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All contributions should be addressed to the Editor, Iqbal Review, 6th Floor, Academy Block, Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex, Egerton Road, Lahore, Pakistan.

Tel: 92-42-36314510, 99203573, & Fax: 92-42-36314496

Email: into@iap.gov.pk Website: www.allamaiqbal.com

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Abdul Hameed Kamali

Ex-Director
Iqbal Academy Pakistan
Lahore

Dr. Abdul Khaiq

Ex-Chairman
Department of Philosophy
University of Punjab,
Lahore

Ms. Atya Syed

Ex-Chairperson
Department of Philosophy
University of the Punjab,
Lahore

Mohammad Altaf Hussain

Ahangar

Adjunct Faculty,
Central University of
Kashmir.
Formerly Professor of Law at
International Islamic
University Malaysia
and Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic
University,
Brunei Darussalam.

William C. Chittick

Writer, Philosopher,
Translator
Professor Department of
Asian and Asian American
Studies at Stony Brook
University,
USA

FROM LIGHT TO DARKNESS: THE ROLE
OF PRIDE, DESPAIR, AND MORAL
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE HUMAN
JOURNEY TOWARDS GOD

Abdul Hameed Kamali

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the themes of divine light, darkness, and the role of evil in human society as portrayed in Islamic thought. It begins with the premise that God is the source of light that brings humanity from darkness into an ordered, fear-free, and grief-free existence. However, those tempted by self-aggrandizement and the pursuit of everlasting dominion are driven into mutual hostility and despair, a condition rooted in the dark force of “Shaitaniya” (Satanism). The text explores how “Shaitan” (Satan) symbolizes one who has alienated himself from God’s mercy and light, while “Iblis,” characterized by despair and alienation, becomes a central figure in opposition to divine evolution and progress.

The discussion moves to the concept of pride and its destructive impact on human society, as embodied by Iblis, who rejects divine guidance, exalting his own self above God’s plan. This rejection is framed as a rebellion against the natural evolution toward light, as Iblis clings to the principle of genesis, denying the transformative potential of creation. The article contrasts Iblis’ self-deception with the role of the angels and God’s messengers, who embody the transition from darkness to light, living in harmony with divine will.

Through an analysis of moral responsibility and the covenant between humanity and God, the article underscores the destructive power of pride and despair, both of which are central to Shaitan’s influence on human history. It highlights the Quranic perspective on personal and collective responsibility, rejecting elitism and emphasizing that every individual is accountable for their deeds. This accountability leads to the ultimate reckoning in the “appointed Hour,” a time of collective judgment when all actions are brought to light.

The article concludes by discussing the Islamic vision of moral law, which transcends causality through refuge in God. It emphasizes that while humanity may falter due to evil inclinations, divine mercy offers redemption to those who seek it, underscoring the importance of good deeds, responsibility, and the pursuit of light in overcoming the darkness of despair.

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. He it is who brings you forth from darkness into light, and bestows on you an order of mutual support as a blessed society which is not hit by fear nor is ravaged by grief, but those who are tempted, each one, to 'everlastingness' and a .dominion that diminishes not, are rent asunder by mutual hostility and pile up grief that never ends and live in fear that multiplies moment to moment.

The question is what is the source of evil promptings. The answer is 'Shaitaniya' (Satanism). It is a dark force which vitiates the human society. Those who guard themselves against it are saved, but he who succumbs to it is pulled back from light into darkness.

"Shaitan" is one who has gone remote and has alienated himself from the blessed order. He who follows God is a servant of God, but he who follows the "Shaitan" becomes a "Shaitan" himself. This stark truth enables us to comprehend the nature of "Shaitan" and obtains a fair view of his role in human affairs. When the probe goes a bit deeper, "Iblis" is noticed deeply entrenched in every "Shaitan".

The meaning of 'Iblis' is: one who lives in utter disappointment; is despaired of his future, and is blind to every bright lining. He it is that who fails to appreciate the Divine Mercy which nourishes and surrounds everything and takes his prospects dim by the better future which awaits the Creations of God. And it is Iblis who grows into "Shaitan", dissociates himself from the Divine scheme of common good as everything swims in the Mercy of God. And it is "Shaitan" who grows into self-aggrandizement and beguiles everybody to achieve his evil aims.

Now, the most important thing to be noticed is that it is despair, distrust in the future of the Universe that gathers mass, all of dark origin; and transforms into a spree after everlastingness and acquisition of a power and sway (dominion) that must never decline. Despair by nature is self-alienation from God, from man, and from all the Universe. It is therefore the supreme mark of those who are the rejecters. They have rejected God, His Mercy,

His Creation of the heavens and the earth with truth, and His Will to bring forth everything from darkness to light.

The goal of all evolution is light. Life may have any origin, or beginning, it is destined to be all light. Despair is opposition to the Divine principle of the evolution of the Universe, the law of progress inherent in every sentient being, living creature. It is finally rooted in the principle of genesis, everything must have its place and rank according to its origin, and that the future of everything ought to be governed and fixed by its origin and birth. It is the evil norm which reverses all evolution back to the abyss of darkness and destroys the entire order. All the forces of self-aggrandizement and self-promotion are in the grip of this hollow norm.

That “Iblis” lived in the Divine presence meant that light was with him and light was in him, but he could not ennoble himself to be all light in the depth of his interior which had darkness at its nucleus. The light in him was shrouding the black spot of his soul, because of which he could not participate in any project of mercy set by his Lord Most High. The darkness hidden in his piety and light thereof made his obedience to his Lord only a means of his worship of himself. This self-worship kept the interior nucleus of his being burning like a furnace. He was burning with self-pride and it was the essence of his black spot in his soul that failed to transform into light, pure light.

This truth of his interior naturally made him an outclass in the community of the angels, who were all light, from the bottom of their soul to the exterior of their existence. But this was not known to the angels themselves, as God Most High said to them:

Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth and know that ye disclose and that which ye hide (Q. 11:33).

The reference to ‘that which ye hide’ was obviously about the one who was burning with the passion of self-glory as it was clear from the further development;

And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save ‘Iblis’. He turned away, glorified (his self), and became of the (class of) rejecters (Ibid: 34).

The Angels

God enquired of him about his conduct, and said:

O ‘Iblis! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate before that which I have created with both of My hands? Art thou too proud or art thou of

the highest exalted? He said: I am better than him. Thou createdst me of fire, whilst him thou didst create of clay (Q, 38: 76-77).

Everyone who goes along with God is led from darkness (of his origin) into light and what one perceives in oneself is light, pure light. The angels and the messengers of God are the examples. No one knows the origin of the angels, because God did not invite anybody to witness the creation of heavens and earth, and witness the creation of angels. Yet everybody knows that the angels are light from end to end. There is nothing but light in them. And so far as the messengers of God are concerned, they are the creatures of clay, yet they are pure light in themselves. When they do introspect they find nothing but light as the substance of their being.

But Iblis' perception of himself, inner vision of his own soul as burning fire meant that he had not gone along with His Lord Most High. His participation in the Divine light was but a device of his mean worship of his own self and boosting up of his position at the cost of all Divine scheme. No ray of light penetrated his interior and he did not allow it, otherwise the fire in him would have turned into light and he would not have been one of the class of rejecters.

In his inner experience, he found himself all fire and when he looked on man he found him a creature of clay. He was completely deceived by his own perception. Therefore, when God asked the angels and apparently Iblis was one of them to bow down to honour man, he saw his own destruction in the act and took God as simply unjust to him. He rebelled against the Divine scheme of making the creatures of clay a unique light in the Universe. He became "Shaitan," got himself out from all Divine purpose, and took upon himself to frustrate it.

He voiced before God as the supreme champion of the principle of genesis. Everything must remain loyal to its origin. Their future must be what they were in the past.

The Divine order of Guidance, Mercy and Light has its basis so to say in *telesis*. Things will not be judged by what they were, but will be ranked by what they have become. In this principle, all pride which is entrenched in the dark continuum of genesis and origin, all usurpation of power and place for self-amplification see its prospects frustrated. And in the flame of self worship the God looks to his morbid mind as the treacherous Lord who has betrayed the one who is all fire in one's soul. "Iblis" said to His God:

My Lord! Because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error and shall mislead them every one. Save such of them as are Thy perfect devotee (Q.15:39-40).

Pride and its ruling norm of genesis as the measure of all things takes the form of open hostility to all progress of mankind, beguiles the innocents, invents deceits, indulges in conspiracies, develops devious networks to catch them and makes them subservient to its ends. It is the evil force which circulates in human societies and finds as its medium those who are themselves “Iblis” in the heart of their hearts.

Inward Experience

Iblis’ role in human history is of far-reaching consequences. He works by producing his own kind in it. All of them are embodiment of “Shaitan”; nay, but Shaitan in themselves. When they look into themselves, who were indeed creatures of clay, they experience themselves as fire, incessantly burning fire. Its heat and gleam overwhelm them. And other men appear to them as mere toys of filth, mud and clay. Human society is ruptured by those men and classes who are made of fire. They are set against the people and classes made of filth and mud.

Immediate and inward experience of the one of fire is that ‘I am better than him of clay and mud.’ This immediate experience which knows no bounds becomes the driving force let loose on the society. When everyone is fire within, then every other man is clay, mere mud in perception and everyone is set to use the clay for building his own everlasting empire of fire and flame. All are tossed to and fro in the dark continuum from which all light has gone. They are stationed alienated from the Divine Mercy. They are violators of all laws which sustain life and make it bright. Invisible black flames consume them.

A nation which does not believe and participate in the good future of mankind in its basic core is one which is distrustful of God and finds its future dark. It turns Iblis and reverts to the principle of genesis as the norm which ought to have decided all the future of the universe.

When the nation looks into itself, it finds itself as the firebrand people, but when it perceives other nations and peoples, it takes them as depictible humble creatures, and fails to see anything beyond clay in them. Therefore, instinctively it proclaims that “I am better than them.” This is how Iblis works in human history.

Many a time it happened that the groups raised to serve as light unto the world, after one or two generations began to change into fire as they began to proclaim that they were superior to and better than all mankind. In history they were destined to fall from one score of darkness to another. And there was no end to it. Their path was laid down by Racialism.

They transformed the God, God of all mankind into their racial God and zealously guarded the light bestowed on them and confided it to themselves. All that was the shining light which with them no longer remained light became fire which consumed them yet consumed them not; they lived burning in it.

They divided the whole world into those who were invested with light and those who were left ignorant. And said to one another that God chose us amidst the whole lot of mankind and abandoned all the rest to grope in darkness. It is we and our stock, our family tree that was preferred over all mankind, nations and races. By genesis and birth we are noblest of all. What actually happened was that they alienated themselves from their God and were attracted to blazing fire and its sparks which they took as light so as to make their future bright.

Again there arose families and households with the teachings of scriptures and wisdom in their hand. They began to convince their progeny that all of it, the knowledge of the scriptures and wisdom should be well guarded lest others of different or lower seed achieve access to it.

Those phenomena, all workings of Iblis in human history, took into grip several societies drying up all the seed of goodness in them.

God, Most High, raised his messengers and prophets in all mankind. There was no human populace in which a guide was not sent. But it has never been necessary that all of them be known to us. What is necessary for us is to realize that God sent or raised the prophets in the enlightened people and in the ignorant people as well.

All mankind is near and dear to Him. All Divine Guidance and the messages with which the Messengers of God, raised anywhere in the World, were invested with, always cut across the principle of genesis and rescue mankind from its pull to bring it forth into light.

Darkness, in human situation, is return to pastness; it is cleaved to origin and shuns every thing good beyond glory to oneself.

Light in its nature is future-looking. By nature it radiates and spreads out and therefore is against racism and is against the spree of:”, I am better than him” drive. Obedience to God means sublimation from obsession with genesis, deliverance from despondency and march in the lead of God to the brightest future.

Responsible Man

It is participation with God in bringing about a better world. Therefore, the fundamental religious consciousness in Islam is grounded in the idea of the responsible man.

It addresses man and puts him to the great disillusionment of his being his own beast of burden. The structure of the world and the nature of the ultimate reality is such that “no bearer of burden bears another burden and if one heavy laden crieth for (help with) his load, naught of it will be lifted even though he (unto whom he crieth) be of kin (Q.35:18).” These plain words in one stroke demolish all claims of a privileged house, chosen line, or a blessed race.

Survival by the genetic principle (all glory to one’s seed and ancestry), the law propounded by Iblis is impossible in the spatio-temporal structure of the universe. Forefathers will not be responsible for their progeny and rescue them from their load, nor would the posterity carry the load of their ancestors. The principle of kinship has no future in the ultimate analysis of the human situation.

There is no such thing as racial responsibility. There is no race of God; there is no race of the messengers and prophets of God, and there is no race of the chosen people and no race of the abandoned people.

Whosoever goeth right, it is only for him self that he goeth right, and whosoever erreth only to his burden. No bearer of burden bears another’s burden (Q.17:15).

The verses define the ultimate destiny of man.

One of the most immediate and natural consequence of this ultimate responsibility of every man for his deeds and loads, means that elitism and the idea of the privileged classes, as shepards of the people, is dismissed in Islam.

The Messengers of God directly address the people. Mankind must harken to them. Islam asks them to march forward taking their load on their own shoulders and warns them not to be deceived by tall promises of others that they would certainly take over if not all, part of their load in future and would save them from the great calamity of the Last Day. As such Islam is the religion of common folks and holds them responsible for everything of their private and public life.

Plain Main

Humanity in general is populated by ordinary men who are raised from their mothers (Umm), grow in mutuality and make their living uninfluenced by special training and attainments. They are the plain people who apparently are as unsophisticated in their maturity as were they at the time of their birth. Therefore, they are called Ummyun, (i.e. those who are just as they were from mothers).

Islam dismisses elitism and burdens the plain men, the Ummyun with the responsibility of their ownelves as the indubitable hard core of the metaphysical structure of the human world encompassing all history and destiny, here and hereafter.

The plain man (Ummy) as unsophisticated as born of his mother (Umm) resides in every adult, be a desert nomad or an urban doctor. All human beings in their frame are primarily Ummyun and therefore are capable of following the teachings, intents and commands of the Universal religion of all creation.

Common men understood the sermons of Musa, the servant of God. And again, they were the common men who listened to Isa bn. Maryam. It was all Islam. All of the people can follow Divine teachings irrespective of the facts whether they are literate or illiterate, philosophers with special sense or just mature working men endowed with common sense.

Islam is common man's revolution. It ends all sorts of elitism. These are the general people who carry the purposes of Islam and have ultimate responsibility for human goodness and its concrete order.

What are the ingredients of a blissful social order? Nations which cherish idleness as the most coveted norm consider the life of toil as a curse on man and dream of a state of no work and no care as the most blissful of all states. The hard core of higher

morality perceived as idleness, entrenched as such in their soul deeply, moulds their social values and collective behaviour.

Thus those who can afford, escape the sweat of labour and live as leisure classes to live on the fruits of the working men and women believed to be suffering from the Divine curse more acutely than those others who have to do light work. Then they regress into infantilism and take the joyful innocence of a baby as the brightest core of all blissful living.

How innocent is a baby? It is not even aware of its shame, and its joy knows no good and evil. Pervading their moral sentiments and futurism, this infantilism relentlessly goads them to shun the world and live beyond its good and evil.

The societies which are hit by inequities often eulogize this life as the supreme end of all wisdom accessible to man. Living untainted with good and evil, sages, holy men, and artists swarm the streets of the iniquitous societies.

Moral Sense

Ordinary men establish rapport with them. Most of them find comfort in their grief and hardship by their swing into poetic and mystic values which reign beyond this world of good and evil. They begin to live as neutrals just like leisure classes. Moral indifference and apathy flourishes like anything in those societies as the law of the people.

That there was a blissful state man lived in haunts the memory of nations and they do visualize it in accordance with their social and spiritual values. One thing which is, however, quiet obvious is that as one of the terminal points of the long chains of biological evolution man's emergence without the sense of good and evil is ruled out from the outset.

Other species which though resembles him yet are far inferior in mental equipment like apes have glimpses of moral sense. Chimpanzee maintains an elaborate social organization. Its complex patterns are impossible without a touch of good and evil in their conduct. The behaviour of dolphins is also a case of moral conduct. Those evidences rule out the rosy thought that when man emerged, he and his wife were free from this sense like an innocent baby and that they lived in a child-like bliss.

The blissful life, according to the Holy Quran consisted living in accordance with the sense of good and evil. There was no question of infantile simplicity in the state of bliss.

Thus in the beginning, man lived in an awakened state of morality and he knew the permissions (good) and prohibitions (avoidance of evil) on which his blessed order rested. All blissful orders follow the same constitution eternally.

Covenant with God

The Glorious Quran reveals that the original blissful order had its foundation in a covenant with God as follows: (1) Man was not to pay heed to the promptings of the Shaitan (Satan), meaning thereby the one who had gone remote and became alienated. Man was forewarned that heeding to the alienated one would drive him out to hardship and unhappiness. (2) The evil things were shown to man and he was put under obligation not to approach them. All things thus forbidden are branches, petals and fruit of a tree - the tree of evil. The knowledge of the tree and where it grew was given to man so that he could stay away from it. (3) Man was shown all the other trees and their fruits and he was allowed to live under their shade and enjoy their yields.

In return for those obligations that man had to honour under the covenant, God, Most High vouchsafed unto him that (1) He would not go hungry (2) Nor would be thirsty. (3) Nor would be naked, (4). Nor would he be exposed to heat. In this way, the blissful order was in continuation. It was a moral and spiritual order with full material guarantees of good and pleasant life to him.

All was good and continued well. Man fulfilled his obligation, lived by the granted permissions and abstained away from all revealed prohibitions, and he had all what was guaranteed to him. The good order lasted over a time. But on the promptings from the alienated one, man committed breach of the covenant which sustained the entire order. All was destroyed and man fell into all sorts of grief and hazard. All blessed orders follow the same constitution and history. Everyone is composed of a guarantee to man.

