CHAPTER FOUR

Iqbal’s Critique of Sufism

Before elaborating Iqbal’s critique of Sufism, it is essential to know about the prime Sufi-doctrines importantly Wahdat al-Wujud and Wahdat al-Shuhud with special reference to their exponents, Ibn Arabi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi respectively and these doctrines we have already discussed in Chapter Third of the present thesis. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to explore Iqbal’s critique of Sufism with special reference to some important mystics and religious scholars.

4.1. IQBAL’S CRITIQUE OF IBN-I-ARABI

Ibn-i-Arabi considers the universe and God as identical to each other. His position with regard to Tawhid is that Being is One. This Being is Allah and everything else is His manifestation. Hence, the world is identical with Allah. The Identity of the world and Allah is conceived on the basis of the identity of His Dhat (essence) and Sifat (attributes), the world being only a Tajlli (shadow or adumbration), or Manifestation of His Sifat. The Being is indeterminate; it is the stage of la’ta’ayyun or indeterminateness of the Unity. In its descent or determination, it passes through five stages. The first two are Ilmi or cognitive and the last three are khariji or existential. In the first descent, the unity becomes conscious of itself as pure being and the consciousness of Sifat is only Ijmai i.e. general and it is implicit. In the second descent, the unity becomes conscious of itself as possessing the attributes, that is the stage of Sifat-i-Tufsilli, i.e. attributes in detail, and it is explicit. These two descents seem to be conceived in conceptual or logical rather than actual, for they are out of time, and the distinction of Dhat/Zat and Sifat or attributes is only Zahni
or logical then the real or actual descent. The third descent, therefore, is *Ta’ayyun-i-ruhi* or determination as a Spirit of Spirits. The unity has broken itself up into so many spirits, for example angels. The fourth of its descent in *Ta’ayyun-i-mithali* or ideal determinations; thereby the world of ideas comes into being. The fifth descent is *Ta’ayyun-i-jasadi* or physical determination; it yields the phenomenal or physical being. These stages are only gradual realization of the capacities that were already in the attributes.¹

According to Ibn-Arabi, God and the universe are in essence one and they are co-eternal. The universe is not the manifestation of the attributes of God. However, the Reality Himself has manifested as the Universal Consciousness, the First Intellect. Ibn-Arabi maintained that the manifestation, weather inward or outward or Asma (names of God) or Sifat (attribute of God) all is the essence of Reality. He says:

> There is no existence save his existence there is no other, and there is no other existence for any other then He. He whom you think to be other than God, he is not other than God, but you do not know him and do not understand that you are seeing Him. He is still Ruler as well as Ruled and Creator as well as created. He is now as he was as to his creative power and as to his sovereignty neither requiring a creature nor a subject when he called into being the things that are. He was already endowed with all His attributes and He is as He was then in his oneness, there is no difference between what is recent and what is original. The recent is the result of his manifestation of himself and the original is
the result of his remaining with himself when you know yourself, your I-ness vanishes and you know that you and God are one and the same.²

In the above lines, the status of supreme union has been described by Ibn-Arabi as a natural interpenetration of Divinity in man. Using the example of a coloured glass, he said that as the same light appeared in many colours so also the Absolute was manifested diversely in men of varying capacities. He believed that God is mysteriously present in man and man is obliterated in God.

For his theory of Wahdat-al-Wujud, Ibn-Arabi has borrowed heavily from other mystic systems, but has given it an interpretation entirely of his own. Ibn-Arabi includes matter in his three elements of universal consciousness: (1) Reality of realities (Haqiqat-ul-Haqaiq), (2) universal body (al-jism-al-kulli), and (3) soul (al-nafs al kulliyah) and spirit (al-aql-al-kulliyah). Secondly, he used the term ‘emanation’ in a sense, which differed from that of Plotinus who believes it to be, “One thing overflowing from the Absolute One then another from the first thing, etc. in the form of a chain.” However, to Ibn-Arabi, emanation meant that the same reality variously determines and delimits itself and appears immediately in the form of different things.³

The doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wujud or unityism was assailed by several, Muslim thinkers and Sufis such as Ibn-Taimiyyah and Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Some attacked the doctrine merely as article of faith for purely theological reasons, while some others endorsed the position of Ibn-Arabi. Thus, volumes were being written by the religious scholars on both sides and the misunderstanding generated by these ideas was infecting the very roots of the
Islamic body politic. Iqbal being essentially a pragmatist assails the doctrine on practical grounds. It was his originality of thought that traces the connection between the doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wujud or Unityism and the decadence which characterized all Eastern people in general and Islamic people in particular. Iqbal came forth to challenge the existing ideas by proclaiming that life is real and not a mere illusion. He asks, “What then is life”? and answers that it is individual and its highest form so for is the ego (khudi) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. According to Iqbal the source of creation is an indivisible Existence (Wujud-i-Basit) with definite power of perception and volition. To operate these powers, the Wujud divides into self and not-self. The purpose of oneself is to provide a mirror for the self to see itself as well as to serve as an objective for the operation of the self. These operations lead to the evolution of the self.4

The background of Iqbal’s philosophy is provided by the strong reaction he showed to the doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wujud, which is normally accepted by the Sufis. In response to criticism against his views, he later tries to make a distinction between Persian Sufism and Islamic Sufism and explains his motivation for doing so. Thus, he declares that his aim is not to destroy the Sufi movement. What Iqbal wants to emphasize is that particular version of Persian Sufism leads towards inaction and otherworldliness and therefore, not at all serve the purpose of life as explained in the Qur’an and practiced by the Prophet of Islam. Thus, he is opposed to such Persian mysticism that is a sort of asceticism and not a part of Islam. He further makes a reference to different philosophical positions Wahdat-al-Wujud, being one of them taken by certain philosophers in interpreting religious beliefs. He thinks that pantheism is not a religious problem, but a problem of philosophy. “The discussion on unity and diversity has nothing to do with Islam. Oneness of God is the cardinal principle
of Islam the opposite of which is *Shirk*, and not diversity.’’ The consensuses about Iqbal’s attitude toward mysticism are as follows:

1. Iqbal subscribed to or Sympathized with a pantheistic point of view not only as a way of life, but as philosophical system in his earlier writings, particularly in his *Metaphysics*.

2. Later he changed from this position to a different one, which has found its fullest and mature expression in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islām*.

3. One of the major motivations for this change lies in the practical effect of a pantheistic outlook on the life and attitude of a person and on his moral and social behaviour.

Iqbal is at pains to explain that it is particular type of mysticism to which he is opposed, i.e. of the type of Hafiz and Ibn-Arabi and like-minded Sufis. Once in Europe, Iqbal tried to explore the truth about Sufism and its relation with Islam. In a letter, dated 18 November 1905 to Khawja Hasan Nizami, he asked:

> If you have to prove that, the concept of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (Unity of Being), the basis of Sufism is in accordance with Islam then which verse of the Qur’an you will quote in support of your answer? What would be is exposition? Can it prove historically the relationship between Islam and Sufism? Was Hazrat Imam Ali given esoteric knowledge?
After searching for years the relevant answer to the aforementioned questions, Iqbal, in a letter again to Khawja Hasan Nizami dated 30 December 1915, concluded:

“You are quite familiar with my family background. By nature and heredity, I am connected with Sufism. After reading, the European philosophy this relationship became stronger because European philosophy is rooted in the concept of Wahdat-al-Wujud. However, after pondering over the Qur’an and deeply studying the history of Islam, I have realized my mistake. And just for the sake of the Qur’an, I have given up my old belief. In order to achieve my objective I have had to wage two fearsome wars (Jihad) against the thoughts, which I had inherited; mental and emotional.”

However, in a letter to Shah Sulaiman Phulwari dated 24 February 1916 he explicitly stated: “The teachings of Ibn Arabi are not in accordance with the teachings of the Qur’an and nor with any tawil (interpretation) or tashrih (commentary) they can conform to it.” Similarly, in yet another letter to Sayyid Faizullah Kazmi, dated 10 July 1916, Iqbal wrote, “In my opinion, pantheistic Sufism is not a part of Islam. In fact, it is against the religion of Islām. The Muslims have borrowed this concept of Wahdat-al-Wujud from non-Muslims”.

