CHAPTER V

IQBAL’S CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM
CHAPTER V

IQBAL'S CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM

Muhammad Iqbal occupies a unique position in the history of Muslim thought. He may be considered the best advocate of Muslim awakening in modern era. His outlook was progressive in a broader sense of the term. He introduced certain radical ideas with a zeal for reforming the Muslim society. He imbibed higher values and ideals from the East and the West, and interpreted them in the framework of Islamic Weltanschauung according to the demands of contemporary philosophical and scientific outlook. Khalīfah 'Abdul Ḥakīm writes in this regard:

Iqbal was an heir to a very rich literary and philosophical scholarship. He imbibed and assimilated all that was best in the Islamic and oriental thought to which he added his extensive knowledge of Western literature, philosophy, and culture both of the past and the present. His range of interest covered religion, philosophy, art, politics, economics, nationalism, the revival of Muslim life and the universal brotherhood of man.

—

Man occupies the central position in Iqbal's philosophy. The core of his works and world-view is the doctrine of Ḥudūd (human ego), the reality of its very existence and the necessity to do everything to strengthen it:

The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation, and he attains this ideal by becoming more and more individual, more and more unique. ¹

This conception is the central theme of his thought. In fact, the doctrine of human personality is the starting and determining point in Iqbal's solutions to all other complex cosmological problems.

Iqbal considers the entire universe and the entire material world as a composite of individual egos. All life is individual; there is no such thing as universal life. God Himself is a unique and absolutely perfect Individual Being.

"He is the most unique individual. The universe, as McTaggart says, is an association of individuals."²

Iqbal attaches much importance to the independence and self-determining nature of the human ego. According to him these are the fundamental characteristics of individuality:

The nature of the ego is such that, in spite 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. ³

---

2. Ibid., p.XVII.
Further, in its higher manifestations—in man and in God—individuality becomes a self-contained exclusive centre.¹

Iqbal rejects all philosophies which degrade and weaken man's خوئی (egohood). He criticizes and attacks vehemently those schools of thought and thinkers who negate human individual and ego, such as Advaita Vedanta of Shankara and ascetic and pantheistic tendencies in Sufism. He is equally opposed to the European varieties of Idealism that designate secondary status to human ego, but accepts the voluntaristic traditions in the West. Human will, the active, creative force of human ego, is in his view, eternally restless and never stops in its quest for perfection.

Obviously, this view of man and the universe is opposed to that of the English Neo-Hegelians as well as to all forms of pantheistic sufism which regard absorption in a universal life or soul as the final aim and salvation of man.²

The Hindu view of the world as 'maya' and the Islamic doctrine of annihilation (فَنَا: فَنَا) of self, according to Iqbal, have been responsible for the decline of the East. He sees the universe as a kingdom of creative and free egos that form the core of reality. His philosophy may be described as the Islamic version of pan-egoism. In the scheme of creation man occupies the highest place. He is the only being (besides Allah)

1. The Secrets of the Self, op. cit., p. XIX.
2. Ibid., p. XVII.
who is self-determining and self-creating:

Man becomes unique by becoming more and more like the most unique Individual. What then is life? It is individual: its highest form, so far, is the Ego (Khudi) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre. 1

The human ego reveals its existence in its constant struggle, never ending creation and fulfilment of desires, passions and ideals. Iqbal, in this regard declares in his Asrār-e Khudī:

Life is latent in seeking, 
Its origin is hidden in desire....
We live by forming ideals, 
We glow with the sunbeams of desire. 2

However, Iqbal does not believe that the existence of the Khudī is confined only to the production of ideals and desires. The latter represent only the initial stage of life, which at higher stages seeks its fulfilment in creative activity to subordinate and reshape the external world according to the needs of human beings so that the individual persons may live freely and realize their ideals creatively:

1. Ibid., p. XIX.
2. Ibid., pp. 23 - 27.
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.

According to Iqbal genuine 'egohood' or authentic individuality is inseparable from unceasing activity of a creative life. In one of his poems in *Sāqī Namāh*, Iqbal very lucidly symbolizes this idea with the image of a wave, which says of itself:

\[
\text{‘When I am rolling, I exist,}
\text{When I rest, I am no more.’}
\]

According to Iqbal, creativity, tireless activity and the constant struggle against difficulties are the vital modes of human life. They are, in other words, life itself, which finds freedom in these manifestations of ego.

For Iqbal freedom is the *Summum Bonum* of human existence. A deep analysis of his conception of freedom, as elaborated in his poetry and philosophical writings, may justifiably lead us to the conclusion that in his thought freedom is the source of all values. He maintains that the life of ego is possible in

freedom only. In one word, "life is an endeavour for freedom." 

In his 'Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam' Iqbal holds that "there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts." And freedom, in its strict sense, sustains the ego. No Muslim Philosopher, before Iqbal, had given the highest position to freedom in the hierarchy of values. For him freedom is not only a value or mode of human existence, it is, as stated earlier, the very life of ego.

In the philosophy of Iqbal, man's Khudî, with its basic and significant qualities—freedom and creativity—is the force that creates itself as well as the world. Freedom and creativity are the outstanding qualities which human ego unfolds to shape and mould its particular historic situation according to its aspirations. Creativity and freedom are interconnected, since the act of creation requires freedom. Freedom is the source of all values and in the real sense of the word, it is the life of ego.

