NEW INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC LOVE-DEVOTION

Muhammad Iqbal & Jalal alDin Rumi

Muhammad Iqbal was a great writer and poet; he assimilated all that was best in Islamic, Oriental and Western thought and culture and used poetry as his means of expression. He was disillusioned with the Western culture and maintained that the lopsided material progress was unethical and unspiritual. He found that Islam was a universal religion which envisaged all humanity as one unity. But the Islam of his time had become narrow, rigid and static. He was of the opinion that life is dynamic and should not be dogmatic. He became an iconoclast and tried to demolish all orthodoxies and idolatries.

He maintained that dogmatic and debased religion had split humanity in to hostile aggressive groups. He wanted to develop a path in Islam which would purify and advance human life in every direction.

Body and Soul:

He studied the philosophy of his contemporary Western philosophers particularly Descrates and Spinoza. Descartes’ held that body and soul are not interlinked. He felt that the attribute of soul is thought while the attribute of body is extension. Descrates further stated that the body and the soul meet only at one point i.e. at the penial gland situated between the two eyes. Iqbal did not accept the analysis of Descrates. He said that to hold body and soul as different is to accept dualism.

As against Descrates, Spinoza held the view that body and mind are not two opposite substances, they are two different expressions of the same substance. States of mind correspond to bodily processes. The two are like two parallel, states of existence. He did not contribute to the dualism found in Descrate’s writings. He held that body, mind and soul are all interrelated.

Iqbal accepted broadly the statement of Spinoza. But Spinoza was a pantheist the worship that accepts all Gods, while Iqbal was a monotheist. In Spinoza’s system the difficulty is how to reconcile the theory of substance with the theory of attributes. Spinoza pointed out that substance has infinite attributes. But the question arises whether attributes are purely subjective or they can also be objective.
Iqbal studied this problem by taking the help of the Qur'an. The Qur'an speaks of reward and punishment after death. The description of heaven and hell are not only mental but they have physical significance. The Qur'an emphasizes on concrete personality of man here and here after. Body divorced from the soul or mind is against the very spirit of the Qur'an. He felt that the message of God contained therein is for the entire man for his whole personality, his whole being. So when we think of man, we think about the whole man not the bodiless soul or soulless body.

Iqbal thinks that it is wrong to regard mind and matter as two different entities. He says that matter is a ‘colony of egos’ of a lower order out of which emerges finite life, with consciousness. They are two faces of the same coin; “Matter is spirit in space time reference. The unity called man is the body when you look at it as regard to what we call external world, it is mind or soul when we look at it as acting in regard to the ultimate aim and ideal of such thing.” In actuality there is no real opposition between mind and matter.

Every object according to Iqbal is an ego. Egos vary only in degrees of reality. According to him ultimate reality is also an ego. And from ego only egos should proceed. The same thing is material from one point of view but spiritual from another. Iqbal was of the opinion that the immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self realisation of the spirit. Man is a combination of body and mind. It is for him to decide whether he makes spiritual progress by conquering matter or remains satisfied in materialistic living.

**Desire, Love and Action:**

Individuals form the society. Beliefs and actions are the foundation of such society. Iqbal points out that the development of the individual is possible only through a proper relation established between him and the environment. He says that according to the Qur'an the following salient points should be taken in to consideration:

(i). Man is the chosen being of God.
(ii). Man is meant to be the representative of God on earth.
(iii). Man is the trustee of his free personality.
(iv). Man is unique in creation.

As man exists in environment, the idea of other-worldliness and renunciation are injurious for self development. We have therefore to establish a proper and active relation with the world, because our highest aim can be fulfilled in remaining active in this world. The world is a medium for reaching the highest goal.

Plato the earliest Greek thinker opined that the material world is the shadow of the world of ideas. He called it supersensuous world. This idea of Plato was later on developed by Plotinus.
Keeping the material world in an inferior position of shadow was not appreciated by Iqbal. He criticized Plato and said that the world of ideas fascinated him so much that he failed to take note of the functions of human brain, eyes, and ears. Iqbal stated that since Plato was devoid of any taste for action, he became the worshiper of the invisible world. Iqbal called it fantasy.