When Iqbal talks against the metaphysics of mysticism, he sounds very much like an exponent of anti-system. He himself was a Sufi Philosopher and
was well aware of how the problems of philosophy arise. His own ‘anti-system’ approach has flowered in the form of a system known as philosophy of self. It has a particular metaphysics, a theory of knowledge and a theory of truth. It deals with morality and the concept of good and evil, and ordains a destiny for man. Iqbal’s is a complete system of thought based on the reality of self and has its affinities with the philosophical systems of Bergson, Nietzsche, Alexander, James Ward and McTaggart etc. from the west and Rumi, Al-Jili, Al-Ghazali, Bedil, Shah Wali Allah etc. from the east. The mystical flavour and the religious approach of this philosophy invites its comparison with the theory of Wahdat-al-Wujud for elucidating the point we are trying to make. The theory of Wahdat-al-Wujud, begging with observations that this universe is contingent in itself and is in time. In this general form, this statement has been taken as true throughout Islamic thought, except for some philosophers who believed in the eternity of matter; but even they at the same time, tried to reconcile the idea of the eternity of matter with belief in the contingent nature of the created universe. As an immediate consequence of the above observation, there arises a problem for Wahdat-al-Wujud and that is about the process through which One Reality could express itself in the diversity of the world. The solution to this problem can be briefly stated as fellows:

Before this universe came into existence, there was only the being of God, and nothing else existed. The being of God has two aspects. In one of His aspects, God is necessarily existent Being and possess all the perfect attributes. The other aspect of his Being is looked at from the point of view of his attributes. Knowledge, being one of the most fundamental of these, and He is termed as the Knower. It is believed that it would be vacuous to say that He is the knower unless there are objects of knowledge, as it is vacuous to say that
one hears or sees without there being objects of hearing or sight. These objects in the knowledge of God are those possibilities that have not yet been actualized or realized. They have not yet been subjected to the command of ‘Be’ (kun, √). Before such a command is given, these attributes or, as they are technically known, *a’yan-i-thabitah* (Divine Essences or Divine Ideas) are contained in the knowledge of God; and since the Being of God is also the knower from eternity and knowledge without objects of knowledge is not possible, therefore these Divine Essences are also eternally co-present.\(^9\)

A glance over the *Reconstruction* brings out the points of distinction between Iqbal’s earlier Persian or pantheistic approach and his later one. The main points are as follows:

1. The view of the universe presented in the philosophy of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* is complete, whereas the later philosophy of Iqbal is still undergoing completion.

2. *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, as evident from its nomenclature, is the philosophy of unity of Being, whereas in Iqbal we find a pluralistic approach.

3. In the philosophy of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* freedom of the human will has no reality whereas one of the fundamental aspects of Iqbal’s philosophy is the concept of real freedom for the human ego or self, so much so that through this freedom the nature of Ultimate Reality is revealed. Freedom is a methodological as well as an ontological concept for Iqbal.\(^{10}\)

This is, by no means, an exhaustive description of the alleged points of difference between the earlier and the later thought of Iqbal or between Persian mysticism and the philosophy of ego.
Iqbal’s later philosophy envisages that this universe is not a complete and finished product, but as covering the stage of completion. Nothing can, according to him, be finally and dogmatically asserted about it. Creation is a continuous process in which human beings are playing their due role, participating in the creative activity of God and at every movement creating new situations, new worlds, new ideals and new products. This universe is a colony or collection of individuals or egos; the number of these egos is not determined. In every temporal unit new individuals are being added, who in their turn add to the activity of creation.

