CHAPTER VI.

THE IDEA OF SOUL

1. The concept of the soul has engaged man's attention through ages. Opinions differ regarding its existence and nature. The theory of the soul is based on the belief that the principle of individuality in man is substantial and that the psychic phenomena must have a concrete agent to which they belong. This agent must be immaterial, because its activity, which is thought, is immaterial. It must be simple too, for thought is simple. Thus it is immaterial, simple and substantial, and it is called the soul. In this simple spiritual substance inhere all the various psychic faculties and operations; but it itself, being a self-subsistent individual substance, inhere in nothing. In order to know what it is, one must look in upon oneself, and learn by direct intuition what one's own inward being is.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle presented this substantialist view of the soul. In the middle ages it was formally elaborated, and later many philosophers like Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Leibnitz and Berkeley believed in it. In the present day the spiritualistic school defends the conception.
Socrates believed that the soul is pure, eternal and imperishable. It is an immaterial spiritual substance which lives in the body, and departs from it at death. What is good for man, he said, is the tendance of the soul or the health of the soul, and what is good for the soul is the knowledge of the self. The human soul, says Plato, is pure, immortal and indestructible. Being the mediator between the world of Ideas and the world of sense, it has affinity with both of them. It is incorporeal and is the cause of body's motion; the human reason abides in it. As against this, Plotinus holds that soul has a divisible element; and yet, he said, it is immaterial. It is present in the body; but in its faculties of reason, memory and perception it is separable from the body.

But, for Aristotle, the human soul is merely the function of the body; hence, cannot exist without the body. The connection between the soul and the body is organic, and both are, by that reason, inseparable. Nor does the soul incarnate itself in new bodies, as Plato believes, because the function of everything differs from the function of every other thing. However, he does talk of the active reason, which comes to man from God, who is the absolute Reason. It is therefore, eternal and imperishable. It enters the body, and rejoins God at death.
For Pythagoras and his followers soul has no distinct being of its own. It is the name given to the harmony arising out of bodily elements similar to the harmony existing in the strings of a musical instrument. However, for some, soul exists, but dies along with the body. Again, there are some who believe that even though soul dies with the body, God will create the body once again at the Resurrection and breathe soul into it.

The Upanishads talk of soul as permanent, giving its development through four stages — bodily, empirical, transcendental and absolute. The central teaching of the Upanishads is the 'Atman' and the identity of the 'Atman' with the 'Brahman'. Philosophy was, hence, called 'Atma Vidya', knowledge of the Self. The Jaina, unlike the Buddhists, accept the existence of soul, which they describe from the phenomenal and the noumenal point of view. From the phenomenal point of view it possesses empirical qualities, experiencing the fruits of Karma. From the noumenal point of view, however, it is pure and perfect, a pure consciousness.

The Biblical conception of soul differs from these foregoing conceptions. The Bible tells us that the soul is God's greatest gift created by Him in His own likeness. He has made it in His likeness by endowing it
with will and understanding. Unlike the body which is material and which has parts, the soul is spiritual and has no parts. It is, for that reason, indivisible and immortal. The body dies, but the soul lives forever. After death it returns to God to share with Him a life of unending happiness in heaven.

The Qur'anic conception of soul comes nearer to the Biblical conception. The scripture asserts that God breathed His own spirit into Adam (cxv.29, xxxviii.72, xxxii.9). The soul is created by God, but it is immortal. When the body dies it returns to God well-pleased and well-pleasing, for to God belong the Creation and the Command. Man is essentially a creature; he can be neither identical nor co-eternal with God.

Al-Kindi is the first thinker who introduced the Neo-Platonic doctrine of soul into Muslim thought. He revised "The Theology of Aristotle" through which the Muslims came to know the theory of the emanation of the human soul from the One Absolute Cause, first through the Universal Spirit or Intelligence and then through the Universal Soul to which it belongs. Man's soul, thus, is an immortal, spiritual and intelligible substance. Its salvation consists in freeing itself from the bondage of the sensible world and in returning to the eternal abode of spiritual substances.
Al-Ashārī gives the doctrine of the incarnation of the Divine Spirit in Adam and its transmigration through the prophets. Al-Baghdādī holds that the life of God is without spirit and nourishment and that all other spirits are created. Ibn Hazm uses nafs and rūḥ interchangeably for man's soul. He believes that God created in spirits of Adam and his descendants before He commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam.

Al-Shahrastānī describes the nature of man with three souls, vegetative, animal and human, each with its own source, place and powers. He rejects the Neo-Platonic idea that human souls are dependent upon the souls of the superhuman spiritual world, the doctrine that the nafs is essentially evil and the doctrine that salvation consists in the release of the soul, rūḥ, from material bodies.

