strong and emotional, but does not last, while real love²⁴ is linked to real life and can withstand trials." Real love means sharing the concerns of daily life and cooperation for it to continue. Within the framework of this cooperation, one can achieve his human need. "Real love" has been expressed in the Quran as affection. Allah the Exalted says, "And of His Signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy"²⁵." The relationship between spouses is based on affection and mercy, not on ardent love, desire and passion. It is a relationship which is based on quiet love (affection) and mutual mercy, not illusions of love which fail to withstand reality or romantic fantasies which fail to create a successful marriage. The Messenger of Allah, (PBUH), gave us the best example of loving his wives. It was narrated in the pure *Sunnah* (tradition) that the Prophet, (PBUH), was careful to put his mouth on the same place of the bowl from which his wife 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, drank. During his final illness, he used her *Sivaak* (tooth stick) and died while he was reclined against her chest, between her neck and bosom. What kind of love is nobler and more sublime than this²⁶."

Friendship: The thought and art can't survive if it is not appreciated by the on hand system. For Aristotle, friendship is one of the most important virtues in achieving the goal of eudaimonia (happiness). ... Aristotle calls it a "... complete sort of friendship between people who are good and alike in virtue"²⁷ "Quran says, "Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord in morning and evening, seeking his approval, and do not let your eyes turn away from them out of desire for the attractions of this worldly life"²⁸."

Societal Dignity: Indicators of societal dignity can be noticed when: People like to sit with you. People like to consult you. People share with you.

Tools to acquire societal dignity: I present the following tools to acquire social dignity that is “The Wealth of Humanity”.

- a) Dignifying others b) Application c) Confession

Dignifying others: All human beings have an inherent dignity. Your conscious choice to be a loving and kind person is powerful way to honor that dignity. Being loving is an ideal to which we should aspire.

Iqbal says:

آدمیت احترام آدمی

باخبر شو از مقام آدمی

Humanity means respect of the mankind-learn to appreciate the true worth of man.

“Look at the world through other person’s eye. In the 1989 film ‘Dead Poet Society’ the new teacher Jhon Keeting (played by Robin William’s) asked each student stand up on his desk and look at the world from a new perspective.

Ask for help. During my workshops, I ask for volunteers to present ethical problems they are facing, because the collective wisdom in the room can provide solutions they wouldn’t have thought of on their own. It also helps when someone says, “this happened to me, and here it is how I handled it.” It is good to know you are not alone.

Being kinder to your-self makes it easier to be kinder to others. The converse is also true, as Mark Twain noted: “the best way to cheer your-self up is to try to cheer somebody else up.

You are better off not making enemies and wasting your energy. I have found that having hateful feelings toward people who have wronged me does nothing to them but a lot of damage to me. Better to set those feelings aside and focus on better, more important things”²⁹

Appreciation: Recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something (see Table 4. 1 Ideas to Establish Appreciation).

Table 4.1 Ideas to Establish Appreciation

1. Thanks that you exist in a social system where good deeds are encouraged.
2. Thanks the blessings you have when you find the others deprived.
3. Take into account the number of blessings that other people around you have. How can you contribute into that?
4. Take into account that how much the misery the others have around you. How can you eradicate them?
5. To love something and then to live up with the loss of the same thing is also a kind of appreciation.
6. Praise the other person in front of others and condemn/suggest in lone.
7. When the other sneezes you say Alhamdulillah, that means you are giving thanks to Allah.

Source: Self extract

Exercise

Appreciate God for everything you have. Write down 10 things you have in your life that give you happiness. Focus on the good/positive things!

Confession: Confession is a statement claiming that one is guilty of wrong doing. Quran says, “God loves those who repent and turn to Him³⁰.” You are right the moment you feel you were wrong (see Table 4. 2 *Ideas to Establish Confession*).

Table 2 Ideas to Establish Confession

1. Feel sorry if somebody is hurt by your thought.
2. Feel sorry if somebody is hurt by your words.
3. Feel sorry if somebody’s belonging is hurt by you.
4. Feel sorry for the bad deeds around you.
5. Feel sorry for others deprivation. How can you eradicate that?
6. Feel sorry that the prayer you have offered is not at par and keep on trying to improve.
7. Lest somebody falls try to support the fallen person.

Source: Self extract

Moral: Dignify humanity.

Exercise

Repent everything you have done wrong to yourself, and to your relations in family, friends, neighbors or coworkers and in the bad interest of humanity; knowingly or unknowingly. Think to refer your personal and collective goals to the system of humanity. Think to be in the well wishes of others; as the well wishes of the others excel you.

IV. Economic thought

How can/should we participate in the economic activity?

Economics is about managing unlimited desires and limited means. Khizra's mentor *Qareeb* is concerned that how the homes are turning into houses and houses into warehouses. That indicates the moral bankruptcy of the nations and humanity. A person is also known to the extent of his style of economic behavior in spending on humanity and utilizing private ownership for public good?

Quran says, "This is a scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God, who believe in the unseen, keep to the prayer, and give out of what we have provided for them those who believe in the revelation sent down to you (Muhammad), and in what was sent before you, those who have firm faith in the hereafter. Such people are following their Lord's guidance and it is they who will prosper³¹," "People, eat what is good and lawful from the earth, and do not follow Satan's footsteps, for he is your sworn enemy³²."

Guidelines for economic thought and practice

- Quran says, "In consumption, there is a responsibility principle that everything consumed will impact human physique and behavior³³."
- Conduct permissible enterprise (permissible conduct) afar from *riba*/usury³⁴.
- The implementation of *zakat* that is compulsory and *sadaqah*, *wakaf*, *hadiah*/gift donated voluntarily have an effect towards the behavior of Muslim consumer.
- Abstain from wasteful and luxurious living; that the economic activity should be to fulfilling the needs and not satisfying the greed.

Thoughtful consumption is about planning to consume the least to fulfill the material needs of life dependent on natural resources.

Informal tools of thoughtful consumption

- *Generosity*: "To limit the needs is wealth." Imam Zain ul Abideen

- *Patience* leads to demand management: Restraining water usage is application of patience.

Formal tools of thoughtful consumption

Zakat is payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes, one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Moral: Minimize the needs to use of resources/natural resources.