There is therein for thee not to go hungry, nor to go naked, nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun's heat (Q. XX: 118-19).

But man must follow its constitutional law, the covenant which details the permission in it and the prohibitions of it. In fact the

permissions and prohibitions are sustaining pillars of the guarantees and assurances that it offers to man. The pillars eroded, all the arrangements made for the good of man and all the guarantees built in it fall apart and man is left to grapple with miseries. The original order of bliss was destroyed in that manner, and all subsequent good orders were destined to destruction in that very manner.

We had taken the covenant of Adam. But he forgot and we found not firmness on his part (ibid: 115).

Thus he succumbed to the suggestions of the alienated one (The Shaitan) that if he desired and cherished everlastingness and undiminishing dominion (power and property) his path laid across the prohibited things. And so he approached the evil tree and tasted its sour fruits.

In their love for permanence, power, and property men committed transgressions against the order, adopted evil as their measure. Mutual hostility flared up amid them. Grief and suffering way laid all of them. Their weaknesses became horribly exposed to one another. They looked shamelessly naked.

Then they took refuge behind fragile things to cover up their shameful exposure to one another, but of no avail. Their sufferings multiplied.

Then his Lord “picked him up. He turned to him and guided (Ibid, p. 122).

Restoration of Man

After the disorder, miseries, shameful exposure before one another following the breach of original covenant, a new order of happiness thus came into existence on the Divine reorientation to man. The original order could not come back because history moves forward. The new order of blessings was also based on a covenant which detailed its own permissions and prohibitions as contents of the Divine guidance. Man pledged to abide by it and God vouchsafed once again a good life, free from evils. Man was also informed of the Divine intention of sending guidance from time to time.

Those who remember God honour their covenant; and those who honour their covenant remember God. It is how the good order is sustained with all of its old promises.

But whosoever turn away from my remembrance, verily for him condition for living will be narrowed down and We will raise him blind on the Day of Rising . (Ibid, p. 124)

He who forgets God commits excesses and aims at self permanence, sway over others and grab big property. But he is simply blind. He commits evil, and the evil overpowers him. If he does not open his eyes soon, he is blind for ever, and if he does not realize today, tomorrow will he realize that he has amassed grief and sorrow, hunger and thirst in his pursuit of permanence and dominion for himself.

When the evil spirit takes a whole people in its grip, all of them have their day of reckoning very soon, as all of them have become blind and follow in utter madness their selfish ends. The result is that they are in hell, they are burnt in the furnace of their social disorder. God is not in them, nor His guarantees, nor His remembrance, nor His permissions, and nor His prohibitions. They are the disgraced people on earth.

Man is sure to taste what he sows. Without this law no spiritual life is possible. But this very law despiritualizes man. That his misdeeds will beget unforeseeable horror to him, sinks him into utter hopelessness.

Now he is Iblis, desolate and disappointed. Then he grows into a monster. He is Shaitan, the egoist self-seeker. The law enormously fulfils itself in his doom. He is doomed for ever.

The law of good and evil is, however, only a segment of the universal law of cause and effect which seems to possess all things in its grip and indifferently rules over all existence.

But positive morality comes only when there is a refuge from the evil or tragic effects of this law and yet this refuge is not likely to destroy the law itself. Cultures and religions arose to meet the challenges of this problem.

There were sages who could go beyond existence and fix their gaze on nothingness. It is nothing which escapes the fist of causality. Therefore, culture arose on the foundation of nothingness as sure opening from the dread of causality. But morality is a question of existence. Founded on nothingness, they advanced to flourish as amoral cultures and became breeding grounds of those who were morally indifferent. And moral apathy

produces Iblis, the despair of all creation. And Iblis eventually grows into Shaitan.

Islam dismantled the idea that it is nothingness which is beyond the grip of causation. It gave the message that the Absolutely Existent, the Eternal One is beyond its fist and hold:

Say, He is Allah, the One. All the eternally besought of all. He begetteth not, nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him: (Q, 112: 1 to 4).

God is above the cycle of causality. He surrounds and circumscribes all causes and all effects. On this vision is founded the moral law in Islam.

Refuge in God

God is the light of heaven and earth. Moral law is His light in the human world and permeates all causation from here to hereafter. In it is offered the concrete refuge in God. The Holy Quran ends at the Surah Al Nas (Chapter: 114) and asks man to seek refuge in God.

Say, I seek refuge in the sustaining Lord of mankind. The King (holder of power) of mankind. The God of mankind. From the evil of the sneaking whisperer. Who whispereth in the heart of mankind. (Be he) of the Jinn and (or) of mankind.

He who has sought protection of God from all evil suggestions coming into him from the seen or unseen individuals is saved from the evil of causality.

But refuge from evil whispers is not sufficient as the Surah Al Falaq, the last but one chapter of the Book teaches. Things of the world have aspects which are evil and disturbing. Fellow beings are also full of evil (if not protected from it):

Say, I seek refuge in the Lord of Daybreak. From the evil of the darkness when it is intense. And from the evil of malignant witchcraft, And from the evil of the envier when he envieth.

It is this multi-dimensional refuge in God, reinforced by His remembrance and prayers for it, that breaks the inevitable doom, latent in causal series and redeems one of its evil. This is how the moral law has permeation in causal series. Those who live in God are rescued from evil. God removes the evil consequences of their past deeds and the causal series take a new course:

O ye who believe! If ye fear Allah. He will grant you discernment and remove from you (all) evil. (afflicting) you and forgive you (8:29).

If a wretched soul starts to live in God, it is redeemed of evil which is in pursuit of it. The Causality is given a new turn by the Lord who reigns over all causes and all effects:

That Allah will remit from them the worst of what they did, and will pay them reward of the good, they used to do (29:35).

All causality will fulfill in the following way by virtue of the moral law which is fundamental to mankind.

The day when He shall gather you unto the Day of Assembling, that will be a day of mutual disillusion. And whoso believeth in Allah and doeth right. He will remit his evil deeds and will bring him into gardens undenearth which rivers flow, therein to abide for ever. That is the supreme triumph (64:9).

The dread of causality is completely overcome in this supreme triumph.

In spite of belief in God, the Mighty, the Merciful, there are cults which could not get rid of the dread of causality. In them, human situation appears doomed for ever. He has to suffer because the law of causality is inexorable and man is sinful. Cast in evil, never can he surmount its mischief. His deeds must bring forth the evil of his nature and therefore from the very start he is condemned in himself. But man cannot accommodate with this gospel of gloom.

Therefore the cults which mystify men emerged by proclaiming that salvation is a free gift of God. Deeds or misdeeds are of no consequence to it. How is it? It is an incomprehensible mystery. They declared that Man will be saved by his faith and not by his deeds. This occultism thus obliterates the moral law.

In their sloth and stupor men succumb to its traps and rehearse the grand ritual of salvation as a spiritual outing by reliving the 'sorceric' feats of God whereby men, condemned *ab initio*, are redeemed of their doom which was inevitable.

The God is merciful God. Nevertheless His mercy does not lie in sorceric feats and their ritualistic versions, but in His guidance to man to build his order with moral law as its moving force on the solid foundation of cause and effect with His Gracious sway to wipe off its evil effects if man turns to goodness with firm resolution.

Thus salvation is never a free gift. But a hard earned award. The idea of work (deed) and its wages (consequences) in Islam is rooted in this moral law. Islam is thus an antiritualistic religion and also it is a religion which is against false hopes.

According to Islam, one is an obvious rejecter if he pretends to believe in God, but places false expectations in Him and indulges in the reverie of being honoured and awarded as His servant notwithstanding one's life of greed, show and arrogance.

This one is a rejecter of God and his belief is unbelief. The Surah al Kahf (Chapt. 18) of the Quran makes it clear by a narration: "Coin for them a similitude. Two men, unto one of whom We had assigned two gardens of grapes and We had surrounded both with date-palms and had put between them tillage. Each of the garden gave its fruits and withheld naught thereof. And We caused a rivulet to gush forth therein.

And He had fruit. And he said to his comrade when he spake with him: I am more than thee in wealth, and stronger in respect of men. And he went into his garden, while he (thus) wronged himself. He said, I think not that all this will ever perish. I think not that the Hour will ever come, and if I am brought back unto my Lord I surely shall find better than this as a resort (18:33-37).

False Hope

It is exactly this kind of self conceit coupled with great expectations which spreads like a contagious disease in all spiritually hollow and pretentious men, classes and civilizations. Their achievements and magnificent buildings look durable .

Feverishly they compete for more and are overjoyed to have an edge over others. They project a bright future for themselves in arrogance and callous disregard of others. Their sole business is to envy one another and exceed all others in wealth, pomp and show. They find no time to think of the Hour to come, the Hour of question and answer. And when hardly it comes into their head that one day they have to meet their Lord, they take refuge in auto-suggestion that He would surely lodge them in far better abodes than they have. Every self-seeker has this kind of illusion.

There is no doubt that in Islam, disappointment and pessimism are strongly condemned as the offshoots of the rejection of God: (Ibrahim) said:

And who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray (15:56)?

But the optimism which springs from arrogance and hankering after the worldly glory for oneself and insatiable lust for a higher and still higher standard of living for oneself and one's family is simply a grave miscalculation.

Their hope that God will continue to award them handsomely in all future is a false hope of such an enormity that God is rejected in it as the comrade of the owner of gardens exposes it:

And his comrade, while he disputed with him exclaimed; Disbelvest thou in Him who created thee of dust, then of a drop, and then fashioned thee a man (18:38).

They fancy themselves as believers, but they are those who disbelieve in their Lord and work against the causality which unfolds in the moral law operative beneath the Throne of the Beneficent:

Wealth and children are an ornament of the world. But the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope (18:47).

Civilizations which flourish on a mad show of the 'ornaments of the world' for which every one leaves behind everyone else breed false hopes in respect of the future, but are destined to violent ends. It is how the causality inherent in the moral law proceeds forward:

There doth every soul experience that which it did aforesaid, and they are returned unto Allah, their rightful Lord, and that which they used to invent hath failed them (10:31).

Greater is their indulgence in worldly decor and self-adoration, larger are their false hopes in God and nearer is their doom. They are *ab initio* Godless people whose belief is equivalent to unbelief. Worst is their abode and darkest is their future. Peace and salvation is a hard earned bounty of God.

Religions are of two kinds: The Religions of worship and the religions of obedience. Worship has its origin in a complex of emotions which manifest themselves in dancing and dancing around the cherished object. It materializes its Deity, idolizes Him, carves out His images and lavishes all of its sentiments on them in a state of frenzy.

Obedience has its roots in the determination of man to be good and lead a good life. The religious feeling, which sprouts from this will-to-be-good, approaches the Deity as the proper Guide to and Guardian of good life. What it produces is not an emotional response of ecstasy but a volitional act filled with utmost awe and reverence. It does not, therefore, worship and idolizes the Deity but calls on Him and prays:

Thou do we obey and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight path. The path of those on whom Thou hath bestowed grace, those whose (lot) is not wrath and who go not astray (Q. I: 5-7).

The consciousness flowing through the religions of worship does not take the world seriously for its purposes. Its highest vision places the Universe and the infinity of its colours and forms in the idea of a 'play' of the Deity. The ultimate good its gnosis seeks is to surmount the attractions of this play and get undone in the ocean of the Infinity.

The world consciousness of the religions of obedience takes everything very seriously.

Our Lord! Thou hath not created this (world) in vain (Q, 3: 191).

The Lord says:

Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between (Q, 21: 16).

And says:

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that in between in vain, (38:27).

Man's Trial

Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Dominion and He over all things hath Power. He Who created death and life, that He may try which of you good in deed (action). And He is the Exalted in Might, Oft forgiving (67: 1-2).

The world as it exists with its rounds of death and life, life and death is a field of action, an arena of good and bad deeds. Man is on trial in it. Successful are those who have trust in their Lord and spare no chance to accomplish goodness. The success may not be immediate and may take lot of time. The most important thing is that future belongs to it.

The religions of worship and idolization cannot comprehend time in the manner in which it is unfolded in the religions of

obedience. In the gnostic vision which intensifies in idolization, Time is of no importance, as it is an aspect of the 'play' and is not different from the play itself. It is an infinity of succession in which the play and its parts are in repetition as the Divine sports. The past, present and future are uniform; all elements of the time. The gnostic tries to escape Time and Play with equal intensity.

In the religions of obedience, Time is laden with a definite structure in which no deed, small or great is missed; everything is recorded, and finally is ripe with all of its consequences. The process of time has an inward thrust towards an 'appointed Hour,' in which every creation and every intelligent being has to give the account of his activities.

The appointed Hour is an integral element of the structure and nature of Time. It is of such an essence that everyone who lived even at the remotest portion of the past will have to face and pass through it. In other words, all the moment of time, all past and all present, are assembled and summed up in it. Every present moment perishes here and now, but it will be present in the summation of the appointed Hour, in its much more real and concrete existence as it will mature with all of its details. Everybody and every deed will be totally manifest in its duration.

Resurrection

This unique structure of time, that all the perished past is completely and elaborately resurrected in the appointed Hour, no creature can guess and speculate about it. The knowledge of all creatures is humbled down as regard to it. Only God in His Infinite Mercy intimated His servants about it. To Musa (Moses) said He:

Verily the Hour is to come - My design is to keep it hidden - so that everybody is awarded by the measure of his endeavour. Therefore, let not such as believe not therein but follow their lust, divert thee therefrom, 'lest thou perish (Q, 20: 15-16).

Our scientific knowledge and astronomical observations may suggest to us the death of a star system or the complete collapse of a galaxy. It may possibly make calculations on the basis of the physical laws of motion and electromagnetism about shrinking and destruction of our part of the Universe or that of the entire Universe, which now appears to be expanding. But non of these conjectures and predictions indicate the time of the coming Hour. What at best all of those efforts may bring to notice is only this much that the present series of temporal events and the successive

states of the galactical mass comes to halt or finish at a future time. To put it differently, their probes are about the last event or chain of the present series.

The appointed Hour on the other hand is not the last of the series of time, but in itself a unique Hour in which all the hours, all the moments and all the series of Time are synchronized in a 'togetherness'. It is Hashr (collection of all). No human knowledge can predict about its coming and its timing. It is independent of the present laws of the Universe, and therefore defies calculation on their basis. Nothing in heaven and earth can contain the indication of its Coming moment. Even the angels cannot bear the knowledge of its occurrence.

Every messenger of God has been intimated of its being sure to come, and every book handed down to man for guidance contains reference to it. But no book given before the Glorious Quran discloses its various aspects with pertinent details. In fact, the Quran completes its knowledge which had been in transmission since the beginning of the human race as a divine communication and warning. But no one knows its timing except God Himself.

The consciousness which underlies worship, idolatry and gnosticism is oblivious to its importance and inevitable coming. The estimation of world as a play and not more than a play has a blinding effect and incapacitates men to understand it. Many people who believe in God, believe in Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the world, are unable to believe in it.

They swear their strongest oaths by God, that God will not raise up those who die. Nay but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth. But most among mankind realize it not (Q, 16:38).

Human will, good will coupled with the consciousness of accountability are such marvelous events and truths that they cannot be accommodated in a serial time, the series of succession of the uniform moments. Their very being as such signifies a higher time which makes the appointed Hour as the logical and meaningful destiny of all human endeavours. The belief in the appointed Hour is one of the basic elements of the religion of good will and obedience, i.e. of Islam.

The Idea that man deserves reward for his obedience and is liable to punishment for his defiance is a universal element of all human civilizations. But it has several interpretations. In Islam only

that interpretation of it is admissible which accords with the notion of man's basic responsibility and ultimate accountability.

Many a civilization lacks this notion. A number of them have a distorted view. In some of them, for instance, man is not responsible for his role and station in the society. Others decide it. His duty is to submit to their will. Intransigence puts him to punishment. Thus his responsibility shrinks to mere servitude.

There are others among whom the commoners are not called for to discern between good and evil. The elites do it and the former are only required to say to them: We hear and obey.

Islam is replete with a unique sense of human situation and destiny. It holds a man responsible not only for his obedience in the above sense but also accountable for what he obeys and what he ignores, what he rejects and what he accepts.

The religious consciousness of Islam impels man from within to stand on his own feet and get himself released from his bondage and docile submission to others. According to it, every human self is endowed with the discrimination between right and wrong, good and evil. And the entire system of law and public order has to be raised on that basis.

The point is so pertinent and profound that the Glorious Quran reveals the entire Universe as to bear testimony to it:

By the sun and its brightness. And the moon that follows it. And the day when it manifests it. And the night when it enshrouds it. And the heaven and Him who built it. And the earth and Him who spread it. And the nafs (self or soul) and Him who composed it. Then inspired it with what is wrong or right for it. Verily, the successful is he who makes it (the soul with its inspiration of right and wrong) grow; and verily, a loser is he who stunt it (Q, 91:1-10).

In other words, the world, its structure and temporal process consisting of nights and days have no place for those who stifle their sense of good and evil, and resign to mere obedience to others. The universe, as God has created and maintained it, paves the path of success for one who looks after one's own discrimination between good and bad, right and wrong, exercises it, and thus rears it to its full bloom. The passive ones who live on 'we hear and obey' with their reins in others' hands are simply destroyed as they have extinguished their own that sense of right and wrong, they were inspired with.

The Glorious Quran exposes all those relations between man and man, groups and groups, classes and classes which dupe the people and stifle their feeling of that they are responsible for all the commendable and apprehensible things they confront.

A responsible man, according to Islam, orders his affairs by himself in exercise of his judgment. And a responsible group of mankind, a nation, also orders its affairs by itself and on each occasion its members feel themselves accountable for its every development.

But minds are enslaved and men are reduced to chattels when they are befooled to be carefree and not to bother about anything as all responsibility has been taken over by the chosen few who enjoy a special position in their social milieu. This kind of mutual arrangement and the social system built on it ultimately fail to the limitless sorrow and absolute loss of those who live in it, for the nature of the universe and its temporal process is such that no soul can draw the wages of another one and has to bear its own burden itself.