The philosophy of Wahdat-al-Wujud regards the universality of direct and immediate experience as the most fundamental characteristic. Nevertheless, Iqbal thinks that the universe is not a finished product which implies that in the universe new facts come into being without any determination whatsoever from pure non-existence. For Iqbal, the chain of new facts coming into existence every moment represents the internal possibilities of Being, becoming actual. From our localized point of view the creation of the universe is a never-ending process, which would continue eternally because the eternity of the Will of God, being one of His fundamental attributes. We cannot put a limit either to the knowledge or to the Will of God. Though we are unable to read through the preserved tablet, from beginning to end, the whole of the creation is preserved in it. Call it the inner possibilities of Being, as Iqbal would like to call it, or give it the name of Divine Essence as the philosophy of Wahdat-al-Wujud visualizes; the consequences are the same, i.e; the resultant continuity of the process of creation or emanation.

The divergence between Iqbal’s later thought and the metaphysics of mysticism or Sufism is also sometimes emphasized with regard to the status of external objects, i.e., the created world. It is said that mystical metaphysics
implies the ideational or mental nature of the objects, whereas Iqbal conceives them to be real. The observation is based on a superficial view of the philosophy of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* and also on misapplication of the categories of mental and non-mental, in their ordinary sense to the metaphysics of mysticism. The logic of mysticism or Sufism is of a different order and these categories are not applicable to it. These categories assume two distinct modes of existence, one external and the other internal, implying that externality is a necessary property of the objects around us, which is independent of all mental relations. For all practical everyday purposes, this may be so, and is not denied even by Sufism. Nevertheless, the logic of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* grades reality into tiers, and mental and non-mental are not mutually exclusive, but only juxtaposed concepts. Being is graded and mental is not a predicate of existence. Within this all-inclusive concept of existence, there are various tiers, which possess a reality of their own, and each tier has its own logic. This is the distinction which Islamic mysticism tries to maintain between itself and the philosophy of pure pantheism.\(^\text{11}\)

The point at issues in the juxtaposition of the mental and the non-mental lies in the concept of a ‘block universe’ which is an alleged implication of the philosophy of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*. This impression is created when *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, is wrongly compared with the idealistic philosophy of the west. In spite of certain parallelisms between the two, they are not identical modes of thought. In this perspective, Iqbal’s remarks become significant when he says that the perfection of the creative ego does not lie in its unchanging nature, but in its continuous activity. The being of God is self-Sufficient, hence it does not move for attaining a goal external to itself. It moves to manifest the infinite possibilities inherent in itself. The paradoxes in the understanding of this
movement in the Being of God arise, because according to Iqbal we apply a wrong logic to it.

The second point of dispute, we mentioned between Iqbal’s later thought and the so-called Persian mysticism is that of monism and pluralism. For Iqbal the chief character of the ego its individuality. A diffused reality in which individuals could not be identified is characterless. The universe is a colony of individuals and God himself is an Individual, though a Perfect One. Iqbal’s philosophy is reminiscent of Leibnizian monadlogy, though he does not say that his monads are windowless. The spiritual nature of these individuals and of reality as a whole is retained and so is it by Wahdat-al-Wujud. The only difference between the two is that Iqbal lays more emphasis on one aspect of the diffused spirituality i.e. the pluralistic, whereas Wahdat-al-Wujud stresses its monistic aspect. The Being of God in Wahdat-al-Wujud though Immanent in the nature of things, yet at the same time is transcendent, is necessarily existent. Although this philosophy sometimes talks in terms of appearances, nevertheless, the appearances have a status of their own. They are appearances only when they are compared with reality.

The distinction between Iqbal’s later and earlier thought becomes more or less verbal. Iqbal never talks about plurality in the sense that this world is completely independent of Divine consciousness. Though it is a colony of individuals, there is the same creative spirit, which keeps every individual active. The only concepts that seem to be pulling apart in the two points of view are those, which prescribe the means for an end towards which those individuals are striving. Wahdat-al-Wujud speaks about losing oneself totally or a complete annihilation of one’s self, whereas Iqbal talks of perfecting one’s self. However, if we look still closer we will find that this difference is only in the methodology and not in the end-stage of this process. The end-stage
concept of Islamic mysticism is that of a complete identification of the will of the individual with the will of God. Notwithstanding these differences in emphasis between Iqbal and *Wahdat-al-Wujud* those points, which have significance for human conduct are the same in both the philosophies. If we look at the point of dispute between them in the light of what we have said above in connection with the creative activity of Being, we would find that their much publicized difference is a difference between two languages rather than between two sets of facts.\textsuperscript{12}

