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Publisher:

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Website: www.allmaiqbal.com

ISBN 969-416-309-9

1st Edition : 2002

Quantity : 500

Price : Rs. 100

Printed at : Sa'adat Art Press, Lahore.

Sales Office: 116 McLeod Road Lahore. Ph. 7357214

**IQBAL
AND
KHAWAJA GHULAM FARID
ON
EXPERIENCING GOD**

DR. SHAHZAD QAISER

**IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN
LAHORE**

Dedicated to the memory of Asghari Khanum,
my loving mother.

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PREFACE

Religious experience is a source of knowledge like other levels of experience. Each level of experience is essentially characterized by its own distinctive nature, mode and significance. To accept one level of experience and reject other levels of experience without any sound reasoning and evidence is against the very spirit of knowledge itself. There is no rationale to solely accept the purely rational method of philosophy and reject other essential forms of reasoning. The Qur'anic mode of higher reasoning and infallible argumentation, for instance, has set creative and universal patterns of thought. Objectively speaking, no kind of reasoning and evidence has ever succeeded in disproving the form and content of the prophetic experience. Islamic Sufism has made an inestimable contribution to higher religion by drinking deep from the eternal fountain of Knowledge. The process goes on and there shall always remain such friends of God who will realize the possibility of experiencing God.

It is our intellectual vocation to critically re-examine the whole body of knowledge and to see things in their true perspective. The science of unveiling helps to remove multiple veils and provides knowledge of the ultimate nature of things.

Dr. Shahzad Qaiser

Lahore, 2002

FOREWORD

Iqbal is one of the unique thinkers in the world of Islam who has successfully attempted to revivify the religious thought in Islam. His understanding of the East and West –with all that it essentially implies – has given him a vision of the vertical and horizontal aspects of different cultures. He has tried to understand Islam both from within and in the context of world civilizations thereby desiring the society to integrate the complementary principles of permanence and change.

Iqbal's foremost contribution as a philosopher of religion has been to demonstrate the possibility of experiencing God. Departing from Kant who states that knowledge of the noumena is impossible, he posits the possibility of religion by declaring that knowledge of the Ultimate Reality is possible for 'God is not a mathematical entity' or an abstraction 'having no reference to experience'.

Obliviousness with regard to the noble tradition of higher Sufism is nothing less than an obliviousness of Islamic Intellectuality and Spirituality. To reject the Sufi path of knowledge and love, besides other things, tantamounts to the rejection of higher possibility inherent in one's own existence. The possibility of experiencing God enshrines in the infinite depths of the human self, as a sign of the Lord, to be realized by man. It is by encountering one's inwardness that one becomes witness to the Truth. A direct contact with the Ultimate Reality renews the whole being of man leading to multiple creative transformations. Iqbal's philosophy testifies to this reality and awakens in man the spiritual consciousness of God who is nearer to man than his neck-vein. Experiencing God makes life spiritually meaningful.

Experiencing God is a universal possibility realizable in all ages and different parts of the world with the proviso that the prophetic experience has attained finality in the medium of Muhammad and has ceased to exist in the history of man. The idea of finality is in consonance with the ultimate nature of things and events and it ensures the solidarity of the human society. All other forms of mystic experience, however, exist as open possibility.

All experience is open to critical scrutiny and mystic experience is no exception to this standard rule. Rather, it requires more stringent measures to test its pure objectivity for in this case the whole career of the individual self as well as that of the collective self is at stake both in this world and in the life hereafter. Obviously, the methods of determining pure objectivity correspond to different levels of experience.

Iqbal envisages the possibility and desirability of mystic experience as a vital fact for it integrates emotion with reason. It opens up 'fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience'. Man has 'to live soulfully, i.e. from within'. He has to restore his primordial link with 'the unplumbed depths of his own being'. This contact with the roots of one's own being shall usher in an era of true creativity. A plunge into the infinite depths of one's own consciousness 'deepens the whole being of the ego', sharpens one's will and makes one committed to continuous action. A religious behaviour not grounded in spirituality tends to become dry, formalist and thereby limited.

Iqbal's analysis of religious experience – as a vital dimension – is a creative addition to the world literature on mystic experience. However, his religious metaphysics makes him remain tied to the subject – object structure of reality. Consequently, he considers man – God polarity as final whereas it is essentially provisional. Khawaja Ghulam

Farid's traditional metaphysics, on the other hand, spells out the possibility where the Self-withdraws from the 'servant – Lord' polarity, with the Grace of Lord, 'and resides in its own transpersonal being'. The subject-object dichotomy or complementarism is transcended by virtue of pure Intellect or Spirit which is identical with the Divine Essence. The need of the hour is to embark upon a creative integration of Iqbal's thought with the metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid. It shall provide further intellectual and spiritual space for experiencing God.

..... saints in the psychological sense of the word or men of saintly character will always appear..... Indeed as long as the spiritual capacity of mankind endures, they will arise among all nations and countries in order to show better ideals of life to man. To hold otherwise would be to fly in the face of human experience. The only difference is that the modern man has the right to critical examination of their mystic experiences. The Finality of the Prophethood means, among other things, that all personal authority in religious life, denial of which involves damnation, has come to an end.

Iqbal

Iqbal and Khawaja Ghulam Farid on the Conception of Prophethood in Islam

..... and in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth.

Iqbal

IQBAL AND KHAWAJA GHULAM FARID ON THE CONCEPTION OF PROPHETHOOD IN ISLAM

Prophecy is a central subject in the Qur'an. The Qur'an highlights its various vertical and horizontal dimensions including the metaphysical, the religious, the philosophical, the historical and the socio-political. The Prophet of Islam has further elucidated the contours of this phenomenon. It is pertinent to point out that the Greeks, as such, had no idea of prophecy. The Muslim thinkers took this idea from the Qur'an, which speaks of the continuity of the Prophetic Revelation from Adam to Muhammad, and by using different methodologies presented various theories of Prophecy.

Iqbal resorts to religio-philosophical methodology in analyzing the conception of prophethood in Islam. His method is qualitatively different from that of the early Muslim philosophers who were highly influenced by the speculative method of the Greeks and it took them several centuries to realize that the spirit of the Qur'an was anti-classical. Iqbal says: 'As we all know, Greek philosophy has been a great cultural force in the history of Islam. Yet a careful study of the Qur'an and the various schools of scholastic theology that arose under the inspiration of Greek thought disclose the remarkable fact that while Greek philosophy very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it, on the whole, obscured their vision of the Qur'an. Socrates concentrated his attention on the human world alone. To him the proper study of man was man and not the world of plants, insects, and stars. How unlike the spirit of the Qur'an which sees in the humble bee a recipient of Divine inspiration and constantly calls upon

the reader to observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alternation of day and night, the clouds, the starry heavens, and the planets swimming through infinite space. As a true disciple of Socrates, Plato despised sense-perception which, in his view, yielded mere opinion and no real knowledge. How unlike the Qur'an, which regards, 'hearing' and 'sight' as the most valuable Divine gifts and declares them to be accountable to God for their activity in this world. This is what the earlier Muslim students of the Qur'an completely missed under the spell of classical speculation. They read the Qur'an in the light of Greek thought. It took them over two hundred years to perceive – though not quite clearly – that the spirit of the Qur'an was essentially anti-classical, and the result of this perception was a kind of intellectual revolt, the full significance of which has not been realized even up to the present day'¹

Iqbal's starting point is that religious experience is 'a source of Divine Knowledge'. Knowledge gained by sense-perception or reflective observation on the outward aspects of Reality is partial and in order to have 'a complete vision of Reality' sense-perception has to be supplemented by heart-knowledge, which directly encounters the Reality 'as it reveals itself within'. Knowledge of the external world is gained by interpreting the sense data and Knowledge of God is attained by interpreting the religious data. Iqbal's essential message is that God can be experienced. He says, 'The immediacy of mystic experience simply means that we know God just as we know other objects. God is not a mathematical entity or a system of concepts mutually related to one another having no reference to experience'²

Iqbal takes his point of departure from the conventional concept of prophecy and the mode of revelation. According to him, a prophet's contact with the

roots of his own being resultantly leads to the creative transformation of human collectivity. This direct contact means that he delves deep in his thought or consciousness where he experiences the throb of Divine life and receives message form the Reality which resides nearer to man than his neck-vein. Also, 'wahy' or 'inspiration' is not exclusively restricted to human domain but is essentially universal. He says, 'A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries, and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite centre of life sinks into his own infinite depths only to spring up again, with fresh vigour to destroy the old, and to disclose the new directions of life. This contact with the root of his own being is by no means peculiar to man. Indeed the way in which the word Wahi (inspiration) is used in the Qur'an shows that the Qur'an regards it as a universal property of life; though its nature and character are different at different stages of the evolution of life. The plant growing freely in space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment, and a human being receiving light from the inner depths of life, are all cases of inspiration varying in character according to the needs of the recipient, or the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs'³

Iqbal, further refers to the nature of the prophetic revelation in these beautiful words, 'The world-life intuitively sees its own needs, and at critical moments defines its own direction. This is what, in the language of religion, we call prophetic revelation'. He analyses the geographical position of Arabia which is the meeting point of the three continents and states that Islam flashed across the consciousness of a simple people who had not been touched by any of the ancient cultures. The new culture on

the basis of tauhid is essentially characterized by world-unity. This principle of tauhid is not merely doctrinal but has a corresponding realizational aspect. It essentially means loyalty to God and since God is the ultimate spiritual foundation of all life therefore loyalty to Him in the ultimate sense means loyalty to one's own ideal nature. Also, this spiritual basis of all life is eternal which manifests in the temporal. It leads to the integration of permanence and change. The structure of revelation is universal, absolute and permanent but it does not exclude the possibility of particular, relative and change. It is a challenge for both European and the Muslim world to understand the necessity of integrating the factors of permanence and change. He says, 'It is only natural that Islam should have flashed across the consciousness of a simple people untouched by any of the ancient cultures, and occupying a geographical position where three continents meet together. The new culture finds the foundation of world-unity in the principle of Tauhid. Islam, as a polity, is only a practical means of making this principle a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty of God, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature. The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Qur'an, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in its

nature, The failure of Europe in political and social science illustrates the former principle, the immobility of Islam during the last five hundred years illustrates the latter'⁴

Iqbal while discussing the rationale of prophecy reaffirms his original position that man receives revelation from within. According to him, prior to the birth of inductive reason or intellect, psychic energy is manifested in the form of prophetic consciousness. He says 'Now during the minority of mankind psychic energy develops what I call prophetic consciousness a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready-made judgements, choices, and ways of action. With the birth of reason and critical faculty, however, life in its own interest, inhibits the formation and growth of non-rational modes of consciousness through which psychic energy flowed at an earlier stage of human evolution. Man is primarily governed by passion and instinct. Inductive reason, which alone makes man master of his environment, is an achievement; and when once born it must be reinforced by inhibiting the growth of other modes of knowledge. There is no doubt that the ancient world produced some great systems of philosophy at a time when man was comparatively primitive and governed more or less by suggestion. But we must not forget that this system-building in the ancient world was the work of abstract thought which cannot go beyond the systematization of vague religious beliefs and traditions, and gives us no hold on the concrete situations of life.

'Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs

to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction'.⁵

Iqbal connects the rationale of prophecy with the idea of finality. His basic argument is that once man is imbued with inductive reason or intellect at a certain stage of evolution it logically necessitates the withering away of non-rational modes of consciousness. In other words, once mankind has matured, it is a form of regression to revert back to the state of childhood. He says, 'The birth of Islam...is the birth of inductive intellect. In Islam, prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot forever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality'.⁶

Iqbal states that there is no qualitative difference between mystic experience and the prophetic one. Mystic experience is a vital fact. The Qur'an considers both man's interiority and exteriority, 'Anfus' and 'Afaq' respectively as sources of knowledge. The idea of finality does not mean the reign of reason at the cost of emotion for such a thing is neither possible nor desirable. The idea simply means that no person after Muhammad can equate his personal authority with Divine Authority. Iqbal says, 'The idea, however, does not mean that mystic experience, which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet, has now ceased to exist as a vital fact. Indeed the Qur'an regards both Anfus (self) and Afaq (world) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience, and it is the duty of man to judge

the knowledge-yielding capacity of all aspects of experience. The idea of finality, therefore, should not be taken to suggest that the ultimate fate of life is complete displacement of emotion by reason. Such a thing is neither possible nor desirable. The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man. This kind of belief is a psychological force which inhibits the growth of such authority. The function of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience. Mystic experience, then, however, unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience'.⁷

Iqbal has spelled-out the conception of prophethood in Islam from the standpoint of religious metaphysics. The traditional metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid complements the religious metaphysics of Iqbal by bringing to light certain essential dimensions of prophecy in Islam.

Ibn Arabi delved on the concept of the Perfect Man in detail and one of his disciples Abd al-Karim al-Jili wrote a book 'Universal Man' in continuation of his master's thesis, with his own punctuation here and there. Writing in the same metaphysical tradition, Khawaja Ghulam Farid considered Muhammad as the embodiment of metaphysical reality and as the most Perfect Man.

From the metaphysical point of view, the Perfect Man is the epitome of all creation. The metaphysical status of Man finds its apex in the Perfect Man who perfectly realizes the cosmic purpose. 'It is precisely the Perfect Man who perfectly combines within himself, in harmony,

Heaven and Earth within the context of the realization of the Oneness of Being, who is at once the eye by which the divine subject sees Himself and the perfectly polished mirror that perfectly reflects the divine light. The Perfect Man is , thus, that individual human being who realizes in himself the reality of the saying that man is created in God's image, who combines in his microcosmic selfhood both the macrocosmic object and divine consciousness, being that heart which, microcosmically, contains all things essentially, and in which the Reality eternally rediscovers Its wholeness. He is also, at once, the original and ultimate man whose archetype and potential for realization is innate in every human being'.⁸

The doctrine of Logos points toward that Reality 'whose name is Ahmad with reference to the celestial sphere and Muhammad with reference to the terrestrial sphere.'⁹ The Qur'anic Christ's prediction of Ahmad as an Envoy after him' is none other than the transcendent and immanent Logos, and thus the 'inward Prophet', or the Intellect considered under its dual human and Divine aspect; it is the 'Divine Spirit', the mystery of which is referred to more than once in the Qoran the name 'Ahmad' is the 'heavenly Qoran name of the Prophet..... It is thus a question not so much of an earthly reality as of its heavenly root, and this brings us to the inward dimension this 'Spirit' is essentially the Intellect thus the 'Inward.....'¹⁰

The name Ahmad signifies the Logos; First Intellect; Reality of Muhammad; Reality of realities; Light of Muhammad etc. He was already a cosmic being before being raised as individual prophet in spatio-temporal order. He stated that he was a prophet even while Adam was between clay and water and that he already knew the all-comprehensive words i.e. the names before God taught

Adam the names. Ontologically, this existence from eternity corresponds to the level of permanent archetypes, which is an intermediary stage (*barzakh*) between the Absolute and the manifestation of the Absolute in the form of the world. It is both Divine and human and in its latter aspect it is the Reality of Muhammad. It is the principle by virtue of which all the archetypes are unified. 'Thus understood, the Reality of Muhammad is not exactly the permanent archetypes themselves. Rather, it is the unifying principle of all archetypes, the active principle on which depends the very existence of the archetypes. Considered from the side of the Absolute, the Reality of Muhammad is the creative activity itself of the Absolute, or God 'conceived as the self-revealing Principle of the universe'. It is the Absolute in the first stage of its eternal self-manifestation, i.e. the Absolute as the universal Consciousness..... The 'Reality of realities' is ultimately nothing but the Absolute, but it is not the Absolute in its primordial absoluteness; it is the first form in which the Absolute begins to manifest itself' Likewise, the Reality of Muhammad can be called the Light of Muhammad for the Prophet said that the first thing, which God created, was his Light. This Light was eternal and non-temporal and was manifest in the chain of prophets till its final historical manifestation in the prophet himself. 'Since the Light was that which God created before anything else and that from which he created everything else, it was the very basis of the creation of the world. And it was 'Light' because it was nothing else then the First Intellect, i.e. the Divine Consciousness, by which God manifested Himself to Himself in the state of the Absolute Unity. And the Light is in its personal aspect the Reality of Muhammad'.¹¹

We have brought out the metaphysical meaning latent in the name Ahmad essentially from the world-view

of Ibn Arabi who exercised a deep impact on the metaphysical thought of Khawaja Ghulam Farid. The latter, in line with his master, considered Ahmad as the first self-determination of the Absolute wherein 'the Essence at the level of Unity determined itself before any other forms of self-determination.'¹² There remains 'above him only the Essence at the level of its absolute Unity, which transcends all self-determinations, whether that of an attribute, name, description, definition or qualification'.¹³