The sort of partnership and mutual dealing in which the plebeians and the downtrodden masses are usually held in grip by the elites and the prestigious classes is spun around the idea of intercession. It ends in catastrophe. The commoners are told that they have nothing to worry about. All their troubles would be taken over by their masters and Leaders from the upper classes, their Lords and Authorities.

The commoners are destined to realize at last that they were cheated. The responsibility was entirely theirs for all that happened to them and occurred in their milieu. None of the prestigious ones of the ruling nobility could stand as their intercessor to save them in the hour of their need, despite their having served the former blindly for the purpose. History did not spare them because they were simply clients of their so-called intercessors.

And verily Ye come to Us solitary (just) as We created you: for the first time. We behold not your intercessors whom Ye presumed to be your partners in your affairs. So now all relations between you are cut off. And what Ye presumed is lost by You (Q. 6:95).

Learned classes emerged in human societies, magnified themselves and posed as false lords unto the people. They put the high claim that it was a must for the people to follow them without questioning. Similarly, priestly classes appeared with the like claims.

Often the learned and priestly classes were identical. Then there were the ruling classes to stultify the people by their several conceits. Islam, in very clear terms, denies their long pretensions and rejects their overlordship as having no roots whatsoever in the constitution of Reality. It abolishes all the relations of superordination and subordination on those false bases.

No Bargaining

Man, whether he is learned or unlettered, a priest or a humble farmer, cannot take the place of another man in the matter of responsibility. Therefore, there are no privileged or prestigious classes who are to be obeyed by the believers in the matters of right and wrong for the conduct of their affairs. The decision with regard to their affairs has to be taken by themselves; in one's affairs individually, and in collective affairs collectively. Every man is irreplaceable and is accountable for what he has done and is doing in the society.

Then guard yourself against a day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (Q,2:48).

The various modes in which the people are duped, have been exposed and described in the above revelations. The real thing is as:

O Ye believe spend out (in good works) of what We have provided for you before the Day come when no bargaining (will avail) nor friendship, nor intercession (2: 254).

It is the Day of accountability, everybody must take care of. It admits of no bargaining. One's responsibility cannot be bargained for, nor can be bartered away or sold out. There is no way to escape from the accountability. No claim of friendship or no favouritism will hold good on that Day. And no hope of intercession will materialize.

No Compromise

The Day casts its reflection in human history, and a day like it comes in the history of a nation when all of its own falsehood and the untruths of its public order are exposed. No one is spared. Its doomsday has come. And before it one crisis after another heralds its fortune.

The masses who sold out their sense of good and evil to their power elites against the false promises of intercession in their favour, or bargained the exercise of their own discretion for lowly

comforts in life are trampled under the heels of time. Darkness reigns everywhere and the entire nation is reduced to earth in no time, as other nations prey on it. Now, it is neither alive, nor dead.

In Islam, no individual can compromise with his sense of right and wrong or his discretion of good and evil and resign from it. The responsibility with which the people are endowed cannot be transferred. They are responsible before God for their collective and individual actions. Their own sense of good and evil, of the obligatory and prohibitory must grow along with those actions so that they are qualified for success.

The Light of God is for every man. His revelations are addressed to all mankind. Therefore, the entire people bear their own burden. It is of no consideration whether one is petty one or belongs to the highest rungs of the society.

MAULANA RUMI: THE SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY OF A MYSTIC POET AND HIS
LASTING LEGACY IN SUFISM

Dr. Atya Syed

ABSTRACT

Mualana Rumi, born in 1207 A.D. in Balkh, emerged as a great spiritual guide, poet, and thinker whose works have transcended time and space, influencing both the Muslim world and the West. Despite facing the turmoil of his era, including the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols, Rumi's migration led him to Konya, where he eventually became a towering figure in the history of Sufism. His journey of spiritual discovery was deeply influenced by pivotal figures like Shams Tabrizi, whose companionship profoundly changed Rumi, and resulted in his celebrated works, including *Diwan-e-Shams Tabrizi* and *Mathnawi*. Rumi's life and works are marked by his deep exploration of love, which he regarded not merely as an emotional experience but as an existential force leading to the divine and to the purification of the self. He emphasized that love, grounded in spiritual separation and suffering, was an unconditional path to God and a transformative force in life. Rumi's concept of Sama—a practice combining music, dance, and poetry—symbolized his unique approach to divine remembrance and spiritual ecstasy. Rumi's philosophy of love, Tawakkul (trust in God), faqr (spiritual poverty), and the transformation of the self have had a lasting impact on Islamic mysticism. His teachings later influenced modern thinkers like Iqbal, who embraced Rumi's vision while also expanding upon it, highlighting their shared affinities and subtle differences in the interpretation of self-realization and spiritual love.

Mualana Rumi the great spiritual guide, seer, poet and thinker was born at Balkh on September 1207 A.D. His father—Bahauddin was much respected among the people of Balkh, but when he realize that the rulers no longer like him. He decided to migrate from his native land. The historians disagree about the exact date of his migration and the age of Mualana Rumi. According to some of them he was five years old, while the other historian age 12 years. But all of them agree that he was very young when his family left Balkh.

Once Rumi's family left their native land, they moved from place to place. They went to Nishapur, Baghdad, Mecca, Maltia and finally to Konya.

In eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D., the Muslim world was passing through a bloody and turbulent period of history. The centre of the Muslim world—Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongols. Consequently, small states came in existence. The rulers of such small Muslim states used to patronize scholars and artists. In the Asia Minor the state of Konya (Rum) was ruled by the Seljuk Sultan—Allaudin. Rumi's father requested him for asylum and he granted it. The history witnessed that when the Seljuk State of Rum was destroyed, then from it reins—a great saint rose whose radiance enlightened at first the Muslim world and now even the West is enchanted by his poetry and wisdom.

The Sufism had emerged atleast three hundred years before Rumi's appearance. It reached its peak in twelfth and thirteenth century. The afore-mentioned observation is strengthened by the fact the Imam Ghazali (1111A.D), Ibn Arabi (1240A.D) and Rumi (1207-1273)— the towering figures of Sufism emerged in 12th and 13th centuries. The great Sufi poets like Sanai (1150), Farid-ud-din Attar (1230A.D) and Rumi belonged to the same period. However, even among these giants Rumi's unique status and stature cannot be denied, because on one hand he was an established Sufi and on the other hand, he was an inspiring thinker and a poet of unsurpassed literary beauty.

Rumi was of the Turkish origin. His father was an Uzbek Turk and his mother was a Khwarizmi Turk. So his other-tongue was Turkish, but his poetry's language was Persian. This diversity of

psycho-linguistics added richness to his poetry and thought instead of showing to be a negative factor.

Rumi's father passed away when he was probably twenty or twenty-four. At-first he was educated by his father and later on by his father's student—Burhan-ud-din Mohaqiq. He studied the Quran and other Islamic disciplines as well as the Greek philosophy. After the death of his teacher Mohaqiq he assumed the title of "*Sheekh*". After 1240 A.D he directed his attention on the individuals with spiritual potential. Among such individual first of all he was attracted by Shams Tabrazi (1242-44A.D), who appeared out of blue and disappeared one day without leaving any trace behind. But he changed Rumi for ever. His son had written about his spiritual revaluation in detail. It was said that Mavelvia Sufi order and the practice of Sama started in memory of Shams Tabrazi.

After few years of Shams Tabrazi's disappearance Rumi paid attention to Saleh-ud-din Zarkob. He remained centre of his affection for seven or eight years. Later on his favourite companion was Hussam-ud-din who stayed with him till his death. He continued as a scribe of *Mathanni* and Rumi mentioned him in *Mathanni* with love and affection again and again.

No doubt that he was a seeker of truth and reality, but as a person his qualities of sincerest affection, humility and compassion were outstanding traits of his personality. On account of such traits Rumi was loved and respects by everybody.

Four Stages of His Life

Rumi's life consisted of four phases:—

- (a) His life as an ordinary cleric, doctor of Islamic law and teacher of Islamic disciplines.
- (b) His encounter with Shams Tabrazi and the question put by Shams which he could not answer. The question was: Why Bayazid tasted one drop of Divine love and was Satisfied, but Mohammad (Peace be upon him) continued to feel thirsty." Rumi was wonder-struck and could not find the answer. According to another tradition Rumi's books were thrown by Shams into water and he was perturbed. He told Shams that he did know how precious those books were, because; he did know about their contents. Then Shams took them out of water and they were neither wet nor damaged in any way. Rumi asked

Shams how he managed to do that. Shams replied, “How this is something your don’t know.” At that moment he realized that despite his claim of knowledge there were so many things about which he did not know. Although both the stories differed about the thought provoking questions put by Shams, but both of them indicate Rumi’s inability to answer the question or questions and his realization that he was totally ignorant of many truths.

- (c) The third period of his life can be titled as “*Sobbat*”—a period of friendship with Shams. During that phase he came to know the secrets of heart and love through the companionship of Shams. He felt the Divine presence in the form of Shams. However, the period of ‘*sobbat*’ lasted only for two years. Then Shams disappeared forever.
- (d) The disappearance of Shams opened another chapter of life in Rumi’s life. He experienced agony beyond words, but he found that true love was strengthened and intensified through separation and sorrow. All these emotions were expressed in his ‘*Divan*’ dedicated to Shams and named as *Divan-i-Shams* Tabrazi.
- (e) The final stage of his spiritual journey was the discovery of all-inclusive divine love. No doubt, he suffered the depths of sorrow; but he came out of it and reached the idea of religion of love and practice of the path.

Rumi’s works

Rumi’s works included *Divan-e-Shams Tabrazi*, *Mathanwi* and *Rubaiyat*.

Mathanwi *Manwi*’s first part was written and completed from 1258 to 1261 A.D. The second part was finished in 1263A.D. The rest of the four parts were complete by 1273A.D and that is the date of his death.

Divan-e-Shams included almost 2500 lyrics. *Mathanwi* consisted 25000 verses. The number of *Rubaiyat* was probably 1600. The Western historian and critics considered ‘*Divan-e-Shams*’ far superior to *Mathnawi* from the point of view of literary craft. However, the oriental historians and critic gave preference to *Mahanwi* and considered it like a vast and deep sea containing pearl of wisdom for everyone. They maintained that *Mathanwi* was simplistic from one point of view and complex from another point

of view. Perhaps it was both, because; the life is both simple and complicated at the same time.

In *Mathanvi Manwi* was a mixture of Sufis' and poetic vision. Of course, there were many Sufi-poets of Persian language. For example, Senai and Farid-ud-din Attar's Sufi poetry were admired and appreciated. But Rumi's *Mathanvi* has a unique style and literary status. He in his *Mathanvi* expressed wisdom and gnosticisim in an incomparable way. Therefore, Rumi's *Mathanvi* was claimed to be the diamond of Persian literature. He used examples, metaphors and stories to simplify the philosophical concepts, ethical principles and Sufi teachings based on mystic experience. In the *Mathanvi* the main message 'love'— the love for God and humanity. He not only taught love for humanity, but also respect for all creatures and beings. In this respect a story was told. According to the story one day Rumi was going somewhere. On his way he led to pass through a very narrow lane. A dog was sleeping right in the middle of the lane. A companion of wanted to kick the dog to wake him up and to clear the passage to facilitate Maulana Rumi. However, he was not permitted by Rumi who did not want to disturb the sleeping dog. So he sat on the doorsteps of a house in the lane and waited for the dog to complete his sleep. Such stories depicted his respect for all beings. In short, the *Mathanvi* reflected the fundamental Islamic beliefs, the philosophical questions of Muslim philosophy and the teachings of Sufism.

Rumi's Concept of Love:

It had been already discussed that Rumi's spiritual journey finally led him to the religion of love. In this it would be pertinent to raise the question: "What was Rumi's concept of love?"— In order to find a comprehensive answer to the question the following points should be kept in mind:—

(a) Rumi did not used the word 'love' in the sense in which it was taken in he common usage. It was an all-inclusive concept for him. It was neither physical nor conventional. His concept of love was spiritual in nature and its object was God and all his creations.

(b) According to Rumi 'love' was not just an emotional experience but an existential experience. In other words, for him it involved totality of being. In psychological terms, it involved not only feelings i.e., affective aspect of human mind, but also cognition. So love was also a source of knowledge. Finally, in his opinion it motivated action and led to a way of life or as Rumi called it i.e., "practice".

(c) Rumi believed that ‘love’ was a revelation of truth and reality through separation and sorrows. The heart should become mellow through separation and pain to achieve the ability to love God and humanity.

(d) Rumi maintained that ‘love’ was unconditional, and boundless. Its objective was not to achieve anything for our self.

(e) According to Rumi love was a means i.e., open a direct channel between the Ultimate Reality and the human beings which enables them to ‘see’ and understand. In his poetic words, “The windows of my soul opens and the Book (the Quran) comes to me directly from the original source.”

(f) Rumi held to opinion that the experience of love led to rebirth and purification of heart that meant shedding of false idols of vanity, identity and negativity. With purification and understanding love grows and the lover’s experience is intense ecstasy.

Rules of Love/the Practice:

Rumi pointed out that certain rules or guidelines had to be followed in the practice or the religion of love. For instance, remembrance or *dhikr* (ذکر). Its object was to remind us of the pre-eternal covenant (عهد الست), when God addressed our souls and asked, “Am I not your Lord,” and we all said, ‘Yes’. *Dhikr* was essential because; in the business of the worldly affairs the people had forgotten the covenant.

The other guidelines in Rumi’s religion of love or ‘the practice’ were listening, silence and experiencing sorrow. There are calls or signs from the Divine Reality if we listen carefully. They were the messages or telegrams in codes for those who understand and love. If Divine love governs our heart then people would rise beyond beliefs, identities and doubts.

According to Rumi we must learn language of silence. He taught that words were enemy of our soul. He believed that in silence we listen well. He also believed in extension of the threshold of human perception possible only through listening in silence, and that making our understanding strong and lucid. In his opinion sorrow and silence both were preparations for love and unity of being, i.e., *taubeed* (توحيد). For him *taubeed* of being meant reconciliation of the opposites in the self, and life. In his opinion

music, dance, and poetry were support systems in human life. Life meant clash of the opposites and love meant achieving harmony and trust in the spiritual reality which helped in suffering and sorrow.

Sama:

Since Rumi considered music, dance and poetry as support system in spiritual life of man, it became essential to discuss his practice of *sama*. The term '*sama*' and its practice was common before Rumi's times. Basically, it was a form of *dhikr* (ذِكْر). In other words, remembrance of God—a spiritual concert consisting of prayer, song and music. It was practiced by Sufis of various orders. However, Mevlevi order credited it to Rumi. According to one story of its origin, one day he was passing through the *bazaar* and the gold beaters were beating the gold. It is said that he was stunned by the sound, because; he could clearly hear the *dhikr* within the beating of he gold. He clearly heard: لا اله الا الله (Translation: The is no God but Allah). The *dhikr* was so rhythmic that Rumi was entranced and in happiness—overjoyed he started whirling. With that Melevi order and its peculiar form of *Sama* including the dance of the whirling dervishes, were born.

The Melevi whirling dervishes were the best known practioners. They used to be young men who moved as a group in a circle, while also spinning individual symbolically, the dance of whirling dervishes represent man's spiritual ascent through love to perfection. That the dance depicted the follower's evolution and return as a mature man to love and serve the whole humanity and creations of God. Rumi himself relaed his form of *Sama* to *Haji*. Both had the same goal to bring the practioners closer to God.

The *sama* of various Sufi orders consisted of singings and music; but all instruments were not used. For example, in Mevlevi *sama* only flutes were used so *sama* consisted of music, dance and poetry i.e., Sufi poetry. The listener's heart must be pure and without lust. His heart should be full of love of God. The verses of the Quran were never used in the practice of *sama*, because; they were sacred.

The objective of *sama* was to get closer to Allah by focusing on melodies and dancing. The purpose was to stimulate love of God. The practice of same was a way not to arouse emotions, but to feel the presence of God in one's heart. Consequently, the doubts would disappear and direct communicate with God would be

possible. However, the immediate goal was to attain the state of *wajd* (وجد) and that meant a trance like state of ecstasy. Sometime it caused unexpected physical movements or agitations and a state of spiritual drunkenness known as *wajid* (وجد). Sometimes *wajid* leads to fainting or even death. However, usually the participants were silent, still and controlled unless *wajid* occurs. Moreover, it was presumed that the state of *wajid* should be genuine and not fake. Otherwise, no genuine spiritual results would be achieved. Although majority of the Suni Ulema were against it; but Ghazali considered it an aid to the enrichment of religious life as long as the heart was pure. The view was expressed in Ghazali's book—'The *Achemy of Happiness*' (کیمیائے سعادت).

Ontology and Psychology of Rumi:

Rumi was not only a practicing Sufi and poet but also a thinker. He had expressed his percepts and concepts in the well-known tradition of the Muslim philosophical dialectical terminology. He maintained that human beings had two aspects representing two principles. One aspect was physical and its representative was human body. The other aspect was spiritual and it was presented by the human soul. The human body was bound by space and time. But the soul was not limited by such barriers. It transcends them. It was non-dimensional dimension of time. Rumi held that the human soul possessed the Divine attributes of being timeless and spaceless.

The above-mentioned ontology of Rumi led to a theory of psychology. In the terms of modern psychology human soul means 'self' and that is open to development. The self has a number of possibilities. In Sufi terminology 'self' meant '*Nafs*' (نفس) and it was capable of evolution. The Sufis believed that the goal of spiritual journey was to achieve *Nafs-e-Mutmena* (نفس مطمئنہ) or what the modern psychology would call an integrated personality.