The third point referred to above is that of determinism or fatalism and freedom of will. Iqbal is said to have adhered to the former in his earlier philosophy, which he gave up later. This problem arises as a direct implication of a pluralistic ontology and the concept of continuous creation. As a matter of fact, it was to safeguard the concept of freedom that Iqbal had to have recourse to the Ash’arite philosophy of continuous creation. The concept of freedom, thus, is logically prior to metaphysics of creation and Iqbal’s reaction against *Wahdat-al-Wujud* is wholly based on the consciousness of a free ego.\textsuperscript{13}

It has been remarked above that the background to the Iqbal’s philosophy is provided by the strong reaction he showed to the doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*. We have also mentioned that Ibn-Arabi affirmed the pantheistic doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*. The first great writer to oppose this doctrine were Ibn-Taimiyyah and Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi gives the theory of *Wahdat-al-Shuhud* as a challenge to *Wahdat-al-Wujud* of Ibn-al-Arabi. The leader of pantheistic mystic in Islam, Ibn-Arabi, held that Being is one; it is that only which exists. This Being is Allah and everything else is His manifestation. Hence the world is identical with Allah, and the relation between the world and God according to Ibn-Arabi is one of Identity. In establishing this identification he proceeds either from the negation
of the world or from the affirmation of God. On the basis of negation of the world, Ibn-Arabi holds that the world as such is unreal, imaginary, objectively non-existent and it is God alone that exists. The *Mujaddid* on the other hand says that there is no likeness whatsoever between the Divine and the human attributes, God is wholly other than world, and the world exists in reality. If the world is unreal, all moral responsibility of man becomes meaningless. While Ibn-Arabi maintains that worship of any object whatsoever is the worship of Allah, the *Mujaddid* insists that there is absolutely no relation between the world and its unique Creator except that the world has been created by Him and is a sign that indicates his hidden attributes.¹⁴

Although the *Mujaddid* and Iqbal both condemn Ibn-Arabi’s pantheistic doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, the real importance of this disagreement between the two lies in regarding life and the world as real and having an objective existence, against the pantheistic conception of the world as merely illusionary and imaginary. Later on, Sayed Ahmed also strongly condemned *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, but by this time, the whole controversy had assumed the role of a theoretical discussion with no obvious connection to everyday life. It was left for Iqbal to trace this connection and to deal with this doctrine.

**4.2. Iqbal’s Critique of Khawaja Hafiz**

Shams-al-Din Muhammad (b-726/1325-26, d. 791/1389 or 729/1390), better known as Khawaja Hafiz Shirazi, is one of the immortals of Persian poetry. His verses are marked with freshness of thought, simplicity of diction, sweetness of language and beauty of Ideas. His name and fame spread beyond the borders of Iran and as a result, he was introduced to the European world also through the translation of his Persian *Ghazals*. Hafiz, the celebrated Persian poet flourished at Shiraz at the time of Shah Shuja’h reign. His
collection of poetry contains four thousand couplets comprising lyrics, odes, panegyrics, eulogies and quatrains. In one of his poems, the poet said, ‘If that fair maid of Shiraz would accept my love, I would bestow Samarkand and Bukhara for the mole of her cheek.’

Hafiz of Shiraz has been given the title of Lisan-ul-Ghayb (the tongue of unseen) by his admirers. He is also called Tarjuman-ul-Asrar (the interpreter of mysteries). The grandfather of Hafiz migrated from Isfahan to Shiraz during the reign of Atbeks of Shiraz. His father Baha-ud-din was a rich merchant but he died untimely leaving three sons behind. Hafiz was the youngest among his brothers and lived with his mother. Due to poverty, Hafiz was forced to work in a baker’s shop. Hafiz had a love for learning. Whatever time he could scratch off from his work in the baker’s shop, he spent in his studies. Out of what he earned, he gave one-third to his mother the other one third paid to his teacher and the remaining one third to the poor and the needy.