Tosum Bayrak Halveti further enlightens on the metaphysical concept of Ahmad. 'Ahmad the most praiseworthy of those who praise Allah. This is the celestial name of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him). Allah, the Ever-Existing, the All-Powerful, 360,000 years before He created the creation, created from His divine light a sacred light. That light upon light praised Allah before and during the creation of heaven and the heavenly and earth and the earthly. The inhabitants of the heavens named that light Ahmad. As his praise of Allah is greater than the praise of all that is created, he is called ahmad al-hamidin – the greatest of givers of praise. Ahmad is the name by which he is mentioned in the Gospel. And when Jesus son of Mary said, 'O Children of Israel, surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad'. (Surah Saff, 6). In the Bible, Jesus '(May Allah bless him) says: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you unto all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me. (John 14:17). That Spirit of Truth who speaks by Allah's words is Ahmad'.¹⁴

The Prophet is the first self-determination of the Absolute. It was by virtue of his reality that the cosmos was created. He realized the permanent and actual synthesis of all states of Being. 'Essentially he is equilibrium and extinction: equilibrium from the human point of view and extinction in relation to God'.¹⁵ The epithets applied to the Prophet, understood in the higher sense, impart a metaphysical understanding of the first self-determination of the Absolute, which as Ahmad became Muhammad. 'It is to Universal Man, who is at the same time the Spirit, the totality of the universe and the perfect human symbol, that the epithets refer which are traditionally applied to the Prophet when they are taken according to their esoteric meaning. He is the 'Glorified' (Muhammad) because he is the synthesis of the divine radiance in the cosmos; he is the perfect 'slave' (abd) because wholly passive in relation to God inasmuch as he is distinct from Him in his created nature; he is a 'messenger' (rasul) because being in essence the Spirit, he emanates directly from God; he is unlettered (ummi) through the fact that he receives his knowledge directly from God without the intermediary of written signs, i.e. without any creature being an intermediary, and he is also the unique and universal 'beloved' (habib) of God'.¹⁶

Unlike Iqbal's starting point which is the Divine or differentiated Reality essentially characterized by an individualistic conception of man and God, Khawaja Ghulam Farid's initiation is from the Essence or undifferentiated Reality which is formless. According to him, the emergence of the principle of differentiation within the undifferentiated Reality is known as Ahmad: the first self-determination of the Absolute. Khawaja Ghulam Farid says:

17

(Translation)

The Primordial Beauty became manifest. Ahad's formlessness assumed Ahmad's form.¹⁸

19

(Translation)

There is no difference between Ahad and Ahmad. The Essence and the Attributes are one.²⁰

21

(Translation)

He is Ahad. He is Ahmad. He wins the heart by being hiddenly manifest in the form of meem. (Muhammad).²²

23

(Translation)

Ahad oh!emerged in the form of Ahmad.²⁴

25

(Translation)

16

He came from the land of the Most Invisible. He dwelled in the city of the visible. He uncovered the veil of the Essence and from the limitless became the limit.²⁶

27

(Translation)

The Essential Beauty: (The light of Muhammad) plays game of pride and humility. Sincerely reflect and understand that he has come in the city of Kot (Kot Mithan).²⁸

29

(Translation)

Do eradicate resentment and grief. Truly understand the friend as formless. He has manifested in each from by being hiddenly manifest in Hijazi light (The light of Muhammad).³⁰

31

(Translation)

My head is sacrificed in the path of the Arabian prophet. My soul and heart are devoted in fondness for him. This essential narration, Farid, is an epitome of his perfection: the royal crown, after God, is on my Shah (Muhammad).³²

33

(Translation)

My Ranjhan (Muhammad) is Divine light. He truly manifests the Attributes of Divinity. He wears the crown of 'lolaak' (the raison 'detre of whole creation). The laurel of 'ta' waves over his head.³⁴

It was by virtue of his reality that the cosmos was created. Ahmad became Muhammad in the terrestrial sphere. He realized the permanent and actual syntheses of all states of Being. It is this underlying cosmic purpose which made God address the Prophet in these words, 'If thou were not, I would not have created the heavens'. (Holy Tradition).

The traditional metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid teaches us that the Cosmic cycle has completed the entire circle of prophecy from Ahmad to Muhammad. This metaphysical wholeness manifested in the medium of

Muhammad leaves no room for the emergence of a new prophet. In other words, in the form of Muhammad the absolutely Perfect and the most Universal Man-the reality manifested and witnessed Its own Attributes in fullness. Such perfection and universalism, complete manifestation and total witnessing in the medium of Muhammad is itself the greatest metaphysical proof for the finality of Prophethood in Islam. Khawaja Ghulam Farid says:

35

(Translation)

I have seen the sacred city (madinah) where is present the custodian of the universe. The city is free from imperfection. The light of prophecy is shining forth beautifully.³⁶

37

(Translation)

The holy land of Arabia is all-beautiful. It is tender, elegant and sublime. I sacrifice myself countless times to this dwelling place of bondless prophet.³⁸

39

(Translation)

He became manifest from the Most Invisible. Originating from Arabia, he captivated the entire universe. The beloved (Muhammad) beautifies the tradition of prophecy.⁴⁰

41

(Translation)

The land of Arabia: the place of celestial happiness is all in full bloom. (the prime or highest perfection of prophecy).⁴²

43

(Translation)

I have witnessed majestic glory in all. I have witnessed Hasan, Husayn and Ali. I have witnessed Abu Bakr, Umar and Usman. Laudation to the holy and bondless prophet whom I have witnessed.⁴⁴

45

(Translation)

The sacred, holy and religious tradition of 'negation' is the kernel of the entire Arab heritage. It is evident in the teachings, Hadith and Qur'an.⁴⁶

47

(Translation)

I have not died in the longing and quest for I have witnessed holy Arabia while still alive. The beautiful friend (Muhammad) has remembered me. I have become worthy of my ornamentation.⁴⁸

49

(Translation)

The custodian of Arab and non-Arab world is that self (Muhammad) which is holy and pure. He is the master of heights and depths. He is totally manifested and is manifestation itself.⁵⁰

51

(Translation)

Where Ahmad is the vanguard of the prophets; beloved of all the divinely accepted; the master of souls and intellects and the Sovereign of the Sovereigns.⁵²

(Translation)

The Primordial Grace became manifest. It is a moment of immense gratitude that we got the universal prophet. The heart found solace and comfort by rejecting all doubts and apprehensions.⁵⁴

Iqbal and Khawaja Ghulam Farid have succeeded in bringing forth the vertical and horizontal dimensions enshrined in the conception of prophethood in Islam. A creative synthesis of Iqbal's religious metaphysics and the traditional metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid is essential for seeing things in their total perspective. The religio-philosophical method of Iqbal integrated with the intellective-spiritual method of Khawaja Ghulam Farid can satisfy the rational and intellectual needs of the modern man.

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Iqbal on the Genuineness of Religious Experience

Iqbal on the Genuineness of Religious Experience

The ultimate basis of religion is an experience which is essentially individual and incommunicable. It is because of its essentially private character that mystics see no use in talking about it except to experts, and that, too, for the purposes of verification only. In the history of Islamic mysticism we find many recorded instances in which some mystics have been reported to have travelled thousands of miles for the verification of a single experience. This is technically known as “Tasdiq”, i.e. verification by an appeal to another man’s experience.

Iqbal

IQBAL ON THE GENUINENESS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Iqbal is an Islamic philosopher of religion. He considers religious experience as the foundation of higher religion. 'Religious experience is essentially a state of feeling with a cognitive aspect..'¹ He states that the content itself of these states cannot be communicated except in the form of propositions or judgement. 'Mystic states are more like feeling than thought. The interpretation which the mystic or prophet puts on the content of his religious consciousness can be conveyed to others in the form of propositions, but the content itself cannot be so transmitted.'² He reiterates his standpoint regarding the incommunicability of religious experience by saying that '...the contentcannot be communicated to others except in the form of a judgement'³. He shows that the intellectual test and the pragmatic test are equally applicable to this judgement as in case of other forms of knowledge. He says: 'Now when a judgement which claims to be the interpretation of a certain region of human experience, not accessible to me, is placed before me for my assent, I am entitled to ask, what is the guarantee of its truth? Are we in possession of a test, which would reveal its validity? If personal experience had been the only ground for acceptance of a judgement of this kind, religion would have been the possession of a few individuals only. Happily we are in possession of tests, which do not differ from those applicable to other forms of knowledge. These I call the intellectual test and the pragmatic test. The former is applied by the philosopher, the latter by the prophet.'⁴

Iqbal's thesis on the genuineness of religious experience is based on sound reasoning. He negates the

possibility of applying the purely rational method of philosophy to religion. 'The spirit of philosophy is one of free inquiry. It suspects all authority. Its function is to trace the uncritical assumptions of human thought to their hiding places, and in this pursuit it may finally end in denial or a frank admission of the incapacity of pure reason to reach the Ultimate Reality'.⁵ The Western philosophy of religion starting from the Greeks till the present times has not succeeded in understanding the essence of religion. Notwithstanding some of the positive contributions it has made in delineating the aspects of religious thought, it essentially has remained oblivious of the kernel of higher religion.

Iqbal considers religious experience as an essential source of knowledge. He says: 'Indeed the Qur'an regards both *Anfus* (self) and *Afaaq* (world) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience, and it is the duty of man to judge the knowledge-yielding capacity of all aspects of experience'.⁶ He further says: 'There is no doubt that the treatment of religious experience, as a source of Divine knowledge, is historically prior to the treatment of other regions of human experience for the same purpose. The Qur'an, recognizing that the empirical attitude is an indispensable stage in the spiritual life of humanity, attaches equal importance to all the regions of human experience as yielding knowledge of the Ultimate Reality which reveals its symbols both within and without One indirect way of establishing connexions with the reality that confronts us is reflective observation and control of its symbols as they reveal themselves to sense perception; the other way is direct association with that reality as it reveals itself within'.⁷ The efficient self obtains knowledge of the outer world in serial time through sense-perception whereas the appreciative self gains

knowledge of the inner world in pure duration by virtue of 'Faud', or 'Qalb', i.e., heart. Both sense-perception and the perception of the heart complement each other in giving a complete vision of Reality. The denial of either sensory knowledge or heart-knowledge is obliviousness of different levels of reality and is fraught with harmful consequences for Man. Iqbal quotes the Qur'an in this context: 'God hath made everything which He hath created most good; and began the creation of man with clay; then ordained his progeny from germs of life, from sorry water; then shaped him, and breathed of His spirit unto him and gave you hearing and seeing and heart: what either thanks do ye return?'⁸

Iqbal delves on the intellectual and the vital approach towards understanding the world. 'The intellectual way consists in understanding the world as a rigid system of cause and effect. The vital is the absolute acceptance of the inevitable necessity of life, regarded as a whole, which in evolving its inner richness creates serial time. This vital way of appropriating the universe is what the Qur'an describes as Iman. Iman is not merely a passive belief in one or more propositions of a certain kind; it is living assurance begotten of a rare experience. Strong personalities alone are capable of rising to this experience and the higher 'Fatalism' implied in it.'⁹ He further says that this vital experience is beyond the ken of logical categories. The essentiality of this experience is that it'...can embody itself only in a world – making or world – shaking act; and in this form alone the content of this timeless experience can diffuse itself in the time – movement, and make itself effectively visible to the eye of history.¹⁰

'Know thyself' is the key to experience the ultimate Reality from within i.e., in the depths of one's

consciousness. In other words, it is contact with the roots of one's being which essentially is experiential in nature. Iqbal says: 'Now my perception of things that confront me is superficial and external; but my perception of my own self is internal, intimate and profound. It follows, therefore, that conscious experience is that privileged case of existence in which we are in absolute contact with Reality, and an analysis of this privileged case is likely to throw a flood of light on the ultimate meaning of existence'¹¹. He further says: 'In its deeper movement, however, thought is capable of reaching an immanent Infinite in whose self-unfolding movement the various finite concepts are merely moments'¹². Iqbal explains the process in these emphatic words: 'A deeper analysis of conscious experience reveals to us what I have called the appreciative side of the self. With our absorption in the external order of things, necessitated by our present situation, it is extremely difficult to catch a glimpse of the appreciative self. In our constant pursuit after external things we weave a kind of veil round the appreciative-self, which thus becomes completely alien to us. It is only in the moments of profound meditation, when the efficient self is in abeyance, that we sink into our deeper self and reach the inner centre of experience. In the life-process of this deeper ego the states of consciousness melt into each other'¹³.

Iqbal does not consider it irreverent to critically examine this vital area of human experience. 'Nor is there anything irreverent in critically examining this region of human experience. The Prophet of Islam was the first critical observer of psychic phenomena. Bukhari and other traditionists have given us a full account of his observation of the psychic Jewish youth, Ibn Sayyad, who ecstatic moods attracted the Prophet's notice. He tested him, questioned him, and examined him in his various moods.

Once he hid himself behind the stem of a tree to listen to his mutterings. The boy's mother, however, warned him of the approach of the Prophet. Thereupon, the boy immediately shook off his mood and the Prophet remarked: 'If she had let him alone the thing would have been cleared up'the first Muslim to see the meaning and value of the Prophet's attitude was Ibn Khaldun, who approach the content of mystic consciousness in a more critical spirit and very nearly reached the modern hypothesis of subliminal selves'.¹⁴

Iqbal moves on to establish the genuineness of religious experience by resorting to historical argument. 'The revealed and mystic literature of mankind bears ample testimony to the fact that religious experience has been too enduring and dominant in the history of mankind to be rejected as mere illusion. There seems to be no reason, then, to accept the normal level of human experience as fact and reject its other levels as mystical and emotional. The facts of religious experience are facts among other facts of human experience and, in the capacity of yielding knowledge by interpretation, one fact is as good as another.'¹⁵

Iqbal rightly picks up an argument with those critics who tend to undermine the spiritual value of religious experience by pointing towards the organic condition of the mystic state. 'Nor is it possible to undo the spiritual value of the mystic state by specifying the organic conditions which appear to determine it...Psychologically speaking, all states, whether their content is religious or non-religious, are organically determined. The scientific form of mind is as much organically determined as the religious...A certain kind of temperament may be a necessary condition for a certain kind of receptivity; but the antecedent condition cannot be regarded as the whole truth

about the character of what is received. The truth is that the organic causation of our mental states has nothing to do with the criteria by which we judge them to be superior or inferior in point of value'.¹⁶ He quotes William James in this context: 'In the end it had come to our empiricist criterion: By their fruits ye shall know them and not by their roots'.¹⁷

Iqbal analyses the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, which poses a direct challenge to the religious phenomena. He states '...though I cannot help saying that the main theory of this newer psychology does not appear to me to be supported by any adequate evidence'.¹⁸ In response to the Freudians, he says: 'That there are religions and forms of art, which provide a kind of cowardly escape from the facts of life, I do not deny. All that I contend is that this is not true of all religions'.¹⁹

He further delves deep into the corner stone of Freudianism and rejects the thesis that religious consciousness is the working of the sex-impulse. 'Nor is it possible to explain away the content of religious consciousness by attributing the whole thing to the working of the sex-impulse. The two forms of consciousness-sexual and religious-are often hostile or, at any rate, completely different to each other in point of their character, their aim, and the kind of conduct they generate. The truth is that in a state of religious passion we know a factual reality in some sense outside the narrow circuit of our personality. To the psychologist religious passion necessarily appears as the work of the subconscious because of the intensity with which it shakes up the depths of our being. In all knowledge there is an element of passion, and the object of knowledge gains or loses in objectivity with the rise and fall in the intensity of passion. That is more real to us, which stirs up the entire fabric of our personality'.²⁰

Iqbal further analyzes Jungian psychology. 'Jung, however, is probably right in thinking that the essential nature of religion is beyond the province of analytic psychology... Yet Jung has violated his own principle more than once in his writings. The result of this procedure is that, instead of giving us a real insight into the essential nature of religion and its meaning for human personality, our modern psychology has given us quite a plethora of new theories which proceed on a complete misunderstanding of the nature of religion as revealed in its higher manifestations, and carry us in an entirely hopeless direction. The implication of these theories, on the whole, is that religion does not relate the human ego to any objective reality beyond himself; it is merely a kind of well-meaning biological device calculated to build barriers of ethical nature round human society in order to protect the social fabric against the otherwise unrestrainable instincts of the ego'.²¹ Iqbal further says: 'This is missing the whole point of higher religious life. Sexual self-restraint is only a preliminary stage in the ego's evolution. The ultimate purpose of religious life is to make this evolution move in a direction far more important to the destiny of the ego than the moral health of the social fabric, which forms his present environment. The basic perception from which religious life moves forward is the present slender unity of the ego, his liability to dissolution, his amenability to reformation and the capacity for an ampler freedom to create new situations in known and unknown environments. In view of this fundamental perception higher religious life fixes its gaze on experiences symbolic of those subtle movements of Reality, which seriously affect the destiny of the ego as a possibly permanent element in the constitution of Reality. If we look at the matter from this point of view modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer

fringe of religious life, and is still far from the richness and variety of what is called religious experience'.²²

Iqbal is of the firm view that a purely psychological method cannot understand the knowledge-yielding aspect of mystic consciousness. 'A purely psychological method, therefore, cannot explain religious passion as a form of knowledge. It is bound to fail in the case of our newer psychologists as it did fail in the case of Locke and Hume'.²³ He demonstrates the need for an effective method for analyzing the mystic states. He says: 'Modern psychology has only recently begun to realize the importance of a careful study of the contents of mystic consciousness, and we are not yet in possession of a really effective scientific method to analyze the contents of non-rational modes of consciousness'.²⁴ He stresses the need of a new technique suited to our times in these emphatic words... 'The ultimate aim of religious life (is) the reconstruction of the finite ego by bringing him into contact with an eternal life – process, and thus giving him a metaphysical status of which we can have only a partial understanding in the half – choking atmosphere of our present environment. If, therefore, the science of psychology is ever likely to possess a real significance for the life of mankind, it must develop an independent method calculated to discover a new technique better suited to the temper of our times'.²⁵

Iqbal builds a case for the genuineness of religious experience on firm foundations. He brings in evidence of religious experts to show the presence and creative activity of potential types of consciousness lying deeper than our normal consciousness. 'The evidence of religious experts in all ages and countries is that there are potential types of consciousness lying close to our normal consciousness. If these types of consciousness open up possibilities of life-

giving and knowledge-yielding experience the question of the possibility of religion as a form of higher experience is a perfectly legitimate one and demands our serious attention'.²⁶

Does the incommunicability of religious experience mean the futility of this religious enterprise? Iqbal tackles this question and shows the nature and meaningfulness of the religious encounter. Iqbal demonstrates the presence of the mystic path, which has been traversed by the religious experts, and this is precisely the reason that they can interpret and guide the people who are following this path. He mentions one such type of interpretation by Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind who was a great religious expert of the Sufi Way. He says: 'The experience of one Abd al-Mu'min was described to the Shaikh as follows:

'Heavens and Earth and God's throne and Hell and Paradise have all cease to exist for me. When I look round I find them nowhere. When I stand in the presence of somebody I see nobody before me : nay even my own being is lost to me. God is infinite. Nobody can encompass Him, and this is the extreme limit of spiritual experience. No saint has been able to go beyond this.'