Rumi described the different components of human psyche as followings:—

- (a) Instincts
- (b) Reason
- (c) Intuition
- (d) Love

Besides Rumi the other Muslim thinkers described the chemistry of human psyche and considered instincts, intellect and intuition as essential parts of human psyche; but they did not mention 'love' as a distinct part. However, for Rumi love, the capacity to love and its experience was what distinguished human psyche, because; it was not just a sentiment, but totality of existential experience. According to Rumi as instincts were inborn and reason i.e., to rationalize was a natural tendency of the human beings, so was the thirst, desire to love and to feel love was inherent in the human nature.

The Self-realization/Transformation:

Rumi laid emphasis on self-realization According to him 'nafs' (نفس) had all possibilities and potentialities hidden within. It depended on human beings to discover and develop them. However, he did not consider it an easy task. In this respect it would be essential to study and keep in mind his concept of 'fana' (فنا). Its literal meaning was considered to be 'extinction'. In traditional Sufi literature it stood for the doctrine that on the path or 'tariqqa' an individual loses his individual self. Evidently it was a negative sense. But for Rumi it meant destruction of those experiences, tendencies and mental states which bar or hinder the revelation of the real self. For Rumi it also meant—liberation from the conventional self.

According to R.A. Nicholson's¹ commentary (p.20):

In other words, cleaning one's own consciousness of what Rumi calls 'fictions, false, idols, greed, envy, jealousy, grief and anger.' Consequently the heart would be mirror like to reflect the reality within, and achieving the state of *Baqa* (بقاء) by attaining the divine attributes.

Rumi maintained that transformation of self meant rebirth again and again. In other words, the spiritual maturity was the fruit of being born again and again. He expressed great respect for the person who was born atleast twice. Thus he says:

چوں روم بار آدمی زاده بزاد

پائے خود بر فرق علت هائے نهاد

(Translation: When a son of man is born twice, he plants his foot upon the head of all causes).²

The conclusion of) Thus for Rumi the rebirth was ‘*baqa*’ and destructing the previous conventional self was ‘*fana*’.

Freedom of Will and *Tawakkal*:

Rumi also believed that choices have to be made and responsibilities have to be fulfilled. He clearly advocated freedom of will as a pre-condition of the virtuous action. In the psychological terms it meant a person’s ability to perform voluntary actions. According to Titus³ (Ethics Today) it is the person expressing himself in action.

Rumi further explained that one could acquire freedom of will be developing his personality. So he says

امر و نہی و خشم و تشریف و عتب
نیست جز مختار را اے پاک حبیب

(Translation: Command and prohibition, and anger and conferment of honour and repuke concern him (only) who possess the power of choice, O pure – bosomed one.).⁴

The directed our attention to the Quran which commanded us to do certain actions and prohibited us not to do certain actions. How could Allah command us— the human beings and consider us accountable if we were not free. After all commands cannot be issued to a marble rock which cannot follow them. In Rumi’s words:

جملہ قرآن امر و نیست
امر کردن سنگِ مرمر را کہ دید^۵

(*Mathnawi*, I, 3026).

Although Rumi was firm believer in the freedom of will, yet he preached ‘*tawakkul*’ (توکل):

گفت آرے گر توکل رہبرست
ایں سبب ہم سنتِ پیغمبرست^۶

His view of *tawakkul* was not conventional. Therefore it was not negative. Of course, it meant completes trust in God, but according to him it did not mean that we should not endeavour or just sit and wait. We should strive and try our best and then trusting God we should hope for that result which would prove best or better in the long run.

Rumi and Iqbal:

Iqbal supported Rumi's stand point about *tawakkul* and said:

مومن از عزم و توکل قاهر است
گر نه دارد این دو جوهر کافر است^۷

[اقبال-پس چه باید کرد(مثنوی)]

In the terms of philosophical debates between Determinism and Indeterminism, it can be concluded that Rumi and Iqbal supported the middle view. Both of them believed in self-determinism. As self-determinists they hold the view that man was capable of perpetual initiative and response. He possessed the ability to reshape himself and to redirect the processes of the out-world within limits. The human beings, according to them were not dead matter or vegetables or even animals, because of their quality of self-consciousness and the ability to choose. Rumi in his *Mathnawi* said:

گردش او را نه اجر و نه عتاب
که اختیار آمد هنر وقت حساب^۸

[مثنوی معنوی، III، ۳۲۸]

Rumi's main argument against determinism (جر) was that reward for good deeds and punishment for evil promised by God in the Quran would become meaningless if the human being were not free to choose between good and evil. He also rejected the notion of pre-destination and maintained that those who shirked their responsibilities and attributed their failures to God, were devil's advocate. In attributing their misfortunes and wrong doing to Allah, they followed the footsteps of the Satan who attributed his sin (disabodience) to Him.

Iqbal also believed in self-determinism. In *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he said:

To live is to reshape and change ends and purposes, and to achieve them. There is a progressive formation of ends and purposes as life grows and expands. ⁹ (*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 54)

Rumi presented the thesis that 'jabbar' and freedom were synthesized in the love of God. He expressed it in his *Mathanwi*.

For example the following verse reflected the afore-mentioned view:

لفظ جرم عشق را بے صبر کرد
و آن کہ عاشق نیست جبر کرد^۱

[*Mathamwi*, I, 1463-1466-مثنوی معنوی]

a. Affinities:

Most of the orientalist as well as some of the Pakistani and Indian intellectual, emphasis the influence of the Western thinkers on Iqbal's thought. They seemed to ignore the impact of the Muslim intellectual tradition much closer and similar to Iqbal's thought. For instance, they totally overlooked the great influence of Rumi whom Iqbal himself declared his spiritual guide. Therefore it would be enlightening to describe the basic affinities between the two thinkers and to trace the extent of Rumi's influence on Iqbal's thought. In the following section of the article we would like to point out the similarities between the teacher Rumi and the disciple-Iqbal.

Rumi and Iqbal described the value of *Ishq* (عشق) and its various dimensions in similar way. For example both of them hold the opinion that *Ishq* was a great motivational force leading to self-realization. In this respect Rumi maintained:

عشق نانِ مرده رازی جاں کند
جاں کہ فانی بود جاویداں کند^۲

(*Mathamwi*, I, 2012)

Similarly, Iqbal says:

از محبت چوں خودی محکم شود
قوتش فرمان ده عالم شود^۳

When Rumi celebrated love's healing power and asserted:

شادباش اے عشق خوش سودائے ما
اے طیب جملہ علت ہائے ما^۴

(*Mathamwi*, ii, 330)

Iqbal endorsed it by saying:

مرض کہتے ہیں سب اس کو یہ ہے لیکن مرض ایسا
چھپا جس میں علاج گردش چرخ کہن بھی ہے^{۱۴}

[بانگِ در، ص ۵۲]

Rumi held the view that transformation of the self was possible through *Ishq*.

از محبت مردہ زندہ می کنند
از محبت شاہ بندہ می کنند^{۱۵}

(Translation: Through love dead rise o life and the king become a slave.) (*Mathamvi*, ii, 1531)

Iqbal followed the same trail by saying:

از محبت می شود پائندہ تر
زندہ تر، سو زندہ تر، تابہ تر^{۱۶}

(Translation: By love it is made more lasting, more loving more glowing.)

For Rumi and Iqbal separation and sorrow strengthened our love and ourselves.

خام را جز آتش ہجر و فراق^{۱۷}

(*Mathamvi*, I, 3058)

In the same way Iqbal claimed:

تو نہ شناسی ہنوز، عشق بمیرد ز وصل
چہیت حیاتِ دوام، سو ختنِ ناتمام^{۱۸}

(*Payam-e-Mashriq*, p. 87)

(Translation> You don't know that union kills love. What is immortal life but burning constantly.)

Iqbal repeated the same idea in *Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadeed*:

جدائی عشق را آئینہ دار است
جدائی عاشقان را سازگار است^{۱۹}

(*Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadeed*, p. 158)

(Translation: Separation is a token of love. It suits the nature of lovers.)

The dialectic love and intellect or reason had been present in the Sufism since the beginning. Rumi, though celebrated the religion of love, but he recognized the value of intellect for the development of the self. According to him though *Ishq* was supreme, yet intellect was very important for human beings and human life. In *Mathnawi*²⁰ (iv. 1965) he asserted that its fountains was in the midst of the soul and considered it a gift of God.

Rumi's above-mentioned point of view was based on the saying of the Holy Prophet according to that saying the Prophet (Pbuh) prayed, "O God! Grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things." No doubt the Quran attached great importance of reflection, i.e., *al-tafukkur* (التفكير). Perhaps in English it meant 'mediation'. However, R.A. Nicholson²¹ maintained that Rumi did not make any distinction, between love and knowledge. In other words, Rumi considered them inseparable.

What was Iqbal's standpoint on the above-mentioned issue? Although the common perception about Iqbal's view was that he favoured *Ishq* than reason (*Aqal*). The basis of the perception was Iqbal's poetry which seemed to advocate supremacy of *Ishq* over reason; but the study of his lectures would lead to the conclusion that like Rumi, he mentioned different sources of knowledge including sense-perception, reason and intuition. Intuition for him was knowledge based neither on senses nor reason. Its source was feeling or in the Quranic word *Qalb* (قلب). However, in the end he pointed out that intuitive knowledge was the higher form of intellect. Their root was the same, but function difference...

Another concept shared by Rumi and Iqbal was that of *faqir* (فقر). In classical Sufism it was considered a preparatory stage of the 'Path' on *Tariqqa* (طريقه). In the beginning of Sufism it was understood in its literal sense i.e., 'having no thing'. Later on the term was spiritualized and *faqir* was understood to be a "a person who does not need anything, but whom everything needs." Junaied Baghdadi attributed the above-mentioned connotation to the word '*faqiri*'. Thus making the word a positive term or value.

The classical literature of the Muslims specially the literature of Persian language depicted '*Gada*' (گدا) opposing '*Shah*'. *Faqir* became a symbol of protest against wealth, power and tyranny.

In Rumi's own words his *mathnawi* was a shop of '*faqir*'.

ہر دکانِ راست سوائے دگر
مثنوی دکانِ فقرست اے پر ۲۲

Hence for Rumi 'faqr' was a way of living which was the result of a particular attitude towards economic and social aspects of life. In Rumi's opinion 'faqr' was important to the development of self.

Iqbal endorsed Rumi's view and considered it vital for self-realization. Iqbal said that the trait of faqir made a person independent, self-sufficient and morally pure. He too took it as a way life. For him it was an attitude towards religious, social, economic and moral aspects of life. It was an attitude towards life and that was not dependent on a person's economic status.

b. Differences

In short Iqbal and Rumi had almost similar understanding of the experience of love and its different dimensions. However, there were differences as well between the two thinkers and those could not be ignored. Some of the differences were the followings:-

(a) For Rumi 'Ishq' was basically 'Divine love' and urge for the evolution of the spiritual plane. But Iqbal means by love the passion for creation and the conquest of the natural forces.

(b) Rumi reflected the height of emotion and the experience of ecstasy in his love-poetry, specially in *Divan-i-Shams*. Such Spiritual states were rarely expressed by Iqbal in his poetry.

(c) The theoretical presentation of the concept of *Ishq* was more lucid, comprehensive and logical in Iqbal's thought than in Rumi's writings.

(d) In the case of Iqbal the political dimension of the human beings was very prominent. It was not in Rumi's philosophy.

(e) Although both of them believed that life was essentially strife, but Rumi's point of view was that it was the conflict within the self because of the inherent contradictions of the human nature itself. According to Rumi both Moses and Pharaoh were present in the human self. Raza Arasteh²³ clarified the fore-mentioned paradox of human nature mentioned by Rumi. He directed our attention to the map of human psyche given by Rumi which contain animal instincts as well as rationality. Often those two were at cross purposes. Rumi told us to go beyond them and transcend

to achieve *nafs-e-mutma'ina* (نفس مطمئنة). In other word for Rumi harmony within was a sign of a mature developed self.

Iqbal on the other hand expressed the opinion that the major challenges and struggle for the human beings were external forces by which meant Nature and Society. Consequently, he preached the conquest of Nature, social transformation and development.

(f) Iqbal like Rumi was aware of the importance of 'faqr' for the development of the self. However, he broadened the concept by extending it to the intellectual self-sufficiency and originality. For example he said:

اغیار کے افکار و تخیل کی گدائی
کیا تجھ کو نہیں اپنی خودی تک بھی رسائی^{۲۳}

(ضربِ کلیم، ص ۱۲۲)

Conclusion:

To sum up, we would like to concluded this brief comparative study of Rumi and Iqbal by pointing out that though there were so many affinities between them, yet the generation gap was evident. Iqbal appeared long after Rumi in a different age and part of the world. Although both of them based their thought on the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. Consequently they were led to a number of uniform conclusions. But the historical distance, cultural difference and individual bent of mind were responsible for their conceptual framework and somewhat different complexion of their thought.

Notes and References

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- ¹² Iqbal, *Asrar-e-Khudi*, p. 25.
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- ¹⁴ Iqbal, *Bang-e-Dra*, p. 52
- ¹⁵ Rumi, *Mathanwi*, ii, 1531
- ¹⁶ Iqbal, *Asrare-Khudi*, p. 18
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- ¹⁸ Iqbal, *Payam-e-Mashriq*, p. 87
- ¹⁹ Iqbal, *Gulshan-e-Raz-e-jadeed*, p. 1
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DIVINE GUIDANCE AND MISGUIDANCE:
THE ROLE OF PROPHETS, SATANS, AND
MORAL CHOICE IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT

William C. Chittick

ABSTRACT

This article explores the dualistic nature of divine guidance and misguidance within Islamic theology, with a focus on the role of prophecy as a means of divine communication. It posits that God's guidance is supreme, but that misguidance, embodied by Satan, serves a necessary role in giving meaning to human moral choice. The coexistence of prophets and satans is presented as essential to the cosmic order, as the existence of evil is required to define good, and distance from God highlights the value of nearness to Him. The article discusses how prophets, including Adam, Moses, and Muhammad (Peace be upon them), represent divine guidance, while satanic figures—both human and jinn—manifest misguidance. Humans are given the freedom to choose between these paths, a freedom rooted in their creation in the divine form and their responsibility to uphold the "Trust." The article emphasizes the universality of the message of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God) brought by all prophets, though it recognizes differences in the secondary messages tailored to different communities. It also delves into the tension between religious exclusivism and the pluralism implied in the Qur'ānic acknowledgment of Jews and Christians as recipients of divine guidance. In examining the relationship between human freedom, moral responsibility, and the paths of guidance and misguidance, the article underscores the Qur'ānic perspective that true salvation is attained through personal accountability, the rejection of false pride, and adherence to divine guidance. Through this, it critiques modern religious and political exclusivism, pointing out the importance of humility and self-reflection, and warning against the divisive "I am better than he" mentality that characterizes the actions of Iblis.

Prophecy is the means whereby God offers guidance to human beings through human intermediaries. Just as God's mercy takes precedence over his wrath and thereby determines the nature of wrath, so also God's guidance takes precedence over his misguidance. Guidance itself demands the existence of misguidance. Without the misguidance that is embodied by Satan, the prophetic messages would be meaningless. Without distance, there can be no nearness; without wrong, no right; without darkness, no perception of light. All the distinctions that allow for a cosmos to exist depend upon the diversification and differentiation of the divine qualities. On the moral and spiritual level, this diversification becomes manifest through the paths of guidance and misguidance, represented by the prophets and the satans.

Wherever there have been prophets, there have been satans. The Qur'ān uses the word satans to refer both to some of the jinn and to some human beings. To be a satan is to be an enemy of the prophets and an embodiment of misguidance:

We have appointed to every prophet an enemy-satans from among mankind and jinn, revealing fancy words to each other as delusion. Yet, had thy Lord willed, they would never have done it. So leave them with what they are fabricating. (6:112)

Just as Adam, our father and the first prophet, was faced with Iblis, so also we are faced with Iblis, his offspring, and their followers. Misguidance is a universal phenomenon, found in the outside world and within ourselves. In the same way, guidance is a universal phenomenon. In other words, the human race is inconceivable without both prophets and satans, because human beings are defined by the freedom they received when they were made in the divine form. They are able to choose among the divine attributes, because all the divine attributes are found within themselves. Just as they can choose God's right hand by following guidance, so also they can choose his left hand by following misguidance. Without that choice, they would not have been free to accept the Trust.

As we have seen,¹ the fundamental message of the prophets is *tawhīd*. In the Islamic perspective, all prophets have brought the first Shahādah: "We never sent a messenger before thee save that We revealed to him, saying, There is no god but I, so worship Me" (21:25). In contrast to the first Shahādah, which designates a divine

guidance that is embodied by all prophets, the second Shahādah refers to the domain of the specific message brought by Muhammad. Other prophets had their own messages that correspond to the second Shahādah:

Every nation has its messenger. (10:47)

We have sent no messenger saw with the tongue of his people. (14:4)

To every one of you [messengers] We have appointed a right way and an open road. (5:48)

The Qur'ān insists that Muslims should not differentiate among the prophets of God. Each prophet, after all, was sent by God with guidance, and the primary message of each is the same:

Say: We have faith in God, and in that which has been sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them, and to Him we have submitted (2:136; cf. 2:285, 3:84)

The Qur'ān tells us in several verses that the later prophets came to confirm the messages of the earlier prophets:

And when Jesus son of Mary said, "Children of Israel, I am indeed God's messenger to you, confirming the Torah that has gone before me. . . ." (61:6)

He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as guidance to the people. (3:3)

At the same time, the Qur'ān makes clear that the details of the messages differ. Any distinction that can be made among the messengers has to be made on the basis of the difference in their messages:

And those messengers— some We have preferred above others. Among them was he to whom God spoke, and He raised some in degrees. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear explications, and We confirmed him with the Holy Spirit (2:253)

And We have preferred some prophets over others, and We gave David the Psalms. (17:55)

The idea that every messenger comes with a message that is specific to the people to whom he was sent and that differs in details from other messages is deeply rooted in the Islamic consciousness and is reflected in the titles that are customarily given to the great messengers in Islamic texts. Each title designates the special quality of the messenger that distinguishes him from other messengers. Thus, one of the verses just quoted refers to him "to whom God spoke." Most commentators think that this is a reference to Moses, to whom Islamic sources give the title *kalīm*

(speaking companion), because God spoke to him from the burning bush without the intermediary of Gabriel, and because the Qur'ān says, "And unto Moses We spoke directly" (4:164). But the commentators add that it may also refer to Adam, to whom God spoke in the Garden, and to Muhammad, to whom God spoke during Muhammad's ascent to God (the *mi'raj*). In a similar way, Jesus is usually called God's "spirit" and Abraham his "close friend" (*khalīl*).