For Iqbal the world is not illusory. The secret of life can not be known by, self-negation and renunciation but in developing consciousness about desires and ideals. Desires and ideals are closely associated with a dynamic life. They make our life enthusiastic and energetic. They may be positive and good or negative or bad. Life becomes worth living with pious desires. Psychologically speaking, desire is a wish which comes out of instinct and man’s interaction with environment. When Buddha regarded desire as enemy of man – he was refereeing to the materialistic selfish desires for aggrandizement. The teachings of Buddha to elevate oneself by following disciplines as preached by Him were in effect creation of a desire of higher order and its fulfillment. Iqbal, argues that Islam accepted the presence and necessity of fulfillment of desires. It prescribed ways to discipline the mind to eradicate harmful desires and encourage everlasting desires. Further Iqbal believed that the material world does not stand in the way of spiritual development. Our highest aspirations can be fulfilled without renouncing the world. He said : nature is not evil, since it enables the inner powers of life to unfold themselves. “There is no such thing as profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self realization of the spirit”. To gain mastery over the environment one should be bold and courageous. As the growth of human mind depends upon creative desires, it should be strengthened by the power of love. Iqbal believed that love is a power which alone can save the suffering humanity. According to him knowledge is power but pure intellectual knowledge devoid of faith is the tool of the Satan. In his poetry collections larar-i-khudi he defines love as the desire to assimilate and absorb. Its highest form is exhibited in the creation of values and ideals and in making efforts to realize them. He in this respect was a true disciple of JalalakDin Rumi the Persian poet.

The Sufis believed in and acted in conformity with the philosophy of love. They were deeply fascinated by the love of God. For the Sufi everything fades away, but the love of God is eternal, when one realizes the supreme state of bliss where he finds God in himself and him in God. Such is the supreme teaching of Sufism-the religion of love.

In the mystical poetry of Islam, the attachment of the soul towards God is expressed in figurative and mysterious style. In Persian mystical poetry the theme of love runs high. But Iqbal like Rumi tries to bring a balance between reason and love. According to Rumi, intellect is the servant of love. True love can not be expressed in words. Love can be defined only through love. Again Rumi
Rumi holds the view that love is ever dissatisfied with its present achievement. It always wants to go ahead of its position at a particular time at the present moment. So it creates new desires and new values. Growth and progress of humanity is due to the inner urge of love. Early Persian philosophers felt that there is universal operation of the force of love, in nature. Striving for the ideal is love’s movement towards beauty which is again the other name for perfection.

In the West it was Kant who declared the incapacity and incompleteness of reason. In his “Critique of pure Reason” he raised the question: Is metaphysics possible? and answered it in the negative. Before Kant, the Muslim philosopher Gazali was also vexed with many philosophical and religious questions. Though he tried to find their answers through reason, he failed. He, in due course relied in his intuitive knowledge to solve those questions. After Kant, in the West, Bergson maintained that apart from reason there are other powerful methods like life-impetus, instinct, which can solve the questions relating to human existence. Intelligence is necessary to take the environment for nurturing it. Bergson being an anti-intellectualist propounded the theory of intuition to know the changing reality. What is intuition? It is the “inwardness” of life. But ultimately he agreed that both intellect and intuition are necessary, Rumi’s views on love are similar in many places with the conclusions of Bergson. For Rumi, intellectual exercises are superfluous and human beings should strive for a burning heart with the flame of love. He said that intellect also is a part of love which is not materialistic and selfish. The mystic always tried to have union with God and nothing less than that. The final goal is the merging of the individual soul, with the Absolute.

The love for the Absolute once felt becomes stronger and stronger in the course of life. Both Rumi and Iqbal are opposed to the conception of ‘moth-flame’ kind of love between the individual and the Almighty. Both had felt that love is a force for creative evolution. All the cases of progress, growth and assimilation can be properly explained through the force of creative love. Further Iqbal emphasized on the importance of love which develops intuitive knowledge. The following stanza of poetry speaks amply about the direction of his mind.