It was Al-Ghazzālī, Islam's greatest theologian, who gave Aristotle's principle of the incorporeal character of spirit a permanent place in Muslim Thought. Ghazzālī defines soul as a spiritual substance, not at all confined in a body nor imprinted on it. It is neither joined to it nor separate from it, and is neither without the world nor within the world. It possesses knowledge and perception and is, therefore, not an accident.
Al-Baidawi discusses the classes of incorporeal substances: the heavenly intelligences, the souls of the spheres, the incorporeality of human souls, their creation, their connection with bodies, and their survival. He argues that the souls were created when the bodies were completed. The nafs is not embodied in the body and is not close to the body, but is attached to it as the lover to the beloved. It is connected with the ruh which comes from the heart and is generated of the finest nutritive particles. The reasoning nafs produces a power that flows in the body. Ibn al'Arabi likewise, divides things into three classes: God, who is the Absolute Being and Creator, the world and the tertium quid of the contingent existence, that is joined to the Eternal Reality and is the source of the substance as well as the specific nature of the world.

The early sufis accepted the materiality of the spirit. Al-Kushairi and Al-Hujwiri, for instance, talk of ruh as a fine, created substance, placed in the sensible body. The nafs is the seat of all evil qualities. Man is a combination of both ruh and nafs. But the later sufis could not be satisfied with the idea that the human soul was created. They asserted that there is something in man that is eternal, divine and
somehow identical with God, in spite of the fact that he was created and, by that reason, possesses some phenomenal aspects. This something in man is his soul. This idea has its basis in the Qurʾān because even though the Qurʾān speaks in terms of creation, it also says that God breathed His own spirit into Adam. It was easy for the sufis to infer from this that the soul in man is the spirit of God, hence, uncreated. Again, the Qurʾān makes the Universe subservient to man, and identifies man's action with that of God. This view was developed by the sufis, who asserted that the human and divine wills are capable of absolute identification in such a way that the individual loses his separate existence. Some other sufis advanced a step further and maintained that there is not only the identity of will but also that of essence.

II. Rūmi employs most of these foregoing conceptions in his thought. Besides the Qurʾān, he has been very much influenced by Greek thought and the Neo-Platonic theory of Emanation, particularly Plotinus' doctrine of the divine origin of the soul, its descent to the material world, its life on earth and its ultimate return to its eternal home. Nevertheless, his thought can hardly be identified with any of these sources.

Rūmi believes that there is a transcendental
self of man which is his real and lasting essence, and
that it is his soul. The soul is divine, uncreated, pure,
self-subsistent and eternal. It is timeless and infinite, and
was one with God, when there was God and noth­ing beside Him. Being the divine spark within man, it is
reality or Truth itself. It has its origin in God and
as such, it has no God.

"It hath no head, inasmuch as it existed
before eternity; it hath no foot: it has
always been akin to everlastingness." 1

Ghazzalī gives a similar conception. He holds
that the human soul was pre-existent before its attach­
ment to the material body. It is the real essence of
man, haqīqat-al-Adamī as he calls it, and it differenti­
ates him from the lower creation. It is divine in ori­
gin, immortal, abiding, eternal, self-subsisting and
incorruptible. It is God-like and it knows God. 2 He
explains the words, nafs, rūh and kalb which are names
for this simple substance that is the seat of the in­
tellectual processes. He distinguishes it from the animal
rūh, which is a refined but mortal body wherein reside

the senses. The incorporeal ruh is identified with the al-nafs al-ɯtma'innna and al-rûh-al-sarrî of the Qur'an. The term nafs is also used by him for the flesh or lower nature, which he deems necessary to be disciplined in the interests of ethics.

Ibn-al 'Arabi regards man as an intermediate creation, a barzakh between God and the world, bringing together the Divine Reality and the phenomenal world. He is a vicegerant connecting the eternal names and the original forms. His animal spirit ruh is the divine breath blown into him, but his reasoning soul comes from the earthly elements.

The Gîta tells us that the soul is unborn, eternal everlasting and primeval; that which is perishable is the body and not the soul. It is divine and free from birth and decay casting off worn out bodies and entering into new ones. In the words of the Gîta -

"The Jîvâtna (soul) in the body is an eternal portion of Myself: it draws with it the mind and the five senses that rest in Matter." 3

And in the words of Rûmi:

3. The Bhagvadgîtā: Ch.XV.vi7
"I was on that day when the Names were not
Nor any sign of existence endowed with name.
By me Names and Named were brought to view,
On the day when there were not 'I' and 'we'." 4

The soul is invisible and unitary in nature. It
is indivisible and free from matter. Reality is one
although it is revealed in plurality. The souls of men
are one, in spite of their multiplicity, as they belong
to the One Soul, the One Being of the Supersensuous
Realm of Will or Spirit. There is unity in the Ground
and Essence of all souls which is the spirit of God treated
into man.

"If you count a hundred apples or a hundred
quinces, they do not remain a hundred but become
one, when you crush them together. In things
spiritual there is no division and no numbers;
in things spiritual there is no partition and
no individuals." 5

This unity of the spirit is illustrated by Rumi in

Shāhīz Tabrīz VII; 1-2.

analogies like the Unity of light. The unity of the spirit is like the unity of light of the two eyes, or like the unity of light in spite of the variety of lamps.