In Islamic countries, especially among people untouched by modern education, there is a common belief that all religions accept the first Shahādah, but that each religion has a specific second Shahādah that differs from that of the Muslims. Thus it is thought that the Christians say, "There is no god but God and Jesus is the spirit of God," while the Jews say, "There is no god but God and Moses is God's speaking companion."

The Qur'ān recognizes explicitly that, although the first Shahādah never changes, the domain covered by the second Shahādah differs from message to message. Hence, all the laws that are proper to Jews, for example, are not necessarily proper for Christians, nor do the rulings of the Muslim Shari'ah have any universality (despite the claims of some Muslims). For example, in the following verse, God explains that the Jews have prohibitions that do not apply to Muslims:

And to the Jewry We have forbidden every beast with claws; and of oxen and sheep We have forbidden them the fat of them, saw what their backs carry, or their entrails, or what is mingled with the bone. (6:146)

Similarly, the Qur'ān places the following words, which are directed at the Children of Israel, in Jesus' mouth, thus indicating that his Shari'ah differs from that of Moses.

[I have been sent] to confirm the truth of the Torah that is before me, and to make lawful to you certain things that before were forbidden unto you. (3:50)

An often recited prayer at the end of Sura 2 of the Qur'ān says, "Our Lord . . . charge us not with a burden such as Thou didst lay upon those before us" (2:286). The commentators say that this refers to the Torah, which is a heavy burden, in contrast to the Muslim Shari'ah, which, in the words of a hadith, is "easy, congenial" (*sahl, samh*).

One of the most delightful expressions of the differing messages entrusted to the prophets is found in the standard accounts of the Prophet's ascent to God, the *mi'raj*. As we saw earlier, Muhammad

met a number of prophets on his way up through the heavens. When he met God, God gave him instructions for his community. On the way back down, Muhammad stopped in each heaven to bid farewell to the prophets. In the sixth heaven, right below the seventh, he met Moses. Moses asked him what sort of acts of worship God had given him for his community. He replied that God had given him fifty *ṣalāts* per day. Moses told him that he had better go back and ask God to lighten the burden. He knew from sorry experience that the people would not be able to carry out such difficult instructions. The Prophet continues:

I went back, and when He had reduced them by ten, I returned to Moses. Moses said the same as before, so I went back, and when He had reduced them by ten more, I returned to Moses...

Finally, after Muhammad had moved back and forth between God and Moses several times, God reduced the *ṣalāts* to five. Moses then said to Muhammad:

Your people are not capable of observing five ṣalāts. I have tested people before your time and have laboured earnestly to prevail over the Children of Israel. So go back to your Lord and ask Him to make things lighter for your people.

But by this point, the Prophet was too embarrassed to continue asking for reductions. Hence he said: “I have asked my Lord till I am ashamed, but now I am satisfied and I submit.”

Nowadays, discussion of Islamic teachings about prophecy can quickly raise emotions among Muslims. Probably the main reason for this is that in many Islamic countries, religion plays a far greater role in daily life than it does in Europe and America. Hence, generally speaking, political positions are posed in religious terms, and opposition to the policies of other countries can take the form of criticism of other religions.

A second factor that helps keep emotions high in discussions of prophecy is that modernized Muslims commonly take the attitude—as do many people in the West as well—that it is not they who are at fault. Shortcomings must belong to other people, and so whatever the problem may be, the blame must lie in the opponent’s court. This attitude is common throughout the world. For those who recognize the truth of myth, it is highly significant that Iblis was the first person to put the blame in the other’s court. It is he who said, “Now, because You have led me astray....” (7:16). If people followed the example of Adam and Eve, they would look more closely at themselves and find room to recognize that “We have wronged ourselves” (7:23).

Do not think that Iblis's position is found only in politics. It is an everyday reality for all of us. For example, think about the way in which students react when they receive their grades. It is not uncommon to hear someone say, "I got an A in physics, but that lousy English teacher gave me a C." This is Iblis's reaction— the light is mine, but he led me astray. I did good, but any evil is someone else's fault. The reaction of Adam and Eve would be the following: "How kind of that physics teacher to give me an A, but I really messed up in English and received a C-, so I will have to work much harder to make up for my own shortcomings."

In short, in the contemporary political situation, ideology is often posed in terms of the war of good against evil. In such a situation, those who would stress the universality of the Qur'ānic message rarely meet with much success. It is too easy to think that the other guy is at fault and we are fine. And in order to think that way, it is necessary to forget that God's mercy extends to all creatures. If people did remember that God's mercy takes precedence over his wrath, they might have to start searching for faults in themselves and to leave the others to God. They might have to accept that the C- was a gift and that they should have flunked.

Judaism and Christianity

The Qur'ānic depiction of the role of prophets in human history is highly nuanced. On the basis of the Qur'ānic text, we can neither claim that Islam has exclusive rights to the truth nor that other religions are valid without qualification. Rather, all prophets have come with the truth from God, but their followers do not always observe the teachings that the prophets brought. Hence, the Qur'ān frequently criticizes the followers of the two religions with which the early Muslim community had contact, Judaism and Christianity. It maintains that many Jews and Christians have not lived up to God's message to them, a point that has been made by Jewish and Christian reformers throughout history.

Many Muslims would like to make this a universal judgment against other religions, claiming that Islam is the only valid religion left on the face of the earth and forgetting that there is no reason to suppose that Islam is exempt from the same sorts of distortion. Other Muslims do not agree with the sweeping condemnations that fundamentalists of all religious persuasions issue against their perceived enemies. There is, in short, no consensus among contemporary or past Muslims on the issue of Islam and other

religions. But the Qur'ān and the classical commentaries offer plenty of room for a view of things that is full of subtlety and nuance.

Among the general statements the Qur'ān makes about the religions brought by the prophets is the following, found in two places in the text:

Those who have faith, and those of the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans—whoso has faith in God and the Last Day and works wholesome deeds—their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they sorrow. (2:62, 5:69)

The key issue here, as should be obvious by now, is faith in God. In the Islamic view, faith in God demands *tawhīd*, and *tawhīd* is the message of all the prophets. To the extent that *tawhīd* is established, salvation is assured. So important is the first Shahādah, through which *tawhīd* is expressed, that a hadith found in one of the most reliable sources tells us, “He who dies knowing that there is no god but God will enter the Garden.” Notice that this hadith does not even mention faith. Simply to know the truth of *tawhīd* is sufficient. Another hadith makes a similar point. On the day of resurrection, God will busy himself with weighing good and evil deeds in the scales. The good deeds of each person will be put in one pan and the evil deeds in the other. If good deeds predominate, the person will go to paradise, but if evil deeds predominate, he or she will be thrown into hell. One of the people brought to be judged will be a Muslim who has ninety-nine scrolls listing his evil deeds:

God will say, “Do you object to anything in this? How My scribes who keep note wronged you?”

He will reply, No, my Lord.”

God will ask him if he has any excuse, and when he tells his Lord that he has none, He will say, ‘On the contrary, you have with Us one good deed, and you will not be wronged today.’

A document will be brought out containing “I witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger.” God will say, “Come to be weighed.”

The man will ask his Lord what this document is that is being brought along with the scrolls, and He will reply, “You will not be wronged.”

The scrolls will then be put on one side of the scale, and the document on the other, and the scrolls will become light and the document heavy, for nothing can compare in weight with God's name.

When the Qur'ān criticizes the followers of other religions, it is criticizing a perceived distortion of *tawhīd*. In doing so, it has

recourse to versions of Christian and Jewish teachings to which the followers of those religions do not necessarily subscribe.

To take a simple example, it is commonly said that the Qur'ān rejects the Christian concept of the Trinity. Inasmuch as the Trinity is understood as negating *tawḥīd*, this is true. But not all Christians think that the Trinity negates *tawḥīd*. Quite the contrary, most formulations of the Trinitarian doctrine are careful to preserve God's unity. If "threeness" takes precedence over oneness, then the Qur'ānic criticisms apply. But among Christians, the exact nature of the relationship between the three and the one is a point of recurring debate. One of the actual Qur'ānic verses that are taken as negating the Trinity says, "Those who say, 'God is the third of three' have become truth-concealers" (5:73). Even an elementary knowledge of any Christian catechism tells us that God is not "the third of three." Rather, God is one and three at the same time. Inasmuch as he is three, he presents himself to his creatures as three persons— Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Another Qur'ānic verse says something similar, but now we have this first verse to help us understand what is being criticized:

The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So have faith in God and His messengers, and do not say, 'Three.' Refrain; better it is for you. God is only One God. (4:171)

Notice that this passage gives Jesus an extremely exalted position and recognizes that he has qualities possessed by no other prophet.² However, it stresses once again that there is but a single God. If faith in Jesus leads to the affirmation of three gods, then the Qur'ān rejects that. But again, the actual Christian position is highly subtle, and few if any Christians would hold that they have faith in other than a single God.

Some Muslim commentators point out that there is nothing wrong in saying "three" so long as it does not mean that God is the *third of three*. If we say that God is the third of *two*, that is fine. The Qur'ān itself says as much:

Hast thou not seen that God knows whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is in the earth? Three men conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer than that, neither more than that, but He is with them, wherever they may be. Then He shall tell them what they have done, on the Day of Resurrection. Surely God has knowledge of everything. (58:7)

Another Christian concept that the Qur'ān criticizes vehemently is that Jesus should be God's son. The verse just cited that negates "three" continues by saying, "Glory be to Him— that He should have a son!" (4:171). Elsewhere the Qur'ān says, "How should He have a son, seeing that He has no female companion, and He created all things, and He has knowledge of everything?" (6:102).

Qur'ānic usage and the general Muslim understanding make clear that by son, Muslims understand not a symbol or a metaphor, but a physical son, born of a mother, God's supposed female companion. It may be that some Christians have thought that God has taken a wife, or that he somehow impregnated the Virgin Mary, giving birth to his son. But no Christian theologian has ever imagined such a thing. For Christians, Jesus' sonship is a reality, but it cannot be taken in a physical sense. The fact that Mary is often called the Mother of God does not help clear up the matter for Muslims, who have only the Qur'ānic text and popular misconceptions of an alien religion to go by.

That the idea of sonship is understood by Muslims in a literal sense is obvious, for example, in the short text of Sura 112, often called *Tawhīd*. Anyone who thinks about the implications of sonship and fatherhood will quickly understand that these are relative terms. Everyone who is a son is also (potentially at least) a father, and everyone who is a father is also a son, with the sole exception of Adam. Notice that in affirming *tawhīd*, the Qur'ān not only negates the idea that Jesus could have been God's son, but also the necessary correlative, that God could have been someone else's son, surely the ultimate absurdity in Muslim eyes:

Say: He is God, One-God, the Everlasting Refuge. He did not give birth, nor was He given birth to, and He has no equal.

Another very commonly repeated Qur'ānic criticism of Jews and Christians is that they have corrupted their scriptures and therefore invalidated the messages brought to them by the prophets. The Qur'ānic text, however, offers a more ambiguous answer to the question of other scriptures than Muslims may admit. The key Arabic term is *tahrif*, which means to turn something from its proper way, to distort, to alter. Do the following Qur'ānic verses refer to the actual text of the scriptures, or do they refer to the interpretation of the scriptures? Qur'ān commentators take both positions, thus allowing Muslims various alternatives in their attempts to understand the significance of the passage (we translate *tahrif* as "alter"):

Some of the Jews altered words from their meanings, saying, 'We have heard and we disobey'. . . . Had they but said, 'We hear and we obey,'. . . it would have been better for them. (4:46)

Notice that in this verse, the Qur'ān does not make a universal judgment, but rather criticizes some followers of the Jewish religion. If the point is interpretation, no one could take exception to this statement, since followers of every religion recognize that some of their co-religionists distort the meaning of scripture. Another verse is as follows:

So, because [the Jews] broke their compact, We cursed them and made their hearts hard, they alter words from their meanings, and they have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded of. (5:13)

Here, the Qur'ān connects the issue of textual distortion with guidance and misguidance. Those Jews who broke their covenant with God suffered hardening of their hearts as a divine punishment. Hardening of the heart is a term that the Qur'ān employs to refer to all the consequences of turning away from God. In general, it signifies a dulling of the intelligence and a weakening of the connection with the divine attributes of gentleness, mercy, and beauty. Those whose hearts became hardened fell into further distance from God and greater misguidance. Hence, they began to pervert the meaning of their own scriptures. The prophets had come to remind them, but they forgot some of what the prophets had told them. Their act of forgetting could possibly mean that some of the scripture was lost, but more likely it simply means that those with hardened hearts were unable to understand the meaning of the remembrance; that the divine message embodied in scripture.

In another verse on the same subject, the Qur'ān addresses the Prophet, telling him not to be so eager for the Jews in his environment to listen to his message:

Art thou then so eager that they should have faith in thee? But there was a group among them who listened to the Speech of God, then altered it knowingly, having understood it. (2:75)

This verse suggests that accepting Islam is not sufficient, if old habits such as reading scripture to one's own advantage are maintained. But again, this verse refers to "a group of them," not to all Jews.

Some of the polemically minded Muslim theologians investigated the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament looking for

evidence that Jews and Christians had distorted the text of their scriptures. The first to do this, and the one who was the most thorough and systematic in his approach, was the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). Given that the Islamic concept of scripture diverges from the Jewish and Christian idea in important respects, and given that the Jewish and Christian canons include a great variety of texts written at many different times and from many different perspectives, it is not surprising that the Muslim scholars found much to criticize. Moreover, these critics were often simply repeating what is found in polemical literature written by Jews and Christian sectarians, or by other, often pre-Islamic, critics of the Bible, who may have been Samaritans, Jewish-Christians, Karaites, Gnostics, Hellenistic philosophers, or Manicheans. Some historians of Islam have even suggested that the modern critical study of the Bible— which, of course, has been far more severe on the Bible than Muslims have— received many of its ideas through the intermediary of the Islamic polemical literature.³

The Qur'ān commonly refers to the messages given to messengers as 'books'; that is, scriptures. Hence, it refers to the followers of a messenger as "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*). In most of the thirty verses where the Qur'ān employs this expression, it seems to have in view the Christians and the Jews, the followers of the two religions with which the nascent Muslim community had contact. In two verses, it also mentions the "People of the Reminder" in the same meaning.

In many of the verses where the People of the Book are mentioned, the two sides of the Qur'ānic picture of pre-Islamic religion can easily be seen. Those who observe their scriptures are praiseworthy, while those who do not follow the messages that the prophets delivered to them are blameworthy:

Many of the People of the Book wish that they might restore you as truth-concealers, after your faith, because of the envy in their souls. (2:109)

Some of the People of the Book are a wholesome nation. They recite God's signs in the watches of the night, prostrating themselves, having faith in God and the Last Day, bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour, and vying with one another in good deeds. They are among the wholesome. Whatever good they do, they will not be denied its reward. (3:113-115)

The Qur'ān is especially critical of the enmity that Christians and Jews have toward each other. Since they accept the Book—*tanhīd* and prophecy— they should not quarrel. The first verse cited is especially interesting, since it makes a general criticism of all

those who would say that Judaism and Christianity have no foundation:

The Jews say, "The Christians stand on nothing." The Christians say, "The Jews stand on nothing." But they recite the Book. Even so, those who have no knowledge say the like of what they say. (2:113)

Say: "O People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but God, and that we associate no others with Him, and that some of us do not take others as lords, apart from God." And if they turn their backs, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims."

People of the Book! Why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, until after him. What, have you no intelligence? (3:64-65)

There are many more verses of the Qur'ān that refer to Christianity and Judaism, but a thorough analysis would demand a major book. Enough has been said to provide the general picture.⁴

One more point, however, needs to be made in order to clarify a major difference in perspective between the Muslim and Christian view of things. For Christians, God's word is Christ, the "Word made flesh." The Gospels are inspired books written about Christ. The whole New Testament can take on the colour of God's word, but all this is secondary to Christ, who is the word incarnate. One can imagine a Christianity without the New Testament, sustained merely by an oral tradition. But one cannot imagine a Christianity without Christ.

For Muslims, God's Word is the Qur'ān, and Muhammad is simply the messenger. True, he is a perfect human being, God's vicegerent, and the model that God has designated for people to follow. But the message is the primary issue, not the messenger. One can imagine Islam without Muhammad, but not without the Qur'ān.

Muslims see other religions in terms of Islam, which in their eyes is the perfect religion. Of course, followers of other religions also look from their own perspective; this is not a quality unique to Muslims. Hence, Muslims expect other religions to have a book like the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān provides every reason for them to do so by referring to the Torah and the Gospel. But note that the Qur'ān mentions Gospel in the singular, not in the plural. It states repeatedly that Jesus, God's messenger, was given the Gospel as his message, just as Muhammad was given the Qur'ān. Hence, Muslims are immediately suspicious when they hear that there are four Gospels. This difference of perspective on the role of the human

and scriptural elements makes for endless misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims.

In order to sum up the Islamic view of other religions— Judaism and Christianity in particular— we can say the following: In reading the Qur'ān, many Muslims prefer to stress the passages that are critical of other religions and to ignore or explain away the verses that praise other religions. It cannot be denied that certain Qur'ānic verses provide a strong case for religious exclusivism. However, many Qur'ānic verses leave plenty of room for openness toward other religions. The position Muslims take on this issue depends largely on their own understanding of God's reality. Those who think that God's mercy really does take precedence over his wrath and embraces all those who try to follow his guidance find it easy to see God's guidance in all religions. In contrast, those who prefer to think of God as a stern and somewhat capricious master who issues orders and expects to be obeyed— no questions asked— are much more comfortable thinking that only they (their religious group, their political party) are among the saved.