Indeed, Hafiz was a persevering and hard-working student. Soon he acquired a good education and learnt the Qur’an by heart because which he adopted his pen name as Hafiz. During this period, the spirit of poetry and romance was in the air. There was a cloth merchant in the locality who was a great admirer of poets. Many poets from the different areas of the city gathered every evening in his shop and recited their poems. This assemblage of poets inspired Hafiz to compose his poems also but with little success. On the contrary, the people made fun of him. Being bitterly frustrated and disappointed, one might he wept bitterly and prayed to Allah for his success as a poet. It is reported that in that night he saw Hazrat Imam Ali in dream who gave him something to eat and assured him that henceforth the gate of poetry as well as knowledge were opened upon him. The following morning when he woke up, he composed a poem which was of great poetic beauty and all were
greatly surprised by newly composed poem. Nothing succeeds like success. This success encouraged him. He began to compose lyrics in Persian and his fame as a great lyricist soon reached far and wide.\textsuperscript{15}

In the poetry of Hafiz, Goethe discovered something, which not only attracted him but also had great affinity with trends in his own creative genius. The result of Goethe’s introduction to Hafiz was that he received a great stimulus to a great creative effort, which resulted in the world having a fine collection of poetry in West \textit{Ostlicher Divan}. Heine writes of the \textit{Divan}:

The charm of the book is inexplicable, it is a votive nosegay sent from the west to the East composed of the precious and curious plants: red roses, hortensias like the breast of a spotless maiden, purple digitalis like the large finger of a man, fantastically formed ranunculi and in the midst of all, silent and tactfully concealed a tuft of German violets. This nosegay signifies that the West is tired of thin and icy-cold spirituality and seeks warmth in the strong and healthy bosom of the East.\textsuperscript{16}

The Diwan consists of the following books having Oriental names:

1. \textit{Maganni Namah} 2 \textit{Hafiz Namah} 3 \textit{Uschk Namah}  

4. \textit{Tafkir Namah} 5 \textit{Rundsch Namah} 6 \textit{Hikmat Namah}  

7. \textit{Tanvir Namah} 8 \textit{Sulik Namah} 9 \textit{Saki Namah}  

10. \textit{Math Namah} 11 \textit{Farsi Namah} 12 \textit{Chulk Namah}  

The \textit{Diwan}, overall, is a collection of fine and sublime poetry, and each book has its own charm. A work of such sublime beauty by a great artist,
offering a bridge between the East and the West, challenged Iqbal and evoked a response in him. The *Diwan* shows that according to the sage, for whom Iqbal had highest respect, the West needed spiritual substance from the East. However, after studying Eastern literature and poetry, he provided this. This stimulated the creative genius of Iqbal and he offered to the West in his *payam-i-Mashriq* (Message of East). All that East had to give, but he went a step further. He described in the *Payam* Several Western thinkers, Philosophers and poets; Locke, Nietzsche, Bergson, Einstein, Browning and Byron. Thus, in his message he also touched upon what West had to give to the East. Iqbal provides a real bridge on which the future of mankind depends.\(^{15}\)

The question of the Persian poets and their determinable influence on the masses is a complex and vexed problem. While on the point concerning the interpretation of Hafiz’s verse, the real meanings of this verse have endlessly been debated not only in Persian, but other languages spoken and written in Islamic world and lately among the western scholarship as well. We cannot even give a sampling of this vast literature here. What nevertheless, transpires from this debate is that readers in different climes and different intellectual and social milieus can interpret Hafiz according to their own levels of knowledge, or of wisdom. An overall decline and especially an impoverished academic background coupled with a perverted taste for this worldly and the mundane resulted in the prevalent views about Hafiz. Moreover, poetry by definition and by its place in the Islamic civilization has always been something of an elitist nature, addressed to and presuming a cultural sophistication and refinement of learning When it filters down to the masses, it inevitably, take on a simplified and often misleading character. However, this is not the fate of poetry alone. Religion and human thought generally shore this destiny. As things move away from their origin, process of decadence sets in.\(^{17}\)
Thus, the above factor leads us to say, with a certain embarrassment indeed, that it is difficult to agree with Iqbal on this point. We do not deny that the phenomenon of decline or passivity towards the demands of the Creator manifested in the *Unmrah*; when we discuss, in the context of Iqbal’s objections. The tendencies and misunderstanding that gave rise to this phenomenon, the point of disagreement lies in that whether Persian poetry and the teaching of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, which it vehicled, could be singled out as the chief culprit. In our view, causes of decline are numerous and they mostly lie in different directions.