"When you look at the form, your eye is two, look at its (the eye's) light, which grew from the eye. If ten lamps are present in one place, each differs in form from another: To distinguish without any doubt the light of each, when you turn your face towards their light, is impossible."

Plurality belongs to the Realm of Nature, to the phenomenal world, wherein forms are produced by the manifestation of the diverse attributes of the Real Being. Those forms are like shadows, which owe their existence to sunlight falling on wall. Just as the single light of the Sun becomes divided into a hundred in relation to the walls on which it falls, the One Soul shines through the innumerable bodies. Remove the walls, and all lights are one. In the words of Rumi multiplicity of the souls is like the multiplicity of the waves caused by the wind.

Divine Light cannot be broken up; and God sprinkled it upon all. All are one substance like the Sun and all are pure like water.

"Their numbers are in the likeness of waves; the wind will have brought them into number (into plurality from unity). The Sun, which is the spirits, became separated (broken into rays) in the windows, which are bodies."  

Gandhi gives a similar conception. For him there is the absolute oneness of human soul just as there is the absolute oneness of God. Men have many bodies but the soul is one. The rays of the Sun are many but their source is one. And is not God the underlying Unity of the variety of phenomena? "No two leaves are alike," he says, "yet there is no antagonism between them or between the branches on which they grow."  

Every human soul existed as an Idea in the Divine Mind, before the creation of the world. The Perfect Men are the universal individualisations to whom all other souls are inferior and sub-ordinate. All prophets


and saints are Perfect Man, who are essentially one with God and with each other. It is through them alone that the hidden nature of God is revealed; they differ only in so far as they manifest diverse attributes of God. They can be treated as different individuals -- one superior to another -- only from this point of view, for God Himself says: 'We make no distinction between any of them.'

"The faithful are numerous; but the faith is one: their bodies are numerous, but their soul is one. 'Twas the epoch of Jesus and the turn was his: he was the soul of Moses and Moses the soul of him." 9

"Beem the soul a unit and the body a hundred thousand numbers,
Even as almonds in the form of oil
How many words are there in the world! Yet all are essentially one;
Water becomes one when you break the jars." 10

The soul is the substance; the phenomena are its attributes. For Rumi the objective universe is

merely the back of the mirror whose face is the soul. As such, the soul is the substance while the world is the accident, a mere shadow and its reflection. Being black on one side with the darkness of not-being this mirror reflects Reality perfectly.

"Hence the heart is the substance, and the world is the accident: Low should the heart's shadow (reflection) be the object of the heart's desire?" 11

The heavens and the earth are the embodiment of man's transcendental ideas and they serve his purpose. The movement of water from above to below, and from below to above again, says Rumi, the journey of wheat into the earth, and its springing up again, the entering of the seed into the earth and its raising its head again, are all blessings of God sent down to earth in order that they may become the nutriment of the soul. 12

"From thy good thoughts are born the boys of Paradise and the houris,
From thy evil thoughts is born the great demon (Iblis)."

See how the secret thought of the geometrician
has become a castle or a palace,
See how the hidden Providence without beginning
has become this mighty Universe." 13

The soul is not limited by space and time. The
realm of the soul transcends all direction and all time
which are merely the phenomenal categories of understanding. They are the source of causation and change of all 'hows' and 'whys', which are not applicable to the Neumaenal Realm to which the soul belongs. Its fall is due to the process of individualisation of the Absolute, which transcends the world of time and space.

"'Below' and 'above', 'before' and 'behind'
are attributes of the body: The essence of
the bright spirit is without direction (not
limited by relation of place)."

"The world of creation is endued with diverse
quarters and directions, but know that the world

13. Nicholson (R.A.): Selected Poems from the Divan-
I-Shaasli-Tabriz, p.337.
of the Divine Command and Attributes is without (beyond) direction."

This child of eternity is the possessor of infinite knowledge, knowing everything before it is clothed into materiality. It beholds wine in grapes, says *na*/mi, and it beholds intoxication even before the creation of garden and vine. It, in fact, beholds thing in nothing, the conditioned in the unconditioned.

"The Spirit is associated (endued) with knowledge and reason: What has the Spirit to do with Arabic and Turkish?"  

The soul essentially belongs to the world of Unity, the realm of colourlessness although it descends into the world of colour and exhibits the diversity of the Divine Attributes. It manifests itself in different modes of being, as it perpetually receives a fresh influx of Divine Grace from the Divine Essence. Its experiences in the world are the manifestation of the all-embracing Divine Knowledge and Power.


"I have circled awhile with the nine Fathers
in each heaven,

For years I have revolved with the stars in
their signs.

I was invisible awhile, I was united with Him,

I was in the kingdom of or nearer, I saw what
I have seen.