Sometimes the best way to approach claims regarding exclusive possession of the truth is simply to laugh and to leave things in God's hands. Thus we conclude this section with an anecdote, told to us by one of the ulama many years ago.

Two Iranian scholars were discussing religion. One of them asked the other, "In the last analysis, who goes to paradise?" The other, a poet well known for his sense of humour, answered, "Well, it is really very simple. First, all religions other than Islam are obviously false, so we do not have to consider them. That leaves Islam. But among Muslims, some are Shi'ites and some Sunnis, and we all know that the Sunnis have strayed from the right path and will be thrown into hell. That leaves the Shi'ites. But among Shi'ites, there are the common people and the ulama. Everyone knows that the common people don't care about God and religion, so they will burn in the Fire. That leaves the ulama. But the ulama have become ulama in order to lord it over the common people. That leaves you and me. And I am not so sure about you."

Doesn't this kind of reasoning sound familiar? It is perhaps not wildly inaccurate to say that many of our contemporaries think this way, whether they be Muslims, Christians, Jews, scholars, scientists, politicians, or whatever. And this sort of position sounds suspiciously like that of Iblis, whose motto is, "I am better than he."

Notes and References

- ¹ This extract is from Dr. Chittick's illuminating study of the Islamic Tradition, *The Vision of Islam*, Paragon House, 1994, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, pp. 164-175. (Ed.)
- ² See the readable and informative study by H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- ³ Christians are often struck by this and other Qur'anic passages about Jesus, and some of the evangelically minded among them would like to find here an opening to convert Muslims to the right religion (i.e., their version of Christianity). The typical Muslim response, however, is a yawn. They cannot get excited about any human qualities when "There is nothing real but the Real." After all, they say, so what if Jesus was born of a virgin? That does not make him divine. Adam was created without father or mother, so that should place him a notch above Jesus. The Qur'an itself compares Jesus to Adam: "Surely the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness. He created him of dust, then said unto him Be! and he was" (3:59).
- ⁴ Excellent recent studies on the Islamic understanding of Christianity include Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991).

IQBAL'S VISION OF 'SHARIAH' IN
TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: AN
ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mohammad Altaf Hussain Ahangar

ABSTRACT

This article explores Allama Iqbal's vision of Shariah, focusing on his approach to reinterpreting Islamic legal principles in light of modern conditions. Iqbal, a philosopher, poet, and reformer, emphasized the need to adapt foundational legal principles from the Qur'an to contemporary social, economic, and political contexts. His work, particularly *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, advocates for legislative processes in Muslim countries that are both Islamic and attuned to the demands of modern life. The article outlines Iqbal's distinction between foundational and non-foundational legal principles in the Qur'an, asserting that while certain principles are eternal, many others require reinterpretation to address evolving societal needs. Iqbal critiques the reliance on past juristic interpretations and stresses that legal systems should evolve with human progress. Furthermore, the article highlights how Iqbal's reinterpretation principle could be applied to various Islamic laws, such as inheritance, will, and marriage, while emphasizing that his vision of Shariah remains an academic exercise yet to be fully realized in the modern Muslim world.

Iqbal represents a complex human entity. In his mortal frame, we find an assemblage of a philosopher, a poet, a reformer, a jurist, a politician and a leader. His poetry has no territorial limitations in view of being deeply inspiring and extremely spiritual. Throughout his all compilations of poetry, his focus was on awakening of the human consciousness and revitalizing of one's inner self. This fact appealed to everyone irrespective of religion, colour, language and creed.

Equally important his contribution has been in the form of book titled "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam". This book is essentially not for everyone but for Muslim intellectuals, economists, philosophers and jurists. The sixth chapter of the book titled "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam" is primarily aimed at outlining the future law-making process in a Muslim country. His endeavour is to have such a legislation in a Muslim country which is Islamic and at the same time in accordance with the demands of modern life.

Iqbal's Vison of Shariah

Every discipline of our life has immeasurably changed over time, so we need to revisit the Shari'ah in a new social, economic and political contexts. But the issue is how to proceed. An acceptable solution has been advocated by Allama Iqbal in following words:

The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to reinterpret the foundational legal principles deduced from Qur'an in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life, is, in my opinion, *perfectly justified*.¹

In other words, for Iqbal Shariah in twenty first century means the sum total of enacted laws based on reinterpretation of foundational legal principles deduced from the Quran. Thus, one can identify the following three components of Shariah in modern times:

1. Every legal issue should be referred to the Quran.
2. Legal verses in the Quran are either foundational or non – foundational.
3. Foundational legal principles in the Quran need to be deduced from time to time and reinterpreted in the light of our own experiences and altered conditions of modern life.

Every legal issue should be referred to al-Quran

About the Quran, Iqbal writes:

Qur'an is a complete book and is itself claimant of its excellence. But what is needed is the practical demonstration of this excellence with regard to human politics, meaning thereby that all important principles are present in it and such and such rule can be deduced from such and such verse.²

It is my belief that any person who analyses contemporary jurisprudence or legal fundamentals from the Qur'anic viewpoint and proves eternity and permanence of Qur'anic principles, he would be *mujadid* of Islam and a great servant of mankind.³

Iqbal considers the spirit of Islam completely imbedded in the Qur'an and advises Muslims for not going outside the Qur'an for discovering the aim and object of Allah.⁴ In a letter to Dr. Nicholson, he writes:

Qur'an is not only the book of metaphysics but whatever has been said in it about this world and the hereafter, has been said with absolute finality. This is another thing that it is related to metaphysical problems.⁵

The truth is that for Iqbal, Quran is everything. This fact has been unquestionably accepted by Maulana Abul Ala Mawdudi in following words:

Whatever Iqbal has thought he has thought through the brains of the Qur'an and what-ever he has seen he has seen through the eyes of the Qur'an. Truth and Qur'an were for him, one and the same, and in this one thing he was so absorbed that among the theologians of his century I have never seen any person who may have lived such life of fanafi'I Qur'an (annihilation in the Qur'an) as this M.A., Ph.D. Bar-at-Law.⁶

Regarding the legal content of the Quran, Iqbal writes:

The primary source of the law in Islam is the Qur'an. *Qur'an, however, is not a legal code.*⁷

Still, he expresses his views about legal content of the Qur'an in following words:

It is most copious on marriage and divorce, most precise in rules of inheritance and if compared to Christianity (Bible), possesses far greater vitality and responsibility instead of being arbitrary and despotic. It has true democratic characteristics in form and substance.⁸

He was further of the view:

Turning now to the groundwork of legal principles in the Qur'an, it is perfectly clear that far from leaving no scope for human thought and

legislative activity, the intensive breadth of these principles virtually acts as an awakener of human thought.⁹

One thing which needs clarification is that in relation to law in future, Iqbal simply demands our focus on the Quran. Nowhere in *Reconstruction*, has he insisted on identification of foundational legal principles from Hadith. Rather he had some doubts about Hadith as a source of law. He writes:

For our present purposes, however, we must distinguish traditions of a purely legal import from those which are of a non-legal character. With regard to the former, there arises a very important question as to how far they embody the pre-Islamic usages of Arabia which were in some cases left intact, and in others modified by the Prophet. It is difficult to make this discovery, for our early writers do not always refer to pre-Islamic usages. Nor is it possible to discover that the usages, left by the express or tacit approval of the Prophet, were intended to be universal in their application.¹⁰

Foundational and Non-Foundational Legal Principles in the Quran

Muslims in general believe that the legal verses of the Qur'an are eternal and unchangeable. However, for Iqbal legal verses in Quran can be foundational and non-foundational. Foundational legal principles can be defined as those principles on which future laws and rules can be founded or based. So far non-foundational legal principles are concerned, they are those principles which are developed and evolved from foundational principles and have secondary importance.

For Iqbal, foundational legal principles can be either conceptual or institutional. The conceptual foundational legal principle can be illustrated by his following writing:

The essence of 'Tawhid' as a working idea, is equality, solidarity and freedom...¹¹ Islam as a polity, is only a practical means of making this principle 'Tawhid' a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind.¹²

The notion of institutional foundational legal principle can be impliedly identified in his letter to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi.¹³ In the letter, he enquires as to whether:

Inheritance verses relating to shares are inherently eternal or only the rules which relate to inheritance regulations are unchangeable and there can be change in shares according to circumstances.

What can be grasped from these lines is that he treats institution of inheritance and the inheritance regulations unchangeable. But at

the same time he had a feeling that quantum of shares may be changeable according to the circumstances. If my understanding is correct, then quantum of shares falls under non-foundational legal principle.

Institutional foundational principles may include marriage, inheritance, *Hiba*, *Talaq*, *Khula*, *Halala*, *Hadd*, *Qisas*, *Diyat*, *Tazir* and other institutions.

Reinterpretation of Foundational Legal Principles

It is evident now that for Iqbal, every legal verse in the Quran is not foundational. Most of the legal verses according to him are non-foundational implying thereby that such verses can be ignored in relation to practical application if the situation demands. However, he does insist on identifying foundational legal principles in Quran. After identifying these legal principles, he does not want us to interpret and apply these principles the same way as it was done fourteen centuries ago. Rather he advocates reinterpretation of the legal principles in the light of our experiences and altered conditions of modern life.

As to what sort of legislative activity is permissible in the Qur'an and are there any limitations on such activity were the other problems which confronted Iqbal. In this regard he is of the view that we should not be handicapped by the legislative activities of the past jurists. He writes:

Our early doctors of law taking their clue mainly from this groundwork evolved a number of legal systems; and the student of Mohammedan history knows very well that nearly half of the triumphs of Islam as a social and political power were due to the legal acuteness of these doctors... *But with all their comprehensiveness these systems are after all individual interpretations, and as such cannot claim any finality.*¹⁴

The reasons as to why we should resort to legislative activity have been explained by Iqbal in the following words:

Since things have changed and the world of Islam is today confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all directions, I see no reason why this attitude recognising the finality of scholars should be maintained any longer. Did the founders of our schools claim finality for their reasonings and interpretations? Never... *The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems.*¹⁵

All this discussion informs us that there is a need to reinterpret foundational legal principles in the Quran in the light of our circumstances and altered conditions of modern life.

Changeability of Foundational Legal Principle

What may be a foundational legal principle today may not remain it so tomorrow. For example, we have a comprehensive discussion about slavery in the Quran. But slavery has been banned throughout the world. Even Saudi Arabia did sign relevant document in 1962. Conversely, Islamic injunctions regarding environmental protection remained unimplemented for centuries in view of unpolluted atmosphere globally till recent years. But in view of environmental crisis at the moment, every injunction in Islam focussing on safe and clean environment has relevance for today. We are told through the Quran and the Hadith to conserve and preserve earth. Physical and social cleanliness is ordained on Muslims. Equally there is an emphasis on planting of trees.

All these details have been given with the object of emphasising that while slavery as one of the foundational legal principle in Islam has lost its importance with the passage of time, it has been replaced by foundational legal principle of environmental protection.

Tawhid as Foundational Legal Principle

In the concept of Tawhid, Iqbal assembles a group of legal principles. As mentioned earlier, he writes:

The essence of 'Tawhid' as a working idea, is equality, solidarity and freedom... Islam as a polity, is only a practical means of making this principle Tawhid a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind.

But the fact is that he did not want the words 'equality, solidarity, and freedom' to be interpreted in the light of interpretations made by the past jurists but in accordance with our circumstances and altered conditions of modern life. Had he kept the Islamic explanations in mind about these words, then he would not have insisted upon Muslims to be guided by the developments in Turkey. He observes:

If the renaissance of Islam is a fact, and I believe it is fact, we too one day, like the Turks, will have to re-evaluate our intellectual inheritance...¹⁶—The truth is that among the Muslim nations of today, Turkey alone has shaken off its dogmatic slumber and attained to self-consciousness. She alone has claimed her right of intellectual freedom;

she alone has passed from the ideal to the real, a transition which entails keen intellectual and moral struggle. To her the growing complexities of a mobile and broadening life are sure to bring new situations suggesting new points of view and necessitating fresh interpretations of principles which are only of an academic interest to a people who have never experienced the joy of spiritual expansion.¹⁷

Application of ‘Reinterpretation’ Principle

There are numerous verses in Quran which, if simply interpreted, rather than reinterpreted, by a contemporary Muslim jurist or law student, would provide us rules which are very close to modern jurisprudence. The interpretation of such verses by classical jurists, *with due regard and respect for their legal acumen*, have many a time led to very complicated and often unjust outcome. The truth is that one can find no scope for Instant Triple Talaq, doctrine of ‘Halala’ and other doctrines developed by Sunni and Shia jurists. In this regard I hereby focus on Islamic law of will, inheritance, Halala doctrine, nearer in degree excludes more remote principle and diyah.

Will (Wassiyat)

In relation to Will, there are following verses in al-Quran:

It is decreed for you that when death approaches one of you, if he leaves property, *he shall write a will in favour of the parents and relatives equitably*. This is a duty upon the righteous.¹⁸

If anyone changes a will after he has heard it, the sin of altering the will shall befall those responsible for altering it. God is Hearer, Knower.¹⁹

If one sees gross injustice or bias on the part of the testator and takes it upon himself to effect a reconciliation between them to restore justice to the will, he commits no sin. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.²⁰

It is evident in these verses that Allah obligates us to transfer our property through a will to our parents and relatives equitably and imposes it as a duty upon the righteous. In all these verses there is no mention about the limit of 1/3 and no bequest to an heir as is recognized by Sunni Law.²¹ Sunni jurists have developed such limitations on the basis of following Hadith reported in Al-Bukhari:²²

The Prophet, peace be upon him, in response to a question from Sa’d Ibn Abi-Waqqas - who was sick and believed that he was about to die - if he should bequeath his entire estate to charity, to the exclusion of

his only daughter, refused; Sa'd then suggested one half of the estate and again the Prophet refused, upon which he proposed that he will only one third. *The Prophet reluctantly approved suggesting that even that was too much. He also advised the dying man that it was better to leave his child rich rather than poor.* ²³

One thing is clear in this Hadith that the Prophet [SAW] allowed such Wassiyat as an exception on the persistent insistence of Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas. The words "it was better to leave his child rich rather than poor" imply that the Prophet [SAW] did not intend this exceptional permission to be generalized and on this permission develop a rule that Wassiyat cannot be made beyond the limit of 1/3 and to an heir. But that is the law under Sunni School.

The truth is that Quran does contain rules which enable us to will away our property to any person particularly children and other relatives without any limit in relation to quantum and beneficiary. However, the approach adopted by our classical jurist in relation to wassiyat has caused injustices to our children, parents and spouses by developing such rules which mostly under Sunni jurisprudence do help remotest relatives in comparison to one's daughters, son's daughters' and spouses. Even a distant male relative disinherits a daughter's daughter and nearest heirs claiming through female. Contrarily, the freedom to will away one's property irrespective of limit and beneficiary is being followed through legislation globally in non-Muslim societies. So what was devised by Quran for Muslims has benefited non-Muslims.

Inheritance Rights in Quran

Likewise, Quran provides us most rules relating to inheritance in chapter 4, An-Nissaa', from verses 7 to 14. These verses focus on inheritance rights of women and spouses among other heirs and lay down the rules in case of intestacy. At verses 11 and 12 we are informed, in part:

Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two thirds of one's estate. And if there is only one, for her is half. And for one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one third. And if he had brothers [or sisters], for his mother is a sixth, after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children - you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise. And for you is half of what your wives leave if they have no child. But if they have a child, for you is one fourth of what they leave, after any

bequest they [may have] made or debt. And for the wives is one fourth if you leave no child. But if you leave a child, then for them is an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you [may have] made or debt. And if a man or woman leaves neither ascendants nor descendants but has a brother or a sister, then for each one of them is a sixth. But if they are more than two, they share a third, after any bequest which was made or debt, as long as there is no detriment [caused]. [This is] an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing and Forbearing.

It is evident from these verses that Quran specifically mentions the list of heirs and the circumstances under which they can inherit. The heirs are husband, widow, daughter, father, mother, full sister, consanguine sister, uterine brother and uterine sister. Sunni jurists however added three more heirs to this list namely son's daughter, true grandfather and true grandmother.

The result is that we have Sunni law and Shia law of intestate succession both claiming based on Quran. However, the outcome is many a time contradictory. On the basis of principle of 'Agnacy', remotest male heirs under Sunni law take the property to the exclusion of nearest blood relationship. For example, under Sunni Law, if the deceased left daughter's daughter and paternal uncle's son 'son, the latter will take whole property. Under Shia Law, the outcome is opposite and daughter's daughter will exclude paternal uncle's son' son.

Doctrine of *Halala*

The doctrine of *Halala* has its origin in Quran.²⁴ Under this doctrine, if a man divorces his wife for the third time, it would constitute an irrevocable divorce and it would be impermissible for him to marry the same woman again unless and until she (perchance) marries another man, consummates the marriage, and the man dies or of his own will divorces her. In case of instant triple talaq, this doctrine becomes immediately applicable. If we treat it as a foundational legal principle, then according to Iqbal we can reinterpret it in the light of our own experiences and altered conditions of modern life. Such reinterpretation may mean the retention of this principle with some amendments or if the situation demands its total abandonment. It has been already done in Pakistan. Section 7 (6) of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961 deals with the issue of intervening marriage (*Halala*). It reads:

Nothing shall debar a wife whose marriage has been terminated by talaq effective under this section from remarrying the same husband, without an intervening marriage with the third person, unless such termination is for the third time so effective.