Exercise

- *Spend your money on experiences.* A study found that 75% of people felt happier when they invested their money in travel, learning courses and classes; only 25% said they felt happier while buying things.
- *Conserve energy and water.* Scaling the energy conservation literacy ask the following qualitative questions to yourself and others:

Would you like to reduce energy consumption for *helping the society* as the energy you save can be used by others?

Would you like to reduce energy consumption for *helping the future generations* as the energy you conserve can be used by next generations?

How would you like to *respond to energy crises of Pakistan* in your personal capacity?

V. Political thought

How can/should we participate in the political activity?

Political thought is about cause and effect of *decisions made by the politicians*. The individual is accountable as voter while polling to elect political representatives. The political representatives decide the allocation of natural and human resources while implying the survival and the dignity of the individual and the nation. A person is also known to the extent of his style of political behavior based on the prevalent political system to appreciate the good governance and condemn the bad governance and corruption.

Distortions in the political system generate corruption that is the high factor in de-characterizing a nation. The annual Corruption Perceptions Index, released by *Transparency International (TI)*, has ranked Pakistan number 120 of 180 countries that were included in the index for the year 2019³⁵. "When exposing a crime is treated as committing a crime, you are ruled by criminals³⁶."

Chinese Wisdom and political thought; Back in the third century A. D the Chinese king sent his son Prince Tai to a temple to get education from the great master Pan Ku. Prince Tai was to succeed his father

as king. Pan Ku was to teach the boy the basics of being a good ruler. When the prince arrived at the temple, the master sent him alone to the Ming Li Forest with the advice to meditate and discover the various sounds in the forest. After a year, the prince was to return to the temple to submit his findings of the sounds before the great master.

When prince Tai returned, Pan Ku the great master at the temple asked the boy to describe all that he had seen and heard during stay in the forest.

Respected master, “said the prince, “I could hear the cuckoos sing, the leaves rustle, the humming birds hum that crickets chirp, the grass blow, the bees buzz, and the winds whisper.” When the prince had narrated all that he had experienced, the master ordered him to go back to the forest again. He told him to stay there for another year to listen to what more he could hear. The prince was puzzled by the master’s new order”. Had he not already discerned every sound and explained everything to the master.” thought the prince.

He went back to the forest again for one year more with the advice to meditate and discern various sounds in the forest.

For many days and nights, the young prince sat alone in the forest listening to the sounds more attentively. But he heard no sounds other than the ones he had already heard. Then, one morning, as the prince sat silently beneath the trees, he started to discern faint sounds unlike those he had ever heard before. The more closely he listened, the more audible and clearer the sounds became. The feeling of enlightenment enveloped the boy.

“These must be the sounds the master wished me to discern.”

He reflected. When Prince Tai returned to the temple, the master asked him what more he heard. “Respected master,” responded the prince reverently, “when I listened most closely, I could hear the unheard sound of flowers’ opening, the sound of the sun’s warming the earth and the sound of the grass with the morning dew.”

The master nodded approvingly:

To hear the unheard, “remarked Pan Ku, “is a necessary discipline to be a good ruler. For, when a ruler has learned to listen closely to the people’s heart, hearing their feelings un-communicated, pains unexpressed and complaints not spoken of, only then can he hope to inspire confidence in his people. He can understand when something is wrong, and meet the true needs of the citizens.³⁷

The basic of any relation is listening as in listening you get the perspective of the subject; While observation is your own perspective.

Guidelines for electing political representative

‘Viewing those mud houses and imagining the tiresome faces of those children returning to home after the day-long labor, I miss the presence of thoughtful policies. My objective is to learn the best policy practices around the globe and take them to my land to rescue those innocent lives buried deep under economic pressure³⁸.’ Deciding which candidate to vote into office is simply a matter of party affiliation for many people. Others, however, cast their votes based on specific characteristics they look for in their candidate of choice. So what are the qualities or characteristics good political leaders should possess? Here are the top 5 characteristics of some of the world’s most successful political leaders³⁹.

- **Honesty:** *Honesty develops character and builds credibility and trust, which is the foundation to evoke confidence and respect from those around you, especially in the case of political leaders, teammates and constituents.*
- **Compassion:** *Compassion is the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something to alleviate that suffering. True compassion is a characteristic that converts knowledge to wisdom.*
- **Integrity:** *The word integrity is defined as ‘the adherence to moral and ethical principles and the soundness of moral character.’ A leader must have the trust of followers. This requires the highest standard of integrity.*
- **Confidence:** *Leaders who possess this quality inspire others, drawing on a level of trust which sparks the motivation to get others on board and get the job done.*
- **Flexibility:** Flexibility for a political leader is about understanding the give-and-take aspects of politics, and the ability to find the common ground. This characteristic allows political leaders to recognize setbacks and criticism.

Moral: Maximize accountability in governance.

Exercise

- *Learn political thought and practices*
- *Consciously vote on elections day*
- *Scaling the political literacy: Ask the following qualitative questions to yourself and others*

- Did you acquire your CNIC in order to *cast a vote*?
- Are you *registered* in the voters' list?
- Do you know your *constituency* to vote in elections?
- Do you take interest in *discussions or debates* about political issues?

VI. Juridical thought

How can/should we appreciate justice?

Justice is about peace, and genuine respect for people. Procedural justice concerns the fairness and the transparency of the processes by which decisions are made, and may be contrasted with distributive justice (fairness in the distribution of rights or resources), and retributive justice (fairness in the punishment of wrongs). *Distributive justice* concerns the nature of a socially just allocation of goods. A society in which inequalities in outcome do not arise would be considered a society guided by the principles of a *distributive justice*. A person is known to the extent of his style of behavior to uphold *balance/justice* in social, economic, and political thoughts & practices.

Guidelines for justice

Quran says, "It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Quran. He created man and taught him to communicate. The sun and moon follow their calculated courses; the plants and trees submit to his designs. He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance (Justice). So you may not exceed in the balance, weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance⁴⁰." Quran says, "Uphold justice and bear witness to God, even it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives⁴¹."

Scaling justice: If one over-retaliates, the other person has the right to counter-retaliate. It is against religious doctrine to over-retaliate or to cross the line in getting revenge. If one slanders another he must receive the religious punishment (*hadd*) and if one wrongfully hits another he must pay blood-money (*dīyah*). For example, suppose someone slapped you and your skin became red, but when you retaliated you slapped him and his skin became black. Here, you must pay the amount of gold specified in the books of jurisprudence under the section of blood-money.