I have my nourishment from God, like a child
in the womb;

Man is born once, I have been born many times."

The soul not only bestows life on the body but
also destroys it by its departure. The destruction of
the body, however, does not affect this self-substituting
substance. Rumi, therefore, compares the soul to fire
latent in flint and steel. The body, he says, is a drop
of water in comparison with the Sea of Spirit which
transcends and subdues it.

Shams-i-Tabriz; pp. 331-32.

Thus, the soul is the meeting point of the phenomenal and the intelligible. It imposes form on matter which is nothing but pure indetermination. Matter is not an independent substance but only an aspect of the soul—a lower grade of the soul. It is the lowest form of existence, the lowest form of life, and, as such, not essentially dead. Body is a product of the soul, an instrument manufactured by it to serve its own purposes.

"Wine in ferment is a beggar suing for our ferment; Heaven in revolution is a beggar suing; for our consciousness. Wine became intoxicated with us, not we with it; the body came into being from us, not we from it. We are bees, and bodies are as wax (honey comb): we have made the body, cell by cell, like wax." 18

The soul derives to a certain extent the element of impurity in itself from its association with the body. It, nevertheless, maintains its natural purity and tries ceaselessly to purify the human nature reminding man of the melodies of the past. The water is

polluted and defiled, and yet, it retains its natural property of purity. "Although the water and earth of our bodies have caused doubt to fall upon us", says Béni, "something of those melodies comes back to our memory."

It is the soul of the perfect Man alone that is completely free from the influence of body. His soul bathes his body in the Eternal Light of God and illuminates it in the mystical union in such a way that he is transformed into Absolute Spirit.

"Not idly, therefore, the great mystics said this: "The body of the holy ones is essentially pure as their spirit. Their speech and soul and form, all is absolute spirit without external spirit." 20

The Universal Soul is the first examination from God, comprehending and including the particular, individual souls, in whom it reveals itself. The first soul determines the character and actions of the individual soul, which is an individualisation and manifestation of the Universal Soul. Under its influence, the indivi-

-dual soul becomes the perfect soul, being imbued with its qualities in its spiritual evolution.

"Since there are consciousnesses beyond this bodily nature in that spiritual arena these sensual souls are like inanimate matter. The first Soul is the theatre of the Divine court; the Soul of the soul is verily the theatre of God Himself."

The human soul possesses a triple nature which comprises the three stages of perfection. The first is the lowest stage wherein the animal soul or the carnal soul, rūh-i-hašāni dwells. The animal soul is a product of the four elements and their nature, dryness, moisture, heat and cold. It is, therefore, closely tied up with the body and cannot endure without it. It has come into existence, and has become the vital element in man through the influence of the rational soul, rūh-i-insāni.

In the second stage there is the rational soul, rūh-i-insāni, which, with its distinctively human characteristic of reasoning, is in contradiction to the animal

soul. The rational soul comes from God. It is the soul of goodness, and is higher than everything that has corporeal basis.

"Besides the understanding and soul which is in the ox and the ass, Man has another intelligence and soul. It is higher than feminine and masculine; this is not that spirit which is composed of dryness and moisture. This is not that spirit which is increased by eating bread or which is sometimes like this and sometimes like that." 22

The third is the super-human part of the human soul, the transcendental soul, rūh-i-qūdsi, in which stage man thinks according to the higher intelligence with which he has become identical. He possesses perfect knowledge by intuition rather than by the aid of discursive reason. The prophets and saints possess this transcendental spirit; they are the Divine Intelligences.

"Again in the owner of that Divine breath there is a soul other than the human soul and

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intelligeuce. 0 thou that hast gone to sleep in the body's boat, thou hast seen the water, but look on the water of the water." 23

This distinction given by Rumi between the three parts of the soul is similar to the distinction made by the Jainaes between Bahiratman, Antaratman and Paramatman. Plato gives a similar conception. The soul, he says, is divided into two parts, one part of which is again divided into two. The topmost part is the rational part of the soul. It is reason, simple and indivisible; it is indestructible and eternal; and it apprehends the Ideas. The other part is the irrational part of the soul. It is mortal and is subdivided into the noble irrational and the ignoble irrational. All noble emotions belong to the noble irrational part, while all sensuous appetites belong to the ignoble irrational part. Man alone is the possessor of all the three parts of the soul. Animals possess the two lower parts and plants only the appetitive soul.

Aristotle talks of the vegetative, the animal and the rational parts of the soul, although he maintains

that it is not correct to talk of the parts of the soul. The soul is single and indivisible, and has no parts. What are called parts are only different aspects of the activity of one and the same thing. The vegetative or the nutritive soul is possessed by plants, which belong to the lowest grade in the organic kingdom. They nourish themselves, grow and propagate their own kind. Above the plants are animals which possess sensation, in addition to the functions of nutrition and propagation possessed by plants. They, therefore, possess both the nutritive and the sensitive souls. Next in the scale of being is man, whose proper and essential activity is reason. His soul is nutritive, sensitive and rational. The stream of thought, says, W. James, has two parts — 'Me' and 'I'. The 'Me' is the empirical self of man which includes in itself all material possessions, his bodily existence, his friends and the like — in fact all empirical things objectively known. The 'I' is not such an aggregate of material things although it knows them. It is a 'Thought' that includes in itself all the experiential facts.