On this the Shaikh replied:

'The experience which is described has its origin in the ever varying life of the Qalb; and it appears to me that the recipient of it has not yet passed even one-fourth of the innumerable "Stations" of the Qalb. The remaining three-fourths must be passed through in order to finish the experiences of this first "Station" of spiritual life. Beyond this "Station" there are other "Stations" known as Ru'h, Sirr-I-Khafi, and Sirr-i-Akhfa, each of these "Stations" which together constitute what is technically

called 'Aalm- Amr has its own characteristic states and experience. After having passed through these "Stations: the seeker of truth gradually receives the illuminations of "Divine Names" and "Divine Attributes" and finally the illuminations of the Divine Essence'.

Whatever may be the psychological ground of the distinctions made in this passage it gives us at least some idea of a whole universe of inner experience as seen by a great reformer of Islamic Sufism. According to him this, *Alam-i-Amr*, i.e., 'the world of directive energy, must be passed through before one reaches that unique experience which symbolized the purely objective. This is the reason why I say that modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer fringe of the subject'.²⁷

If one pays serious attention to the Muslim traditions in psychotherapy, one shall find adequate evidence in support of Iqbal's thesis on the subject.

Iqbal analyzes the category of pure reason and reaches the conclusion that it has no access to the corridors of Divinity. The purely rational process, which forms the concepts of philosophical theology, is not a final word. Religious experience, in a sense, is an antidote to such form of speculative reasoning. 'As a form of higher experience it is corrective of our concepts of philosophical theology or at least makes up suspicious of the purely rational process which forms these concepts'.²⁸

Iqbal is of the considered view that banking on concepts is a non-serious way of dealing with Reality. Unlike science, religion handles Reality seriously for essentially it is committed to the way of actual living. 'It seems that the method of dealing with Reality by means of concepts is not at all a serious way of dealing with it. Science does not care whether its electron is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention. Religion,

which is essentially a mode of actual living, is the only serious way of handling Reality'.²⁹

Iqbal considers higher religion as essentially experience, which is its foundation. He parts company from all those philosophers of religion who search for some non-experiential basis of religion. He also moves away from a large group of philosophers of religion who advance arguments for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, for instance, resting them on nonreligious premises. They do not understand the foundation of higher religion. Religion took precedence over science in acknowledging the necessity of experience. It is critical of its own level of experience as is the case with Naturalism. 'Yet higher religion, which is only a search for the larger life, is essentially experience and recognized the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do so. It is a genuine effort to clarify human consciousness, and is, as such, as critical of its level of experience as Naturalism is of its own level'.³⁰

Iqbal reiterates his standpoint that unlike science it is impossible for religion to discard metaphysics. 'Science can afford to ignore metaphysics altogether, and may even believe it to be 'a justified form of poetry, as Lange defined it, or a 'legitimate play of grown-ups', as Nietzsche described it. But the religious experts who seeks to discover his personal status in the constitution of things cannot, in view of the final aim of his struggle, be satisfied with what science may regard as a vital lie, a mere 'as-if' to regulate thought and conduct. In so far as the ultimate nature of Reality is concerned, nothing is at stake in the venture of science; in the religious venture the whole career of the ego as an assimilative personal centre of life and experience is at stake'.³¹

Iqbal has brought to light the nature of both religion and science. There is no inherent contradiction between the two with the proviso that the data of religious experience is unique and it cannot be mechanically reduced to the data of empirical sciences. 'Religion is not physics or chemistry seeking an explanation of Nature in terms of causation; it really aims at interpreting a totally different region of human experience-religious experience—the data of which cannot be reduced to the data of any other science. In fact, it must be said in justice to religion that it insisted on the necessity of concrete experience in religious life long before science learnt to do so. The conflict between the two is due not to the fact that the one is, and the other is not, based on concrete experience. Both seek concrete experience as a point of departure. Their conflict is due to the misapprehension that both interpret the same data of experience. We forget that religion aims at reaching the real significance of a special variety of human experience'.³²

Iqbal states that both the religious and the scientific processes, using different methodologies, aim to reach the reality with religion excelling to reach the ultimately real. 'The truth is that the religious and the scientific processes, though involving different methods, are identical in their final aim. Both aim at reaching the most real. In fact, religion...is far more anxious to reach the ultimately real than science. And to both the way to pure objectivity lies through what may be called the purification of experience. In order to understand this we must make a distinction between experience as a natural fact, significant of the normally observable behaviour of Reality, and experience as significant of the inner nature of reality. As a natural fact it is explained in the light of its antecedents, psychological and physiological; as significant of the inner nature of

reality we shall have to apply criteria of a different kind to clarify its meaning. In the domain of science we try to understand its meaning in reference to the external behaviour of reality; in the domain of religion we take it as representative of some kind of Reality and try to discover its meaning in reference mainly to the inner nature of that Reality. The scientific and the religious processes are in a sense parallel to each other...A careful study of the nature and purpose of these really complementary processes shows that both of them are directed to the purification of experience in their respective spheres'.³³

Iqbal further says"religion as a deliberate enterprise to seize the ultimate principle of value and thereby to reintegrate the forces of one's personality is a fact which cannot be denied. The whole religious literature of the world, including the records of specialists' personal experiences, though perhaps expressed in the thought – forms of an out-of-date psychology, is a standing testimony to it. These experiences are perfectly natural, like our normal experiences. The evidence is that they possess a cognitive value for the recipient, and, what is much more important, a capacity to centralize the forces of the ego and thereby to endow him with a new personality. The view that such experiences are neurotic or mystical will not finally settle the question of their meaning or value. If an outlook beyond physics is possible, we must courageously face the possibility, even though it may disturb or tend to modify our normal ways of life and thought'.³⁴

Iqbal brings a very cohesive argument against those who consider religious experience amenable to illusions. He states that this objection is equally applicable to sense-experience as well. Both the mystic and the scientist are cognizant of it and have different methods to purify experience. He says: 'No doubt he has his pitfalls and

illusions just as the scientist who relies on sense-experience has his pitfalls and illusions. A careful study of his method, however, shows that he is not less alert than the scientist in the matter of eliminating the alloy of illusion from his experience'.³⁵ Regarding the purification of experience, he states: 'His sense of objectivity is as keen as that of the scientist in his own sphere of objectivity. He passes from experience to experience, not as a mere spectator, but as a critical sifter of experience who by the rules of a peculiar technique, suited to his sphere of inquiry, endeavours to eliminate all subjective elements, psychological or physiological, in the context of his experience with a view finally to reach what is absolutely objective'.³⁶ He further says: 'The demon in his malice does counterfeit experiences which creep into the circuit of the mystic state. As we read in the Qur'an:

*'We have not sent any Apostle or Prophet before thee among whose desires Satan injected not some wrong desire, but God shall bring to naught that which Satan had suggested. Thus shall God affirm His revelations, for God is Knowing and Wise' (22:52).*³⁷ Iqbal understands religious experience as a concrete experience and successfully points towards a method, which has the vitality to eliminate the satanic from the Divine. He refutes the arguments that the experience is either a mystery or essentially emotional. Rather, the technique of Islamic Sufism takes good care to eliminate any spurious element, which might creep in.

Iqbal while demonstrating the genuineness of religious experience brings forth the pragmatic argument which 'judges it by its fruits'. He, now, applies the pragmatic test to the revelations of religious experience. He says: 'Another way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience, therefore would be to examine the

type of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his Message'.³⁸ He applies this test to the final prophet of Islam. He says: Muhammad, we are told, was psychopath. Well, if a psychopath has the power to give a fresh direction to the course of human history, it is point of the highest psychological interest to search his original experience which has turned slaves into leaders of men, and has inspired the conduct and shaped the career of whole races of mankind. Judging from the various types of activity that emanated from the movement initiated by the Prophet of Islam, his spiritual tension and the kind of behaviour which issued from it, cannot be regarded as a response to a mere fantasy inside his brain. It is impossible to understand it except as response to an objective situation generative of new enthusiasms, new organizations, new starting points'.³⁹

Iqbal concludes his arguments in these emphatic words: 'Mystic experience, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience. This is clear from the Prophet's own attitude towards Ibn-i-Sayyad's psychic experiences. The function of Sufism in Islam has been to systematize mystic experience; though it must be admitted that Ibn Khaldun was the only Muslim who approached it in a thoroughly scientific spirit'.⁴⁰

Iqbal laments that the technique of medieval mysticism has now practically failed to unleash fresh sources of energy. 'The technique of medieval mysticism by which religious life, in its higher manifestations, developed itself, both in the East and in the West has now practically failed. And in the Muslim East it has, perhaps, done far greater havoc than any thing else. Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life, and

thus preparing him for participation in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thralldom...Disappointed of a purely religious method of spiritual renewal which alone brings us into touch with the everlasting fountain of life and power by expanding our thought and emotion, the modern Muslim fondly hopes to unlock fresh recourses of energy by narrowing down his thought and emotion....The modern world stands in need of biological renewal.’⁴¹

Iqbal posits the need of a sound technique relevant to the modern times. ‘There are, however, men to whom it is not possible organically to assimilate an alien universe by re-living as a vital process, that special type of inner experience on which religious faith ultimately rests. Moreover, the modern man, by developing habits of concrete thought-habits which Islam itself fostered at least in the earlier stages of its cultural career – has rendered himself less capable of that experience which he further suspects because of its liability to illusion. The more genuine schools of Sufism have, no doubt, done good work in shaping and directing the evolution of religious experience in Islam; but their latter-day representatives, owing to their ignorance of the modern mind, have become absolutely incapable of receiving any fresh inspiration from modern thought and experience. They are perpetuating methods, which were created for generations possessing a cultural outlook differing, in important respects, from our own. ‘Your creation and resurrection’, says the Qur’an, ‘are like the creation and resurrection, of a single soul.’ A living experience of the kind of biological unity, embodied in this verse, requires today a method physiologically less violent and psychologically more suitable to a concrete type of

mind. In the absence of such a method the demand for a scientific form of religious knowledge is only natural'.⁴²

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Iqbal and Khawaj Ghulam Farid on Man-God Polarity

Iqbal on the Stages of Religious Life

Knowledge and direct revelation are not mutually opposed; they are complementary to each other. The philosophical theologian simply tries, for the sake of less fortunate persons, to socialize, through reason, what is essentially individual. When the mystic Sultan Abu Sa'id met the philosopher Abu Ali ibn Sina, he is reported to have said: I see what he knows.

Iqbal

Iqbal on the Stages of Religious Life

IQBAL ON THE STAGES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Introduction

The word religion is impregnated with diversity of meaning. It has been understood at different levels. An analysis of religious thought testifies the fact that no single definition has gained universal acceptance. Correspondingly, the number of religions has remained an open issue. Huston Smith, for example, in his book *The Religions of Man* characterizes Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity as religions. Walter Kaufmann's *Religion from Tolstoy to Camus* narrates a different story. For us, religion is that which binds man to God through Revelation.. It is quite legitimate to qualify the sense of religion in order to ward off any vagueness in the use of the term.

Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* tried to reconcile the divergent trend of British empiricism and Continental rationalism. He raised the fateful question: *Is metaphysics possible?* and answered in the negative. His statement that metaphysical speculation had no constitutive role in human knowledge. banished metaphysics from the realm of epistemology. His commitment to pure reason ravaged the edifice of intellect. He was not ready to embrace any other level of human experience within his narrow orbit of knowledge. Iqbal says: 'As to the thing in itself, which is inaccessible to pure reason because of its falling beyond the boundaries of experience, Kant's verdict can be accepted only if we start with the assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible. The only question, therefore, is whether the

normal level is the only level of knowledge-yielding experience'¹. He did not accept the Kantian position and attempted to establish the possibility of religion on the basis of religious experience. He talks of the totality of human consciousness. 'Feelings, purposes, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense impressions'². He sums up the entire argument in these words: 'If these types of consciousness open up possibilities of life-giving and knowledge-yielding experience the question of the possibility of religion as a form of higher experience is a perfectly legitimate one and demands our serious attention'³.

The study regarding the stages of religious life is exceedingly imperative in the modern times for the following reasons:

1. Religious dogmatism has assumed many forms, which are essentially against the spirit of Islam. Faith, which is a living reality, has been merely reduced to a lifeless set of propositions.
2. Faith has been divorced from rational understanding of religion leading to the phenomena of immobility. The static, the stationary and the immobile have crept into the body of Islam.
3. Faith has also become adamant to religious experience, which is a form of true knowledge.
4. Rationalism has invaded the realm of Islam with little regard to the element of faith and religious encounter with God.
5. Pseudo-mysticism has become a life-denying attitude. The lessons of higher Sufism have been forgotten.

6. There is no integration of faith, reason and discovery.

Thus, it is very important to discuss the periods of religious life as set forth by Iqbal, so that people understand the essence, nature and dynamics of religion.

There has been ample literature on Islam contributed by different thinkers belonging to different epochs and disciplines. There is no dearth of authentic literature in the Islamic world but still there shall remain a need of constant integration between the eternal and the temporal. Religious life is dynamic and it has nothing to do with what is static, stationary or immobile. It has the vitality to essentially remain contemporaneous. Iqbal expresses the dynamic spirit of Islam in these beautiful words: 'The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Qur'an, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilize what is essentially mobile in its nature, The failure of Europe in political and social sciences illustrates the former principle, the immobility of Islam during the last five hundred years illustrates the latter'⁴. The principle of movement in the nature of Islam is 'ijtihad'.

Iqbal is a thinker who is placed at a unique station for he understands both East and the West. He is fully conversant with different languages of the world including Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English. He takes

Rumi as his guide and through him gets knowledge of the Islamic heritage. It is interesting to note that Iqbal essentially has taken the concept of three stages of religious life from Rumi. Dr Nazir Qaiser, in his marvelous book: *Rumi's Impact upon Iqbal's Religious Thought*, elucidates this point in its various dimensions. Iqbal's understanding of the Qur'an, Hadith, Jurisprudence, Hikmat etc. is superb. He is equally well versed with Greek Philosophy and the subsequent Western Thought. He is equipped with deep knowledge of the important civilizations of the world. His understanding of the principles of permanence and change and their integration makes him one of the most profound Muslim thinkers.

Iqbal delivered certain lectures, which were compiled in the form of a book titled: *The Reconstruction Of Religious Thought in Islam*. In the seventh lecture of the book titled: *Is Religion Possible?* Iqbal starts his lecture by differentiating three periods of religious life. The first period is faith, which is an unconditional adherence to Divine Command. It is of great consequence for the political and social life of a people but is of less consequence as far as individual harmony and growth is concerned. However, faith has a higher dimension also where it imparts heart-knowledge. The second stage of religious life is 'Thought' where religion is understood rationally. Reason plays a dominant role in this sphere and develops a rational metaphysics. The intellectual test is applied on the revelations of religious experience and an analysis of physics, biology and psychology demonstrate that both science and religion point towards the same essential Reality. The third stage of religious life is categorized as 'Discovery' where metaphysics is displaced

by psychology and man develops a direct contact with the ultimate Reality.