Moral: Submit witness for truth in all circumstances.

VII. Global thought

How can/should we participate in the globalization?

Globalization "is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world ...brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down

of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and people across borders⁴².” A person is known to the extent of his style of behavior to feel for humanity while thinking, wording and acting any standard of deeds.

The intensive and extensive globalization has signed thoughtless language, and thoughtless relations, through social media among the peoples. It has infected distortions in the family institution, and imposed the mental garbage across the societies. The globalized societies face threats to their eating and dressing values. The sleeping habits are perturbed as well. The nocturnal⁴³ has been increased in Pakistan particularly. The day sleeping has emerged a socio-economic problem because nocturnal persons are found burdening the household economy by over using food and energy resources. Particularly youth is found addicted to night wakeups without positive thoughts and practices.

Call of the day is harmony with globalization and nature. The following piece of knowledge seems ‘INSPIRING. “In *Bhutan* we wear Gho. In Bhutan everyone wears Gho and like our women we men wear bright colors but unlike our women, our men get to show off their legs. Like our dress, my country’s promise to remain carbon neutral is also unique. Bhutan is a small country in the Himalayas which is assumed to be a big monastery populated with happy monks. The total population is 700, 000 sand-witched between the two most populated countries the China and the India. We are a small underdeveloped country doing our best to survive; in fact we are thriving. The reason we have been thriving is that we have been blessed with extra ordinary kings. Our enlightened monarchs have worked tirelessly to develop our country by balancing economic growth carefully with social development, ensuring environmental sustainability and maintaining cultural preservation, all within the *framework of good governance*. We call this holistic approach to development, ‘Gross National Happiness’ (GNH). In 1970s, our fourth king famously pronounced that Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product. Ever since, all development in Bhutan is driven by GNH, a pioneering vision that aims to improve the happiness and well being of our people. But that’s easier said than done, especially when you are one of the smallest economies in the world. Our entire GDP is less than two billion dollars. Our economy is small but education is completely free, all citizens are guaranteed free school education and those who work hard are given free college education. Health care is also completely free; medical consultation, medical treatment and medicines are provided by the state. We manage this because, we use

our limited resources very carefully and because we stay faithful to the core mission of GNH i.e. *development with values*. Our economy is small and we must strengthen it, economic growth is important, but that economic growth must not come from undermining our unique culture or our *pristine environment*. Today our culture is flourishing, we continue to celebrate our art and architecture, food and festivals, monks and monasteries and yes we celebrate our national dress, too. This is why I can wear my Gho with pride.

Our culture is flourishing and so is our environment. 72% of my country is under forest cover. Our constitution demands that a minimum of 60% of Bhutan's total cover shall remain under forest cover for all time. Incidentally, our king used this constitution to flourish democracy he included provisions in the constitution to empower people to impeach their kings and included provisions that require all our kings to retire at the age of 65.

In a world that is threatened by climate change we are a carbon neutral country. Out of 200+ countries in the world today, we are the only carbon neutral country. Our entire country generates 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide. Our forests sequester more than three times of that amount, so we are in a net carbon sink for more than four million tons of carbon dioxide each year. We export the renewable electricity that we generate from our fast flowing rivers. Today the clean energy that we export offsets about six million tons of carbon dioxide into the neighborhood. By 2020, we would be exporting enough electricity to offset 17 million tons of carbon dioxide. The green energy that we export would offset something like 50 million tons of carbon dioxide a year. That is more carbon dioxide than what the entire city of New York produces in one year. So inside our country we are in net carbon sink and outside we are offsetting carbon.

The world is getting warmer and climate change is a reality. My country is also being affected by climate change. Our glaciers are melting, causing flash floods and landslides, which in turn are causing disasters and widespread destruction in our country. We have 2,700 of glacial lakes which are melting day by day.

My country and my people have done nothing to contribute to global warming, but we are already bearing the brunt of its consequences and for a small country which is landlocked and mountainous, it is very difficult. *But we are not going to sit on our hands doing nothing. We will fight the climate change.* That's why we have promised to remain carbon neutral. We first made this promise in 2009 during COP15 in Copenhagen but no one noticed but in COP

21 we were heard and acknowledged by the world because the world wanted to unite and cooperate towards a solution.

We will remain faithful to our promise, Bhutan will remain carbon neutral. Here are some of the ways we are making it possible. We are providing free electricity to our farmers. The idea is that, with free electricity farmers won't use firewood to cook their food. We are investing in sustainable transport and subsidizing the purchase of electric vehicles. Similarly, we are subsidizing the costs of 'Light emitting diode' (LED) lights and our entire government is trying to go paperless. We are cleaning up our entire country through clean Bhutan, a national program. We are planting trees throughout our country, through green Bhutan, another national program. But our protected areas are at the core of our carbon neutral strategy. Our protected areas are our carbon sink, they are our lungs. Today more than half of our land is protected as national parks, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. But the beauty is that we have connected them all with one another through a network of biological corridors. Now this means that our animals are free to roam throughout our country.

A tiger was spotted at 250 meters above sea level in the hot, subtropical jungle. Two years later, that same tiger was spotted near 4,000 meters in our cold alpine mountain. We should keep our parks awesome. So every year we keep aside resources to prevent poaching, hunting, mining and pollution in our parks and resources to help communities who live in those parks, manage their forests, adapt to climate change and lead better lives while continuing to live in harmony with the nature⁴⁴."

Guidelines for the management of global thought

In foreign policy perspective 'International game entails something throwing sharpest knives at you. It depends on your skills whether you catch those by blade or handle.

For an inclusive unity, "Beyond the mountains there are people too⁴⁵."

Iqbal says:

مشرق سے ہو بیزار، نہ مغرب سے حذر کر
فطرت کا اشارہ ہے کہ ہر شب کو سحر کر

Don't shun the East, nor look on West with scorn,
Since Nature yearns for change of night to morn.

Quran says, "Prophet tell believing men to lower their glances, guard their private parts: that is purer for them. God is aware of everything what they do⁴⁶."