Now, Nafs, the carnal soul, lies intermediate between the body and the rational soul. It should be disciplined so that it is changed from nafs-i-ammārā, the commanding soul, to nafs-i-lavvāmā, the reproaching soul,
which whispers the voice of conscience. From this stage it should further rise to that of nafs-i-mutma’inna, the tranquil soul. This is the achieved through moral purification and through the realisation of Truth. Nafs and Ruh thus characterise the two aspects of man, the former characterising his lower self, which belongs to the Alam-i-khalq, the Realm of Creation the latter his higher self, which belongs to Alam-i-amr, the Realm of Will.

The transformation of the lower self enhances the spiritual faculties of man. In the beginning when man was an embryo his food was blood. This very embryo later became a taker of milk, then a taker of solid food, finally developing into a full fledged personality. A similar evolution takes place in the self of man wherein his lower self is completely changed to the effect that his spiritual self, which is his true self, is endowed with increased spiritual faculties. Man is potentially capable of contemplating God; and unless this transformation takes place, his inward eye, which is the eye of the Eternal Light, is not opened. It alone is the real eye without which he cannot be truly said to see.24

The animal spirit is indispensably connected with the body. The human body is like a lamp, whose light is the animal soul. The human body is entirely dependent upon secondary causes and cannot endure without food and sleep, without nutriment; so also the animal spirit which vanishes from the body as soon as it dies as light vanishes from the lamp without wick and oil. These hundred lamps are separate from one another. In the words of Rumi, one is extinguished, the other still burning; one is dim, another bright.

"The animal soul does not possess oneness: seek not thou this oneness from the airy vital spirit."

"At night a lamp is placed in every house, in order that by its light they (the inmates) may be delivered from darkness. That lamp is like this body, its light like the animal soul; it requires a wick and this and that." 25

Consequently, one who looks at the multiplicity of the bodies, to which the animal soul belongs, doubts the unity of spirit. Do not keep your gaze upon the lamp,

sings Rumi, lest you will be involved in plurality. Gaze upon the light so that you are delivered from all plurality. 26

Nevertheless, Rumi does not exclude the existence of a plurality of souls, which for him do possess a particularly unique existence. These particular souls are the animal souls in men, set against the human spirit breathed into man by God. 27

We do not know how the soul gets separated from God, for the ultimate relation between the soul and God is incomprehensible. The soul, however, is conscious of its fall from God. Its life is, hence, nothing but an endeavour at self-realisation, which is the realisation of its original unity with God. All life is a journey back to Him, who is the beginning and the end of everything, for "To Him do we return". In the words of Rumi, "our journey is to the rose garden of union." 28

God has a purpose of His own in embodying the soul into the body. Just as formless idea is put into words, in order that these words may convey meaning to

28. Nicholson (R.A.): Selected Poems from the Bivān-i-
Shahe-i-Tabriq: II, 12.
people, similarly, the creation of man serves to give form and expression to God's idea of Himself. Furthermore, He has bestowed benefits on man himself and by doing so He has enabled him to reflect the Divine Attributes. He has endowed man with spiritual perception so that he may attain to real knowledge of God. Man has to understand the purpose of God before he can see the significance of the body in connection with the soul. The soul is the abode of God; it is the window, ever reflecting the all-pervading Divino Light. It is the mirror of God that contains the image of God.

"He said, 'O Umar, what was the wisdom and mystery of imprisoning that pure one (the spirit) in this dirty place?' He (Umar) said, 'Thou art making a profound inquiry; thou hast imprisoned the free (unconditioned) meaning in a word. This thou hast done for a benefit; He from whom every benefit was born, how should He not see that which was seen by us? There are myriads of benefits, and every myriad is but a few beside that one. The breath of thy speech became beneficial: why, then, is the whole of the whole (the universal connection of spirit and body) devoid of benefit? " 29

But in its earthly abode the soul has become unconscious of God, of the world of Reality whence it

sprang. Even though distinct from the phenomenal world, it has wrongly identified itself with it. Like a dreamer it suffers from the illusion that this world is permanent. Like the embryo, that does not believe the person who tells it that there is the world of gardens, orchards and fields outside its abode, a sky full of light, the sun and the moon, it does not believe that there exists another world far better than the present one. It has become blind, as it has seen nothing but darkness. It has forgotten its original state that it pre-existed with Adam and lived in Paradise. Plato's prisoner, in his allegory of the cave, also would be as incredulous as this embryo, if he is told that there is a world better and more real than what he is beholding. The soul of the Perfect Man alone is delivered from the bondage of sense. His free soul always endeavours to awaken all the imprisoned souls to their fallen state.