Iqbal's concept of Islam as a dynamic religion with three periods of religious life is his magnificent contribution to the literature on the subject. He avoids the limitations of numerous religious thinkers and presents Islam in its true spirit to the best of his ability.

The present study is a wake-up call for all those who remain captivated in a certain period of religious life. However, with the growth of knowledge it has been seriously realized that Iqbal's thought needs to be further developed and integrated with the traditional metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid.

The Dynamics of Faith

Iqbal categorizes the first period of religious life as Faith. 'In the first period religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned'⁵.

Iqbal has very beautifully brought out the first period of religious life as perfect submission to the Divine Command. This may not be termed, as blind faith for the process of reflection cannot be ruled out even at this initial stage. However, the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command is understood in the second stage of religious life where rational metaphysics takes the leading role.

Faith does play a vital role in cementing the social and political life of the Ummah but it has a limited role in respect of man's inner growth and expansion.

Iqbal, very interestingly, moves to the spiritual dimension of faith for pure reason cannot reach the ultimate Reality. 'The essence of religion, on the other hand, is faith; and faith, like the bird, sees its 'trackless way' unattended by intellect which, in the words of the great mystic poet of Islam, 'only waylays the living heart of man and robs it of the invisible wealth of life that lies within'. Yet it cannot be denied that faith is more than mere feeling. It has something like a cognitive content, and the existence of rival parties scholastics and mystics in the history of religion shows that idea is a vital element in religion'⁶.

Schuon considers an element of faith that forms part of gnosis as a throb of the living heart. 'When God is removed from the universe, it becomes a desert of rocks or ice; it is deprived of life and warmth, and every man who still has a sense of the integrally real refuses to admit that this should be reality; for if reality were made of rocks, there would be no place in it for flowers or any beauty or sweetness whatsoever. Similarly for the soul: remove faith including that element of faith that forms part of gnosis and the soul becomes impoverished, chilled, rigid and embittered, or it falls into a hedonism unworthy of the human state; moreover, the one does not preclude the other, for blind passions always overlays a heart of ice, in short, a heart that is "dead"⁷.

Schuon considers it a great absurdity that people live without faith. 'This is the greatest absurdity: that people live without faith and in an inhumanly horizontal manner, in a world where all that nature offers testifies to the supernatural, to the hereafter, to the divine; to eternal

spring'⁸. He further says: 'Faith is to say, "yes" to God. When man says, "yes" to God, God says "yes" to man'⁹.

Schuon explains the element of mystery in faith in these emphatic words: 'If faith is a mystery, it is because its nature is inexpressible to the degree that it is profound, for it is not possible to convey fully by words this vision that is still blind and this blindness that already sees'¹⁰.

Schuon has very beautifully brought out the intimate link of faith with truth and knowledge. 'Faith without truth is heresy; knowledge without faith is hypocrisy'¹¹.

Schuon describes the dimensions of faith linking it with absolute certitude and innate wisdom. 'Faith is peace of heart arising from an almost absolute certitude, hence escaping by its very nature the power of doubt; human intelligence is made for transcendence, on pain of being no more than a duplication of animal intelligence. Thus faith, apart from its completion by its contents, is our disposition to know before knowing; what is more, this disposition is already a knowledge, especially as it derives from the innate wisdom which, precisely, the divinely revealed content of faith is intended to revivify'¹².

Rational Understanding of the Religious Phenomena

According to Iqbal, the second stage of religious life is 'Thought': a rational understanding of the religious phenomena. He says: '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'¹³.

Iqbal provides a basis for providing rational foundation to religion. 'Now, since the transformation and guidance of man's inner and outer life is the essential aim of religion, it is obvious that the general truths which it embodies must not remain unsettled. No one would hazard action on the basis of a doubtful principle of conduct. Indeed, in view of its function, religion stands in greater need of a rational foundation of its ultimate principles than even the dogmas of science. Science may ignore a rational metaphysics; indeed, it has ignored it so far. Religion can hardly afford to ignore the search for a reconciliation of the oppositions of experience and a justification of the environment in which humanity finds itself. That is why Professor Whitehead has acutely remarked that 'the ages of faith are the ages of rationalism'¹⁴.

Iqbal very rightly points out that to rationalize faith does not mean to leave religion at the mercy of philosophy for religion deals with the whole man. 'But to rationalize faith is not to admit the superiority of philosophy over religion. Philosophy, no doubt, has jurisdiction to judge religion, but what is to be judged is of such a nature that it will not submit to the jurisdiction of philosophy except on its own terms. While sitting in judgement on religion, philosophy cannot give religion an inferior place among its data. Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man. Thus, in the evaluation of religion, philosophy must recognize the central position of religion and has no other alternative but to admit it as something focal in the process of reflective synthesis'¹⁵.

Iqbal says that the Prophet initiated the search for rational foundations in Islam. 'The search for rational foundations in Islam may be regarded to have begun with

the Prophet himself. His constant prayer was 'God! Grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things!'¹⁶.

Iqbal's critique of Greek philosophy, which despised sense-experience as a source of knowledge is his great contribution to the subject. He criticizes the Muslim thinkers who read the Qur'an in the spell of Greek speculative thought and it took them centuries to realize that the spirit of the Qur'an was anti-classical. This intellectual revolt against Greek thought became manifest in all departments of thought. 'But the point to note is the general empirical attitude of the Qur'an which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual and ultimately made them the founders of modern science. It was a great point to awaken the empirical spirit in an age which renounced the visible as of no value in men's search after God....It is our reflective contact with the temporal flux of things which trains us for an intellectual vision of the non-temporal'¹⁷.

Iqbal, in-order to provide a rational foundation to Islam, moves to introduce the intellectual test and apply it to the revelations of religious experience. 'By the intellectual test I mean critical interpretation, without any presuppositions of human experience, generally with a view to discover whether our interpretation leads us ultimately to a reality of the same character as is revealed by religious experience'¹⁸.

Iqbal applies the intellectual test to the three main levels of experience the level of matter, the level of life, and the level of mind and consciousness respectively dealt by physics, biology, and psychology. He concludes that the findings of modern science are in consonance with the facts of religious experience. 'Thus a comprehensive philosophical criticism of all the facts of experience on its efficient as well as appreciative side brings us to the

conclusion that the Ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life'¹⁹.

Iqbal rightly points out that thought and intuition is not inherently opposed to each other. They have different modes of operation pertaining to the same Reality. 'Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspect of Reality. The one is present enjoyment of the whole of Reality; the other aims at traversing the whole by slowly specifying and closing up the various regions of the whole for exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek visions of the same Reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life'²⁰.

Iqbal has succeeded in providing a rational foundation to religion. But he does not stop here. Religion transcends philosophy by positing the possibility of a direct living contact with Reality. He says: 'Thus the facts of experience justify the inference that the ultimate nature of Reality is spiritual, and must be conceived as an ego. But the aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such does not care to go beyond a concept, which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experience, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and finds its fulfillment in an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam'²¹.

Discovering the Roots of Religion in the Depths of One's Consciousness

The third period of religious life is 'Discovery' where man finds the roots of religion in the very depths of his consciousness. Iqbal says: '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 the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness. As in the words of a Muslim Sufi 'no understanding of the Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet.'²².

Iqbal builds his religious edifice on the subject and object structure of Reality. Mystic experience maintains this subtle distinction, which is understood in the language of religion as a polarization between man and God. The polarization alluded to is manifest in the following main characteristics of religious experience as presented by him.

1. Mystic experience is immediate like other levels of human experience. Its interpretation gives us knowledge of God. 'The immediacy of mystic experience simply means that we know God just as we know other objects. God is not a mathematical entity or a system of concepts mutually related to one another and having no reference to experience'²³.

2. Mystic experience is characterized by unanalyzable wholeness. 'The mystic state brings us into contact with the total passage of Reality in which all the diverse stimuli merge into one another and form a single unanalyzable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist'²⁴.
3. The private personality of the mystic, in state of mystic experience is neither obliterated nor permanently suppressed. '...the mystic state is a moment of intimate association with a Unique Other Self, transcending, encompassing, and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience'²⁵. The truth of this intimate association is the element of response, which essentially posits, 'the presence of a conscious self'²⁶.
4. Mystic experience by virtue of being direct is incommunicable but the interpretation put on it can be conveyed in the form of propositions.
5. The mystic, in the ultimate analysis, remains linked with serial time. 'The mystic's intimate association with the eternal which gives him a sense of the unreality of serial time does not mean a complete break with serial time. The mystic state in respect of its uniqueness remains in some way related to common experience. This is clear from the fact that the mystic state soon fades away,

though it leaves a deep sense of authority after it has passed away. Both the mystic and the prophet return to the normal levels of experience; but with this difference that the return of the prophet....may be fraught with infinite meaning for mankind'²⁷.

Iqbal argues that mystic experience is a true form of experience intimately linked with knowledge. 'For the purposes of knowledge, then, the region of mystic experience is as real as any other region of human experience and cannot be ignored merely because it cannot be traced back to sense-perception'²⁸.

Iqbal considers prophetic consciousness as a type of mystic consciousness. Prophet's contact with the roots of his own being resultantly leads to the creative transformation of human collectivity. This direct contact means that he delves deep in his thought or consciousness where he experiences the throb of Divine life and receives message from the Reality, which resides nearer to man than his neck-vein. The dictum: 'Know Thyself' both in its conceptual form and realization aspect is a key to the divine treasure. He says: 'A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite centre of life sinks into his own infinite depths only to spring up again, with fresh vigour to destroy the old, and to disclose the new direction of life'²⁹.

He further says: 'The birth of Islam.....is the birth of inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own

abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot forever be kept in leading strings; that, in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources³⁰. The idea of finality in Islam does not mean that mystic experience has ceased to be a religious fact. Iqbal says: 'The idea, however, does not mean that mystic experience, which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet, has now ceased to exist as a vital fact....The idea of finality, therefore, should not be taken to suggest that the ultimate fate of life is complete displacement of emotion by reason. Such a thing is neither possible nor desirable. The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man. This kind of belief is a psychological force, which inhibits the growth of such authority. The function of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience.....Mystic experience, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience'³¹.

Mystic experience gives a vision of Reality by virtue of heart and it can be understood as heart-knowledge. Iqbal says: 'Faud', or 'Qalb' i.e. 'heart' is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. It is according to the Qur'an, something, which 'sees' and its reports, if properly interpreted are never false. We must not, however, regard it as a mysterious special faculty; it is

rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does play any part. Yet the vista of experience thus opened to us is as real and concrete as any other experience'³².

What is the ultimate nature of the ego in reference to the climax of religious life? Iqbal says: 'Indeed, the incommunicability of religious experience gives us a clue to the ultimate nature of the ego... The climax of religious life, however, is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual self-hood. It is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness; its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status. Strictly speaking, the experience, which leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation which cannot be captured in the net of logical categories'³³.

Iqbal understands the ultimate aim of the ego not in the category of 'seeing' but in the category of being. 'The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something. It is the ego's effort to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his objectivity and acquire a more fundamental 'I am', which finds evidence of its reality not in the Cartesian 'I think' but in the Kantian 'I can'. The end of the ego's quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it. The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens 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 ego³⁴.

Iqbal further discusses the nature of this final experience. 'This final experience is the revelation of a new life-process-original essential, spontaneous. The eternal secret of the ego is that the moment he reaches this final revelation he recognizes it as the ultimate root of his being without the slightest hesitation. Yet in the experience itself there is no mystery. Nor is there anything emotional in it.... Thus the experience reached is a perfectly natural experience and possesses a biological significance of the highest importance to the ego. It is the human ego rising higher than mere reflection, and mending its transiency by appropriating the eternal. The only danger to which the ego is exposed in this Divine quest is the possible relaxation of his activity caused by his enjoyment of and absorption in the experience that precede the final experience'³⁵.

Iqbal moves on to discuss the expression of this experience in the religious life of Islam. 'The development of this experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well-known words of Hallaj-'I am the creative truth'. The contemporaries of Hallaj, as well as his successors, interpreted these words pantheistically; but the fragments of Hallaj, collected and published by the French Orientalist, L. Massignon, leave no doubt that the martyr-saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. The true interpretation of his experience, therefore, is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality'³⁶.

He further says: 'In the history of religious experience in Islam which, according to the Prophet, consists in the 'creation of Divine attributes in man', this experience has found expression in such phrases as-'I am the creative truth' (Hallaj), 'I am Time' (Muhammad), 'I am the speaking Qur'an' ('Ali') 'Glory to me' (Bayazid). In the higher Sufism of Islam unitive experience is not the finite ego effacing its own identity by some sort of absorption into the Infinite Ego; it is rather the infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite'³⁷.

Conclusion

Iqbal has made an everlasting contribution in stating the periods of religious life. The triplicity of 'Faith', 'Thought' and "Discovery' essentially brings forth the dynamism of religion. The problem in the world of Islam, at present, is that people are forgetting this Primordial Truth. Faith is a point of departure and not a point of destination. To consider faith as a point of destination is fraught with harmful consequences for religious life. Strictly speaking, such a dogmatic attitude does not help the phenomena of religion, which is 'search for a larger life'. It gives rise to many ambiguities, contradictions and absurdities if it is insulated from the rational and the spiritual process. Faith is not an end in itself. It is a means towards having a vision of Reality. Iqbal has tried to reflect the doctrinal aspects of faith but has not developed his point further.

Rational understanding of religion is one of the most important periods of religious life. The Qur'an lays emphasis on thinking, reflection, imagination, wisdom, reason, intellect so on and so forth. It is the duty of a

Muslim to gain knowledge by reflecting on the verses of the Qur'an and the 'Signs' of God within the human self and the outer universe, which essentially is a cosmic book.

Iqbal stresses the search for rational foundations in Islam. His intellectual method broadens the scope of knowledge. He presents a critique of Western science and philosophy but shows no reservations in accepting the universal elements of Western thought. He has a critical and an independent attitude towards the development of human thought and attempts the reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam in the light of human experience.

Iqbal is a rational thinker but he does not fall in the pit of rationalism. He understands the limits of reason while dealing with religion. His polemics against the Greek speculative reason has cleared the ground for understanding inductive or scientific reason with the method of conceptualization. He does not consider reason as all-inclusive. The Rationalists, in the world of Islam, who consider reason as all embracing, tend to regard the horizontal dimension of religion as final. It attempts to turn religion into philosophy by providing it the crutches of scientism and rationalism. Religion as a vital force ceases to exist. The spiritual fountainhead of Knowledge dries up. Religious life is constricted and man is locked up in the narrow circuits of his individuality. The realm of Reason stifles the human 'Spirit'. Metaphysically speaking, reason is divorced from Intellect, which essentially is Divine in nature. From the traditional metaphysical point of view, human reason has a limited role to play, which is legitimate but without the light of Intellect, reason shall remain groping in the dark.

Iqbal has not touched pure metaphysics or traditional metaphysics but on the basis of religious metaphysics has assigned a true place to reason by

providing it a possibility to move to the higher period of religious life, which is termed as the stage of 'Discovery'.

Iqbal posits the possibility of man's direct contact with the ultimate Reality as the final period of religious life. Here religion becomes a personal experience with objective validity and reliability. Man becomes personal witness to Truth.

The greatest contribution of Iqbal as a Muslim thinker in this sphere is that he integrates faith, reason and discovery. The other can rectify the pitfalls of one stage. Each period of religious life blossoms whose perfume spreads far and wide.

However, Iqbal remains tied to mystic realization and never reaches the stage of metaphysical realization. He manifests no understanding of the doctrine of Oneness of Being, perhaps, for the fear of pantheism. He seems to forget that Ibn' Arabi while propagating Oneness of Being does not deny the transcendence of God. He considers the Real as the Absolute and the Infinite. These two fundamental aspects of the Real leave no room for pantheism which is a Western concept having to do nothing with the categories of Eastern Metaphysics. There is nothing outside Metaphysical Wholeness.

Iqbal's fundamental message for the New Millennium is to exercise the principle of movement in the structure of Islam. The principle of 'Ijtihad' has the vitality to integrate the elements of permanence and change. And in this integration lies the future of our Muslim Ummah.

Iqbal is not a final word in the world of Islam. And he himself admits it in his preface to the book: *The Reconstruction Of Religious Thought in Islam*. It is exceedingly imperative, for us, to lay a metaphysical foundation of the post-Iqbalian era. It will be in consistent with his idea that each generation should solve its own

problems in the light of Islamic principles. For this, we shall have to go beyond Iqbal to reach the stage of traditional metaphysics, which shall have its creative bearing on faith, reason and discovery.

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alqbal and Khawaj Ghulam Farid on Man-God Polarity

Religion, in its more advance form, rises higher than poetry. It moves from individual to society. In its attitude towards the Ultimate Reality it is opposed to the limitation of man; it enlarges in claims and holds out the prospect of nothing less than a direct vision of Reality.