Quran says, “Children of Adam, dress well, whenever you are at worship, and eat and drink, but do not be extravagant: Allah does not like extravagant people.”⁴⁷

Quran says, “Gives you sleep for rest, the night as cover, and the day for livelihood.”⁴⁸

Exercise

- *Organize compatibility with the nature* to set your time table; with due regard to sunset and sunrise. Offer five times prayers a day.
- *Keep your gaze down*; hold on to piety and go for marriage to take the responsibility of male-female relationship.
- *Go for organic food* and indigenous cuisine
- *Choose some middle* stuff for consumption do not spend only for the name of the brand.
- *Scaling global perspectives in daily life*: Ask the following qualitative questions to yourself and others

How much you are inclined to ‘Day sleeping’, you start day at 9, 10 or 11 AM?

If you start at 9, you have full day. If you start at 10, you have 2/3 day. If you start at 11 you have 1/3 day. If you start after 11, then you lose the whole day.

How much you are inclined to the concept of boy friend and girl friend?

How many times in a week you eat fast food; Mcdonald or KFC?

How much you take pride in Branded garments and other products?

Moral: Think globally and act locally.

Please rise to say:

May we have the heavenly aroma of thoughts and deeds, for weaving the infrastructure of much needed contentment in a growing scary context.

In conclusion, thoughtful intelligence serves as a vital framework for navigating the complexities of our globalized world. It empowers individuals to deeply reflect on the consequences of their actions, fostering moral development that transcends cultural, social, and geographical boundaries. By aligning personal and societal conduct with universal values—such as sustainability, justice, and empathy—thoughtful intelligence nurtures a holistic approach to problem-solving and harmonious living. Drawing inspiration from both spiritual and philosophical traditions, particularly the teachings of Iqbal and Islamic principles, it encourages individuals to engage with the world responsibly and compassionately. In a time marked by

rapid change and moral ambiguity, the cultivation of thoughtful intelligence offers a means to foster both personal growth and collective well-being, ultimately contributing to a more just and ethically grounded global society.

Notes and Reference

- ¹ Al-Quran, Bani Israel, Ayat: 70 ‘And We have certainly honored the children of Adam.’
- ² The inner paradigm is a framework containing all the accepted views of an individual about human life (past, present, and future); inclusive social, economic, political, and security dimensions.
- ³ Courage is the ability to do something that frightens one: bravery.
- ⁴ Compassion is the ability to give and to forgive.
- ⁵ Globalization processed by fast communication has signed thoughtless language, and thoughtless relations, through social media among the peoples. It has infected distortions in the family institution, and mental garbage across the societies.
- ⁶ “When asked what one did over the weekend, we often hear the boast, ‘Oh, I binge-watched Game of Thrones’ or one of the other numerous series of cluttering the airwaves. Coupled with other online distractions like play stations and social media, the opportunity for healthy mental pursuits is almost non-existent. Since we do not study history and literature or study science and technology, our mental faculties are not being developed to their potential. As a result, we can’t debate with any sense of authority, nor can we see beyond the surface of an issue. Our reactions are usually knee- jerk as we lack any background knowledge of national or world affairs. Make sure you are staying away from ‘junk food for the mind’ and are following a healthy reading ‘exercise’ plan with lots of mind games thrown in. Junk food leads to diabetes and obesity, junk food for the mindset can be worse.” Daily DAWN, accessed Sep 2018, <https://epaper.dawn.com>
- ⁷ Muhammad. Iqbal, accessed Sep 2, 2017, <https://www.iap.gov.pk/>
- ⁸ Muhammad. Iqbal, accessed Sep 2, 2017, <https://www.iap.gov.pk/>
- ⁹ The heirs are not the legal ones; but everybody doing the same practices as of the expired.
- ¹⁰ Muhammad. Iqbal, accessed Sep 2, 2017, <https://www.iap.gov.pk/>
- ¹¹ Faith means trust, confidence, assurance and belief.
- ¹² Al-Quran Al-Baqra, Ayat: 2-5
- ¹³ Muhammad. Iqbal, accessed Sep 2, 2017, <https://www.iap.gov.pk/>
- ¹⁴ Al-Quran Al-Zumar, Ayat: 9
- ¹⁵ Muhammad. Iqbal, accessed Sep 2, 2017, <https://www.iap.gov.pk/>
- ¹⁶ Henry. Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ¹⁷ The Seventh Generation Principle, <https://www.mollylarkin.com/what-is-the-7th-generation-principle-and-why-do-you-need-to-know-about-it-3/>
- ¹⁸ Western society generally considers a generation to be 25 years; the Lakota Nation considers one generation to be 100 years
- ¹⁹ Al-Quran, Al-Jathiyah, Ayat:13
- ²⁰ “Irish blessing” accessed Sep 13, 2018 <https://www.pinterest.com>

- ²¹ Al Quran, Sura Al Mminune, Ayat :1-11
- ²² “Religion and Spirituality”, accessed June 3, 2018, <https://www.sunnah.com>
- ²³ Ibid
- ²⁴ The concept of true love in Islam, accessed on Dec 18, 2017, <https://www.islamweb.net>
- ²⁵ Al-Quran, Al-Rum, Ayat: 30-21
- ²⁶ “The concept of true love, ” accessed on Oct 31, 2017, <https://www.islamweb.net/en/article/156581/the-concept-of-true-love-in-islam>.
- ²⁷ “Friendship For Aristotle Friendship Is...” accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.coursehero.com>.
- ²⁸ Al-Quran, Al-Kahf, Ayat:28
- ²⁹ Wienstein, Bruce. *Ethical Intelligence: Five Principles for Untangling Your Toughest Problems at Work and Beyond*. (California: New World Library, 2013).
- ³⁰ Al-Quran, Al-Baqara, Ayat: 222
- ³¹ Al-Quran, Al-Baqara, Ayat: 1-5
- ³² Al-Quran, Al-Baqara, Ayat:168
- ³³ Al-Quran, Al-Mulk, Ayat: 15)
- ³⁴ “Interpretation of Verses on Consumption, ” accessed on Dec 18, 2017, <http://journal.uui.ac.id/index.php/Millah/article/viewFile/430/344>
- ³⁵ DAWN, “Little Change in Pakistan’s Ranking in Corruption Index” accessed February 23, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1391129>
- ³⁶ Gillespie, Nick. “When Exposing a Crime is Treated as Committing a Crime, You Are Ruled By Criminals.”, accessed on 31 March 2018, <http://www.reason.com>
- ³⁷ Chinese wisdom, *English 9*, (Lahore: Punjab Text Book Board: 2011).
- ³⁸ Maria Awwal, (2017) BS student Government and Public Policy, National Defence University, Islamabad
- ³⁹ “Characteristics of good political leaders” accessed on Nov 12, 2017, <http://www.beliefnet.com>
- ⁴⁰ Al-Quran, Al-Rahman, Ayat: 1-9
- ⁴¹ Al-Quran, Al-Sura Nisa, Ayat: 134
- ⁴² Stiglitz, Joseph E. *Globalization and its Discontents*, (New York: W.W. Norton: 2002).
- ⁴³ Nocturnal: done, occurring, or active at night.
- ⁴⁴ Tshering Tobgay, 2016, Prime Minister of Bhutan accessed on February 26, 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/tshering_tobgay_this_country_isn_t_just_carbon_neutral_it_s_carbon_negative
- ⁴⁵ “Norwegian proverb” accessed June 2, 2018, <https://www.google.com.pk>
- ⁴⁶ Al-Quran, Al-Noor, Ayat: 30
- ⁴⁷ Al-Quran, Al-A raf, Ayat: 31
- ⁴⁸ Al-Quran, Al-Naba, Ayat: 9-11