"The man who has lived in a city many years, as soon as his eye goes asleep, beholds another city full of good and evil; and his own city comes not into his memory at all. He thinks that he has always lived in this very city and has been born and bred in it. What wonder, then, if the spirit does not remember its ancient abodes, which have been its dwelling place and birth place
afere-tixes, since this world, like sleep, is covering it over like clouds cover the stars? "30

Nevertheless, the soul does get reminiscences of the past, as it is freed every night from the bondage of the body, of the world, and its limiting attributes. From this cage, says Rumi, sleep releases the soul, wherein the prisoners forget their prison, and the rulers their power. There is no sorrow and no pain, no idea of gain or loss, in fact no consciousness of the world and its affairs. This is the state of the soul in sleep every night, when it flies back to its natural home. The soul of the Perfect Man alone enjoys this state even when awake. In fact, every soul endeavours to attain to it as its own perfect state, for the soul is a pure substance of which the world and its phenomena are the attributes. In order to get its pure essence back, such an abstraction from all these false attributes is necessary. Even though it dwells on earth it belongs to the garden of the spirit. It grows from God, and to Him shall it return.

"If thou hast formerly laughed in that earthly garden; yet thou art the rose of the garden of the spirit and the spiritual eye."

"We all have been parts of Adam, we have heard those melodies in Paradise."

"By God, thou grewest from His (God's) attributes in the beginning: go back nimbly and fleetly into His attributes." 31

III. Real perfection of the soul, therefore, consists in advancing endlessly towards God. It traverses the circle of existence, which begins in God and ends in God, through its downward journey to the elements, and then through its upward journey back to God. It has to pass through certain phases of being and experience certain states before it completes its evolution. The soul undergoes this experience because God desired to be known and behold Himself objectively in a mirror that reflects all His Attributes. The soul is that mirror which combines in itself both the active and necessary, passive and contingent aspects of Being.

Rumi here proffunds his doctrine of evolution, and anticipates the consummation of all things in their ultimate return to their eternal home. Being more con-

-cerned with the problem of development, he regards this consummation as taking place through a process of evolution.

The conception was foreign to Semitic religious, which believed that creation took place in six days, and that it took place out of nothing. Medieval Christianity believed that creation took place six thousand years ago. For the Greeks, however, the world was eternal, and there was no upward movement in the world, that would ensue in the development of life. Nor does the Indian system of philosophy present only evolutionary doctrine. It is the transmigration of souls that seems to be the nucleus of all speculation. Although it contains the idea of transmutation of species, it does not approach the idea of natural development. For man, according to it, may be born as a bird or as an animal in his next birth, which scheme is quite different from any scheme of development from the lower to the higher.

Plato postulated the possibility of the soul reincarnating itself in the body of a being lower than its present one, although he maintained at the same time that the soul's life in the world is a ceaseless endeavour to return to its original home. The soul goes back to this blissful abode, the world of Ideas only if man
leads a good life in this world by cultivating the knowledge of Ideas. There are severe penalties for the evil doers; man may be born as an animal, if he lives an utterly sensual life.

It is in Plotinus alone that we can find something that can be developed into a theory of evolution. For him the continuous chain of life holds an hierarchy of beings emanating from the One, every stage in the hierarchy being lower than the preceding one. Nevertheless, even the lowest stage strives to return to the original source, the one, so that there is a continuous upward movement through the circle of Becoming. But this eternal Becoming is not a process in time; for there is an eternal repetition of these infinite series. Everything has a fixed place in the hierarchy, receiving its share of perfection from the being preceding it. Hence, in his scheme there is no place for transformation of beings.

In Islam, however, different thinkers, the authors of Īkhwān al-ṣafā, ʿΑηζ, and the like, developed their own theories of Evolution. ʿΑηζ believed that creation took place with infinite possibilities and potentialities, and that it took place only once. Creation
is the gradual realisation of these latent potentialities. Ibn Miskwain, gives the doctrine in clear terms. According to him, the mineral kingdom was produced by the combination of primary substances. The inorganic matter developed into the lowest form of plant life like grass which again developed into its highest forms with leaves and flowers. Plant life entered animal life, which later developed to become man.

Nāmi must have assimilated these foregoing conceptions. Although the germs of the doctrine are found in his predecessors, the conception produced by him strikes one as most original product of his own mind. Nāmi believes that life proceeds according to a process of evolution, a process of assimilation of the lower into the higher. The soul is a mode of Divine Being and its inherent potentialities are developed and exhibited through its descent into the world of matter. After its descent into the material world, it gradually develops to higher and higher forms, and ascends from the lowest phase of its life to the highest, finally attaining to the utmost perfection and realising its essential unity with God.