Regarding freedom and creativity Iqbal has alluded to various Qur'anic verses in his Urdu and Persian poetry. In the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, he specifically dealt with this issue. In his fourth Lecture, The Human Ego—His Freedom and Immortality, Iqbal presents three significant themes

1. The Secret of the Self, op. cit., p. XXI.
from the Qur'an: man's being a Vicegerent of God, a chosen entity and "the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril." Iqbal argues that man's freedom and creativity, at the early stage of life, must be under the control and guidance of Law that may teach him to abide by certain moral principles:

The greatest obstacle in the way of life is matter, Nature; yet Nature is not evil, since it enables the inner powers of life to unfold themselves. "The Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all abstractions in its way. It is partly free, partly determined, and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the Individual who is most free — God." 2

God has created everything that is in Heavens and earth for His Vicegerent—man. Human being is free at his will to make use of all that has been bestowed on him by his Supreme Creator (Allah). But this worldly material life is not his ultimate destiny. It only paves the way that leads towards the higher life. Man's aim, according to Iqbal, must be nearness to God, who alone is the source of his freedom. By exercising his freedom and creativity he can conquer the material world and reach fuller freedom through approaching God, who is Absolute Freedom. In brief, man's highest achievement or distinction, according to Iqbal, does not lie in seeking self-negation or detachment from the material world and in the annihilation of his egohood in the Ultimate Reality (fanā fī Allah: ﷺ). God is over and above the world and all attempts

2. The Secrets of the Self, op. cit., pp. XX-XXI.
to submerge one's self into Divine Being are futile. Allah Himself emphasizes the human identity of the Prophet(S): 

أَنْتَ مِنْ قَبَلِهِ مَكَّةَ عَبْدُ الله ُرسُولُهُ

At one place The Qur'an asks Muhammad(S) to say to the people that he is a man like other human beings:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا نَفْسُكُمْ وَالْأَرْضُ مَعَهُمْ وَالْآمِنُ بِمَلَكُوتِ دُنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ (كُلُّ نَفْسٍ يُقَدَّرُ بِمَا كَرَّتَهُ)

The Qur'an underlines and highlights man's separate identity, that is, it teaches how to affirm one's selfhood. But selfhood finds the means of perfection in the corporeal world that provides him an area of action. According to Iqbal human ego is essentially rooted in self-affirmation and conquest of the Universe: 2

کمیلی گنجی آب مگر س مجری
کلال ب پنچ خان کی دوڑی

'The height of renunciation is not renunciation of the world of phenomena,
The height of renunciation is in conquest of the corporeal and the celestial.'

All this could be done only when the individual person is free and creative.

Action (عل) is also an important aspect of Iqbal's thought. "Activity", according to him, is the fundamental aspect of reality. Introspectively, it is ego; outwardly, it is movement.

1. Al-Qur'an, XVIII:110
Worldly life is consists in man's coming out of inactivity and passive and servile obedience and a completely static state. In its real sense, according to Iqbal, Worldly life directs the individual to lead a life of desire, activity, effort and tension. Moreover, he maintains that this life is an intensive urge to live as a free individual and to create values. Due to this 'free creative urge' man exiled himself from the Heaven. In the preface to his Reconstruction, Iqbal writes that the Qur'ān "emphasizes 'deed' rather than 'idea'". Again, he says that according to the Holy Book the earth is not a "torture-hall where the elementally wicked humanity is imprisoned for an original act of sin." Iqbal's conception of 'man's expulsion from Heaven' is basically different from the Christian dogma of Ādam's fall and expulsion. He differs from the dogma of the Christian existentialist thinkers who place 'fall' and divine grace at the centre of their philosophy and regard man as alienated from the source of his being, from world and from God because of his "fallen state of being." Iqbal is of the opinion that the 'fall' does not mean any moral depravity but "it is man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self-consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream of nature with a throb of personal causality in one's being." This phenomenal world is not in vain (الله) or torture-hall. It is, according to the Qur'ān, "'the dwelling place' of man and a 'source

2. Ibid., p. 85.
3. Ibid., p. 85.
of profit' to him for the possession of which ne ought to be
grateful to God": 1

"And We have given you (mankind)
power in the earth, and appointed
for you therein a livelihood. How
little do ye give thanks! "

Thus, the human person has to treat his dwelling place as a source
of profit and not as a punishment. Man exists in a real sense
only when he is free and creative.

The Universe, according to Qur’ān, is liable to develop
further:

It is a growing universe and not an already
complete product which left the hand of its
Maker ages ago, and is now being stretched
in space as a dead mass of matter to which
time does nothing, and consequently is
nothing.

Iqbal puts it more unambiguously in the following verse saying:

The Universe is perhaps 'incomplete'
As every movement comes the sound: "Be and
it was.

This universe, in brief, is finite as well as boundless.