Iqbal

IQBAL AND KHAWAJA GHULAM FARID ON MAN-GOD POLARITY

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and Khawaja Ghulam Farid (1845-1901) are two great representative of the Islamic heritage. Iqbal builds a religious metaphysics by taking fundamental inspiration from Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) whom he openly acknowledges as his spiritual guide. He says:

Asrar-i-Khudi (1915)

1

“Inspired by the genius of the Master of Rum
I rehearse the sealed book of secret lore.
The Master of Rum transmuted my earth to gold
And set my ashes aflame”²

Payam-i-Mashriq (1923)

3

‘Spiritual Master Rumi, the sage of holy origin,
Opened the secret of life and death to us’.⁴

Zubur-i-Ajam (1927)

5

‘Have a spark from my innermost heart,
For my heart is as fiery as Rumi’s’.⁶

Javid Nama (1932)

7

‘And like the sun was his clear countenance,
And age, in him, did scintillate like youth.
His figure gleamed with godly light that lent
Him bliss and grace.
The secrets of this life hung on his lips and burst
The bounds of word and sound.
The words he spoke were crystal clear

With learning full and inward light'⁸

Pas Cheh Baid Kard (1936)

9

'I have learnt the subtleties from Pir Rumi,
I have burnt my self in his letters'¹⁰

Musafer (1936)

11

It is time that I reopen the tavern of Rumi.
The Shaikhs of the Ka'aba are lying drunk in
The courtyard of the church'¹²

Khawaja Ghulam Farid, on the other hand, commits to the traditional metaphysics of Islam by mainly accepting the doctrinal formulations of metaphysical and traditional truths as realized by a number of Sufis including Bayazid Bistami (d.260-874), Mansur Hallaj (858-922), Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and his own spiritual master Khawaja Ghulam Fakhruddin (d.1288-1871). He pays homage to these saints in the following lines:

Learn the Mansurian tradition and its realization; now shelve, 'Kanz', 'Kaduri' (books of jurisprudence)¹⁴

15

The antagonist mullahs seem to be hardened in their way; undoubtedly Ibn' Arabi and Mansur impart heart-knowledge¹⁶

17

The sermons of the mullahs do not touch us; undoubtedly we are committed to the Way shown by Ibn' Arabi. The entranced lover exists beyond disdain. Be Bistami by saying 'Glory be to Me'. Say: 'I am the Truth' and be Mansur¹⁸

19

Adopt the way of Ibn Arabi; shelve jurisprudence, its principles and problems²⁰

21

Fakhr-e-Jehan, the preceptor, has pontificated that Ibn Arabi, the Gnostic, is our Master²²

23

Learn Oneness and thrust aside the vice of otherness. Adopt the ways of Ibn' Arabi. This has been said by the resplendent Fakhr-e-Jehan²⁴

His formemost disciple Maulana Ruknud-Din who recorded the proceedings of his doctrinal sittings over a period of time says:

'In the eye of Hazrat (Khawaja Ghulam Farid), Shaikh Mansur is the Man of God and the Iman of the The Righteous..... We servants know full well that Shaikh Mansur, Shaikh Muhyuddin Ibn' Arabi and Shaikh Bayazid Bistami are considered by Hazrat (Khawaja Ghulam Farid) as Imams of 'Faqr'(Poverty) and "Tariqah (Sufism). There are numerous 'Kafis' in his 'Diwan' wherein he acknowledges them as his Masters and has followed their Way'.²⁵

Both Iqbal and Khawaja Ghulam Farid believe in man-God polarity but with this essential difference that for Iqbal this polarity is absolute, final and categorical whereas for Khawaja Ghulam Farid it is essentially relative provisional and hypothetical and is ultimately transcended by virtue of the Self, the Intellect or the Spirit which is identical with the Divine Essence. Here lies the essential difference between a religious metaphysics and an

intellectual one. The former stands for individuality, limitedness and duality whereas the latter is essentially characterized by universality, unlimitedness and non-duality.

Iqbal builds his religious metaphysics on the subject and object structure of reality. His theory of knowledge embraces the triplicity of sense perception, reason and intuition within the framework of individualistic experience. The distinction between subject and object subsists at each level of experience including the mystical one. Mystic experience maintains this subtle distinction which is understood in the language of religion as a polarization between man and God. The polarization alluded to is manifest in the following main characteristics of religious experience as presented by Iqbal.

1. Mystic experience is immediate like other levels of human experience. Its interpretation gives us knowledge of God. 'The immediacy of mystic experience simply means that we know God just as we know other objects. God is not a mathematical entity or a system of concepts mutually related to one another and having no reference to experience'.²⁶

2. Mystic experience is characterized by unanalysable wholeness. 'The mystic state brings us into contact with the total passage of Reality in which all the diverse stimuli merge into one another and form a single unanalysable unity in which the ordinary distinction of subject and object does not exist'.²⁷

3. The private personality of the mystic, in state of mystic experience, is neither obliterated nor permanently suppressed. 'The mystic state is a moment of intimate association with a unique Other Self, transcending, encompassing, and momentarily suppressing the private personality of the subject of experience'.²⁸

The truth of this intimate association is the element of response, which essentially posits 'the presence of a conscious self'.²⁹

4. Mystic experience by virtue of being direct is incommunicable but the interpretation put on it can be conveyed in the form of propositions.

5. The mystic, in the ultimate analysis, remains linked with serial time. 'The mystic's intimate association with the eternal which gives him a sense of the unreality of serial time does not mean a complete break with serial time. The mystic state in respect of its uniqueness remains in some way related to common experience. This is clear from the fact that the mystic state soon fades away though it leaves a deep sense of authority after it has passed away. Both the mystic and the prophet return to the normal levels of experience'.³⁰

Iqbal consistently maintains that sense-perception needs to be supplemented by the perception of heart in order to have a total vision of Reality. 'In the interests of securing a complete vision of Reality, therefore, sense-perception must be supplemented by the perception of what the Qur'an describes as 'Faud' or 'Qalb', i.e. heart... The 'heart' is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception. It is, according to the Qur'an, something which 'sees' and its reports, if properly interpreted are never false. We must not, however, regard it as a mysterious special faculty; it is rather a mode of dealing with Reality in which sensation, in the physiological sense of the word, does not play any part. Yet the vista of experience thus opened to us is as real and concrete as any other experience'.³¹

Iqbal considers man as self, ego, nafs or soul. For man both 'Anfus' (self) and 'Afaq' are sources of knowledge. 'God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience, and it is the duty of man to judge the knowledge – yielding capacity of all aspects of experience'.³² In other words, 'One indirect way of establishing connections with the reality that confronts us is reflective observation and control of its symbols as they reveal themselves to sense-perception, the other way is direct association with the reality as it reveals itself within'.³³ Here conscious experience is the royal road to Reality. 'Now my perception of things that confront me is superficial and external; but my perception of my own self is internal, intimate and profound. It follows, therefore, that conscious experience is that privileged case of existence in which we are in absolute contact with Reality and an analysis of this privileged case is likely to throw a flood of light on the ultimate meaning of existence'.³⁴ Both efficient and appreciative aspects of the ego are oriented towards conscious existence which means life in time. Human 'self in its inner life moves from the centre outwards... on its efficient side it enters into relation with what we call the world of space... The self here lives outside itself as it were and, while retaining its unity as a totality, discloses itself as nothing more than a series of specific and consequently numerable states... The unity of the appreciative ego is like the unity of the term in which the experiences of its individual ancestors exist, not as a plurality, but as a unity in which every experience permeates the whole. There is no numerical distinctness of states in the totality of the ego, the multiplicity of whose elements is, unlike that of the efficient self wholly qualitative'.³⁵

The levels of experience are understood in reference to the dynamism of human thought. 'In its deeper movement, however, thought is capable of reaching an immanent Infinite in whose self-unfolding movement the various finite concepts are merely moments. In its essential nature, then, thought is not static; it is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed which, from the very beginning, carries within itself the organic unity of the tree as a present fact... It is in fact the presence of the total Infinite in the movement of knowledge that makes finite thinking possible. It is a mistake to regard thought as inconclusive, for it too, in its own way, is a greeting of the finite with the infinite'.³⁶ Also, one finds no cleavage between thought and intuition. 'They spring up from the same root and complement each other',³⁷ 'Thought therefore, in its true nature, is identical with life'.³⁸

Iqbal believes in the individuality and uniqueness of man. Human ego is real and its reality cannot be denied. 'The finite centre of experience, therefore, is real, even though its reality is too profound to be intellectualized... The ego reveals itself as a unity of what we call mental states... True time-duration belongs to the ego alone... Another important characteristic of the unity of the ego is its essential privacy which reveals the uniqueness of every ego'.³⁹ Iqbal rejects the theological view of considering the ego as 'a simple indivisible, and immutable soul substance, entirely different from the group of our mental states and unaffected by the passage of time'.⁴⁰ He states that 'our conscious experience can give us no clue to the ego regarded as a soul substance; for by hypothesis the soul-substance does not reveal itself in experience... the interpretation of our conscious experience is the only road by which we can reach the ego, if at all'.⁴¹

Iqbal considers the ego as a directive energy which 'is formed and disciplined by its own experience'.⁴² He quotes the Qur'anic verse in this context.

'And they ask thee of the soul. Say the soul proceedeth from my Lord's "Amr" (command) but of knowledge, only a little to you is given. '(17;85).⁴³ His explanation of the verse is as follows: 'The verse quoted above means that the essential nature of the soul is directive, as it proceeds from the directive energy of God; though we do not know how Divine 'Amr' functions as ego-unites. The personal pronoun used in the expression Rabbi (My Lord) throws further light on the nature and behaviour of the ego. It is meant to suggest that the soul must be taken as something individual and specific, with all the variations in the range, balance, and effectiveness of its unity... Thus my real personality is not a thing, it is an act...My whole reality lies in my directive attitude.'⁴⁴

In the divine scheme of things, ego occupies a prominent place. 'The degree of reality varies with the degree of the feeling of egohood. The nature of the ego is such that, inspite of its capacity to respond to other egos, it is self-centered and possesses a private circuit of individuality excluding all egos other than itself. In this alone consists its reality as an ego. Man, therefore, in whom egohood has reached its perfection occupies a genuine place in the heart of Divine creative energy and thus possesses a much higher degree of reality than things around him. Of all the creations of God he alone is capable of consciously participating in the creative life of his Maker'.⁴⁵

Iqbal on the basis of individualistic experience considers the ultimate Reality too as an ego. He says: 'Thus a comprehensive philosophical criticism of all the facets of experience on its efficient as well as appreciative side

brings us to the conclusion that the ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life... Intuition reveals life as a centralizing ego. This knowledge, however imperfect as giving us only a point of departure, is a direct revelation of the ultimate nature of Reality. Thus the facts of experience justify the inference that the ultimate nature of Reality is spiritual, and must be conceived as an ego.⁴⁶ In other words: 'The more important regions of experience, examined with an eye on a synthetic view, reveal, as the ultimate ground of all experience, a rationally directed creative will which we have found reasons to describe as an ego. In order to emphasize the individuality of the ultimate Ego the Qur'an gives Him the proper name of Allah, and further defines Him as follows:

'Say: Allah is One;
All things depend on Him;
He begetteth not, and He is not begotten;
And there is none like unto Him'(112: 1-4).⁴⁷

Iqbal derives the egos from the ultimate Ego. He says: 'Reality is, therefore, essentially spirit. But, of course, there are degrees of spirit... from the ultimate Ego only egos proceed. The creative energy of the ultimate Ego, in whom deed and thought are identical, functions as ego unities.. The world, in all its details, from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego, is the self revelation of the 'Great I am.' Every atom of Divine energy, however low in the scale of existence, is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of egohood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man. That is way the Qur'an declares the ultimate Ego to be nearer to man than his own neck vein. Like pearls do we

live and move and have our being in the perpetual flow of Divine Life.⁴⁸

Iqbal presents an individualistic conception of God and interprets the metaphor of light in the Qur'an accordingly. He says: 'The metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must, in view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God and not His Omnipresence which easily lends itself to a pantheistic interpretation.'⁴⁹ He poses a question: Does not individuality imply finitude? In other words, if God is an ego and as such an individual, how can we conceive Him as infinite. He says: 'The answer to this question is that God cannot be conceived as infinite in the sense of spatial infinity. In matters of spiritual valuation mere immensity counts for nothing – moreover, temporal and spatial infinities are not absolute... space and time are interpretations which thought puts upon the creative activity of the ultimate Ego... The infinity of the ultimate Ego consists in infinite inner possibilities of his creative activity of which the universe, as known to us, is only a partial expression'.⁵⁰ He believes in the self-revelation of God. 'God's life is self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached. The 'not-yet' of man does mean pursuit, and may mean failure the 'not –yet' of God means unending realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process.'⁵¹ Further, it is in the concrete individuality manifested in the countless varieties of living forms that the ultimate Ego reveals the infinite wealth of His being'.⁵² Infinite Reality remains in the process of creative unfolding. 'Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which 'every moment appears in a new glory'. And the recipient of Divine illumination is not

merely a passive recipient. Every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding'.⁵³

Iqbal poses another question: Does the universe confront God as His 'other' with space intervening between Him and it? He answers in the negative. 'The answer is that, from the Divine point of view, there is no creation in the sense of a specific event having a 'before' and an 'after'. The universe cannot be regarded independent reality standing in opposition to Him. This view of matter will reduce both God and the world to two separate entities confronting each other in the empty receptacle of an infinite space.... space, time and matter are interpretations which thought puts on the free creative energy of God. They are not independent realities existing per se, but only intellectual modes of apprehending the life of God'.⁵⁴ He further discusses the intuition of I amness reference to both the human self and the Divine Self with corresponding relation to Nature. 'To exist in pure duration is to be a self, and to be a self is to be able to say 'I am'. Only that truly exists which can say 'I am'. It is the degree of the intuition of 'I amness' that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being. We too say 'I am'. But our 'I amness' is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not self. The ultimate Self, in the words of the Qur'an, 'can afford to dispense with all the worlds'. To Him the not-self does not present itself as a confronting 'other', or else it should have to be, like our finite self, in spatial relation with the confronting 'other'. What we call Nature or the not-self is only a fleeting moment in the life of God. His 'I amness' is independent, elemental, absolute. Of such a self it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception. As the Qur'an says: 'Naught' is like Him, yet 'He hears and sees'. Now a self is unthinkable without

a character, i.e. a uniform mode of behavior. Nature... is not a mass of pure materiality occupying a void. It is a structure of events, a systematic mode of behaviour, and as such organic to the ultimate Self. Nature is to the Divine Self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Qur'an it is the habit of Allah. From the human point of view it is an interpretation which, in our present situation, we put on the creative activity of the Absolute Ego...Nature, then, must be understood as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i.e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole. As the Qur'an says: 'And verily unto the Lord is the Limit'⁵⁵ (50:14). All limits have to be understood in this context. For instance, 'the element of guidance and directive control in the ego's activity clearly shows that the ego is a free personal causality. He shares in the life and freedom of the Ultimate Ego Who, by permitting the emergence of a finite ego, capable of private initiative has limited this freedom of His own free will'.⁵⁶

It is very pertinent to note that Iqbal mentions Bayazid Bistami on the question of creation to bring home the fact that matter is not co-eternal with God. He says: "The question of creation once arose among the disciples of the well-known saint Basyazid of Bistam.. One of the disciples very pointedly put the commonsense view saying: 'There was a moment of time when God existed and nothing else existed beside Him'. 'It is just the same now' said he, 'as it was then'. The world of matter, therefore, is not a stuff co-eternal with God, operated upon Him from a distance as it were. It is, in its real nature, one continuous act which thought breaks up into a plurality of mutually exclusive things."⁵⁷

What is the ultimate nature of the ego in reference to the climax of religious life? Iqbal says: ‘Indeed, the incommunicability of religious experience gives us a clue to the ultimate nature of the ego.. The climax of religious life, however, is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual self-hood. It is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness; its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status. Strictly speaking, the experience which leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation which cannot be captured in the net of logical categories⁵⁸

Iqbal understands the ultimate aim of the ego not in the category of seeing but in the category of being. He says: ‘The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something. It is the ego’s effort to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his objectivity and acquire a more fundamental “I am” which finds evidence of its reality not in the Cartesian ‘I think’ but in the Kantian ‘I am’ The end of the ego’s quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality: it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it. The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens 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.⁵⁹ Iqbal holds that even the Day of Judgment shall not ‘affect the perfect calm of a full grown ego...Who can be the subject of this exception but those in whom the ego has reached the very highest point of intensity? And the

climax of this development is reached when the ego is able to retain full self possession, even in the case of a direct contact with the all-embracing Ego. As the Qur'an says of the Prophet's vision of the ultimate Ego:

'His eye turned not aside, nor did it wander'.
(53:17)