Iqbal criticizes Sufism in public and in his writings. In 1914 at the annual celebration of the *Anjuman Himayatul Islam*, he declares that Sufism preached passiveness, inactivity and self-annihilation, which are against the teachings of Islam. Moreover, in his Persian work, *Asrar-i-Khudi* (The Secrets of the Self), (1915), Iqbal criticized Plato, whose thoughts, in his opinion, deeply influenced all those Sufis who believed in the doctrine of *Wahda –al-Wujud*, (Unity of Being) leading to an ethic of Self-denial. He emphatically says:

راهم دیرینه افلاطون حکیم
در کهستان وجود افکنده‌سم
اختبار از دست و چشم و گوش برده
آنجنان افسون تا محسوس خورد
گفت سر زندگی در مردن است
بر تخلیه‌ای ما فرمانروست
جام او خواب آور و گیتی رباست
حكم او بر جان صوفی محکم است

Plato the prime ascetic and sage,

Was one of those ancient flocks of sheep.
His Pegasus went astray in the darkness of idealism,
And dropped its shoe amidst the rock of actuality.
He was so fascinated by the invisible
That he made hand, eye and ear of no account.
‘To die’ said he is the Secret of life:
The candle is glorified by being put out:
His cup sends us to sleep and takes
The sensible world away from us,
He is sheep in man’s clothing
The soul of the Sufi bows to his authority.18

According to Iqbal, Plato was the godfather of those Sufis who believed in the doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud*. Iqbal rejects Plato’s Philosophy, Hafiz’s poetry in particular and pseudo-mysticism in general as already discussed because they advocate flight from the society.

Iqbal criticized Hafiz for preaching in-action and Neo-Platonism, and warned the people in a very impassioned language to avoid his philosophy and says:
Beware of Hafiz the drinker,

His cup is full of the poison of death.

His garment of abstinence is mortgaged to the cup-bearer;

Wine is the remedy for the horror of the resurrection.

He is a Muslim, but his belief wears the thread of an unbeliever;

The beloved’s eyelashes make holes in his faith.

He has learnt coquetry and whims and elegance

His fascination is poison and that’s all.

He gives weakness the name of strength,

His musical instrument leads the nations astray.

His congregation is not worthy for the pious ones.

Go independent of the congregation of Hafiz,

Beware of Sheep Beware.¹⁹
When the first edition of *Asrar-i-Khudi* came out in 1914 attacking Hafiz, it raised a storm of controversy among mystically inclined Muslims, including the conservative Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi, Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Delhi, Pirzada Muzafar-ud-Din Ahmed and Maulana Feruz-ud-Din Ahmed Tughrayee. The latter two wrote in reply to *Asrar-i-Khudi* and in defense of Hafiz two complete *Mathnawis, Ramuz-i-Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness) and *Lisan-ul-Gha’ib* (Tongue of the unseen). They went so far as to pass some discourteous remarks about Iqbal. However, by nature, Iqbal was a peace-loving man, he did not like to enter into such uncalled, for controversies, and thus omitted the offending verses from his *Mathnawi* in its second edition.\(^ \text{20} \) Iqbal had to drop those lines on Hafiz and in his Introduction, he wrote:

I have omitted in this edition lines written on Hafiz.

Although the purpose of writing those lines was merely to criticize, a literary ideal and they did not reflect upon the personality of Khawaja Hafiz, because they offended some of the readers,. I have replaced them by new ones in which I have explained the rules according to which literature of a nation must be judged.\(^ \text{21} \)

The question is that if Iqbal was right in criticizing Hafiz then whey did he eliminate his indictment of Hafiz in the second edition of his *Mathnawi*? Khalifah Abdul Hakim, one of the authorities on Iqbal and a closed associate of the poet-philosopher, explains the reason:

Iqbal dropped the name of Hafiz from *Asrar-i-Khudi* in its second edition. Once I inquired about
this from him. He replied: ‘My views are the same. I have omitted the name of Hafiz expediently; otherwise, I was afraid that due to this controversy, people might oppose the aim of the philosophy of Khudi presented by me. If they do not consider Hafiz to be such a poet as I depicted then let them do so. But they must think over my contention so for as literature is concerned.’