It is an open unfinished entity, constantly undergoing development

1. Ibid., p. 84.
2. Al-Qur’ān, VII:10
p. 55.
and extension. It provides a unique type of stimulating field for man's free and creative activity, through which on the one hand, he conquers and overcomes the natural world and on the other, perfects the power of his egohood or individuality. Man shares with God in the process of creativity. In the "Introduction" to The Secrets of the Self, Prof. Nicholson interprets the viewpoint of Iqbal about the universe and man's creative activity in the following words:

"Thus the universe is not a complete act; it is still in the course of formation. There can be no complete truth about the universe, for the universe has not yet become 'whole'. The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it, in as much as he helps to bring order into at least a portion of the chaos. The Qur'ān indicates the possibility of other creators than God, 1 as "Blessed is God, the best of those who create (الله أحسن المخلّقين)"

In the entire poetico-philosophical writings of Iqbal these two modes of human existence—freedom and creativity—occupy an important place. Man is free at his will to make or mar his life in this world. It is in this world that man creates new things and makes his life as he wills:

Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice; and that is why according to the Quranic narration, Adam's first transgression was forgiven. 3

This means that freedom and creativity have been bestowed on man by God due to which he evolves his own world and creates his own values. Iqbal points out that if the existing world gives no meaning and importance to human personality, it should be destroyed and reshaped in accordance with human aspirations and ideals. In one of his poems "Life" in Bāng-e Darā, he asserts:

Create thy own world if thou be amongst the living,
Life is the secret essence of Adam, the hidden truth of creation. ...
Life is reduced to a rivulet with little water in bondage,
In freedom, life is a boundless ocean!

Again, in this connection, in the same poem Iqbal declares:

Burn up this borrowed earth and sky,
And raise a world of your own from the ashes.

In Derb-e Kalīm in a poem "Creation", he further says:

Only he overcomes the revolution of Time,
Who creates an eternal life with every breath.

1. Kulliyāt-e Iqbal (Urdu), op. cit., p. 259.
For human activity, Iqbal uses a very expressive and all-inclusive phrase, 'Kasb-i halāl' (کسب می‌کند), which stands for "lawful acquisition" according to orthodox theologians. But according to Iqbal 'Kasb-i halāl' has a wider meaning as "acquiring things or ideas solely through one's personal efforts and struggle." Analysing the same theme Iqbal points out that enjoying anything which has not been acquired by work or struggle is harmful for the ego. He does not even consider acquiring anything through inheritance as Kasb-i halāl. He says in Zabur-i 'Ajam:

'Be ashamed if you want to inherit a ruby from your forebears; This cannot give the pleasure that lies in quarrying a ruby.'

This interpretation of Kasb-i halāl, according to Iqbal, stipulates that all egos have to undergo an intensive life of active effort and continuous struggle and it totally excludes all ideas of self-renunciation. In his 'Pilgrimage of Eternity' ("Jawīd Nāmah") Iqbal declares:

'The cosmos shapes
Unceasing wonders even now; the stuff
Of life is not blind following. A heart
which is alive creates an epoch new,
And repetition makes it contract, sag
With its own inner soul.'

Again, the following verses of his 'Jāwīd Nāmah' assert man's freedom and creativity:

'Life is mortality
And everlastingness as well; it is
Compact of both creativeness and zeal.
Dost Live? then learn to love and to create
And hold the heavens in grasp like us.
And shatter all that suits thee not, and make
A fresher world grow from thy mind.'

The last two lines reinterpret an earlier Persian poet, Saʿdī's following couplet:

'Truely it is as torturous as burning in the hell-fire,
Entering Paradise through the assistance of a neighbour.'

2. Ibid., p. 182.
According to Iqbal freedom and creativity are the two fundamental modes of human ego. He holds that it is freedom, constant struggle and life of activity that develop the ego. Creativity, as stated earlier, is possible only when there is freedom, and to Iqbal, creative and original activity alone can sustain and fortify the ego (Khudī). Mere imitation is of no use in strengthening the human personality:

Mawlānā Rūmī, whom Iqbal chose as his guide on his pilgrimage to eternity, also preaches a life of ceaseless activity and endless struggle to attain personal freedom and immortality. He goes even to the extent of saying:

Both Mawlānā Rūmī and Iqbal agree that the perfect Man (Mard-i Mu'min or Mard-i Kāmil) can work miracles in the sense of creating a new world of values. Iqbal further adds that the Perfect Man (Mu'min) is a miracle in himself and is a creator

1. *Kullīyat-e Iqbāl* (Urdu), op. cit., p. 630, *(Darb-e Kalīm*, p. 168)
of new values. He possesses a special and unique status in the kingdom of God. Human ego in its movement towards uniqueness has to pass through three stages:

(i). Obedience to the Law.
(ii). Self-control, which is the highest form of self-consciousness or Ego-hood, and
(iii). Divine Vicegerency.¹

Iqbal, in a letter to Nicholson, describes the characteristics of the Perfect Man:

"This (Divine Vicegerency: niabat-i Ilahi نیابتِ ایلہی) is the third and last stage of human development on earth. The nā'ib (vicegerent) is the vicegerent of God on earth. He is the completest Ego, the goal of humanity, the acme of life both in mind and body; in him the discord of our mental life becomes a harmony. The highest power is united in him with the highest knowledge. In his life thought and action, instinct and reason, become one. He is the last fruit of the tree of humanity, and all the trials of a painful evolution are justified because he is to come at the end. He is the real ruler of the mankind; his kingdom is the kingdom of God on earth."²

Further, defining man's uniqueness and as miraculous power in himself, Iqbal very lucidly asserts under the same title Divine Vicegerency:

1. The Secrets of the Self, op. cit., (Introduction), P. XXVII.
2. Ibid., pp. XXVII-XXVIII.
'His genius abounds with life and desires to manifest itself:
He will bring another world into existence.
A hundred worlds like this world of parts and wholes
Springs up, like roses, from the seed of his imagination.' 1

Regarding creativity he says in one of his poems—"Creation", included in his collection of Urdu poems, 'Darb-i Kalīm' (The Rod of Moses):

'New worlds derive their pomp
From thoughts quite fresh and new:
From stones and bricks a world
Was neither built nor grew.
The resolve of those,
Who depths of self explore,
Transforms, this stream to sea
That he has no merge or shore.'