The Capital of intellect consist of doubt and fear
But determination and faith are the essence of love.
The former builds with a view to demolish.
The latter destroys in order to construct.
Intellect is cheap and common as air
But love is rare and invaluable.
Intuition and Tension:

Thus Iqbal believes that intuition stands higher than intellect, but intellect is not entirely useless. It can be fruitfully employed in the service of intuition. Intuition is a higher kind of intellect. Thus in Sufism intuition (haqqul-yaqin) is higher form of intellect (itmul-yaqin) or intellectual inward reasoning. Righteousness and goodness makes our action and faith dignified and majestic. Iqbal mentions about the following characteristics of intuition: (i) it is immediate (ii) it is not analysible (iii) in deep intuition the individual travels nearer to the Universal self beyond the experience of senses. (iv) it is a matter of feeling and can not be transmitted and communicated, (iv) the experience happens with the time-space level. (v) it is pragmatic.

The Qur'an indicates that man has to exploit natural forces for his interest and progress. But the exploitation must be in the interest of mankind. The nature of love is such that it fears neither sword nor dagger. The self is strengthened by the spark of love. It can gain dominion over the inward and outward forces of the universe.

Iqbal talks of assimilated action. He refers to the life of Prophet Muhammad and His actions. His action justified His ideal. It is thus through Ideal-centric action that we can achieve our aspirations and rise to a higher level of existence. Talking of action, he speaks of creative actions. Imitation suppresses the creative faculty of life. So both inaction and imitation bring decay to the human ego.

The Holy Book recognizes the empirical analysis as an indispensable element in the spiritual life of humanity. Naturalism of the Qur'an indicates that man has to exploit natural sources for constructive work, keeping both the self and the society at par. Man has to act. Iqbal does not define action. He says-as love fortifies the ego, asking (Su'al) weakens it. All that is achieved without personal effort is in action sual. A rich man who inherits his father wealth is an asker or beggar. Iqbal uses the term 'asking' Su'al in the sense of inaction. He pleads to avoid all types of inaction. He writes: Personality is a state of tension and can continue only if that state is maintained. If the state of tension is not maintained, relaxation will ensue. Personality is a valuable achievement of man; he should therefore see that relaxation does not come to him. Inaction brings degeneration to human self. It deprives the self, from the light of illumination. Anything achieved without personal effort is deterrent to the progress of the self. Action is a necessity of life.

Iqbal when talks of 'action,' has in his mind good action and not misdeed. Islam gave call to people for good activities and Iqbal feels that Persian Sufism did not give due emphasis on action. Iqbal further states : we find a strange similarity in Hindu and some of the Muslim thinkers who thought over this problem of the self. In Indian thought we find a strange mixture of theory and
practice. Some of their greatest thinkers have deeply thought over the nature of human capacity for action. They arrived at the conclusion that the continuity of the life of the self, which is at the root of all feelings of contentment pain and suffering, is achieved through activity. The Indian thinkers solved the difficult problem of freedom of will, by stating that good actions, good results, bad actions, bad results. This is the theory of \textit{Karma}. But to be free from the bondage of \textit{Karma} is it necessary to stop all activities or \textit{Karma}? At this stage, Hinduism required a great seer to interpret to the people the true significance and value of activity of \textit{karma}. This stupendous task was done by Srikrishna.\textsuperscript{9}. He pointed out that one should not abhor activity. One should only remain indifference to the consequences of action. Lord Krishna criticized in a most discerning manner the philosophical tradition of his people and emphasized on ceaseless active life for every human being.

Iqbal disliked the pantheist way of thinking. He felt that it gives very little scope for action and responsibilities. He advocated for active life as mentioned in the Qur’an: man has to actively participate in the deeper aspirations of the universe by adjusting himself to the forces of nature and also moulding these forces in his own interest and the interest of universe. In this great task he receives the help of God. Qur’an clearly stated: Verily the God will not change the condition of man till they change what is in themselves (13:12).