The soul started its existence as matter, in which state it lived for a long time, moving about to and
from. This was the first form of existence in the world of appearance.

"Hundreds of thousands of years I was flying to and fro involuntarily like the motes in the air." 32

It then lived as fire and water, as wind and cloud, before it got itself assimilated by plant life and passed into plant life.

"From the day when thou comest into existence, thou wert fire or air or earth." 33

The plant became animal by getting itself assimilated by animal life, which, again, dying to its animality, assumed a higher life and became man. Now, whither shall man rise? He shall rise higher and higher in his ascent to the world of angels. From this stage again he is destined to rise above, far above the realm of imagination, to his eternal home—God. Had the soul remained in one condition, it would never have reached its present heights, nor will it be able to rise to its source.

32. Ibid. Vol. VI, 220.
From the moment you came into the world of being,
A ladder was placed before you that you might escape.
First you were mineral, later you turned to plant
Then you became animal: how should this be a secret
to you?
Afterwards you were made man, with knowledge, reason, faith;
Behold the body, which is a portion of the dust-
how perfect it has grown!
When you have travelled on from man, you will
doubtless become an angel;
After that you are done with this earth: your
station is in heaven
Pass again even from angelhood: enter that ocean
That your drop may become a sea which is a hundred
seas of 'Oman
Leave this 'Son', say ever 'One' with all your soul;
If your body has aged, what matter, when the soul
is young?

34. Nicholoon (M.A.): *Selected Poems from the Minj-i-
Shab-i-Farizi*; xii. 6-11.
This evolution of the higher from the lower or the transition of the lower into the higher is on account of the inner necessity of the lower to perfect itself. It is the divine urge, the will to live, inherent in every atom of the Universe that drives the lower to assimilate itself into the higher. The diverse modes of being of the soul indicate that nothing becomes less by dying. The diverse modes of being of the soul indicate that nothing becomes less by drying. The higher develops by assimilating the lower, thereby raising the lower. The corn-seed becomes bread, which again, when eaten and assimilated, produces man endowed with reason and spirit. Thus in death is concealed growth. Rumi observes:

"When the throat of an animal is cut duly in the manner prescribed by law there grows from it the throat of man, and its excellence is increased. When a martyred man's throat is cut, consider what the result will be! A third throat will be born and care of it will be taken by the sherbat of God. The throat that has been cut drinks the Divine sherbat, but only the throat has been delivered from May and has died in Yea." 35

35. The Mathnavi: Vol.1, 3873-76.
"Know death to be the thing signified by what the Mohamadan community are agreed upon, namely, that the Water of Life is hidden in the Land of Darkness." 36

The soul mixes with the elements of particular species thereby producing the special characteristics of that species. Thus, the vegetative soul has self-maintenance as its special characteristic, and the animal soul, which is the offspring of the vegetative soul, possesses those of self-maintenance and self-perpetuation. The human soul, which comes from the animal soul and which is endowed with reason, possesses in addition to these the ability to know the things in the world.

The soul, however, does not remember its previous state from which it has descended, but does entertain within itself an inclination towards that state, an unconscious desire for it, a desire it does not understand; and even gains often a faint realisation of that state through phenomena that remind it of the past. Thus, although the animal soul has become forgetful of its previous vegetative state, the flowers and herbs in spring

time awaken in its subconscious memories associated with that state. The human soul also is reminded of its animal state in the same way. This conception of Rūmi is similar to the modern conception of Collective Unconscious and heredity. It is also similar to samskāra, the accumulated traces and dispositions in Indian philosophy. In the words of Rūmi:

"First he came into the clime of inorganic things and from the state of inorganic things he passed into the vegetable state. Many years he lived in the vegetable state and did not remember the inorganic state. And when he passed from the vegetable into the animal state, the vegetable state was not remembered by him at all, save only for the inclination which he has towards that state, like the inclination of babes towards their mothers: it (the babe) does not know the secret of its desire for being suckled. 37

The soul's present state of humanity marks the end of the perceptible stages, marātib-i-mahamāsā, in the scale of existence. Leaving it behind the soul enters the vast Ocean of Reality and passes through the traceless imperceptible stages without sign and name in its flight towards the Unity.

37. Ibid. Vol.IV, 3637-41.
"These foot-prints extend as far as the shore of the Ocean; then the foot-prints disappear in the Ocean, because from Divine precaution the resting places appointed for the traveller on the dry land are like villages and dwellings and caravansaries. On the contrary, the resting places of the Ocean, when its billows swell, have no floor or roof to shelter the traveller during his stay and detention. These oceanic stages have no visible beacon; these resting places have neither sign nor name." 38

Rumi seems to anticipate Darwin in his evolutionary concepts. But there are fundamental differences between the mystic and the naturalist. Rumi's conception, as that of Darwin, neither begins with naturalism nor ends with it. For Rumi the universe is the outward form of the spirit, quite different from the scientist's universe which consists of atoms. Nothing is dead, even matter, as it is the first and the lowest form of life. "Air and earth and water and fire, he says, "are God's

slaves; with you and me they are dead, but with God they are alive.”