2. Ibid., p. 82 (Verse 931-34)
Iqbal stresses that human ego is not a datum but a creative possibility, an active effort and struggle, and a co-worker with God. Man smashes the world which does not suit him and evolves his own world and creates his values. According to Iqbal, through freedom and creative activity man shares in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and shapes his own destiny as well as that of the universe. In this process of progressive change (i.e. evolution), God also becomes a co-worker with man, provided that man takes the initiative. As the Qur’ān declares:

\[
\text{"Verily, God will not change the condition of men till they change what is in themselves."}^{1}
\]

This injunction of the Holy Qur’ān, as stated in the previous chapter of this work, clearly asserts that man is by his nature creative and free. He can make or mar his life as a result of his actions. Man makes his Heaven and Hell as a result of his deeds:^{2}

\[
\text{‘It is action that makes life either paradise or hell; This earthly creature is neither sacred nor profane in his nature.’}
\]

2. Kullīyāt-e Iqbāl (Urdu), op. cit., p. 274.
Firm conviction, uneasing struggle and love conquer the universe; In his struggle for existence man possesses nothing but these weapons.'

According to Iqbal, man being a partner in the creative activity of his Maker (Allah) should not subscribe to the oft-repeated notion of 'Taqdīr' (تَقْدِير), that is Fate. He emphatically says that 'man himself is his fate and the maker of his destiny:

'Lover of truth! Be like a shining sword and be the fate of thine own world.'

In one of his poems in 'Darb-i Kalīm' he asserts:

'Decrees of Fate are not concealed From man whose heart throbbing seems: He sees the image of new world In slumberous state, during dreams. When prayer call at early morn, Transports him to Morpheus' domain. He tries to build the world beheld With utmost might and utmost main.'

Iqbal points out that it is possible for man to change his destiny (تَصَبِّر). It is up to him to attain perfect mastery over his destiny. In this regard he writes in Jawīd Nāmah:


Syed 'Abdul Vahid quotes the following lines of Wilcox which find an echo of the above Iqbalian thought regarding human destiny:

"There is no chance, no Destiny, no Fate,  
Can circumvent or higher or control  
The firm resolve of a determined Soul." 1

Moreover, Iqbal says that creative activity and invention of new meanings are the gifts of God bestowed on man:

'It is a gift by God bestowed,  
To coin fresh words with meanings new;  
Yet skilful artist must work hard,  
As inborn trend is owned by few'. 2

Iqbal maintains that human ego possesses in its unique nature the attributes of freedom and creativity through which man is distinguished from the non-human beings. He underlines this theme of the uniqueness of individual existence (man's Khudī) with all its inner fecundity and self-sufficiency in the following verses of Bāl-e Jibrīl: 3

1. cf. S.A.Vahid, op. cit., p. 163.  
2. The Rod of Moses, op. cit., p. 82.  
Iqbal is of the view that art, religion and ethical ideas must be judged from the viewpoint of human personality. He holds that actions of an individual can only be judged as good or bad when he is free at his will:

A being whose movements are wholly determined like a machine cannot produce goodness. Freedom is thus a condition of goodness.

Man is known through creativity. A man who has the ability of perceiving, judging and acting freely, rightly comes under the category of perfect Man and a co-creator along with God. Iqbal underlines these points in the following words:

Inner experience is the ego at work.
We appreciate the ego itself in the act of perceiving, judging and willing.

He very strongly pleads that only due to the 'creative skill' that man establishes his relationship with God. He refers to

2. Ibid., p. 102.
Iqbal is of the opinion that this verse of the Holy Scripture clearly indicates that the essential nature of the soul is directive, as it proceeds from the directive energy of God; though one does not know how Divine 'Amr' functions as ego-activity. It is this directive activity of the self that makes man a free being, as the Qur'ān indicates:

'Qul: Khulqan li-yāfa-tum maṣājūdahā, fa-rūfikum aʿẓāma nisātum, suhūdūhā, (Isārāt: 23)

'Say: Each one doth according to his rule of conduct, and thy Lord is best aware of him whose way is right.'

Thus according to Iqbal, human ego (Khudī) can be considered to exist only when it is creative and free. The ego's experience consists of a series of acts. Its existence is known through its judgements, will, attitudes, desires and aspirations:

1. Ibid., p. 103.
2. Al-Qur'ān, XVII:84
Thus my real personality is not a thing, it is an act. My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to one another, and held together by the unity of a directive purpose. My whole reality lies in my directive attitude. You cannot perceive me like a thing in space, or a set of experiences in temporal order; you must interpret, understand and appreciate me in my judgements, in my will-attitudes, aims and aspirations.  