Power is the dominating feature of Iqbal’s philosophy, but it is not power as we understand in social parlance. His concept of power was associated with broader vision of life. Attainment of Power is necessary to mould nature for common good and to resist evil.

Iqbal felt that ‘Jihad’ as mentioned in the Qur’an was misunderstood and misinterpreted. It does not mean the bloodshed of mankind. It is a constant struggle for eradicating evils from the world, an activity for the betterment of mankind. It ordinarly means fight – fight against one’s self for purification, against the evil-mongers and infidels. Iqbal requires the youth to create a spirit like that of falcon. It’s position is highest among all the birds. It is always alert and courageous. It does not stay in a nest.

Whoever believes in action, Iqbal says refrains from imitation. He had warned the Islam community not to copy the West in their urge to adopt changing way of life.

Iqbal is neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He believes that the stream of life gives pleasure or pain depending upon the action it performs.
Determinism and flow of life:

The question which disturbs everyone is: Is our life predetermined and our actions are predestined? If it is so, where is the place of free-will, human freedom and human responsibilities. The orthodox Muslim theologians in their efforts to establish the supremacy of Allah were silent about this question. Iqbal was of the view that there is nothing definite in the Qur’an about this. He says that there are passages which say that man has freedom of action, and also passages which could be interpreted as fatalism. According to the tradition, the Prophet did not encourage any discussion on this controversy but advised for doing good work unceasingly. But when Islam was accepted by a large number of people, people started debating on this issue. Iqbal felt that the three important Muslim sects which were referred to in this connection were the Jabrians, the Qadarians and the orthodox group. The Jabrians pleaded for the all sovereignty of Allah and accepted absolute fatalism. Everything happens as Allah wills. The philosophy of fatalism was suitable for justifying oppressions, fightings among groups and thus turned out to be a philosophy of opportunism used by the powerful. When this philosophy brought degradation in human thought and action, a group of rationalist thinkers known as mutazallites Qadarians appeared on the scene. They argued that man decides to act and reaps the fruits of heaven and hell. If we accept the theory of predetermination then punishing a man for infidelity, cruelty and falsehood would not be proper as we can justify them as Will of God. Mutazallites thus concluded that man is free to choose between good and evil.

The orthodox school made a distinction by pointing out that actions created by God do not mean that He is characterized by them. For example if God has created the sea, He is not sea. In this way an infidel person is one who does infidelity and not the God who created him. They maintained that free action of God is possible under the power of God. God’s Will is already planted in the will of man. They have propounded a doctrine of acquisition (kash). According to this doctrine God has given man both power and choice for his actions. Man possesses the power of acquiring different modes of activity.

Iqbal remained away from this controversy and maintained that man has freedom under certain limitations and freedom of man is determined according to the development of his personality.

Jalal al-din Rumi in Masnavis:

Among the creatures of God, man alone is endowed with freedom of choice with regard to actions. The grace of God is bestowed upon him in accordance with his efforts. Freedom of will in man does not mean that he can make the impossible, possible. The nature of things is such that earth cannot become water and water cannot develop the properties of honey. Man is however
free to do whatever is possible. That is why he has got superiority over other creature of nature. Every other thing is controlled by outside influence. Man alone carries his becoming with himself. In a world of obstruction man is free to act in accordance with his plans. He has to struggle for higher and higher objectives. The very fate of man is to struggle. Struggle against destiny is his destiny. In this way he can realize his inner potentialities. Every action has a reaction. Destiny does not move in an arbitrary manner. Good and evil deeds are pre-destined to produce their consequences. That the thief shall be punished and wine shall cause intoxication are pre-destined. In a poem Shahin, he mentions:-

“Amal se Zindegi' banti hai
Jannat bhi jahannam bhi
Ya khaki apnai fitrat me na noon hai, nari hai.

in the qur'an it is said If you do well to your own behalf you do well; and if you do evil against yourselves will you do it (17:7)

This suggests that man unlike an animal does not simply accept the external conditions which frequently obstruct and hamper his movements. He can transform his environment. That is why man is not a puppet in the hands of nature. Man is related to the absolute. Therefore, he partakes in the Divine Freedom.