Again, for Darwin the impelling force behind evolution is the struggle for existence which pervades the universe, and which leads to natural selection. Rumi also talks of this struggle in the universe — the struggle between atom and atom, between part and part. All life is a perpetual struggle — a struggle of words against deeds, of faith against infidelity, in fact of all contradictory forces. Even man is struggling with himself, with his mental and bodily states mutually opposed to each other. This struggle is the very constitution of the universe, for creation itself is based on opposition. Creation is the principle of opposition taking objective form. Eternal peace can be found only in the realm of Spirit, which is divine and which transcends all opposition.

“This world is all at strife, note with note, as religion with infidelity. One mote is flying to the left and another to the right in search. War of nature, war of action, war of speech — there is a terrible conflict amongst the

parts of the universe. This world is maintained by means of war. The edifice of creation is based upon contraries. Consequently, we are at war for weal and woe. My state of mind and body are mutually opposed." 40

But this struggle is not the force underlying the process of evolution. For Rumi there is no passive and mechanical natural selection. Development means assimilation into the higher, which process results in the creation of an ever increasing need for expansion. The Universe is a process of constant movement, constant struggle for self-fulfilment and self-development, a perpetual dying to live. It is this internal impulse to live a fuller life that drives matter to organise itself into a vegetable organism, from which again it ensues a transition to animal life, and then to humanity. Evolution, thus, is creative. In this idea Rumi seems to anticipate Bergson, whose 'Elan Vital' is the will to live a higher and fuller life. Rumi does not stop at man as Darwin does.

Creation is the separation of the lover from the Beloved, a descent of the uncreated soul from God. The

How and why of this descent is beyond the grasp of reason. However, the soul tries to go back to its Eternal beloved, and evolution is its ascent to the beloved. It is the descent of God to man, the ascent of man to God and the establishment of the original identity between the two.

For Ibn Rushd it is Intellect that is universal and eternal. Its manifestation in the finite egoes is nothing but a temporary phase of its existence. Intellect, therefore, as it appears in the finite egoes never dies. Bergson talks of Elan Vital, which is the immortal principle of all existence, manifesting itself in ever new forms and individuals. The forms may vanish, but there is no cessation or loss to itself because it is eternal and continuous with its unbreakable process of new manifestations.

Hegel's conception of immortality is based on the scientific hypothesis that energy is never lost. Nothing, not even death, can cause the dissipation of energy. The amount of energy is fixed, and the various combinations of energy centres lose their unity only to regain it after a time. It is evident that this doctrine of Eternal Recurrence hardly speaks of individual immortality. Like Ibn Rushd's conception of Intellect, which leads to the immortality of the human race, this argument
leads to the immortality of energy and the process of its eternal recurrence in finite centres.

Kant affirms personal immortality. He argues that man should pursue the Highest Good which comprises two elements, perfect virtue and perfect happiness. Now, the realisation of this Highest Good is not possible in this short span of life. It is, therefore, necessary that we must postulate immortality which implies permanent existence and infinite progress of the individual.

Iqbal admits that man has grown out of the evolutionary process, and that there is no end to evolution. Life, he says, would be unbearable, if we suppose that man and the universe have reached the final point of evolution, because the Ego is immortal and free.

Rumi approaches his idea of progressive immortality also from the standpoint of development. Sufism had developed the conception of impersonal immortality long before him, but the idea of progressive immortality is original with him. In his transcendental aspect man is eternal and immortal; so also in his existence in the world of space and time. He is capable of progressive immortality, every death being a stepping stone to a higher life.
Love is the impelling force that starts and sustains this process of evolution. Love is the inner necessity behind all movement. There is a perpetual striving of all towards God, the Eternal Beauty who is the origin of all. Love actualises this striving, this movement and this progress, so that even the meanest thing of creation assumes various forms, rising higher and higher in the scale of perfection, and finally to God, who is the motive force in the whole process.

"Oh, alas for my bird of goodly flight, that has flown from my end (my last state) to my beginning (my first state)." 41

It is love, therefore, that moves and transforms the soul. This love is a reflexion of Divine Love, an attraction exerted by God, the Universal Whole, upon its parts. The transformed soul is the soul of the Perfect Man which, evolving through lower forms of soul life, finally manifests itself completely in him. The soul takes wings to God, says Rumi, like a fish that leaps into the water from the dry land as soon as the sound of waves reaches it and like a falcon that flies to the King as soon as it hears the notice of "Return".

Fly, fly, O bird, to thy native home,
For thou hast escaped from the cage, and thy pinions are outspread
Travel away from the bitter stream towards the water of life,
Return from the vestibule to the high seat of the soul. *42

42. Nicholson (n.d.): Selected Poems from the Divan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz; iii. 6. 7.