Nearer in Degree Excludes more Remote

One of the principles of Islamic law of inheritance is that a nearer relation of the deceased excludes remoter relation. This rule has no reference in Quran and is based on the following hadith:

Give the *faraid* (Quranic Shares) to those who are entitled to receive it. Then whatever remains should be given to the closest male relative of the deceased.²⁵

All the mature legal systems of the world recognise this rule with some exceptions. The strict application of this rule, however, leads to injustice to orphaned grandchildren in case the deceased has left son under Sunni Law and Son or daughter under Shia law.

In order to address the problems created by this rule, Muslims countries have enacted legislations which mandate the grandparents to make *Wassiyat* in favour of the grandson to the extent of 1/3rd of the property. If the grandfather fails to make *Wassiyat*, then law presumes that it has been made in favour of the orphaned grandson.

If we apply Iqbal's 'Reinterpretation' principle to this situation, then a legislation can be enacted which can provide that 'nearer in degree excludes more remote' rule will not apply to the descendants, whether male or female of the deceased. The basis for such rule will be that we will have to look at the nearer relation to the deceased through each pre-deceased descendant rather focusing on the deceased. Suppose a person died leaving behind

1. Son and Son's Son
2. Sons's Son and Son's Son'Son
3. Son's Son, Sons' and Son'Son' Son'Son

If we apply Sunni Law of inheritance as it is, Son as a nearer relation will take whole property and exclude all the heirs mentioned in the example. What we need to do is to see who is nearer to the deceased in each branch. Such approach will allow inheritance to Son's son and Son's Son's Son mentioned in entry 2 and entry 3 along with Son.

This approach needs to be adopted in relation to both male and female descendants. Such law has been already enacted in Pakistan in 1961. Section 4 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance reads:

Succession: .In the event of death of any son or daughter of the propositus before the opening of succession, the children of such son or daughter, if any, living at the time the succession opens, shall per

stripes, receive a share equivalent to the share which such son or daughter, as the case may be, would have received if alive.

Dīyah

For legal purposes, *dīyah* (blood money and ransom) is the financial compensation paid to the victim or his/her heirs. In essence, in the case of death it is the fine paid by the killer or his/her family or clan to the victim's family or clan; in case of injury or grievous injury, it is paid to the victim.

Qur'an allows *dīyah* in cases of both intentional and accidental killing.²⁶ However, Qur'an leaves the quantity, nature, and other matters related to *dīyah* open to the society's customs and traditions. The problem is that four Sunni legal schools of thought do not provide uniform rate of *dīyah* for Jewish and Christian heirs. The Shafi'is prescribe one third of the amount paid for a Muslim, the Malikis prescribe one half, and the Hanafis do not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. Such a practice is still followed in Arab countries. For example, in Saudi Arabia the victim's heirs have the right to settle for *dīyah* instead of the death sentence. The prescribed blood money rates are:

- 300,000 riyals if the victim is a Muslim man
- 150,000 riyals if a Muslim woman
- 150,000 riyals if a Christian or Jewish man
- 75,000 riyals if a Christian or Jewish woman
- 6,666 riyals if a man of any other religion
- 3,333 riyals if a woman of any other religion.³⁴

Islam stands for justice and equality. The issue is whether the approach adopted by Sunni jurists and Saudi Arabia regarding the quantum of compensation is in accord with these principles. Iqbal's 'Reinterpretation' principle will simply adopt equal diyat approach for the family members of the victims irrespective of victim's religion.²⁷

Conclusion

What can be concluded from the above discussion is that Iqbal does not want a secular law but a law based on the foundational legal principles deduced from the Quran. But the fact is that Iqbal's views about shape and content of Shariah in future have so far proved an academic exercise. Least attention is paid by Muslims of Indian sub-continent to dynamic and awakening features of the Qur'an ; legal content of the Qur'an; consonancy of legal activities of a Muslim with the Qur'anic spirit and interpretational permissibility enjoined by the Qur'an. ²⁸ Overall the Muslim

community is still of the view that all the legal verses in the Qur'an are of eternal value and future legislation has to take place literally in the light of all these verses. In India, it still holds good that in administering Muslim law no court should attempt to put its own construction on any Qur'anic text,²⁹ or examine the conformity of any traditionally settled legal principle with the relevant text of the Qur'an³⁰ or in any way circumvent or deviate from the law as settled by the jurists of the past even if it does not sound "modern", "just" or "logical".³¹ Like-wise lawyers of modern age are not allowed to introduce new rules of law by claiming that they logically follow from the texts of the Qur'an.³² However, Indian Supreme Court recently declared Instant Triple Talaq unconstitutional.³³ Consequently, the Indian Government issued an ordinance wherein the pronouncement of Instant Triple Talaq has been made an offence. The offence has been declared non-bailable and the offender can be sentenced to an imprisonment for a maximum period of three years. Even a Bill has been introduced in Indian Parliament to enact law relating to criminalization of Instant Triple Talaq. However, in view of resistance from all opposition parties of India, so far the bill has not become law.

In conclusion, it seems that it would take, if not centuries, at least decades, to realize Iqbal's dream of Muslim nations, like the Turks, re-evaluating their intellectual inheritance³⁴ and shaking off their dogmatic slumber.³⁵ So far Iqbal's suggestion to identify and reinterpret foundational legal principles deduced from the Qur'an has not much impressed the legislators and jurists of the Muslim countries.

Notes and References

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 - ³ Letter to Sufi Ghulam Mustaffa Tabassum dated 2 September 1925. For details B. A. Dar, *فکر اقبال اور مسلمہ اجتہاد*, Iqbal, Vol. II No. 2, pp. 29-48 at 41.
 - ⁴ Muhammad Hussain Arshi Amritsari, "Hayat-i-Iqbal ka Aek osha-i-Pinhan", *Iqbal Review*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 1-12 at 11 (July 1974).
 - ⁵ Supra note 2 at 15.
 - ⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabrial Wing*, 2nd Edn. Lahore, 1989, p. 222.
 - ⁷ *Reconstruction*, p. 131. [Italics Supplied].
 - ⁸ R.H. Gillani, *The Reconstruction of Legal Thought in Islam*, Delhi, 1982, p. 55.
 - ⁹ *Reconstruction*, p 133
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 136
 - ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p 122

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- ¹² *Reconstruction*, p 117
- ¹³ Letter to Nadvi dated 18th March, 1926. For details, see Tahir Tawnsawi. *Iqbal Aur Syed Sulaiman Nadvi*, 77.
- ¹⁴ *Reconstruction*, p 133 [Italics Supplied].
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* [Italics Supplied].
- ¹⁶ *Reconstruction*, p. 121.
- ¹⁷ *Reconstruction*, p 128
- ¹⁸ Quran, Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah, verse 180. [Italics Supplied]
- ¹⁹ Quran, Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah verse 181.
- ²⁰ [Quran, Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah verses 182]
- ²¹ Shia law allows a bequest to an heir to the extent of 1/3rd
- ²² *Sahih Bukhari*, Volume 4, Book 51, Number 5
- ²³ Italics Supplied.
- ²⁴ Surah al-Baqara, Ayat 230
- ²⁵ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 8, Translation by Khan, M, Vol.8.Tr.No 724
- ²⁶ Quran,4:92-93; Quran, 2:178
- ²⁷ For detailed discussion about Diyah, see Muhammad Altaf Hussain Ahangar “Crime and Punishment in a Modern Muslim State: A Pragmatic Approach”-*American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences [AJISS]*, Spring 2014, pp 51-69.
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UNDERSTANDING TAWHEED: THE
UNITY OF THE DIVINE BEING AND ITS
ROLE AS A LIVING FORCE IN ISLAMIC
THOUGHT

Dr. Abdul Khaliq

Abstract

Tawheed, or the Unity of the Divine Being, is the foundational principle of Islamic belief, representing the absolute oneness and uniqueness of God. This concept is not just a theological doctrine but a living force that profoundly influences both individual and collective aspects of life in Islamic thought. Tawheed asserts that God is singular, without partners or equals, and that all creation is dependent on Him. It transcends categorization into philosophical classifications like theism, pantheism, or deism, as it encompasses elements of all while remaining uniquely Qur'anic in nature. Prominent thinkers like Allama Iqbal emphasized that Tawheed should not be confined to abstract theology but should serve as a dynamic and transformative force, guiding the moral and spiritual growth of individuals and shaping the unity, dignity, and collective strength of the Muslim ummah. By internalizing the essence of Tawheed, believers cultivate a deep connection with God, which inspires personal responsibility, social justice, and a commitment to live in harmony with divine guidance.

Tawheed i.e 'Unity of the Divine Being' is the *sine qua non*, the most essential article of faith, according to the teachings of Islam. Being entirely indispensable and inviolable it admits of no compromises of any kind. Look at the categorical way the Qur'an asserts:

Ascribing partners to God is indeed a grievous iniquity and a great sin.¹
God has decided that He may forgive anyone He likes but He will not at all forgive those who set up partners with Him.²

Regarding the question as to what is the exact nature of Divine Unity a lot of confusion has been created by the philosophers of religion, in general, and by the neo-mu'tazilite modernist Qur'an scholars, in particular. Due to their characteristic habit of analysis, they have characterized the generic concept of the Unity of God into, for instance, the theistic, pantheistic and the deistic varieties which, in many respects, are recognizable as mutually exclusive though not collectively exhaustive. These various sections of thinkers have further tried to prove that the Qur'anic point of view in this connection belongs — safely and neatly — to the one or the other of these varieties only. They duly offer arguments allegedly supported with reference to the Sacred Text itself in order to logically demonstrate their respective points of view. But the basic confusion still remains unresolved. Given the analytical line of approach, it will in fact continue to be so because the spirit behind this classification and even the very nomenclature employed for the same is alien to the temperament of the Qur'an itself. Qur'anic attitude specially towards the realities of ultimate significance is uncompounded, simple and straightforward and admits of absolutely no categorization and no analysis. If at all we have to use the modern terminology we can affirm that the Qur'anic view of God has the so-called 'theistic, 'pantheistic' as well as 'deistic' **aspects** — all of them at the same time but none of them exclusively.

Qur'anic concept of God is theistic insofar as He is the One Who created the universe out of nothing,³ Who is powerful over every thing,⁴ Who listens to the prayers of men and answers them,⁵ Who is independent of all the worlds,⁶ Who alone continues to help human beings throughout their lives,⁷ and to Whom alone worship is due.⁸ And so on. This aspect of the Qur'anic teachings was specially highlighted by, among others, Sheikh Ahmad

Sirhindi⁹, the celebrated ‘*mujaddid* (religious re-constructionist) of the second millennium’. The relationship of man to God, according to him, is that of a servant carrying out the orders of his Supreme Lord: man is a servile, humble creation and God is beyond all beyond, then beyond all beyond, then beyond all beyond. Among the earliest Muslim theologians Abul Hasan al-Ash’ari and his followers were thorough-going theists. In their ontological moorings they specially emphasized it so exclusively and so thoroughly that in the face of it everything /everyone else, including human beings, become altogether impotent. Every quality being a sort of effectiveness and powerfulness, God has in fact all the qualities; natural objects have no qualities whatsoever inherent in themselves: They do not have even the quality of existence continuing for any measure of time unless perpetually granted to them by God Almighty. This led to their doctrine of Occasionalism¹⁰ as to the apparent relations among natural beings and objects including the causal relations. The renowned Imam Ghazali was too an Occasionalist in this sense.

The Qur’anic view of God is pantheistic insofar as He is the First and the Last, the Evident as well as the Hidden,¹¹ His throne extends over the heavens and the earth,¹² He is nearer to man than his very life-vein¹³ and He encompasses everything.¹⁴ And so on. This point of view was elaborated and adopted by, for example, Ibn Arabi,¹⁵ the mystic, for whom only God has the real existence; all else is evanescent and ephemeral. The universe, he says, was not created by God *ex nihilo* as a tangible ‘something else’, existing for all practical purposes independently and in its own right; it is for him simply a reflection, an effulgence emanating from Him as rays emanate from the sun or as fragrance emanates from a flower. In fact pantheism appears to be almost the official standpoint of all mysticism. One of the characteristics of a mystic’s gnosis of God is that it is entirely gripping and absorbing so that all other shades of consciousness are held in abeyance: for the gnostic nothing/none exists except God at least as long as the trance of that consciousness continues. This trance has naturally a hangover of its own and that justifies the pantheistic metaphysics. Otherwise also, as mystic experience is regarded as the most authentic source of knowledge in the mundane context what this experience discovers is the truth *par excellence!*

Metaphysical standpoint of the Qur’an is deistic insofar as it has asked its readers to inculcate in themselves the inductive spirit. Time and again they have been called upon to observe the course

of history, the '*ayyam Allah*'¹⁶ in the Qur'anic terminology, the behavior of the physical universe¹⁷ as well as the facts of their own mind, soul and consciousness¹⁸ so as to draw irresistible conclusions and generalizations therefrom. Obliquely, for some thinkers, it is implied in these directives that the phenomena of nature have uniformities inherent in themselves and causal principles independently operative among them which *ex hypothesi* are not supposed to be disturbed by any agent operating from elsewhere. This aspect of the Qur'anic teachings was specially emphasized by, for instance, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan,¹⁹ a nineteenth century religio-philosophical thinker of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a thoroughgoing naturalist. His basic thesis was that the Qur'an is the Word of God and nature is the work of God; so there can be no disharmony between the two. The former is His verbal promise; the latter, His practical promise. Both are trusted, inviolable documents in their respective ways. Nature once having been created and its laws once having been put into operation by a Perfect God, they need not, and must not now, be changed by Him in any way. Given that the laws of nature are the practical promises of God and given that God has taken upon Himself not to go against His promises and commitments, He in fact cannot change them. Hence no literal acceptance by Him of petitionary prayers addressed to Him. No occurrence of miraculous happenings in the sense of the violations of the laws of nature, and so on.

Whether a person reads theism, pantheism or deism into the Qur'an with almost the total exclusion of all other views, it can be easily recognized, ultimately depends on the particular temperament or attitude that he has. This attitude works as a sort of coloured glasses through which he looks at the Holy Script. Those, who have a natural affinity with the naive, indigenous and simple way the Qur'an was understood during the earliest times of Muslim history and those who have in Him and His entire scheme of things a robust faith untouched by discursive reason, have a tendency towards theism. Those, who have an infatuation for the Divine and harbor mystic leanings, an inclination to go beyond and behind the verbal garb and claim to have discovered the esoteric layer of meaning of the religious language, become pantheists. Those, who have a this-worldly, matter-of-fact scientific outlook on life, very easily develop a metaphysics of deism. Now, as the Qur'an is a book of guidance for all people and for all times, it has of necessity catered to the requirements of all these temperamental varieties. A person, who sincerely desires to have the truest understanding of

the Qur'anic concept of God *vis a vis* nature including human beings, must, to begin with, try his best to avoid the temptation of prefacing the Qur'an with his own personal preferences, prejudices, likes and dislikes and let the Book speak for itself. It is, no doubt, very difficult to undertake such a dispassionate study of the Book of God. However, once we are — if at all we are — successful in carrying it out, we shall find that the Qur'anic view of the Supreme Oneness of the Divine is simple but comprehensive and that it transcends all attempts at critical analyses and academic classifications.

Allama Iqbal, not very unjustifiably, claims — in fact takes an oath imprecating himself — that the views expressed by him on various problems are Qur'anic in essence and spirit. Likewise, the concept of Divine Unity given by him too may not be unequivocally bracketed into only one of the categories enumerated above; and also, positively, elements of all of them can be shown to have been woven into its formulation. There has since long been a heated controversy on the subject whether Iqbal, in his maturest views, was a theist or a pantheist and a lot of relevant textual evidence has been marshalled on both sides. The controversy has never been resolved and continues to be revisited again and again by Iqbal scholars and critics. Some of them strike a conciliatory note and say that Iqbal in fact subscribes to both these doctrines at the same time and his position thus supposed to have taken a distinct shape termed by them 'panentheism', meaning to say that God is transcendent above, as well as immanent in, the world. Iqbal, they point out, describes nature as a human interpretation put on the creative activity of the Absolute Ego²⁰ as the habit of Allah²¹, as 'God's behaviour',²² as 'a fleeting moment in the life of God'.²³ He also says that nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self.²⁴ Now, just as man stands revealed through his activities, his character and habits and thus in a sense can be declared identical with them but, at the same time, he transcends them too, so God is very much **in** nature but is not at all entirely exhausted by it. He is **above** and **beside** it also. I have in general no arguments to offer towards the settlement of this theist/pantheist controversy besides the ones that have already been occasionally given by very knowledgeable critics and scholars nor do I have enough space here to mention these arguments all over again. However, I would like to add at least one more dimension to this problem and that dimension is that the thought of Iqbal can be interpreted naturalistically (and so deistically) also. Some years ago, a renowned Iqbal scholar Prof. Abdul Qayyum

delivered the Annual Iqbal Memorial Lecture which was titled 'Naturalism of Iqbal'. The Lecture, as usual, was held under the auspices of the Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab and hosted by the University itself.²⁵ It was well-documented and was well-received by the learned audience. As a philosopher of religion, the task which Iqbal had set before himself and which he very ably tried to carry out was, as the speaker described in detail in the historical perspective, the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam. Islam being the Universal Religion valid for all times, earlier too Islamic thought had been reconstructed time and again. Farabi and Ibn Sina reconstructed it against the perspective of Greek thought. Iman Ghazali reconstructed it as he wrote *Tabafut al-Falasifah* (Destruction of the Philosophers) and *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (Revival of Religious Sciences) in reply, respectively, to the 'heretics' and the 'innovators' in his own camp. Shah Waliullah – 'first Muslim to rethink the whole system of Islam' — reconstructed it so as to make it consonant with the dictates of plain rationality. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan reconstructed it in order to show that it fulfilled the requirements of the nineteenth century scientific naturalism and rationalistic determinism. Iqbal's reconstruction of Islamic thought, visibly on the identical pattern, has been called 'scientific reconstruction' because he was of the view that the Qur'anic concept of God, the Ultimate Reality, is of the same character as that which qualifies the truth that is being gradually discovered by researchers in the field of natural sciences dealing with all the three departments of nature, *viz* matter, life and consciousness, the subjects-matter, in that order, of physics, biology and psychology.²⁶