Now Iqbal explains the verses of the Qur’an: “God created all things and assigned to each its destiny” in the following manner.

Laws of God are applicable both in material and spiritual realms. The material realm is determined by certain fixed laws of nature, whereas the spiritual realm is different. It is the destiny of the flower to fade way in autumn. But man has got the power to convert his potential power to actual power. The ultimatum of destiny is “every action will have a reaction”. Good doings will be rewarded and bad deeds will be punished. So Iqbal says: dependance upon fate are for plants and minerals and to some extent for animals. The faithful depends only on the commands of God. If he does not make his environment agreeable his decay is certain. Thus Iqbal believes that man is the architect of his own fortune.

Obedience to Divine Law and to the Prophet:

Man struggles for freedom in order to be more powerful and happy. With this aim in view he has to act in accordance with some law which exhibits and manifest the law of causation. Acting without any law or discipline will bring chaos in person as well as in society.
Iqbal feels that obedience to Law makes our life significant and valuable. Iqbal advises the Muslims to abide by the Qur'an. They should be obedient like a camel, the traits of which are service, and patience. He points out to the passages in the Qur'an where it is mentioned that if a man completely devotes himself to God, the Almighty and His glories he is saved from all troubles. Iqbal attaches a lot of importance to prayer. If a Muslim cannot participate in daily congregations at a mosque, he should at least attend the Friday congregation prayer in his locality. He should not miss the Id prayer. In a congregation for prayer everyone is equal irrespective of his social position, wealth and power. From the Unity of God follows the essential unity of mankind. So Iqbal says, Islamic form of association in prayer is indicative of the aspiration to realize the essential unity of mankind as a fact in life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man and man.

Iqbal has referred to the saying of the Qur'an! “Lo, I will appoint a Khalifa on earth”. Iqbal also refers to the Sufi doctrine of the Insan-al-kamil the Prophet the representative of God on earth. Sufis believe that this representative teaches that everyone is potentially a perfect man and these Divine Attributes are seeds which are to be sprouted and nurtured by following the Prophet.

Iban-al-Arabi in 13th century and Jili in 14th century made this proposition as supreme path for development of love, pure love which is the only path for developing divinity in human being. Jili had said: you must know that perfect man is a copy of God. That is so because God is living, knowing mighty, willing, hearing, seeing and speaking; and man too is all these. Further, we must know that the Divine Names and attributes belong to the perfect man by fundamental and sovereign right by virtue of a necessity inherent in his essence. The Prophet had said: create in yourself the attributes of God (Takhallqubi-Aklaq Allah)

Nietzsche, the Western philosopher also talked of Superman – he who comes nearest to the God, the complete person. Not that he is finally absolved in God, on the contrary he absorbs God in himself.

Nietzsche opined that life is essentially a play of self assertion. Evolution i.e. the ascent on the ladder of life is the victory of strength over weakness. The course of evolution is determined by the will-to-power which is fundamental in the universe. So Nietzsche was an advocate of the life in force and beauty. Life is to be taken ahead as the ancient Greek philosopher Apollo thought; inspite of woes and troubles. The Superman is endowed with this Apolline vision to its perfection so that He can guide others. Nietzsche thought that the God of Christianity is the symbol of negation. He is for all those who suffer and are tending towards death. Jesus Christ gave His life for the redemption of the
world, for the poor, the weak and the suffering. The real redeemer according to Nitzsche is he who by self-affirmation and self-assertion, opens up new horizons and shows infinite possibilities. Iqbal thinks that man need not submit to his environment. He has to mould it. Any existing state of decadence does not lead to nothingness. It is a prelude to regeneration. Man must suffer in order to climb the highest height. From the highest degree of suffering and pain, man will draw impetus for a higher form of existence.

Iqbal further states that the Superman comes to give to the humanity the message of happiness. He will provide the way for achieving the real aims of life. Such Supermen do appear from time to time in order to save the world from sins and vices prevailing in a large scale in the society. But the question arises why inspite of appearance of more than one Prophet, the misery, and suffering do not cease. They are on the increase. Iqbal of course has no answer for this question.