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT AND THE INTERPLAY
OF THOUGHT AND INTUITION IN
ALLAMA IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

Abstract

This article explores Allama Iqbal's profound reflections on the relationship between human thought, religious experience, and the foundations of faith-based life. Iqbal challenges the clear distinctions often made between thought and intuition, arguing that both stem from a common origin and are interlinked in their pursuit of understanding reality. He emphasizes that human thought, while bound by temporal limitations, is inherently dynamic and capable of transcending its perceived finitude to grasp infinite truths. Drawing on concepts such as "Unity of Being" from Sufi philosophy, Iqbal illustrates how thought can evolve beyond logic and merge with spiritual insight. He critiques the limitations imposed by philosophers like Kant and Ghazali, asserting that thought's essence is infinite and must be understood as such to pursue higher knowledge. Iqbal also elaborates on the heart as a means of acquiring divine knowledge, following Ghazali's ideas but with a deeper emphasis on spiritual experience validated through rational and result-based criteria. The heart's illumination, as described by Iqbal, provides access to truths beyond sensory perception and serves as a reliable source of spiritual knowledge. Furthermore, Iqbal discusses the role of faith as a stabilizing force in a challenging world, highlighting how spiritual conviction empowers human beings to overcome obstacles and fulfill their divine purpose. The article delves into Iqbal's assertion that religious experience should be comprehensible and subject to scrutiny, ensuring that religious experience does not become monopolized by a select few. He integrates modern psychological insights, particularly from William James, to describe the characteristics of spiritual experience and its validation. By intertwining intellectual and practical dimensions of faith, Iqbal presents a holistic vision where spiritual experiences shape both individual and collective life, manifesting divine attributes and fostering societal transformation.

In Allama Iqbal's philosophy, spiritual insight emerges as a dynamic interplay between thought and intuition, reflecting a holistic understanding of human consciousness and divine reality. Iqbal emphasizes that true spiritual experience cannot be limited to mere emotional states or abstract rationalizations; instead, it represents an integrated process where intuition and intellect converge to grasp higher truths. He asserts that intuition, often perceived as the heart's domain, is essential for accessing spiritual realities that transcend the limitations of rational thought. However, this does not imply a rejection of reason; rather, Iqbal envisions thought and intuition as complementary faculties. Intuition provides a direct, non-sequential understanding of divine presence and cosmic order, while rational thought articulates, interprets, and gives structure to these insights. This interplay allows spiritual experiences to be both deeply personal and communicable, transforming abstract metaphysical concepts into meaningful, lived realities. Iqbal's philosophy thus advocates for a balance where the intuitive experience of the heart informs the reflective capacities of the mind, fostering a comprehensive approach to understanding existence and the divine. Here are some significant aspects of religious experience and the affirmation of the faith-based foundation of life:

(i) Understanding the Nature of Human Thought and Faith

By stating that both thought and intuition (or spiritual insight) originate from the same root, Allama Iqbal views thought as an initial form of intuition, considering it a bridge leading to religious experience. When Imam Ghazali experienced the knowledge of the Divine after religious experience, he regarded intuition as the means to such knowledge, deeming thought to be finite and inadequate. However, Allama Iqbal disagrees with the notion of drawing a clear boundary between thought and intuition and categorizing them separately. According to Iqbal, thought and intuition are interconnected in their functioning. Thought operates within the realm of time, bound by temporal limitations, and thus is considered finite. However, to conclude from this that thought, being finite, cannot grasp the infinite reality of the Divine is based on a misunderstanding of how knowledge is transformed through thought.¹

Iqbal argues that while it is true that human logical understanding, which grasps reality in fragmented pieces, cannot merge what appear to be opposing or conflicting individualities into a coherent, final, and unified whole, this limitation is not a flaw in thought itself but a weakness in the logical direction of human thinking. Logical understanding is incapable of comprehending multiplicity as an integrated and orderly universe because its method of understanding relies on generalizing similarities between things, and all its generalizations are based on hypothetical concepts and units that do not affect the reality of perceived things. Moving away from the direction of logical understanding, thought, in its deeper movement, has the capacity to reach the truth of the infinite, though the finite concepts encountered along the way are only temporary and partial.

Iqbal emphasizes that thought, in its essential nature, is not static but dynamic. It is not rigid, but rather evolving and alive. Drawing from the well-known concept of "Unity of Being" (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) in Sufi thought, Iqbal compares thought to a seed, which contains the essence of a tree from the beginning as a condensed reality, and its manifestation unfolds gradually, stage by stage.²

Thought expresses itself in its entirety, but when we understand it within the framework of time, it appears to us in two distinct ways with precise specifications:

a) These specifications do not hold meaning in themselves but derive their meaning from the larger whole, of which they are expressive aspects. The Qur'an refers to this whole as the "Preserved Tablet" (*Lauh-e-Mahfuz*), which signifies that level of knowledge where all indeterminate possibilities exist as a present and actual reality.

b) These meanings manifest themselves in continuous time through a sequence of finite concepts. Thus, they seem to grow as a unity that was already present within them, but due to the limitations and inadequacy of our understanding, we perceive them as fragmented. The truth is, without the element of infinity in the movement of knowledge, the very concept of finite thought would be impossible.³

Allama Iqbal does not agree with the views of Kant and Ghazali that thought cannot transcend its finitude during the acquisition of knowledge.⁴ In other words, thought is finite only when it studies and observes facts in fragments from a logical perspective. But as soon as it rises above the constraints of logic and begins to

encompass realities, it becomes infinite in its essence and activity. Iqbal asserts that the finite elements of nature, or in other words, the finite components of nature, are separate and distinct from each other. However, thought, in its entirety, is not like this. In its totality, thought possesses the attributes of infinity and is not bound by the narrow confines of individuality in its essential nature.