For Iqbal, as stated earlier, man is a self-contained centre of activity, self-conscious, creative and self-evolving. Human self is free in the sense that it is not determined by anything outside it. Freedom is its own architect and the very laws of governing its mode of operation are of its own making. Above all, according to Iqbal, as mentioned before, man is the architect of his own life and is the sole sovereign and master of his destiny:  

"Futile is the complaint about the God-determined destiny, Why art thou not thyself the God-determined destiny?"  

"Develop thyself so that before every decree, God will ask thee: 'What is thy wish'?"  

Iqbal asserts that God speaks through freedom. He does not regard a slave's prayer as genuine, because he is not free to communicate with God. "Prayer in Islam is the ego's escape from mechanism to freedom." Iqbal holds that Islam recognizes this very significant faculty of ego-activity and "is anxious to retain the power to act freely as a constant and undiminished factor in the life of the ego." The real man can only be brought up in the spirit of freedom, while, on the contrary, slavery distorts character, degrades human nature and lowers man to the level of a beast. Accordingly Iqbal proclaims:

```
In slavery the heart is killed in the body,
In slavery the soul becomes a burden to the body;
In slavery the community is disunited,
This one and that one quarrel with this one and that one.'
```

Regarding a slave's action, Iqbal declares that it is devoid of true spirit. In *Darb-e Kalim*, he says:

```
In slave's body heart for deeds is nil,
Always his days and nights are at standstill.'
```

Of ripe beliefs, if nations heart
Has no share or alloted part,
Their acts are mean, debased and low.  

Pointing out the worst state of slavery, he goes a step further claiming that even an unbelieving state is better than slavery. In Bāl-e Jibrīl, Iqbal says:

"Conviction is at ease in fire like Abraham,
Conviction is absorption in Allah and retirement in one's inner being.
Listen! 0 prisoner of the modern civilization,
Life of unbelief is better than life of slavery."

Iqbal's man is the architect of his world and creates it with the help of his freedom. He is also self-subsistent in a way that is denied to other creatures of the terrestrial world:

"The world of the moon and the pleiades has no worth before thee;
Their is the world of necessity, thine of freedom."

As mentioned before, Iqbal lays great stress on creativeness, and refers to the Qur'ān which very clearly mentions the human

1. Ibid., p. 92.
2. Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl, (Urdu), op. cit., p. 373.
worship at regular intervals during the day and night so as to restore or increase the capacity of freedom by bringing the ego into close touch with the ultimate source of life and freedom.¹

Further, underlining the importance of Islamic worship, Iqbal points out that prayer in its real sense is meant to secure the 'unity' of feeling in the congregation. Its form, in general, creates and fosters the sense of 'social equality' inasmuch as it tends to destroy the feeling of rank, race-superiority or higher status among the worshippers. In this connection, Iqbal writes in a long poem "The Complaint":²

'As in the heat of battle the time approached, the time of namāz, In the direction of the Ka'bah postered the people of Hijāz; To the one rank belonged all, whether Mahmud or Ayāz, No distinctions of 'master' and 'slave' were observed; The ruler and the ruled, the have-nots and the haves, All bowed their heads in reverence in Thine Presence.'

In the same context, in The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, he elaborates:

1. Ibid., p. 203.
The real object of prayer, however, is better achieved when the act of prayer becomes congregational. The spirit of all true prayer is social. Even the hermit abandons the society of men in the hope of finding in a solitary abode, the fellowship of God. A congregation is an association of men who, animated by the same aspiration, concentrate themselves on a single object and open up their inner selves to the working of a single impulse. It is a psychological truth that association multiplies the normal man's power of perception, deepens his emotion, and dynamizes his will to a degree unknown to him in the privacy of his individuality.... From the unity of all inclusive Ego who creates and sustains all egos follows the essential unity of all mankind. The division of mankind into races, nations, and tribes, according to the Qur'ān, is for purposes of identification only. The Islamic form of association in prayer, besides its cognitive value, is further indicative of the aspiration to realize this essential unity of mankind as a fact in life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man and man.

In Iqbal's view congregational prayers are meant to cultivate among the believers a sense of unity and integrity. The congregational prayers represent an association of free egos effected in full freedom by free beings. In his view, psychology has so far failed to understand, analyse and explain how such unity could be brought about. Islām, without making use of analytical tools, arrived at the best way of attaining such unity. Iqbal says in this regard:

Indeed, regarded as a psychological phenomenon prayer is still a mystery; for psychology has not yet discovered the laws relating to the

enhancement to the human sensibility in a state of association. With Islam, however, this socialization of spiritual illumination through associative prayer is a special point of interest. As we pass from the daily congregational prayer to the annual ceremony round the central mosque of Mecca, you can easily see how the Islamic institution of worship gradually enlarges the sphere of human association.