Coming back to Maulana Rumi he expressed the coming of the Prophet in a beautiful couplet. Once the Prophet while a boy was lost in the desert. His nurse Halima became very anxious and while she was searching for the boy, she heard a voice as such;

"Do not grieve, He will not be lost to thee Nay the whole world will be lost in Him".

**Immortality:**

It is said that in Islam, law of Karma is not accepted. The following verse from the Qur’an is quoted: when death overtakes one of them, he said Lord, send me back again, that I may do the good that I have left undone. By no means. These are the very words which he shall speak. But behind them is a barrier (Barzakh) until the day they shall be raised again (23:101-102).

Iqbal is of the opinion that the statement given in the Qur’an should be understood with deep insight. It mentions about Barzakh—a state of suspense between death and resurrection. In the Qur’an the possibility of resurrection is very much there. The Qur’an also indicates that the soul has to pass through many states—“And by the moon when at her full, that from state to state shall be surely carried forward (84:19). So death is only interlude which the Qur’an describes as Barzakh. Records of sufistic experience indicate that Barzakh is such a state of consciousness in which the ego’s attitude towards time and space is characterized by a change. So the ego remains, there is only change of time and space. The enormous condensation of impressions which occurs in our dream life and the exaltation of memory which sometimes takes place at the moment of death disclose the ego’s capacity for different standards of time. The state of rest-Barzakh is not merely a passive state of rest. The spirit or the ego prepares itself for another new life. The ago has however to struggle till it
succeeds in gathering himself for winning resurrection. The ego in order to
tolerate the shock of death and separation from one life is to be fortified and
strengthened. It must be invigorated by the power of love. Personal immortality
for which we aspire can be achieved only through our efforts of thinking and
practice in this present life. As the Qur’an says: blessed is he who hath made it
grow and undone is he who hath corrupted it (91:7-10). The Qur’an also says
that each individual shall be rewarded or punished according to his deeds. All
rewards or punishments are ordained here. If this position is accepted then the
Qur’an is nito against continuous birth-death-birth chain for individuals. In that
case the question o hell or heaven in Barzakh would not arise. Of course there
will be perpetual enjoyment of peace or suffering of the individual soul or ego in
Barzakh according to its deeds performed during his life time.

Evolution of Life:

With regard to the evolution of the living species into man Ibn Maskwih
was the first Muslim philosopher who presented a modern theory of origin of
man. It is as follows: The combination of primary substances produced the
mineral kingdom, the lowest form of life. A higher stage of evolution is reached
in vegetable kingdom. The first to appear was spontaneous grass then plants
and various kinds of trees, then out of the vegetable kingdom some could touch
the border line of animal Kingdom, there was a certain form of life which was
neither plant or animal, (i.e.Coral). Then there was power of movement, and
sense of touch in tiny forms which crawl upon the earth. Then gradually came
the animal kingdom.

Human form began with ape which gradually developed in to human form
with understanding and intelligence. Rumi developed the theory of evolution
mostly on the same line. Darwin’s theory of evolution has a striking resemblance
with the theories of Maskwih and Rumi.

But the biological theory of evolution may not be the last word. Rumi
anticipates a higher form of life in course of time i.e. evolution of man from the
present state to a higher form.

The Hindu philosophers except Charvak considered man to be immortal.
The working of Law of Karma is a prominent feature of Hindu philosopihcal
thought: our present life is determined by our previous actions, and the actions
of the present life determine the scope of our future life. Man gets a degraded or
elevated birth in the future life on the basis of his acts in the present life. But we
will not be able to remember our previous life. The Hindu philosophers believed
that there is a better state of existence than the life on this earth so they wanted to
transcend the earthly life. They suggested that the cycle of birth-death-birth can
be crossed if our desires and passions are controlled and subdued. So the
Vedanta Philosophy emphasizes on self-realization—the conscious identification
of individual soul with the Universal Soul. Man can overcome disease and
death and can enjoy the eternal peace in the bosom of the eternal reality, if he
has no self satisfying wants and desires.

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