There is no reality beyond thought's infinite nature that does not embrace this infiniteness; even in the activities of life, thought can break through its finite boundaries and reach its hidden and potential infinity. If thought did not have the capacity to transcend finitude and access the infinite, the concept of thought's finitude would not exist. This aspect—that thought is, in essence, infinite—keeps the flame of desire alive within it and drives it tirelessly along the path of boundless pursuit.

Therefore, to consider thought as limited or incomplete is incorrect because, by its nature, disposition, and function, it is equivalent to the finite merging with the infinite.⁵

(ii) The Heart and the Faith

Allama Iqbal, following in the footsteps of Imam Ghazali, describes the heart as an inner intuition or insight that transcends reason for the knowledge of the Divine. He explains this concept using Maulana Rumi's words, saying that the heart receives direct illumination from the sun of reality. Through the heart, we can connect with aspects of reality that are beyond the limits of the five senses.⁶

Allama Iqbal states that, according to the Holy Quran, the heart is also a means of acquiring knowledge. The information it provides is never incorrect. This means that knowledge gained through the heart, if subjected to the processes of purification and discipline—previously discussed in the context of Surah Ash-Shams—leads to accurate conclusions. However, the heart is not some mystical entity; it is simply another way of knowing reality, just as other means of reaching the truth are available to us. The difference is that the senses usually do not play a role in this process. The observation gained through the heart is just as concrete and real as any other experience. The fact that knowledge acquired through the heart is beyond the physical senses does not diminish its value. If we consider this principle, we see that, in the early stages of human development, all observations were considered supernatural. Gradually, human necessities enabled

interpretations and explanations of these experiences, eventually leading us to form our current understanding of nature.

Allama Iqbal asserts that when the universal reality becomes part of our perception and observation, it takes on a specific form through our interpretation, but it can enter our consciousness through other channels as well. This universal reality holds many possibilities for interpretation. If we examine human history, inspired and mystical literature shows us that religious experience has always had a dominant influence on human history. Therefore, it cannot be dismissed as mere illusion simply because it is not obtained through the usual sensory processes. Instead, the effects and outcomes of spiritual experiences should serve as the basis for evaluating their validity.

Allama Iqbal argues that there is no justification for accepting general human experiences as reality while dismissing spiritual experiences as mere emotional or sentimental phenomena. The truths of religious experience are just as valid as other human experiences. As far as the acquisition of knowledge through interpretation is concerned, all truths are equally firm. The field of human experience, which includes religious experience, cannot be ignored, nor should it be viewed critically as a form of irreverence.⁷

(iii) The Necessity of Faith for Perseverance in Life's Challenges

Allama Iqbal writes that the environment in which humans are placed is filled with difficulties and obstacles. By nature, humans are restless beings, willing to abandon everything to achieve their goals. They are ready to pay any price if they are presented with new opportunities to express themselves. Though they possess many weaknesses and shortcomings, humans have been made rulers over nature. The greatness of humans in the entire universe is rooted in the fact that they accepted the burden of trust, which, according to the Qur'an, even the heavens, earth, and mountains declined to bear:

Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it. Yet, man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (Al-Ahzab, 33:72)

Although humans, by their origin and eventual end, are finite beings in this world, they are not without purpose. Humans have been created with a purpose that, in comparison to the entire universe, makes them beings with a mission to fulfill. Furthermore,

in the life to come, they are accountable for the completion of this purpose:

Does man think that he will be left without purpose? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted? Then he became a clot of blood, and Allah created and perfected him. Then He made him in pairs, male and female. Is He not able to give life to the dead? (Al-Qiyamah, 75:36-40)

To achieve this purpose, humans have been given the ability to improve the things around them and redirect them toward new goals. One aspect of their dominion over the universe is that when they face obstacles in their environment in pursuit of their goals, it does not eliminate their potential. Instead, within their being, they have hidden reservoirs of life and energy,⁸ which can restore their joy and strength, propelling them toward their goals with renewed vigor. Though human existence is more delicate than a rose petal, the environment in which they live is full of hardships, challenges, and barriers.⁹

In such an environment, it is their conviction, born from faith, that serves as the source of their strength and vitality.

(iv) The Aspect of Religious Experience and Understanding

Allama Iqbal states that when religious experience is the foundation of a person's conviction and power of action, it is essential that it not be devoid of understanding. In other words, religious experience is a state of perception in which an aspect of comprehension is present, and it can be presented to others as an understandable concept,¹⁰ even though the full details of its occurrence cannot be fully communicated.

At this point, Iqbal addresses a concern for the general human intellect by stating that the results of religious experience should be subject to free inquiry and criticism. If religious experience were limited to an experience that only a few could interpret or explain, it would become entirely personal and individual. This would lead to a situation where religion is monopolized by a select few, which is not the case. To assess the validity of religious experience, we possess standards that are just as reliable in their credibility as the criteria used to evaluate the results of other fields of knowledge.

Although, throughout the history of Sufism, spiritual experiences and observations have been subjected to rigorous critical evaluation, Iqbal, with consideration for the convenience of the reader's understanding, presents two main criteria for evaluating religious experience: rational and result-based.¹¹

The rational criterion is related to philosophical critique and interpretation, where an issue is examined and interpreted without any assumptions, and it is determined whether our interpretations ultimately lead us to the truth that is revealed through religious experience. The result-based criterion concerns the effects, outcomes, and fruits of religious experience. The first criterion is used by scholars and philosophers, while the second is applied by the Prophets.

Allama Iqbal elaborates on the first criterion for assessing religious experience in detail in his second lecture.¹²

Characteristics of Religious Experience:

Allama Iqbal, following the approach of modern psychology and William James, outlines the characteristics of religious experience. However, before mentioning these characteristics, it is important to clarify the following points:

a) What is the central theme of the lectures of *the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*?

b) What does Allama Iqbal mean by religious experience or religious experience?

a) What is the central theme of the lectures?