This is the ideal of perfect manhood in Islam. Nowhere has it found a better literary expression than in a Persian verse which speaks of the Holy Prophet's experience of Divine illumination:

(‘Moses fainted away by a mere surface illumination of Reality: Thou seest the very substance of Reality with a smile’) Pantheistic Sufism obviously cannot favour such a view, and suggests differences of a philosophical nature. How can the Infinite and the finite egos mutually exclude each other? Can the finite ego, as such, retain its finitude besides the Infinite Ego. This difficulty is based on a misunderstanding of the true nature of the Infinite. True infinity does not mean infinite extension which cannot be conceived without embracing all available finite extensions. Its nature consists in intensity and not extensity, and the moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be distinct, though not isolated, from the Infinite. Extensively regarded I am absorbed by the spatio-temporal order to which I belong. Intensively regarded I consider the same spatio-temporal order as a confronting ‘other’ wholly alien to me. I am distinct from and yet ultimately related to that on which I depend for my life and sustenance.⁶⁰

Iqbal further discusses the nature of this final experience. He says: ‘This final experience is the revelation of a new life process-original essential, spontaneous. The eternal secret of the ego is that the moment he reaches this final revelation he recognizes it as the ultimate root of his

being without the slightest hesitation. Yet in the experience itself there is no mystery. Nor is there anything emotional in it. Thus the experience reached is a perfectly natural experience and possesses a biological significance of the highest importance to the ego. It is the human ego rising higher than mere reflection, and mending its transiency by appropriating the eternal. The only danger to which the ego is exposed in this Divine quest is the possible relaxation of his activity caused by his enjoyment of and absorption in the experiences that precede the final experience'.⁶¹ It is interesting to note that for Iqbal the religious experience of the Prophet is, in fact, the contact of the Prophet with the root of his own being. He says; 'A Prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries, and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite center of life sinks into his own infinite depths only to spring up again, with fresh vigour, to destroy the old, and to disclose the new directions of life'.⁶²

Iqbal moves on to discuss the expression of this experience in the religious life of Islam. He says: 'The development of this experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well-known words of Hallaj- 'I am the creative truth. The contemporaries of Hallaj, as well as his successors, interpreted these words pantheistically, but the fragments of Hallaj, collected and published by the French Orientalist, M. Massignon, leave no doubt that the martyr-saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. The true interpretation of his experience, therefore, is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold affirmation in an undying phrase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality'.⁶³ He further says: 'In the history

of religious experience has in Islam which, according to the Prophet, consists in the 'creation of Divine attributes in man, this experience has found expression in such phrases as 'I am the creative truth' (Hallaj), 'I am Time' (Muhammad) 'I am the speaking Qur'an' (Ali) 'Glory to me' (Ba'Yazid). In the higher Sufism of Islam unitive experience is not the finite ego effacing its own identity by some sort of absorption into the Infinite Ego: it is rather the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite'.⁶⁴

Before we proceed to present the views of Khawaja Ghulam Farid on man-God polarity, it is imperative to examine a few essential points arising out of Iqbal's approach to the subject. Iqbal is a religious metaphysician and he starts with an individualistic conception of man and God. He is neither concerned with pure metaphysics nor with the traditional one. This is precisely the reason that he does not start from the Essence or undifferentiated Reality.

His starting point is the Divinity or differentiated Reality. This approach lands him in the orbit of individualistic experience whether discursive or intuitive. His conception of man and God within the individualistic framework is fraught with much meaning for both religion and philosophy but remains incomplete from the traditional metaphysical point of view. His starting point is not the Supreme Principle which is formless but the divine form which is termed as God or the ultimate Ego. Metaphysically speaking 'it has been possible to say that the Avatara was "created before creation", which means that before creating the world, God has to "create Himself" in divinis, if one may say so, the word "Create" having here a higher and transposed meaning which is precisely that of Maya'.⁶⁵ Thus, 'there is Atma and there is Maya; but there is also Atma as Maya, and this is the manifesting and acting Personal Divinity'.⁶⁶ And when it comes to understanding

the total universe, Iqbal does not appreciate that Maya is Atma. From the metaphysical point of view, 'there is also Maya as Atma, and this is the total Universe when seen as one polyvalent reality. The world will then be the Divine aspect termed "Universal Man" (Vaishwanara) or, in Sufism, "The Outward" (as-Zahir); this is, incidentally, the deepest meaning of the Far Eastern Yin-Yang.⁶⁷ Iqbal considers man as an individual, ego, self, soul or nafs. He does not take into consideration the metaphysical reality of man which is understood by dint of Intellect or Spirit (ruh) which is in man but is not his. It is the presence of this universal element i.e. the Self in man which makes him transcend the narrow circuits of his individuality. Iqbal not only misses this metaphysical perspective but further makes a mistake of translating 'ruh' Spirit as 'nafs' soul in the Qur'anic verse alluded to. Resultantly, many problems like pantheism arise which have no cause of origin in traditional metaphysics. Thus, when it comes to realization, Iqbal can only talk of individual realization and not of universal one. He is condemned to interpret the utterances of Mansur Hallaj and the like from the individualistic perspective whereas they can only be understood in reference to the universal realm. It is here that Khawaja Ghulam Farid emerges on the scene to provide intellectual foundations to both religion and philosophy by reiterating the doctrine of Oneness of Being (wahdat ul Wujud) which not only embraces man-God polarity but further suggests doctrinal and realizational measures to transcend it. It is emphatic to note that Iqbal in his study of God, man and universe, at certain points reaches the threshold of traditional metaphysics but in the absence of intellectual perspective he fails to develop these points and returns back to his essential individualistic approach. Khawaja Ghulam Farid, as if by Providence, takes these points to

their logical conclusion. Thus Iqbal's incomplete religious metaphysics, in a certain sense, is completed by the traditional metaphysics of Khawaja Ghulam Farid.

Khawaja Ghulam Farid starts with the metaphysical idea of the Absolute. He uses the word 'Haqq', which literally means the Truth or the Reality in referring to the Absolute. He in one of his kafees brings home the message that nothing can be ascribed to the Absolute for all ascriptions, in principle, fall short of describing the Real. He starts his kafi by posing a fundamental question as to whether the essential Beauty or Primordial light can be called necessity and possibility. He goes on equating it with certain sensuous and non-sensuous realities and in the end shows the deficiency of this approach in the following verses:

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Farid hasten to have eternal repentance. Saith, each ascription is impregnated with imperfection. Saith. He is Pure, Transcendent, unblemished. Saith, He is Nameless Truth without Signs.⁶⁹

These verses are very translucent in revealing the essential nature of the metaphysical Reality. The Absolute in its absoluteness is Nameless and it has no Signs by which it can be approached. It is beyond human perception, conception and imagination. No qualification or relation can be attributed to it for it even transcends transcendence. It is 'the most indeterminate of all indeterminates'. No linguistic category can describe it. It lives in permanent abysmal darkness and is 'the most unknown of all the

unknown'. The Absolute in its absoluteness is the 'Mystery of mysteries' and no one, in principle, can have access to it. The Absolute does not manifest itself in its absoluteness. 'The self-manifestation of the Absolute does not yet occur' There is an yet no theopany or tajalli. The Absolute in its absoluteness is termed as 'Dhat' or Essence. The Pure Absolute in its fundamental aspect of absoluteness is beyond the insatiable human quest and all attempts to reach it prove to be nugatory. Khawaja Ghulam Farid says:

Where to seek! Where to find You Friend. All the fiery creatures, human beings, forces of Nature and the entire world is amazingly drowned in the sea of bewilderment. The Sufis, devotees, men of wisdom and learning have ultimately lost. Arshi and Bistami while embracing each other cry in vain. Ptolemy and Pythagoras did a lot of thinking and reasoning but found no mark and clue of the Friend which made them resign to the human limitation. The Buddhists, Zorastrians, Jews, Christians, Hindus and the People of Book say that He is Pure, Perfect, Unlimited. Transcendent and Limitless. Saints, Prophets, mystics, poles and even messengers and deities incarnate proclaim weepingly that He is beyond the reach of vision. Scientists, erudites, gnostics and professionals, in all humility have admittedly resigned. Ask Farid, naïve and simple: Where do you stand? ⁷¹

Thus, the Absolute in its absoluteness is the highest metaphysical stage of Reality. At this highest metaphysical stage, Reality is undifferentiated. Khawaja Ghulam Farid accounts for the principle of differentiation within the Reality. He says:

‘Hidden Treasure’ testifies Love in itself, Originally Love emerged within the Reality which caused the entire universe. ⁷³

The above verses refer to the Holy Tradition: 'I was a hidden treasure, and longed to be known, so I created the cosmos'. Self consciousness is the primordial and fundamental polarization within the Absolute. The otherness is not absolute for in case of Self-consciousness the principle of otherness or differentiation is essentially for Self-Realization. Ibn' Arabi explains this point in these beautiful words: 'The Reality wanted to see the essences of His Most Beautiful Names or, to put it another way, to see His own Essence, in an all-inclusive object encompassing the whole (divine) Command, which, qualified by existence, would reveal to Him His own mystery. For the seeing of a thing, itself by itself, is not the same as its seeing itself in another, as it were in a mirror, for it appears to itself in a form that is invested by the location of the vision by that which would only appear to it given the existence of the location and its (the locations), self disclosure to it. The Reality gave existence to the whole Cosmos (at first) as an undifferentiated thing without anything of the spirit in it, so that it was like an unpolished mirror...the (divine) command required (by its nature) the reflective characteristics of the mirror of the Cosmos, and Adam was the very, principle of reflection for the mirror and the spirit of that form...'.⁷⁴

In order to know the emergence of the principle of differentiation within the undifferentiated Reality, one needs to understand that the Supreme Reality is absolute and infinite. 'That is absolute which allows of no augmentation or diminution, or of no repetition or division; it is therefore that which is solely itself and totally itself. And that is infinite which is not determined by any limiting factor and therefore does not end at any boundary; it is in the first place Potentiality or Possibility as such, and ipso facto the Possibility of things, hence Virtuality. Without

All-Possibility, there would be neither Creator nor Creation, neither Maya nor Samsara'.⁷⁵

The distinction between the absolute and the infinite expresses the fundamental aspects of the Real i.e. the Absolute. 'The infinite is so to speak the intrinsic dimension of plenitude proper to the Absolute; to say Absolute is to say infinite, the one being inconceivable without the other. The distinction. expresses the two fundamental aspects of the Real, that of essentiality and that of potentiality; this is the highest principle prefiguration of the masculine and feminine poles. Universal Radiation, thus Maya both divine and cosmic, springs from the second aspect, the infinite, which coincides with All-Possibility'.⁷⁶ Speaking etymologically, the infinite is that which is without limits. It has absolutely no limits. The infinities of number, space and time belong to the domain of the indefinite which is qualitatively different from the Infinite. The Indefinite is merely an extension of the finite and may be understood as enhanced finiteness. 'The Infinite... if it is truly to be such, cannot admit of any restriction, which supposes that it is absolutely unconditioned and indeterminate, for all determination is necessarily a limitation simply because it must leave something outside itself, namely all other equally possible determinations. Limitation, moreover, presents the character of a veritable negation, for to set a limit is to deny that which is limited everything that this limit excludes. Consequently, the negation of a limit is in fact the negation of a negation, which is to say, logically and even mathematically, an affirmation. Therefore the negation of all limits is equivalent, in reality, to total and absolute affirmation. That which has no limits is that to which one can deny nothing, hence is that which contains all, outside of which there is nothing. This idea of the Infinite, which is

thus the most affirmative of all because it comprehends or embraces all particular affirmations whatsoever, can only be expressed by a negation by reason of its absolute indetermination. Any direct affirmation expressed in language must, in fact, be a particular and determined affirmation—the affirmation of something--- whereas total and absolute affirmation is not any particular affirmation to the exclusion of others, for it implies them all equally. It should now be simple to grasp the very close connection which this has with universal Possibility, which in the same way embraces all particular possibilities'.⁷⁷

The idea of the Infinite cannot be contradicted for it contains no contradiction and there is nothing negative about it. 'If, in fact, one envisages the "Whole" in an absolute and universal sense, it is evident that it can in no way be limited. It could only be limited by virtue of something outside itself, and if there were anything outside it, it would no longer be the Whole... the Whole in this sense must not be assimilated to a particular or determined "Whole" which has a definite relationship with the parts of which it consists. It is, properly speaking, "without parts", for these parts would be of necessity relative and finite and could thus have no common measure with it, and consequently no relationship with it, which amounts to saying that they have no existence from its point of view. This suffices to show that one should not try to form any particular conception of it'.⁷⁸ Likewise, universal Possibility is necessarily unlimited and an impossibility being a pure and simple negation is nothing and cannot limit it. "Thus, when we say that universal Possibility is infinite or unlimited, it must be understood that it is nothing other than the Infinite itself, envisaged under a certain aspect, insofar as one may that there are aspects to the Infinite. For the Infinite is truly "without parts", and strictly

speaking, there can be no further question of a multiplicity of aspects existing really and “distinctively” within it. It is we who in fact conceive of the Infinite under this aspect or that, because we cannot do otherwise, and even if our conception were not essentially limited (as it is which we are in an individual state), it is bound to limit itself in order to become expressible, for that requires its investiture with a determinate form. All that is important is that we should understand well from what side the limitation comes and to whom it applies, so that we do not misattribute our own imperfection, or rather that of the exterior and interior instruments which we now use as individual beings, and which possess only a definite and conditioned existence. We must not transfer this imperfection, purely contingent and transitory as the conditions to which it refers and from which it results, to the unlimited domain of universal Possibility itself... The determinations, whatever the principle by which one creates them, can exist only in relation to our own conceptions... Perfection being identical in its absolute sense with the Infinite understood in all its indetermination. Being does not contain the whole Possibility, and that in consequence it can in no wise be identified with the Infinite, that is why we say that our present standpoint is far more universal than that from which we envisage only Being’.⁷⁹

Khawaja Ghulam Farid identifies the stage of the Absolute in its absoluteness with Allah’s Essence. He ascribes to this view of identity as set forth by Ibn’ Arabi who ‘explicitly identifies the absolute Being with Allah, the Living, Omniscient, Omnipotent God of the Qur’an’.⁸⁰ The Absolute in its absoluteness is not only identified with Allah’s Essence or Divine Essence but has complete identity with Unity (al-ahadiyah) ‘Divine Essence (dhat) and unity (ahadiyah) are completely identical with each

other in indicating one and the same thing, namely, the Absolute in its absoluteness as the highest metaphysical stage of Reality'.⁸¹

Khawaja Ghulam Farid maintains a subtle distinction between the Essence and the Divinity. 'God may be considered in respect of Himself, in which case He is referred to as the Essence, or in respect of His level, in which case He is referred as the Divinity. In both cases he is called 'Allah'.⁸² However, in respect of Himself i.e. the Essence, He is unknowable. 'God is known through the relations, attributions, and correlations that become established between Him and the Cosmos. But the Essence is unknown since nothing is related to it. In proof of this assertion, the Shaykh (Ibn' Arabi) often cites Koranic verse, "God warns you about His Self" (3.28:30), which he frequently explains in terms of the prophetic saying: "Reflect (tafakkur) upon all things, but reflect not upon God's Essence".⁸³ Ibn' Arabi says: 'God is described by Nondelimited Being (al-Wujud al mutlaq), for He is neither the effect (ma'lul) nor the cause ('illa) of anything. On the contrary, He exists through His very Essence. Knowledge of Him consists of knowledge that He exists, and His existence is not other than His Essence, though His Essence remains unknown; rather, the Attributes that are attributed to him are known, i.e., the Attributes of Meanings (sifat al-ma'ani), which are the Attributes of Perfection (Sifat al-Kamal). As for Knowledge of the Essence's reality (haqiqat al - dhat), that is prohibited. It cannot be known through logical proof (dalil) or rational demonstration (burhan 'aqli), nor can definition (hadd) grasp it. For He—glory be to Him—is not similar to anything, nor is anything similar to Him. So how should he who is similar to things know Him to whom nothing is similar and Who is similar to nothing? So your knowledge of Him is only that "Nothing

is like Him” (Koran 42:10) and “God warns you of His Self” (Koran 3:27). Moreover, the Law (al-shariha) has prohibited meditation upon the Essence of God.’⁸⁴

The principle of differentiation emerging within the undifferentiated Reality as alluded to is named by Khawaja Ghulam Farid as Ahmad. He says:

85

The Primordial Beauty became manifest; Ahad’s formlessness assumed Ahmad’s form.⁸⁶

87

Ahad emerged in the form of Ahmad.⁸⁸

The name Ahmad signifies the Logos; First Intellect; Reality of realities; Light of Muhammad; Reality of Muhammad and so on and so forth, ‘Thus understood, the Reality of Muhammad is not exactly the permanent archetypes themselves. Rather, it is the unifying principle of all archetypes, the active principle on which depends the very existence of the archetypes. Considered from the side of the Absolute, the Reality of Muhammad is the creative activity itself of the Absolute, or God ‘conceived’ as the self-revealing Principle of the universe. It is the Absolute in the first stage of its eternal self-manifestation, i.e., the Absolute as the universal Consciousness... The ‘Reality of realities’ is ultimately nothing but the Absolute, but it is not the Absolute in its primordial absoluteness; it is the very first form in which the Absolute begins to manifest itself.’⁸⁹ Likewise, the Reality of Muhammad can be called the Light of Muhammad for the prophet said that the first thing which God created was his light. This Light was eternal and non-temporal and was manifest in the chain of prophets

till its final historical manifestation in the prophet himself. 'Since the light was that which God created before anything else and that from which He created everything else, it was the very basis of the creation of the world. And it was 'Light' because it was nothing else than the First Intellect i.e., the Divine Consciousness by which God manifested Himself to Himself in the state of the Absolute Unity. And the Light is in its personal aspect the Reality of Muhammad'.⁹⁰

How does the possibility of relativity arise in the Absolute? 'The Divine Essence-Beyond-Being include in Its indistinction and as a potentiality comprised within its very infinity a principle of relativity; Being, which generates the world, is the first of the relativities, that from which all the other flow; the function of Being is to deploy in the direction of 'nothingness; or in an 'illusory' mode, the infinity of Beyond-Being, which thus, becomes transmuted into Ontological and existential possibilities.... Relativity is the 'shadow' or 'contour' which allows the Absolute to affirm itself as such, first before itself and then in 'innumerable' gushings forth of differentiations.'⁹¹

The chapter of Sincerity (surt al Ikhlas) beautifully delivers the message of the Essence, all ahadiyah.' "Say: He, God is One (Ahad) God, the Absolute Plenitude Sufficing-unto-Himself (as-Asmad)". It is no doubt in virtue of this last Name... of Oneness that the chapter is called the Chapter of Sincerity (Surat al Ikhlas). For sincerity implies an unreserved assent, and for this to be achieved the soul needs to be made aware that the oneness in question is not a desert but a totality, that the One-and-Only is the One-and-All-and that if the Indivisible Solitude excludes everything other than itself, this is because Everything is already there'.⁹² Behind the illusory veil of

created plurality there is the One Infinite Plenitude of God in His Indivisible Totality.