Iqbal may be called the only Muslim thinker who gave the highest status to freedom in the realm of values. He bases his conception of freedom on the Qur'anic teachings and declares that it is the immense faith in God that provides the capacity and courage to exercise free will and create oneself and one's values. God, in his world-view, does not deprive man of his freedom, as some orientalists hold, but rather guarantees it. He does not accept the oft-repeated notion of fate (taqdir: تقدّر) advocated by the orthodox Muslim scholars. He rejects all those systems which degrade human 'Khudi' by curtailing man's power of acting freely and make his personality inactive and meaningless. Nicholson makes similar remarks interpreting the stand-point of Iqbal:

"...The conviction that Khudi (selfhood, individuality, personality) is real and is not merely an illusion of the mind. Iqbal, therefore, throws himself with all his might against idealistic philosophers and pseudo-mystical poets, the authors, in his opinion, of the decay prevailing in Islam, and argues that only by self-affirmation, self-expression, and self-development
Iqbal's philosophy is religious. But one must note that he does not treat philosophy as the handmaid of religion. Iqbal conceives free society as a kingdom of ends, in which every individual is free, an end in himself. He holds that the full development of the individual presupposes a free society (Ummah: ﺭﺳﻮل). He finds the ideal society in what he considers to be the Prophet's conception of Islām. Every Muslim, he asserts, in striving to make himself a more perfect individual, is helping to establish the Islamic kingdom of God upon earth. In his Rumūz-e Bekhudi (The Mysteries of selflessness), Iqbal poetically explains that the individual who loses himself in the community reflects both the past and the future of Ummah as a mirror. It is so because he transcends static morality and enters into the life of Islām, which is infinite, everlasting and ensures a dynamic, free morality. It is to be noted that Iqbal's Rumūz-e Bekhudi is not contrary to his Asrar-e Khudī, but a sequel to and a complementary part of it. An individual as a member of a community (Millat) does not lose his individual existence. He is in the real sense, the guiding star that directs the destiny of Millat. Only a free and creative individual, according to Iqbal, can make his society free and creative. Man's moral behaviour assumes meaning in collective life, and his individuality

is developed in society only. Iqbal, in his *Rumūz*, describes the nature of the relationship of the individual and the social life of the community (*Millat*), in the midst of which he lives, moves, translates his values into action and expresses his authentic being. Alone, man is weak and powerless and his aims are narrow. It is the active participated of the living membership of a vital 'Millat' that confers on him a unique sense of power and makes him aware of higher collective purposes which deepen and widen the scope and significance of his very individual ego. He says:  

"The destiny of the nations lies in the hands of the individuals, 
Every individual is the star of the community's destiny.'  

'Iqbal points out that freedom is not merely a value or a mode of human existence, but it is the very life of the ego. In short, "life is an endeavour for freedom." 2 Man, Iqbal holds, is an active principle of life. The unique power of free choice is not a free gift of God; it is to be attained through unceasing hard struggle. Man often has to encounter dangers in his struggle  

for seeking freedom and completeness. The ego has to attain freedom by removing all the obstructions in its way. Man by his nature is partly free and partly determined. He attains fuller freedom by approaching the unique Individual who is the most free Being—God (Allah). In reality, Iqbal holds, life is ceaseless striving and an endeavour for freedom. His man believes in 'endless quest':

\[
\text{'Everything is alive only through endless effort.'}^{(i)}
\]

\[
\text{Without unceasing endeavour no potentiality is actualized,}
\]
\[
The life of Farhad is illuminated with the sparks scattered from his chip-axe!^{(ii)}
\]

\[
\text{Only he overcomes the revolution of Time,}
\]
\[
\text{Who creates an eternal life with every breath.}^{(iii)}
\]

\[
\text{Where'er be life, it means a ceaseless search,}
\]
\[
\text{I know not if I am a prey or He.}^{(iv)}
\]

\[
\text{I am all an imperfect burning—all a painful longing—}
\]
\[
\text{I give away certainty for doubt as I am the victim of a ceaseless quest!}^{(v)}
\]

2. (i). Kulliyât-e Iqbal (Urdu), op. cit., p. 124.
   (ii). Ibid., p. 593.
   (iii). Ibid., p. 563.
Emphasizing man's freedom and constant striving for creativity, Iqbal maintains that man will be able to wash away the blot of sin and guilt from his conscience. He says in 'Payām-i Mashrig':

"If you do an extraordinary (creative) act, it becomes a good work even though it is sinful."

Iqbal believes that man makes the world with his free creative skill. All worldly objects are there for the service of man. He has only to bring into play his hidden potentialities for various deeds, and all this earth and heavens will move at his command for it is only the free ego-activity which gives them meaning and purpose.

Iqbal infers two principles from the Qur'anic legend of Adam:

(a). Man's longing for the infinite; and
(b). his desire for immortality through self-multiplication.

The Qur'ān splits up the legend into two distinct episodes—the one relating to what it describes simply as 'the tree' and the other relating to the 'tree of eternity' and the 'kingdom that faileth not.'

According to Iqbal man is the possessor of a free personality accepted at his peril and the ego is free personal causality.