If we were to identify a theme that pervades all of Iqbal's lectures, it would be "religious experience" or "religious experience." Iqbal's Lectures themselves are a reflection of his own religious experience, expressed in an effective and comprehensive intellectual form. A look at the period when the lectures were composed supports this notion. During this time, the Islamic community faced several practical and intellectual challenges. In response, Iqbal was engaging both poetically and in prose, pouring extraordinary creative energy into reinterpreting the teachings of Islam. This is evident in the intensity of his efforts. In a letter to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, dated March 18, 1926, Iqbal wrote:

Some of the thoughts are the result of the modern philosophical perspective, for which the old Persian style of expression is not helpful. For expressing certain impressions, words do not seem adequate.¹³

When Iqbal visited South India for his lectures, during a stay in Bombay on January 3, 1929, Begum Hashim Ismail sent him a copy of Goethe's *Faust* and requested that he write a verse on it in his own hand. Even though Iqbal had come to deliver lectures on philosophical topics, what he wrote reveals his inclination toward

inquiry and observation rather than abstract philosophy. Iqbal penned:

I have erased philosophy and discourse from the tablet of my heart;
I have opened my soul to the lancet of inquiry.¹⁴

This aspect of the Lectures is further demonstrated by a statement made by Syed Nazir Niazi, as mentioned in Dr. Rafiuddin Hashmi's book *Iqbal Studies: Understanding and Analysis*. Professor Israr Ahmad Suharwardi, in his autobiography *Sarmaya-e-Hayat* (Gujranwala, 1996), writes:

Nazir Niazi was assigned to teach our MA Islamic Studies class the Lectures of Madras. His first lecture was both fascinating and instructive. He claimed that he had discussed most of the difficult sections of the Lectures with Allama Iqbal himself. He had translated the Lectures from English to Urdu, which is both reputable and well-known. In his introductory lecture, he said something unusual about the Lectures. He stated that these Lectures were Iqbal's most difficult work. 'Don't expect me to solve all the difficult passages for you, as I am not entirely clear about some of the most complex parts myself, even after contemplating them for twenty years. Some passages remain ambiguous. I presented these difficult sections to Allama Iqbal himself for clarification, but he smiled and said, "Nazir! These are the sections that, even when I reflect on them, do not become entirely clear to me. I wrote these parts in a mystical state of intuition. They are all intuitive, not intellectual. You can only grasp them through intuition. Keep reading them, and if you ever experience a mystical state like mine, these meanings will reveal themselves to you like a discovery. But even then, you will only be able to feel them, not express or communicate them.'" So, gentlemen, I still haven't attained that intuition.¹⁵

These details clarify that in the composition and arrangement of Iqbal's Lectures, there was not only an intellectual and scholarly effort, but also a kind of religious or psychological experiential endeavor involved. Thus, two aspects of Iqbal's Lectures come to the forefront: first, the Lectures themselves represent a form of religious experience, and second, they provide a detailed account of religious experience. It is essential that the "religious experience" described in the Lectures be explained in light of Iqbal's own thoughts. This is because, when an attempt is made to interpret Iqbal's concepts and terminology solely in the context of intellectual tradition and other philosophical ideas—without considering Iqbal's own perspective—it only leads to misconceptions.

It is important to ensure that the understanding of Iqbal's thought is derived from his own poetic and prose works, and to

explore how his ideas can be applied to the contemporary cultural landscape. Determining the meaning and significance of Iqbal's ideas should be the first priority, with accepting or rejecting them being secondary.

The centrality of religious experience in the Lectures is so all-encompassing that when Iqbal describes religious experience, he brings the entirety of life within its scope. He uses the natural order, scientific principles, and discoveries as the foundation for religious experience.¹⁶ He then elevates this religious experience from an individual level to a collective and social level—for example, through the establishment of spiritual democracy or the final point of the Allahabad Address. In this way, religious experience operates on two levels in Iqbal's thought:

1. At the intellectual level, in the form of revelation and inspiration.
2. At the practical level, by manifesting divine attributes and producing tangible results in the external world.

At the individual level, the experience and understanding of theological truths strengthen and solidify conviction, while at the collective level, this helps form a civilization with the power of religion. Allama Iqbal demonstrates the validity of this concept by providing examples from individual, intellectual, conscious, and collective life. In this way, the Divine appears as an omnipotent and active presence in human life, and every action in life becomes part of religious experience. Religious experience is no longer limited to religious practices in the traditional sense. To assess the possibilities and scope of religious experience, Iqbal believes it is essential to understand its meaning.

b) What does Allama Iqbal mean by religious experience or religious experience?

According to Allama Iqbal, the initial stage of religious experience is connecting with a source beyond sensory perception and illuminating one's consciousness with its grace.¹⁷ In the state of religious experience or religious experience, we can perceive reality beyond the confines and capacity of our limited self. As Allama Iqbal explained, referencing Professor Hawking, the Sufi's soul experiences the manifestation of eternal reality in the form of a powerful surge. This means that religious experience is both a process of receiving guidance from the Divine manifestations and transmitting that guidance to others. This is why Iqbal differentiates

this from ordinary psychological processes, stating that the knowledge gained from religious inspiration cannot be proven or understood through conventional psychological methods.¹⁸

The ultimate form of religious experience is the development of divine attributes in the one experiencing it. History testifies that the expression of this experience has been seen in phrases such as: "Ana al-Haq" ("I am the Truth") by Mansur al-Hallaj, "Ana al-Dahr" ("I am Time") by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), "I am the speaking Qur'an" by Ali (RA), and "I am the magnificent" by Bayazid Bastami.¹⁹ In the higher Sufi tradition of Islam, this experience of unity does not mean the annihilation of the finite self into the infinite, but rather the infinite self embracing the finite:

In God's will, the Sufi's will is lost.