Khawaja Ghulam Farid is highly committed to the metaphysical idea of the Indivisible One-and Only'. He says:

93

Discard the worthless falsehood. Remember the sole Reality. Except the essential One, there is mere imperfection. The forged, fake beauty is perishable, ruinous. Whither Majnun, whither Laila. Whither Shireen Farhad. Things totality beside God is annihilative, unfounded. Without divine love, there is repulsive thundering antagonism. Farid understand. Always remain free from the non-divine.⁹⁴

95

Thrust away the craving for other than God; everything is pseudo-thought. Whither Laila, whither Majun, whither Sohni Mahinwal. Whither Ranjhan, whither Kheras, whither Heer Sayal. Whither Sassi whither Punnu, whither the tale of anguish and suffering. Whither Saifal, whither Fairies, whither that parting and meeting. Except the essential One, all things are ephemeral. Anything besides God is false, undoubtedly, a concocted lie.⁹⁶

97

The existence and activity of total things is illusory; the Reality is Omnipotent, all else is powerless.⁹⁸

99

Each instant concentrate on the Real; undoubtedly this is the Committed Way.¹⁰⁰

101

Letter Alif alone is enough for me; set aside your sophistic ramblings. Alif has captivated my heart.¹⁰²

After establishing the principle of ‘the Indivisible One-and-Only’ which in the religious language means transcendence of God, Khawaja Ghulam Farid moves to affirm that the ‘One-and-Only’ is the ‘One-and-All.’ He says:

103

One is, One is, One is; each breath yearns for the One. The One dwells in each place, whether high or low. The one is Outward, the One is Inward; all else is annihilative. He who considers the One as two is veiled, polytheist¹⁰⁴

105

Lover know the Omnipresence of Punnal with certainty. The Friend’s demonstration is in each form be Heavens, earth.¹⁰⁶

107

Laudation to the conduct of the Beautiful: who descendeth in each form.¹⁰⁸

109

Understand and recognize and do not consider it non-divine: all form is sure manifestation. Do ascertain, don't ramble: Ka'abah (House of God), Qibla (Direction of prayer), Dair (Idol-temple), Dawara (Sikh place of worship), mosque, temple are identical Light.¹¹⁰

111

Recognize the Essence in all forms: do not place the other beside Reality. Neither there is Adam nor Satan: it has become a totally fabricated story. Without God there are mere thought: do not associate heart with the other. Each move means unity; do not crave for the other side.¹¹²

113

The immanence of Beautiful Friend Punnal is manifest everywhere. Know that the First, the Last, the Outward, the Inward is His manifestation.¹¹⁴

It is pertinent to note that both transcendence and immanence are human viewpoints pertaining to the understanding of the Supreme Principle which is neither one nor the other. 'In itself, the Supreme Principle is neither transcendent nor immanent. It "is That which is" only in relation to Manifestation may one speak either of transcendence or immanence... transcendence annihilates, reduces or diminishes the manifested; immanence on the contrary ennobles dilates or magnifies it'.¹¹⁵

Khawaja Ghulam Farid's understanding of the Absolute as the Essence (al-ahadiyah) and as the Divinity (al-wahidiyah) becomes precisely formulated in his metaphysical conception of tawhid. He manifests an intellectual understanding of the idea beyond the exoteric constriction of it. He says:

116

Everlastingly repent and seek forgiveness; remain constantly spiteful about innovation and polytheism; be purely unitarian, clearly singular.¹¹⁷

118

Farid, duality is a false pretext.¹¹⁹

120

Shelve jurisprudence, principles, kalam, lexicon, logic, syntax and accident for tawhid is high-minded. Mullahs impute contrary meanings to the message of verse, teaching and hadith. They are proud of mere sound. Undoubtedly, Ibn' Arabi and Mansur impart heart-knowledge. The manifest Unity is in substance and accidents; in secret of esoterism and exoterism. It is apparent and not hidden. Remain ascertaining; accept the Faridian tradition and be delighted.¹²¹

122

Consider all evidence as real. Unity is the story of love. Understand and reflect on the unity behind the veil of multiplicity. Do eradicate resentment and grief. Truly understand the Friend as Formless. By hiding askance light Hijazi, He has manifested in each form. The otherness is sacrilegious. Inherit the tradition of Truth. Do real ceaseless struggle and become exalted victor. This Faridi Way of Sufism, the tradition of tawhid is strange. It is relishing, delectable and contemporaneous. Leave long distant modes.¹²³

124

Any one who is convinced of tawhid is our bosom friend. The receptivity of the purified self makes it capable of knowing the realities. Farid, Face of God remaineth; all else is annihilative, ephemeral and disintegrative.¹²⁵

Tawhid is essentially expressed in the doctrine of Shahadah which is the fountainhead of Islam. Khawaja Ghulam Farid says:

126

The “negation” tradition of the religious Way is the kernel of the entire Arab heritage. It is evident in the teachings, hadith and Qur’an. Learn to be thyself and cast away the craving for the other. The majestic Fakhr-e-Jehan advises to remain in the tracks of Ibn’ Arabi. Unmindful, devotee, neglectful, reader, virtuous, vicious, faithful, infidel: all is the Splendor of the Primordial Light. He is Ahad, He is Ahmad. Wins the heart while hiddenly manifest in Meem. Farid, keep constant watch.¹²⁷

From this inward, esoteric and intellectual point of view Shahadah means: ‘There is no divinity (or reality, or absolute) outside the only Divinity (or Reality or Absolute) and Muhammad (the Glorified, the Perfect) is the Envoy

(the mouthpiece, the intermediary, the manifestation, the symbol) of the Divinity.’¹²⁸ The entire Shahadah demonstrates that ‘God alone is’ and ‘all things are attached to God’. ‘All manifestation and so all that is relative is attached to the Absolute. ‘The Shahadah— “There is no divinity (reality, quality) but the sole Divinity (Reality, Quality) “—which in the first place signifies the exclusive and extinguishing primacy of the Sovereign Good, assumes in esoterism an inclusive and participatory signification; applied to a given positive phenomenon; it will mean: this particular existence or this particular quality – this miracle of being or of consciousness or of beauty – cannot be other than the miracle of the Existence or the Consciousness or the Quality of God, since precisely there is no other existence, Consciousness or Quality, by the very terms of the Shahadah. And it is this truth that lies at the basis of such theopathic expressions—of the highest level – as “I am the Truth” (anal’Haqq) of the illustrious Al-Hallaj, or “Glory be to me” (subhani) of the no less illustrious Abu Yazid al-Bistami. It goes without saying that in ordinary language, the first Shahadah... is connected with Transcendence, without in any way excluding a certain casual existentiating and efficient Immanence which is essential for Islamic unitarianism. But it is in the second Shahadah “Muhammad (the perfect Manifestation) is His Envoy (His unitive prolongation)” that we meet with the direct expression, or the formulation symbol of Immanence and thus of the mystery of Union or Identity’.¹²⁹

The metaphysical conception of tawhid opens the door to the doctrine of Oneness of Being (wahdat ul Wujud). The term Oneness of Being (wahdat ul wujud) simply means that ‘there is only one Being, and all existence is nothing but the manifestation or outward

radiance of that One Being. Hence “everything other than the One Being” that is whole cosmos in all its spatial and temporal extension is nonexistent in itself, though it may be considered to exist through Being’.¹³⁰ Khawaja Ghulam Farid considers the sensible world as not-self, imagination and dream. He says:

131

The world is fancy, imagination and dream; all forms are marks on water. If you ask about Reality, then listen, understand and pay heed. The Unity encompasses like sea wherein all multiplicity is bubble-faced. Duality has no essential reality; know yourself that duality is not everlasting. The airy duality vanishes; well, the water remains the same water.¹³²

These forms and properties are not real in themselves but are manifestations of the Reality. In other words, ‘reality is not a subjective illusion’ whim or caprice but is an ‘objective’ illusion. It ‘is an unreality standing on a firm ontological basis’. One could say that ‘the world of being and becoming (kawn) is an imagination but it is, in truth, Reality itself’.

The doctrine of the Oneness of being (wahdat ul wujud) accounts for both the undifferentiated Reality and the differentiated one and gives us metaphysical vision of wholeness. 'Thus God, although One in His Essence, is multiple in forms'.¹³³ Khawaja Ghulam Farid spells out this metaphysical idea in numerous verses. He says:

134

Understand reflectively and do not consider it as other. All form is His Glory. The openly manifest Friend is the First, the Last, the Outward and the Inward.¹³⁵

136

Friend is not hidden, Farid. Every where He is openly manifest. Darkness is all –pervasive light. Only it has been named differently.¹³⁷

138

Discard the style of apprehension and risk. There is no other except one God. In the interior and the exterior there is the everlasting existence of Truth, the existence of Reality. There is no other except Thou. There is absolutely no odour of the non-Divine. There is permanent One and not two. Be with One, discard otherness.¹³⁹

140

Face of God Remaineth Farid; all else is annihilative, ephemeral and disintegrative.¹⁴¹

142

The mysteries of Oneness of Being are remarkable. They are known by the dealers of Unity who behold the real Sinai theophany in each and every existent.¹⁴³

144

The entranced lover exists beyond disdain. Be Bistami by saying 'Glory be to Me'. Say 'I am the Truth' and be Mansur.¹⁴⁵

146

All that is, is obviously manifest. How can I acknowledge except Him. The murshid, after full verification, imparted instruction on Oneness of Being.¹⁴⁷

148

Oneness of Being has made me realize a noble tradition.¹⁴⁹

150

After imbibing learning of Oneness of being, the hidden intricacies were disclosed.¹⁵¹

152

The religion of Being is imperative: all else is in vain, conceit. I have seen with the 'Eye of Certainty' The same is called the passion of the lovers.¹⁵³

Khawaja Ghulam Faird maintains a subtle distinction between the soul or nafs and the Spirit or ruh. The former is individual whereas the latter is universal. He follows the metaphysical tradition which considers the 'intellect' and 'spiritual' as more or less equivalent terms. Both 'body and soul are purely human and belong to the 'individual' domain, the spirit or Intellect is 'universal' and transcends the human state as such... the Latin Spiritus vel Intellectus (Spirit or 'Intellect' corresponds to the Arabic Ruh. Anima ('soul') corresponds to the Arabic nafs.¹⁵⁴

Resultantly, the realization of the sould or nafs is individual whereas the realization of the Spirit or ruh is universal.

Khawaja Ghulam Farid, under the guidance of his spiritual master, attained both mystic and metaphysical realization. He expresses it thus:

The divine flute created percussion. The spiritual master taught complete esoterism. Made reason, thought and all comprehension dwindle into insignificance. Taught sobriety in drunkenness. Made me realize the stages of spiritual voyage. I have witnessed Oneness as openly manifest. I have understood the reality of annihilation. All hidden has become seeable. I have realized each degree of Knowledge itself. The intricacies of existence have opened-up. The lights of the existents have become perceptible. The visible and the Invisible are capable of being understood. The difference between proximity and remoteness has withered away. The flute has marvelously unraveled mysteries, intricate secrets and incredible snares. The unreal essences and properties have vanished. It is the dawning realization of His Omnipotence. After drinking cups of pure wine, we have become matchless intoxicated lovers. We have transcended fasting and ritualistic prayer. We have adopted a bold form. How can an unenlightened conformist know the lauded, pious and noble tradition? Oh Unitarian! He is Freedom Itself without limits. He has descendeth in all forms. When one indication was received from Oneness, the heart became free from servitude. Farid, the individual, by ceasing to be, narrated the sermon: My essentiality is Spirit.¹⁵⁶

Laudation to the conduct of the Beautiful: He descendeth in each form. At one place He takes love on Himself and at another place He Manifests Beauty. He is the Master and I am a petty creature. He looks sweet in each form. What to talk of me, He has captivated the heart of the world. He has everywhere beaten the drum of His Elegance. I am without expectation but He is the ground of hope. He is pleasing to the apt and inept. He is tough Friend and childlike Lover. Each heart finds Him lovable. Anyone who like me unravels the mystery becomes acquainted with the whole esoterism. Absolutely, there is no existence everywhere of anything. Know that the entire manifestation is that of the Beloved. Bow your head at the feet of your Master and whatever he commands carry out whole heartedly. Accept the responsibility of struggle and effort. The essential meaning lies in attaining nearness and perfection. Be the true disciple of the Spiritual Master. Don't irresolute by retracing your step. The cauldron of love is on the roaring flames. Get totally burnt in it by raising the cry: 'I am the Truth'. Anyone who cultivates these four virtues: self-restraint, generosity, meditation and night watchfulness, shall enter and remain happy in the temple of the Beloved. He shall remain detached from the worldly life. One who traverses the terrestrial world, the world of imagination and the world of spirits, shall realize that all these are created for your realization. Those step that falter in realizing this truth, shall remain wandering in the four corners of the world. Don't discard this Gnostic learning and integrate hell and heaven within you. Don't be oblivious of your essential Reality. All is your Splendid Face. The four Vedas and the Hindus code openly proclaim: The Nameless has been Named as Om, Brahma and the Eternal. He has assumed the form of the Supreme Soul. Farid! multiplicity is merely ephemeral.¹⁵⁸

159

The cup-bearer made me perceive one intricacy. Understand the Beloved as near. At all places and at each moment, do not be oblivious of the Beloved even for an instant. In order to captivate the heart of Farid, he became Fakhr-ud-Din.¹⁶⁰

161

I completely owe my Master Fakhr with whom I accomplish nuptial rites. Why should I grief when I belong to him. The Friend has made me understand everything.¹⁶²

163

Fakhruddin made me understand all the deeper secrets of faqr (Sufism). He has fully demonstrated the contraction and expansion in states and stations. The cordial friendships and sociable companionships have

withered away. Farid, since love captivated me, all other activities have finished.¹⁶⁴

165

The time of eternal bliss dawned. Fakhr-e-Jehan laid bare the principles of gnosis. The harmonious disposition of Farid understood the language of the birds.¹⁶⁶

167

Fakhr-e-Jehan made me perceive one tradition. The terrestrial became celestial. The darkness turned light upon light.¹⁶⁸

169

The perfect Pir complete in gnosis made me perceive the intricacy. Farid, the Face of God remaineth; all else in annihilative, ephemeral and disintegrative.¹⁷⁰

171

The Master taught the total doctrine, taifuri (of Bayazid Bistami) and Mansur (of Mansur Hallaj). The Sinai theophany became openly manifest. Everything is Aiman (the valley of Mount Sinai) and Meeqataan (the moments of communication with Lord).¹⁷²

173

In fondness of sweet Fakhruddin, each breath of mine emits smoke. Farid attained union after becoming extinct.¹⁷⁴