The account of Allama Iqbal's concept of God in the paragraph just ended, I would reiterate, does not go to prove that there is any kind of self-contradiction in his metaphysical views. Rather, this account simply brings home the fact that his concept of God, in consonance with the one that is laid down in the Qur'an, is comprehensive, holistic and basal: different aspects of this concept that have been, or may ever be, identified simply subscribe to this comprehensiveness.²⁷

Despite the entire above account regarding various colours of the 'phenomenological nature of Divine Unity' — which of course does have its own academic importance — Allama Iqbal, once again in consonance with the Qur'anic world-view, holds that this concept has a very vibrant potential of relevance for man-in-the-world. *Tawbeed*, Arabic equivalent of 'commitment to One Supreme

Being', he never tires of emphasizing, is not just numerically one article of faith among others which a person must subscribe to in order to be declared a Muslim for all socially acceptable purposes; nor does it have simply an academic or a theological importance. It is rather to be accepted as a dynamic factor, a living force, that must necessarily have an impact on the moral and spiritual life of the individual as well as of the society at large. Sorrowfully he says:

زندہ قوت تھی جہاں میں یہی توحید کبھی آج کیا ہے فقط اک مسئلہ علم کلام

(there was a time when faith in the Oneness of God was a living, dynamic force whereas to-day it is nothing but just one of the theological problems)

How to realize *Tawheed* as a dynamic force for man here and now. In this connection it would be suggestive to refer to the three periods of religious life enumerated by Iqbal, namely, the periods of faith, thought and discovery. "In the first period", he says, "religious life appears as a discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned. Perfect submission to discipline is followed by a rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority. In this period religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics — a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the third period metaphysics is displaced by psychology and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the Ultimate Reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of law but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his consciousness".²⁸ In the first two periods as described here man has only a dry, calculated 'I-it' relationship with God whose existence becomes, at the most, what Iqbal has termed, the subject-matter of a theological discourse. It is only in the third period when man has an I-thou, a person-to-person encounter with Him and when he consciously participates in His life that it becomes a 'living force'. It is this personal experience amounting to God-consciousness and the perception of His Unique Individuality which positively affects the incumbent in his personal as well as social life. In the Qur'anic dialect this experience is institutionalized in *salat* which Iqbal translates as prayer. Prayer, he further observes, is instinctive in its origin. He approvingly quotes, in this

connection, the great American psychologist William James: “It seem probable that, in spite of all that science may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray to the end of time unless their mental nature changes in a manner nothing we know should lead us to expect.”²⁹

Anyway, it may parenthetically be remarked, prayer, according to Iqbal, has a wider connotation than that which is commonly recognized. It is generally considered to be equivalent to the formal practice of *salat* commonly observed by a Muslim. In that capacity it may ideally be described as a mode of direct, ‘face-to-face’ encounter with God. But there is an indirect such encounter also which would eventualize through the scientist’s observation of ‘nature’ understood as the ‘habit’ or ‘behaviour’ of God. “Knowledge of nature”, says Iqbal, “is the knowledge of God’s behavior, in our observation of nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego”.³⁰ In fact “all search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer.”³¹

Man-in-the-world, we know, is bound by, what Iqbal describes, ‘forms of perception’ i.e. space and time as well as categories of understanding like possibility/impossibility, existence/non existence, plurality, causality etc. These are the sorts of implements, the mechanics which he has somehow developed for dealing with the universe around him. However, at the same time, they have restricted his knowledge to appearances i.e. the phenomenal world only, holding him back from an acquaintance with the noumena, the Reality as such. When, on the other hand, a person has gnostic awareness of God, Who is beyond space and time and beyond all categories, he himself is freed from all these bounds. The Qur’an has perhaps this contemplated — though difficult to register — achievement of man in view when it says:

O Assembly of jinn and men if you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth then pass through them. You cannot pass through them but with authority.³²

“Prayer in Islam”, Iqbal very succinctly remarks, “is the ego’s escape from mechanism to freedom”.³³ Equipment with this freedom amounts to the development of the purest, the most unbiased point of view and the capability to look at everything in the true perspective. “Beware of the wisdom of a *mo’min*”, the prophet of Islam (peace be on him) is reported to have said, “because he sees with the light of God”.³⁴ In order to have the clearest idea of the geography of a land we must transcend the ground and undertake its aerial survey. So, in order to have a truly

sympathetic understanding of the problems of life and existence we must psychologically take leave of their spatio-temporal settings and look at them afresh from the highest point of view, the point of view that is guaranteed by one's direct contact with the Ultimate Reality. This paramount equipment also amounts to making the person concerned indifferent to, and independent of, all the false deities and dummy gods that consciously or unconsciously continue to charge the lives of ordinary people, literally, 'the-men-of-the-world'. Says Iqbal:

یہ ایک سجدہ جسے تو گراں سمجھتا ہے ہزار سجدے سے دیتا ہے آدمی کو نجات^{۳۵}

[This one prostration (to God) in prayers which a person does not feel inclined to perform would actually absolve him of thousands of prostrations (to false deities)].

In his *Rumuz-e Bekhudi* Iqbal has a section reserved for an account of a healthy influence that *Tawbeed* would exercise on the psychology of an individual.³⁶ He enumerates in this connection three mental states, despair, grief and fear which, according to him are the basic ailments that are likely to afflict the personality of a man and do him immense harm. As to the sentiment of despair, he says, that life, essentially, is almost identical with optimism sanguinity and hope. If, despite all hardships that we come across in life, we are still hopeful for better days to come and accordingly struggle hard for the same, we continue to be really alive. If, on the other hand, we lose hope, we are almost dead. We live as if we are not alive: we barely exist. Grief or sorrow makes a man hollow from within just as termite eats up a wooden structure. It does not simply snatch away his happiness but also weakens his 'will to act'. Similarly, fear has a deadening effect on the excellences of a human being. It is the perpetual enemy of his courage, enthusiasm and valour. Most of the social attitudes like flattery, lying, hypocrisy, cunning and deceit are, in the last analysis, grounded in some kind of fear. Faith in One Omniscient, Omnipotent God, Who is always with us, when properly subscribed to and assimilated, removes all these incongruencies and aberrations, and gives us tranquility and peace of mind. All our hopes and aspirations having been directed to the One Being, all lesser beings and the sentiments attached to them become irrelevant and meaningless.

Morally also, existential consciousness of the Supreme Real is specially relevant to the individual as it determines his status in the scale of values. On the authority of his spiritual mentor Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, Allama Iqbal has prescribed three tests³⁷ which

ought to be applied in order to determine the level of integration or authenticity which the ego of an individual has already acquired or the station of moral-spiritual growth that he happens to actually occupy. The first test requires: **look at yourself with the light of your own consciousnesses**. I have my own moral principle within me in the form of my own conscience which gives me pangs and pricks when I perform an evil action and which makes me feel happy and satisfied when I perform a good one. So, to begin with, my conscience must be satisfied with me in regard to my behavior on the moral plain. Obliquely, my conscience demands that I must be prepared to shoulder the responsibility of what I do. The second test is: **'look at yourself with the light of human egos other than you'**. I must be prepared to take up the responsibility of what others do. If there is evil flourishing in the society around me I am duty-bound to stop it forcefully; if that is not possible, I must verbally prohibit people from doing it; if even that is not possible, I should at least feel, with the maximum of heartfulness and sincerity at my command, that it is evil. The third test demands: **look at yourself with the light of God**. This is the most exacting criterion. It requires that man should recognize and realize the Divine spark within himself and see that his moral will is almost identified with the Divine will. He, of course, continues exercising choices whenever alternatives are available to him but, despite all options open to the contrary, he invariably does choose the way that is good from the highest point of view. His ego becomes disciplined and thoroughly integrated and reaches nearest the Ideal *par excellence*, the Supreme Ego, Who dispenses with all the worlds and Whose I-amness is independent, elemental, absolute. "The act" of such a person, say Iqbal, "is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpen his will with the creative assurance that the world is not something to be merely seen or known through concepts, but something to be made and re-made by continuous action. It is a moment of supreme bliss and also a moment of the greatest trial for the ego."³⁸

Faith in One God has a healthy effect not only on the personality and character of the individual and his episteme it is also helpful towards the formation and development of a well-knit, thoroughly organized society. Being the essence of nationhood in Islam, *Tawbeed*, says Iqbal, stands for equality solidarity and freedom. Those who share this faith are mutually cemented as a rock. They are one and united in all important respects. They have the same aspirations, same aims and ideals, same patterns of behavior, same criteria of good and evil and same philosophies of

life. Fair play and justice prevails among them. Allama Iqbal further points out that the social order of Islam which “finds the foundation of world-unity in this principle of *Tawbeed*, put forth by Islam as a religion, is only a practical means of making the principle a living factor in the intellectual life of (the entire) mankind: It demands loyalty to God and not to the thrones”.³⁹

It would be interesting and very informative also, to quote here in some detail from the last i.e. the 16th section of *Asrar-o-Rumuz* wherein Allama Iqbal seeks to derive truths about the relevance of the Muslims’ concept of *Tawbeed* to the well-being of their social life from *surah Iklas*. The *surah*, with four *ayat* only, is one of the shortest *surahs* of the Qur’an. It reads as follows:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۝ لَمْ يُولَدْ ۝ وَأَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

In the beginning of this section Iqbal relates a dream of his own in which he met *Hazrat* Abu Bakr Siddiq (God be pleased with him), the first Caliph in Muslim history. The former asked the latter to prescribe as to what should be done to alleviate the socio-moral ailments from which his contemporaneous (early 20th century) fellow-Muslims suffered as he himself had been the one who was able to save the *Ummah* from a number of insurgent eruptions that tended to create a lot of social unrest during the earliest times of the spread of Islam. *Hazrat* Abu Bakr advised Allama Iqbal that guidance be sought from the verses of *surah Iklas* which are all full pregnant with meaning in this regard. Every verse connotes one particular *sifat* of God. In compliance with the Holy Prophet’s (peace be on him) reported directive ‘assimilate in your person the *sifat*, the habits, of God’,⁴⁰ the Muslims should inculcate these *sifat* in their own personal as well as social lives. What follows in *Asrar-o-Rumuz* comprises details of the advice as spelled out on the behest of *Hazrat* Abu Bakr himself.

[Say: He, Allah is One.] قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝

Faith in the Oneness of God, provided it is not just a lip-service and a blind conviction but is rather a ‘living assurance’ – as it necessarily ought to be – implies that the Muslim *ummah*, in compliance with this faith, should keep themselves united as a singular impeccable unity. They should give up their mutual skirmishes, animosities, conflicts and unnecessary differences. Oneness among themselves must in fact be put forth by Muslims as a testimony and a visible proof of their commitment to One God.

If the testimony here happens to be defective, every person should feel concerned that there is something wrong somewhere with that which it is required to testify. So the lesson which this verse imparts to its readers is: be united as an *Ummah* in order to put up a clarion demonstration of the fact that they really understand its meaning and significance.

[Allah is He on Whom all depend.] اللَّهُ الصَّادِقُ

From the truth that God is independent, self-determined and absolutely free from all sorts of constraints whatever every Muslim ought to learn the lesson to vouchsafe and maintain his own dignity, self-respect, prestige and honour, to recognize and discover the immense possibilities of his being and also work hard to realize them; and complementarily to avoid unnecessarily begging from others and thus being under the stress of an obligation to them. What is desirable for all Muslims as individuals as well as for them as a social unit is to exploit their own indigenous resources — moral, spiritual, intellectual and material — and take pride in them. Presently (i.e. in the times of Allama Iqbal —although equally true to-day in our own times), on the contrary, they take pride in blindly mimicing the thought fashions, habits and cultural trends of other nations and even the language they would prefer to speak. All these are shamefully unfortunate indicators of a slavish mentality which belie even the minimal level of sincerity and commitment with which we ought to have faith in God Who is Independent and Absolute.

[He begets not, nor is He begotten.] لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

God does not beget any child nor is He begotten. He has no blood relations. This character of the Divine, incidentally, demonstrates His nature as the Perfect Individual — the One and Only. ‘For the individuality to be perfect’, Bergson very rightly says, “it would be necessary that no detached part of the organism could live separately”.⁴¹ Thus “individuality is a matter of degrees and is not fully realized even in the case of the apparently closed off unity of the human being”.⁴² This Divine *sifat* is obviously inimitable literally by a human individual because to have various kinds of blood relations are, what is known in logic, ‘inseparable accidents’ of man: he cannot even be conceived to exist without at least some of these accidents. However, he has still a lesson to learn from this *ayat* of the Qur’an. Man cannot relinquish and get rid of his blood relations once they stand established but he can, for all

practical purposes, ignore and bypass them and transcend them when the achievement of higher moral-cum-spiritual goals is at stake. When Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) could not bring round his father to stop idol-worshipping, the son had to part his ways from the father, when prophet Noah's (peace be on him) son refused to subscribe to what he preached, he had no option but to leave him alone; when our Holy prophet (peace be on him) was opposed by the people of Mecca – many of whom were his blood relations — as he preached to them his own apostleship and the singular Unity of the Divine Being, he did not hesitate to migrate to Madina where environments for the spread of Islam were far more congenial. So blood relations are alright and they urgently need to be recognized and honoured so long as they do not come into conflict with higher ideals but when they so come into conflict they ought to be relegated by the Muslim *ummah* to the realm of meaninglessness.

[And none is like Him.] **وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ**

Description of the Divine Being in this verse as 'the Unique' and 'the Unparalleled' is an indicator of a directive to every Muslim, who has faith in that Being, to be a candidate for the realization of the ideal of the highest position in regard to the integration of his ego insofar as it is humanly possible. Howsoever he endeavours to occupy that position and howforever he has actually gone in that direction, there is always a space available for him at a still higher pedestal. So his endeavours must never suffer from any dissipation: they should ever continue. Needless to say once again that what is true here of every individual Muslim is equally true of the entire Muslim *ummah*. The *Ummah* should prove to be a role model for the whole world. Just as God is the One in his Divinity, so is Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) the one and only in respect of the humanistic perspective. He is the ideal of perfect manhood in Islam whom we all should emulate. The Qur'an says:

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar.⁴³

The manhood that the Holy prophet (peace be on him) raised around him is too a beacon light for others to be guided by. He is reported to have said:

My Companions are like the (guiding) stars. Whomsoever of them you follow you will be treading the right path.⁴⁴

Let me enclose in the end a few scattered verses from *Rumuz-e-Bekbudi* which very forcefully bring out the importance of *Tawheed*

as a living force for human beings, *in general*.⁴⁵ I shall quote verbatim without giving their translation in, order to communicate to my readers 'beauty of the original', pure and simple:

اینکه در صد سینہ پیچید یک نفس سرے از اسرارِ توحید اس و بس^{۴۶}
یک شود توحید را مشہود کن غائبش را از عمل موجود کن^{۴۷}
دین ازو حکمت ازو آئین ازو زور ازو قوت ازو تمکین ازو^{۴۸}
قدرت او برگزیند بنده را نوع دیگر آفریند بنده را^{۴۹}
بیم و شک میرد عمل رگرد حیات چشم می بیند ضمیر کائنات^{۵۰}
لا اله سرمایہ اسرار ما رشته اش شیراز افکار ما^{۵۱}

Notes and References

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- 1 Qur'an, 3:150
 - 2 *Ibid*, 4:48
 - 3 *Ibid*, 29:20
 - 4 *Ibid*, 2:20
 - 5 *Ibid*, 2:186
 - 6 *Ibid*, 3:97
 - 7 *Ibid*, 3:150
 - 8 *Ibid*, 1:4
 - 9 For a more elaborate description of the position of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi see my book: *Problems of Muslim Mysticism*, pp.143-49
 - 10 For a detailed critical study of Occasionalism, see Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism and its Critique by Averroes and Aquinas*, *passim*
 - 11 Qur'an, 57:3
 - 12 *Ibid*, 2:255
 - 13 *Ibid*, 50:16
 - 14 *Ibid*, 41:54
 - 15 For a more elaborate description of the position of Ibn Arabi, see my book, *op.cit.*, pp.137 -143
 - 16 Qur'an, 14:5
 - 17 *Ibid*, 2:164 etc
 - 18 *Ibid*, 51:21 etc
 - 19 For a more elaborate description of the position of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, see my book, *op.cit.*, pp. 150-157
 - 20 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 45
 - 21 *Ibid*.
 - 22 *Ibid*.
 - 23 *Ibid*.
 - 24 *Ibid*.
 - 25 This lecture was later included in a book published by the Research Society of Pakistan, University of the Punjab, Lahore: *Khutbat Ba Yad-i- Iqbal*, pp. 46 -61

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- 26 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, Chapter II
27 Zarb-e Kaleem, *Kulliyat-e Iqbal* (Urdu), p.537/37
28 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.143
29 *The Principles of Psychology* I, p.316
30 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, 87
31 *Ibid*, p.73
32 Qur'an, 55:33
33 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.87
34 اتقوا فراسة المؤمن انه ينظر بنور الله
35 Zarb-e Kaleem, *Kulliyat –e Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 550/50
36 *Khulliyat-e Iqbal* (Farsi) p.107/91
37 *Ibid*, pp 56 – 62/40 – 46
38 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam*, P.
39 *Ibid*, p.117
40 تخلقوا باخلاق الله
41 *Creative Evolution*, p. 13
42 *Ibid*, p.14
43 Qur'an, 33:21
44 اصحابى كالنجوم بايهم اقتديهم اهتديتم
45 *Kulliyat-e Iqbal* (Farsi) p. 163/147
46 *Ibid*,
47 *Ibid*, p. 105/89
48 *Ibid*,
49 *Ibid*,
50 *Ibid*,
51 *Ibid*, p. 92