Its destiny is self-determined in its unitive experience. He asserts:

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. 1

The ideal of Islam is self-affirmation, not self-negation. Iqbal attacks Sufism because it tends towards self-annihilation—negation of one's own freedom to exist as an individual creative agent of the Divine will. Fate is not pre-destined, it is actually the ego's free creativity:

In Iqbal's poetry and philosophy, freedom seems to be the value of all values—the Summum Bonum. He would agree with the existentialists that human existence is grounded in freedom. Sartre's dictum that 'Man is condemned to be free' would have been turned upside down by Iqbal saying 'Man is blessed to be free'. Freedom is not condemnation. For Sartre there is no choice for man but freedom. For Iqbal man chooses his freedom from within, it is not thrust upon him from without. Ibn-i 'Arabi says: 'What the essence (of man) demands was given to him.' He means to say that man chose his being freely, for no compulsion was involved in this process. Man is the architect of his own destiny. Iqbal holds that acts are either self-sustaining or self-dissolving according to their affirmation or negation of freedom. 2

1. Ibid., p. 110.
The ego has a beginning in time and therefore it is finite. But this finitude, says Iqbal, is not a misfortune. He writes:

\[(\text{The Qur'an}) \text{ does not contemplate liberation from finitude as the highest state of human bliss. The 'unceasing reward' of man consists in his gradual growth in self-possession, in uniqueness and intensity of his activity as an ego.}\]

He further claims that even the Day of complete destruction (or in his words 'Universal Destruction') cannot affect a full-grown ego. In this regard he refers to a Qur'anic verse:

\[
\text{وَفَلَّتُمْ فِي الْجَهَنَّمَةِ وَفَلَّتُمْ فِي الْجَهَنَّمَةِ}
\]

"And the Trumpet is blown, and all who are in the Heavens and the Earth swoon away, save him whom Allah Willeth."

Iqbal holds that true infinity is intensity, not extensity. Action provides the ground for the intensity of the ego. In reality, Life offers a scope for ego-activity. As he says:

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; ...Life offers a scope for ego-activity.

It is in action that the free ego seeks immortality. The martyrs who sacrifice their lives for the sake of higher ends attain immortality. In Iqbal's view Martyrdom of Husayn ibn 'Ali is the highest instance of the individual freely choosing his own destiny and thus attaining immortality. In this context, regarding Imām Ḥusayn (referred to him by name (ShabbIr), he says in Bāl-e Jibrīl:

'The station of ShabbIr is eternity, While the positions of the Kūfīs and Shāmīs are ever-shifting.'

Iqbal holds that immortality can be attained through action, living and creating one's own self and the surrounding universe freely as well. The ego does not end with the death of the body. Iqbal's Perfect Man (Mirām) is not awed by death. The inevitability of death strengthens his faith in Allah and he tries to attain immortality through acquiring the pleasure of Him. In Bāng-e Darā in a long poem entitled "Walde Murād-i Yādīn" Iqbal says:

'Ignorants consider death the end of life, While the eve of life is the beginning of an eternal life. ...'1
Death is nothing but revival of the lust for life, It is a dream that conveys the message of awakening. Alas ! you, the ignorant person, are unfamiliar with the mystery of death; The transitory character of an image implies permanence.

In Bal-e Jibrīl he further asserts:

'I learnt this wisdom from Abū al-Hasan[‘Ali(A)],
that the soul remains unaffected by the death of body.'

Immortality, in the eyes of Iqbal, is an ideal which may or may not be attained by every one. Its achievement solely depends upon one's personal efforts or constant striving.

As the Holy Qur’ān declares:

"Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Sovereignty, and He is able to do all things. Who hath created life and death that He may try you, which of you is best in conduct (or in point of deed); and He is Mighty and Forgiving."  

According to Iqbal, life offers to the ego a great scope for personal efforts to achieve the ideal of immortality, and death is perhaps the best test whereby the synthetic activity of the ego is brought to trial. In this regard Iqbal says in Payām-e Mashriq:

1. Ibid., p. 379.  
2. Al-Qur'ān, LXVII:1,2.  
'I tell thee a piece of secret wisdom,
If thou would'st learn from me the
lesson of life:
Thou diest if thou hast not the soul
in the body,
If thou hast the soul in the body thou
diest not.'

An ego perfected through a life of creativity and action
overcomes finitude. Martyrdom is eternal life, for in it the indi-
vidual ego becomes one with the creative activity of Allah and
conquers time:

It is here that he becomes the Perfect Man;
his eye becomes the eye of God, his word
the word of God and his life the life of God—
participates in the general life of Nature
and 'sees into the life of things' 1

Iqbal is of the view that it is only the pure time that brings
to the ego its freedom, creativity and immortality. Man that
has attained a relatively perfect egohood, possesses a priviledged
position in the heart of Divine creative energy and is capable
of consciously participating in the creative life of Allah—
the Supreme Creator:

Endowed with the power to imagine a
better world, and to mould 'what is' into
'what ought to be' the ego in him aspires, into
the interests of an increasingly unique and
comprehensive individuality, to exploit all
the various environments on which he may be
called upon to operate during the course of
an endless career. 2

1. Iqbal, Muḥammad, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia,
(Lahore: Bazm-i Iqbal), p. 119.
2. Iqbal, S.M., The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,
p. 72.
Iqbal, with reference to Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, points out that in the history of modern thought there is a positive view of immortality. He himself conceives "Recurrection as a universal phenomena of life." He is of the view that immortality is not liberation from the shackles of time, it rather means to be eternally present before Allah:

'Iqbal finds a positive view of immortality in Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. In his view of time Nietzsche deviates from Kant and Schopenhauer by regarding it as a real and infinite process. But his doctrine implies fixity of events happening again and again. It is a more rigid kind of mechanism and hence eventuates in determinism. Time, regarded as circular movement, makes immortality intolerable. The Supremacy of Nietzsche's conception amounts to a repetition of what man has been a number of times before."