Khawaja Ghulam Farid consistently maintains a distinction between mystic realization and metaphysical realization. Mystic or individual realization is by virtue of self, ego soul or nafs. It realizes the way from man to God. It manifests a temporary identity with the Lord (Rabb) for a complete identity, in principle, is not possible in the axis servant-Lord. Such an experience momentarily suppresses the soul or nafs of the subject of experience and in this single unanalysable unity the ordinary dichotomy of subject and object ceases to exist and there is a 'sense of the unreality of serial time'. When the mystic state fades away the mystic returns back to the normal level of selfhood which includes the distinction between subject and object and the reality of the serial time. But such an experience is restricted entirely to the individual domain for the nature of the mystic state is in no manner supra-individual. Mystic state stands for 'indefinite extension of purely individual possibility' spread on a broader spectrum than ordinarily supposed by the psychologists but it only leads to partial

realization. This realization of the soul or nafs is no match to the realization of the Self which is universal for in the latter it is not the soul or nafs but the Spirit or Intellect which attains universal realization. Unlike a mystic who returns to his ordinary self or the precise limitations of individually, a man who has attained metaphysical realization does not return to his habitual selfhood but achieves a complete emancipation from the limitations of individuality. His human overlay no more remains permanent, fixed and unalterable but becomes impermanent, fleeting and ephemeral. Khawaja Ghulam Farid says:

The heart is engrossed within imagination. I cannot bear any differentiation. This imagination is imminent union and this is perfection and not madness. I have openly witnessed the Supreme Principle in every nook and corner. This witnessing is so glaringly evident that I cannot disengage myself even for a moment. That what was spatial has become non-spatial and that which was sign has become without signs. The names and customs of the ages have left me forlorn. O God: What should I call myself. Neither there is openness nor hiddenness; neither there is speech nor thought. Neither the body has remained nor the life impulse; how can I blame my sense and senses. There is double reflection: fana (extinction) is baqa (subsistence) and baqa (subsistence) is fana (extinction). Except the ultimate where is that and you ;where is yes and yea. Sometimes there are loud offensives; at times there are great falterings. There are many types of prattles leading to meaningless discourse. Farid, the lust has been uprooted and I have become incapacitated as a straw. Be quiet for there will be tumult in determining who absolutely merits or who does not merit.¹⁷⁶

Day and night the qalandars are themselves drowned in their own selves. They go beyond fasting and prayer. They rise above pilgrimage and almsgiving. They transcend the dichotomy of the Essence and the Attributes. They simply yearn for the majesty of Oneness. They have no longing for dominion and wealth. They have no interest in rank and dignity. They are intoxicated in contemplating the Divine. Their eyes transcend the human sphere. Though they are heavily drunk yet being animated they are silent. They are the coverings of the mysteries. They remain quiet and do not prattle. They are themselves lovers and beloveds; are themselves vanguards and rearguards; are themselves pearls and caskets. They remain serene in all situations. They are themselves poor and oppressed; are themselves sad and melancholy. Each moment they are in a state of annihilation. They do not nurture any desire in their heart. All that is, is obviously manifest. How can I acknowledge anyone except Him. The spiritual Master after full verification, imparted instructions on the Oneness of Being. Such is the reflection and such is the discourse; such is the ecstasy and such is the state. Such is the fondness which is present at each and every moment. This is the Truth and every other thing is untrue. Discard the style of apprehension and risk. There is no other except One God. In the interior and the exterior is the everlasting Presence of Truth, the Existence of Reality. There is no

other except Thou. There is absolutely no odour of the non-Divine. There is everlasting One and not two. Be with One, discard otherness. Search thine own reality. Do not bother about the other. Do remember our saying and do not doubt its veracity: After drinking from the Faridi cup, be perpetually drunk and intoxicated. Day by day keep advancing your steps. The entire populace may keep lauding you.¹⁷⁸

One who unravels the mystery of the Beloved, remains witnessing day and night. Here there is no scope of opium, neither of hemp nor of electuary. Those who keep track of the Unique, they remain drunk without wine. They remain and dwell with the people but are essentially free from the worldly strings. Each moment they are drowned in meditation. They remain committed in sleep and remain absorbed while awake. They are beyond individuality and ego. They are drowned in Divine illuminations. They are permanently in the fold of Divine Presence. The worldly activity is for them a persona. They are not attached to property, dominion and wealth. They are neither attached to wife nor to children. They belong to inspiration, intuition and inwardness. They discard the apprehensions and remain meditative. By sacrificing their head, they witness the real mystery. They save their head from ordinary death. They attain subsistence by annihilating their individuality. From one loss they reap countless benefits. They go and dwell in the nuptial city. They enjoy the destined forms of bliss. Their twelve months are that of spring. Being in peace, they mount and sit on the nuptial bed. Those who discovered the Beloved in the temple of their heart, their total grief and sinfulness vanished. Farid, remains without individuality by subsisting in the Everlasting One.¹⁸⁰

The ultimate aim of the Self is to see His own Essence in the 'human' medium. Once the soul or nafs has

withered away, the self-identity of mystic realization is transformed into the Self-identity of metaphysical realization, which is understood as the 'Supreme Identity. Such identity cannot be termed as philosophical monism through it can be called sapiential monism. From the purely metaphysical point of view, this identity is essentially covered under the principle of non-duality. Man subsists in the Divine Consciousness as realized possibility. It is pertinent to note that originally man is nothing but a mere name of the Divine unrealized possibility. It is by virtue of freedom and grace that this possibility is partially realized in the mystic state and completely realized in the universal one. In the mystic state the principle of fana (extinction) and baqa (subsistence) has a single reflection whereas in metaphysical realization this principle has a double reflection. Fana (extinction) is baqa (subsistence) in the sense that nothing remains of man as such except the Spirit, which is not his; and baqa (subsistence) in the sense that the baqa (subsistence) or the feeling of 'I am-ness' is an illusion for in the ultimate analysis it is only the Reality which can say "I am". Thus, it is the Spirit which says: "I am the Truth;" "Glory be to Me. How great is My Majesty". In other words, "the final end and ultimate return of the gnostics though their entities remain immutably fixed is that the Real is identical which them, while they do not exist"! ¹⁸¹

From the metaphysical point of view 'I' is an imagination, dream and illusion but it is not vain, groundless or false. 'I' is not the Reality itself but it vaguely and indistinctively reflects the latter on the level of imagination. It is 'a symbolic reflection of something truly real'. It is essentially a dream-symbol which needs to be interpreted and whose interpretation shall lead to the real I.

Man does not see in a dream the Reality itself but an 'imaginal' form of the Reality and by interpretation he has to take back this symbol to its Origin. The Prophet says: 'All men are asleep (in this world); only when they die, do they wake up'. This dying is to the soul or nafs wherein man realizes that the reality of the I does not belong to him but to the Spirit which is identical with the Divine essence. Thus, the I, which is essentially Spirit, fully unravels itself once the 'I' grounded in soul or nafs has withered away. And this I is nothing but the Reality itself. The veracity of this metaphysical truth dawns when one has achieved metaphysical realization.

The problem with Iqbal is that he remains at the individualistic level and does not transcend to the universal realm. He commits a category-mistake in the sense that he tries to place the metaphysical truths at the level of the mystical plane and abhors them for being pantheistic. He interprets the utterance of Mansur Hallaj: 'I am the Truth' on the mystic plane whereas Khawaja Ghulam Farid excels in interpreting and realizing the truth of this assertion at the metaphysical level to which it rightfully belongs. What is the secret of Mansur al-Hallaj's assertion 'ana' I-Haqq, I am the Truth'? The secret revealed in the process of metaphysical realization is that the Self withdraws from the "servant-Lord" Polarity and resides in its own transpersonal being. The subject-object dichotomy or complementarism is transcended by virtue of pure intellect or Spirit, which is identical with the Divine Essence. 'If soul is the element in man that relates to God, Spirit is the element that is identical with Him - not with his personal mode, for on the celestial plane God and soul remain distinct, but with God's mode that is infinite, Spirit is the Atman that is Brahman, the aspect of man that is the Buddha-nature, the element in

man, which, exceeding the soul's fully panoply is that "something in the soul that is uncreated and uncreate" (Eckhart). It is the true man in Lin Chi the Ch'an master's assertion that "beyond the mass of reddish flesh is the true man who has no title"; and the basis for the most famous of Sufi claims: Mansur al-Hallaj's assertion "ana' I.... Haqq, I am the Absolute Truth, or the True Reality....Peripherally Spirit is without boundaries; internally it is without barriers. It knows neither walls that encompass nor walls that divide".¹⁸²

Mansur al-Hallaj delved on this secret by virtue of inner illumination. 'His ana' I-Haqq (I am the Truth) has become perennial witness to the fact that Sufism is essentially gnosis and ultimately it is God within us who utters "I" once the veil of otherness has been removed'.¹⁸³ It is a process of annihilation wherein the Divine Self is alone real. Mansur al Hallaj says: 'You have wasted your life in cultivating your spiritual nature: What has become of annihilation in Unification (al-fan f'I tawhid)'.¹⁸⁴ It is at this stage that even man's own individual self as testifier to the Shahadah ceases to exist for 'the soul is not competent to voice the Shahadah. The Witness must be, not the self, but the Self'.¹⁸⁵ It is in this ultimate sense that Mansur al Hallaj says. 'Whose claimeth to affirm God's Oneness thereby setteth up another beside Him'.¹⁸⁶ No one can affirm truly the Oneness of God for the very process of affirmation creates a duality through the intrusion of one's own person. 'Who is it that can bear witness that there is no god but God, no reality but the Reality? And for the Sufis the answer to this question lies in the Divine Name ash-Shahid (the witness) which significantly enough, comes next to al-Haqq (the Truth, the Reality) in the most often recited litany of the Names. If God alone is, no testimony

can be valid except His. It is hypocrisy to affirm the Oneness of Being from a point of view which is itself in contradiction with the truth'.¹⁸⁷ There is nothing beside God. 'If there were anything which, in the Reality of the Eternal Present, could show itself to be other than God, than God would not be Infinite, for Infinity would consist of God and that particular thing'.¹⁸⁸ Thus, the Self, the pure intellect or the Spirit says *ana'I-haqq* (I am the Truth) and it was obliviousness of this metaphysical truth which led people to crucify the great Saint.

Metaphysical realization is the process through which man ceases to be for the final goal is union. 'If sacred knowledge involves the whole being of man, it also concerns the giving up of this being for its goal is union. The miracle of human existence is that man can undo the existentiating and cosmogonic process inwardly so as to cease to exist, man can experience that "annihilation" (the *fana* of the Sufis) which enable him to experience union in the ultimate sense. Although love, as the force "that moves the heavens and the stars", plays a major role in attracting man to the "abode of the Beloved" and realized knowledge is never divorced from the warmth of its rays, it is principial knowledge alone that can say *neti neti* until the Intellect within man which is the divine spark at the center of his being realizes the Oneness of Reality which alone is, the Reality before whose "Face" all things perish according to the Qur'anic verse. "All things perish save His Face".¹⁸⁹

Thus, it is the immanent Divinity, pure Intellect or Spirit within man which says: 'Glory be to me' and 'I am the Truth' 'Man qua man cannot have union with God. But man can, through spiritual realization and with the aid of Heaven participate in the lifting of the veil of separation so

that the immanent Divinity within him can say “I” and the illusion of a separate self, which is the echo and reverberation upon the planes of cosmic existence of principal possibilities contained in the Source, ceases to assert itself as another and independent “I” without of course the essential reality of the person whose roots are contained in the Divine Infinitude ever being annihilated.¹⁹⁰ Thus, the goal of sacred knowledge is deliverance and union, its instrument the whole being of man and its meaning the fulfillment of the end for which man and in fact the cosmos were created’.¹⁹¹

Before we conclude, it is exceedingly imperative to reiterate the point that Iqbal’s rigorous approach to man-God polarity is purely derived from the individualistic dimension and it has nothing metaphysical about it. Also, his fear of pantheism has no foundation in the metaphysical realm. Metaphysical pantheism, if we can use this term, neither denies the transcendence of God nor the degrees of reality. Though the separation between the Creator and creature is rigorous yet ‘by compensation there is an aspect which admits the created and the Uncreated to be linked, since nothing that exists can be other than a manifestation of the Principle or an objectivization of the Self; “everything is Atma”....If philosophical pantheism had this aspect of things in view-which it has not, being ignorant of the degree of reality and ignorant of transcendence - it would be legitimate as a synthetic or inclusive perspective. The polemics of the theologians readily confuse these two kinds of pantheism’.¹⁹²

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Postscript

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Experiencing God is a possibility to be reckoned with. The alpha and omega of higher religion is experience. The soul of religion is Spirituality. The modern attempt to understand religion as merely an article of faith, belief or a moral system characterized by ritual behaviour does not reach the heart of religion. The essence of religion is experience which opens the gateways to the corridors of Divinity. In the absence of religious experience, religion becomes constrictive and its votaries cease to live the religious life in fullness. Religion always stands in need of its own spirituality which provides it with ever flowing sweet and fresh waters. Instead of ceasing direct contact with the Ultimate Reality, it is high time that man seizes the opportunity of experiencing God.

One of the most effective methods of experiencing God is to dwell in the company of the Man of God who has experienced the Ultimate Reality: who has been granted the knowledge of the ultimate nature of things and events.

It is by following the Spiritual Master with sincerity, reverence and perseverance that one can realize the possibility of experiencing God. The search for a spiritual mentor is subject to the following mystical paradox: Those who seek shall never find. Those who find shall ever seek. Once on the mystic path, the disciple gains gradual perfection when his knowing becomes seeing and his seeing becomes knowing.

The spiritual science of the soul demonstrates the metaphysical reality of the self. The self is characterized by possibilities tendering to be realized by contemplation and action. The nature of the self is such that right conduct sustains and integrates it whereas wrong conduct lead to its

disintegration and eventual dissolution. The concept of right and wrong is, thus, essentially linked to the integration and the disintegration of the self respectively. To save oneself from the disastrous consequences of one's conceptions and actions is the legitimate demand of one's primordial wisdom. The process of experiencing God, rightfully takes away a man from the pettiness of life in order to save his soul but it does not take him away from the concrete realities of life. Rather, it integrates him in the normal affairs of life by making him share his self in fullness with others in act of humility gratitude and benevolence. It is his creative participation in the world which ensures his own spiritual development. In a certain sense, it is reaching God through His creation. Higher Sufism (faqr), in this context, has found ways and means of integrating both the individual and society.

Experiencing God or the Ultimate Reality is the realization of the possibilities inherent in human existence. Oneness of Being (wahdat ul wujud) both in its doctrinal (intellectual) and realizational (spiritual) aspects embraces the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life. If the Reality is manifest in all things and the Truth is reflected in all events then, how can a single thing or a single event afford to dispense with the aforesaid Realty and Truth? Is not all creation the manifestation of the Absolute?

The essentiality of the metaphysical life is that both the Divine and the human witness each other in their personal and transpersonal aspects. Man is responsive to the Reality for whom each and every existent is a locus of manifestation. Such a universal responsiveness is reflected in man's act of worshipping the Divine Reality and his serving the same Reality as manifest in different forms.

Humanity is the epitome of creation. Woman, by virtue of her feminine essence, occupies an inherent and

unique place in the scheme of Reality. Man contemplates the Reality in himself in a passive mode whereas in woman he contemplates the Reality both in active and passive modes. Anyone who oppresses woman, beside other things, ceases to mirror the Reality in the infinite depths of his own being.

From the metaphysical point of view, all forms of human oppression including legal, religious, economic, social, political and cultural are evil which stem from the world of contrasts and tend to smash the myriad of mirrors reflecting the Face of the Sovereign Good. It is the basic vocation of each and every individual to struggle with grace against evil at all levels and to accept only that as good which is in consonance with the ideal human nature. Knowledge of the ultimate nature of things teaches us that there is an identity between the metaphysical Truth and the structure of the ideal human nature. It is only the Truth which can make us free. Freedom flows from the Freedom Itself and all genuine, real or practical freedom is earned by a constant struggle against the oppressive forces of ignorance, authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Man is always in a situation of either/or: freedom or bondage. It is his metaphysical right to choose freedom against bondage: good against evil.

Experiencing God is not merely a romance of the Spirit. From the annals of the prophetic experience to the channels of higher Sufism(faqr) experiencing God has been a total, inward and passionate commitment to God, man and universe. How can a spiritual person remain committed to God by remaining uncommitted to His Manifestation?

The modern man needs to delve deep into the infinite depths of his own being in order to understand what essentially it means to be human. A real contact with the

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roots of his own being shall transform him from within and provide him succour for the creative transformation of society. He has to realize it much sooner than later that he shall always remain essentially oblivious of the horizontal dimensions of life unless he understands the essentiality of vertical dimensions. A struggle benefit of spiritual meaningfulness is a lamentable tragedy.

The possibility of experiencing God still remains open for those who spiritually dare. The last hour of the humanity is drawing nigh. Hasn't the time come for Man to retract from the evil state which leads to cosmic and human catastrophe and adopt instead, the paradisaal state both in its transcendent and immanent aspects?

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