How can this be made comprehensible to the common man?²⁰

Iqbal explains that this is not self-negation but life and limitless power, which knows no obstacles. It enables a person to calmly perform their prayers even amidst the barrage of bullets.²¹

In his Lectures, Allama Iqbal refers to religious experience in various contexts using different terminologies, including:

actual experience¹, aesthetic experience², concrete experience³, concrete living experience⁴, conscious experience⁵, corrective experience⁶, higher experience⁷, Holy Prophet's experience⁸, human experience⁹, immediate experience¹⁰, inner experience¹¹, living experience¹², mystic experience¹³, natural experience¹⁴, non-emotional experience¹⁵, normal experience¹⁶, original experience¹⁷, outer experience¹⁸, past and present experience¹⁹, personal experience²⁰, political experience²¹, psychic experiences²², psychic, mystical, or super-natural experience²³, purposive experience²⁴, religious experience²⁵, self experienced²⁶, sense-experience²⁷, social experience²⁸, spatial and temporal aspects of experience²⁹, spatial experience³⁰, spiritual experience³¹, sufistic experience³², super-natural experience³³, unitary experience³⁴, unitive experience³⁵.²²

Conclusion

Allama Iqbal's exploration of religious experience and the faith-based foundation of life provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between thought, intuition, and faith. Iqbal emphasizes that thought, though finite in its logical form, possesses the potential to transcend its limitations and grasp infinite realities when directed toward deeper spiritual insight. He refutes the rigid separation of thought and intuition, asserting their

interconnectedness in the pursuit of ultimate truth. This synthesis allows for a more profound comprehension of reality, highlighting the evolving and infinite nature of human consciousness.

Iqbal further asserts that the heart serves as a vital channel for spiritual knowledge, transcending the sensory realm to access divine realities. He draws from Islamic and Sufi traditions to argue that religious experience, validated through both rational and outcome-based criteria, holds equal significance to conventional forms of knowledge. By acknowledging the importance of faith, Iqbal addresses the resilience required to navigate life's challenges, emphasizing that spiritual conviction empowers individuals to overcome obstacles and fulfill their higher purpose.

In bridging the gap between rational inquiry and spiritual experience, Iqbal advocates for an integrated approach where religious experience encompasses both individual and societal dimensions. This approach transforms faith into a living, active force that shapes civilizations and manifests divine attributes in human life. Ultimately, Iqbal's vision calls for a reassessment of spiritual experiences as legitimate and impactful forms of knowledge, urging a balance between intellectual understanding and heartfelt spiritual engagement.

Notes and References

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- ¹ The idea that thought is essentially finite, and for this reason unable to capture the Infinite, is based on a mistaken notion of the movement of thought in knowledge. *Reconstruction*, pp.4-5.
 - ² In its essential nature, then, thought is not static; it is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed which, from the very beginning, carries within itself the organic unity of the tree as a present fact. *Reconstruction*, p.5
 - ³ It is in fact the presence of the total Infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible. *Reconstruction*, p.5
 - ⁴ Both Kant and Ghazali failed to see that thought, in the very act of knowledge, passes beyond its own finitude. *Reconstruction*, p.5
 - ⁵ Its movement becomes possible only because of the implicit presence in its finite individuality of the infinite, which keeps alive within it the flame of aspiration and sustains it in its endless pursuit. It is a mistake to regard thought as inconclusive, for it too, in its own way, is a greeting of the finite with the infinite. *Reconstruction*, pp.4-5
 - ⁶ The 'heart' is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. *Reconstruction*, p.13
 - ⁷ *Reconstruction*, p.13.
 - ⁸ *Ibid.*, p.10.

- ⁹ *Reconstruction*, pp.9-10.
- ¹⁰ Religious experience, I have tried to maintain, is essentially a state of feeling with a cognitive aspect, the content of which cannot be communicated to others, except in the form of a judgement. *Reconstruction*, p.21
- ¹¹ *Reconstruction*, p.22.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.22.
- ¹³ *Iqbal Namah Majmo'a Makatib-i-Iqbal*, p. 157.
- ¹⁴ *Allama Iqbal ka Janabi Hind ka Safar*, p. 21.
- ¹⁵ *Iqbaliyat Tafbeem-wo-Tajziya*, p. 52, 53.
- ¹⁶ Science does not care whether its electron is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention. *Reconstruction*, p.145
- ¹⁷ The truth is that in a state of religious passion we know a factual reality in some sense outside the narrow circuit of our personality.... As Hawking says, it is the trooping invasion of the concrete fullness of Eternity into the soul of saint. pp.20-21.
- ¹⁸ A purely psychological method, therefore, cannot explain religious passion as a form of knowledge. *Reconstruction*, pp.20-21.
- ¹⁹ Devotional Sufism alone tried to understand the meaning of the unity of inner experience which the Qur'an declares to be one of the three sources of knowledge, the other two being History and Nature. The development of this experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well-known words of Hallaj - 'I am the creative truth.' *Reconstruction*, p. 77
- ²⁰ *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Persian), p. 62.
- ²¹ The fatalism implied in this attitude is not negation of the ego as Spengler seems to think; it is life and boundless power which recognizes no obstruction, and can make a man calmly offer his prayers when bullets are showering around him. *Reconstruction*, p.88
- ²² *Reconstruction*; 1, pp.63, 69, 90; 2, pp.26; 3, pp.4, 20, 20, 20; 4, pp.72; 5, pp.37, 37, 38, 38, 40, 40, 41, 42, 42, 42, 42, 43, 43, 43, 47, 47, 48, 61, 61, 61, 80, 80, 81, 81, 81, 110; 6, pp.98, 145; 7, pp.146; 8, pp.94, 101; 9, pp.12, 12, 12, 13, 13, 13, 14, 20, 20, 21, 34, 34, 72, 101, 145; 10, pp.15, 41; 11, pp.xxi, 77, 82, 101, 102, 153, 17, 38, 39, 47; 12, pp.xxi; 13, pp.4, 4, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 15, 15, 16, 16, 17, 18, 101, 101, 101, 101; 14- *ibid.*, pp.101; 15, pp.156; 16. *ibid.*, pp.14, 16, 149; 17, pp.150;18, pp.101, 101; 19, pp.110; 20, pp.21, 149; 21, pp.125, 138; 22, pp.101; 23, pp.13; 24, pp.90; 25, pp.xxi, 1, 7, 13, 13, 14, 20, 21, 23, 26, 50, 87, 99, 99, 114, 145, 145, 152; 26, pp.15; 27, pp.150, 155, 26, 26; 28, pp.15, 16; 29, pp.110; 30, pp.36; 31, pp.153, 109, 109, 110; 32, pp.95; 33, pp.13; 34, pp.99, 99, 100; 35, p.87.