Iqbal holds that the creative activity of time does not repeat itself. It is free; it is not deterministic. Consequently, Nietzsche's doctrine fails to overcome finitude. For Kant immortality remains merely a postulate of morality. The Qur'anic view is partly ethical and partly biological. Iqbal defines Barzakh (بَرزخ) as a state of suspension of life between death and resurrection. Resurrection itself is conceived by him as a universal phenomenon of life. Reward and punishment on the day of judgement are not willed by God, but willed by man himself. He receives what he chooses to deserve. Immortality is within the reach of the ego, but man has to will it; it is not given him as a gift. Iqbal asserts that immortality is not liberation from the shackles of time, but it means to be eternally present before God!

2. Ibid., p. 115.
3. Ibid., pp. 114-15
5. Waheed Akhtar, "Iqbal's Conception of Time", op. cit., p.93.
Iqbal maintains that the true nature of time is realized when we look into our deeper self:

'Real time is life itself which can preserve itself by maintaining that particular state of tension (personality) which it has so far achieved.'

In other words, man, according to Iqbal, having time with God, can himself become eternal. In Asrār-e Khudī Iqbal Says:

'Knowing not the origin of Time, Thou are ignorant of everlasting Life. How long wilt thou be a thrall of night and day? Learn the mystery of Time from the words "I have a time with God". Phenomena arise from the march of Time. Life is one of Time's mysteries. ... Our Time which has neither beginning nor end, Blossoms from the flower-bed of our mind. To know its root quickens the living with new life; Its being is more splendid than the dawn. Life is of Time, and Time is of Life: "Do not abuse Time!" was the command of the Prophet.'

1. The Secrets of the Self: (Asrār-e Khudī), op. cit., (Introduction p. XXV.
Further in Asrār-e Khudī (The Secrets of the Self) Iqbal underlines that when the self is strengthened by 'Love' (イスク) it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe. Moreover, it symbolizes man's freedom:

The fifth part of the Secrets of the Self shows that when the Self is strengthened by Love it gains domination over the outward and inward forces of the universe. Love, in Iqbal's thought and poetry, is the moving force and creator of values and ideals; it symbolizes man's freedom. It is through love that the ego conquers finitude and attains immortality. It is not the negation but the affirmation of individuality and hence it individualises the lover as well as the beloved. Iqbal's concept of love is the culmination of the Sufi concept of love, but he has redefined it and broadened its meaning and scope so that it may embrace the ego, time, creativity, freedom and even God.

According to Iqbal, it is this faculty—'Love (イスク) that distinguishes man from other beings. 'イスク, he thinks, is a source of knowledge and a creative force. It is only 'イスク which is capable of knowing real time and participating in its creative activity. Iqbal maintains that the ego is the seat of 'イスク and antedates (is prior to) space and time. He eloquently describes the connection between 'Love' and the Ego in his Asrār-e Khudī (The Secrets of the Self):


ezāmiyyat bā 'ishq ba 'ishq
uzāmiyyat ba 'ishq ba 'ishq
arzfamī 'ishq ba 'ishq
aṣūzī 'ishq ba 'ishq
ba 'ishq 'aṣūzī 'ishq
2a 'ishq 'aṣūzī 'ishq

When the self is made strong by Love,  
Its power rules the whole world. ...  
By Love it is made more lasting,  
More living, more burning, more glowing.  
From Love proceeds the radiance of its being,  
And the development of its unknown possibilities. ...  
Love fears neither sword nor dagger,  
Love is not born of water and air and earth. ...  
The hardest rocks are shivered by Love's glance;  
Love of God at last becomes wholly God.'

Iqbal has given a more comprehensive expression of Love in his Jāwīd Nāmah (The Pilgrimage of Eternity) pointing out that due to it man transcends worldly space and time and reaches the superphysical realm. In the following lines Iqbal presents beautiful similes on Ishq:

Love dwells  
Within the soul as sight doth in the eye,  
Within and yet without: 'tis both the fire  
That flames and ashes cold. 'Tis greater than  
One's knowledge and one's faith. The final plea  
Is love, and both the worlds are love's empire.

Love doth transcend both time and space, and yet
The far, the nigh, the future and the past
Proceed from love. When love the ego seeks
From God, it sways the world, establishes
The place of heart and breaks the ancient spell
Of this old idol-house. The lover gives
His self to God, surrenders he the sense
That to evasion takes. Art thou one such
Transcend the bounds of space, be free from death.'

In the light of the preceding discussion, one can conclude
that in the philosophy of Iqbal Man's Khudī is a manifestation
of his urge for freedom and creativity. Since the act of
creation requires freedom, it is a logical corollary that
creativity and freedom go together and hence are interdependent.
Moreover, freedom and creativity are the Divine qualities which
human ego unfolds to shape and mould its particular historic
situation according to its aspirations. Therefore, freedom is
the source of all values and ideals and above all it is the
very life of ego. In a word, freedom, according to Iqbal, is
the raison d'être for Khudī.

1. Ibid., p. 321, (Trans. The Pilgrimage of Eternity, op. cit.,
   pp. 15-16 (lines 315-329).