Thus, in Iqbal’s views Hafiz is not a Sufi. He opines that one cannot be a Sufi merely by using the terms and language of Sufism, as one cannot be a clergyman merely by wearing a cowl. Sufis generally give instruction for action: this is missing in Khawja Hafiz’s system of thought. The fact remains that Iqbal’s distinction is presently marked when he widens his scope of thought by making useful addition of his brilliant reflection. He despises Plato for his idealism and submissive morality. He also criticizes Hafiz in particular and Persian poetry in general in so far as they preach imaginative luxury and inactivity. About the Persian poetry, Iqbal says:

The Persian Muse though mirthsome and heart teasing,

No wet stone for the sword-edge of the self.

Iqbal’s likeness towards the medium of communication remained surprisingly different. Thought at various places he preferred Persian as the most attractive language and factually, he expressed his feelings well in this medium. However, he prefers Arabian poetry to Persian poetry because the former is far more vital and inspiring. He says:
It behaves thee to meditate well concerning literature; (therefore) it behaves thee to go back to Arabia;

Thou hast gathered roses from the garden of Persian.

And seen the spring tide of India and Iran:

Now taste a little of the heat of the desert,

Drink the old wine of the date.\textsuperscript{24}

However, it does not appear true at all because of the fact that in his Persian poetry Iqbal also seems openly praising Persian poets and prays for such self-mortification and \textit{soz} and \textit{saz} of these great \textit{Ajam} visionaries. In fact, he prays to God for bestowing upon him the deep \textit{spiritual} qualities of the Great Persian Sufis like Rumi, Khusraw, Sanai, and the like. Iqbal says in his \textit{Armughan-i-Hijaz}:\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{align*}
\text{عطاقین شور رومی، سوژ خسرو، عطاقین صدق و اخلاص سنائی} \\
\text{چنان با بندگی در ساختمن نه گیرم گر مرا بخشی خدائی}
\end{align*}

Bestow on me the spiritual cry of Rumi, the longing of Khusraw!

Bestow on me the authenticity of \textit{Sanai}!

I am so engrossed in your servitude,

Would not take even if you give me your Godhood.

Again, it is because of its emphasis on struggle and action that Iqbal recommends the Arabian poetry and not the Indian poets, sculptors and storytellers who present a different perspective. He says:
Oh India’s painters, poets and story-tellers!

The female sits astride their quivering nerves.\textsuperscript{26}

Such poets sound the death knell to the Nation and Iqbal does not like such types of Poets or artists. As He says:

\textit{وَلَائِٰ قَوْمِ كَزَاجَل ِ غِرِّدَ بِرَاتُ شَاعَرُ شَاعَرُ وَابْسِدَّازُ نُوقُ حِيَاتِ}

Woe to a people that resigns itself to death.

And whose poet turns away from the joy of living.\textsuperscript{27}

To conclude Iqbal’s criticism of Hafiz and the other Persian poets in general, we may add that Iqbal does not approve of all such writers and poets who teach or preach otherworldliness and inaction in the real life which is based on constant striving, innovation and creativity.

It is interesting to be noted that as long as Iqbal talks about poets and their poetry, he thinks that a real poet acts like a prophet pouring his wrath over the useless devastators of individuals and people. In this way, Iqbal himself when preaching his religious ideals, he uses the classical literary forms and expresses his thoughts in most sublime poetry using the traditional symbol of his predecessor whom he otherwise so strongly attacked. For him, the positive poetic act is a kind of prophetic mission, which he explains at several places in his Persian and Urdu writings.\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{4.3. Iqbal’s Attitude toward Hallaj}

Hussain Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj was born in 859 in Bayda, a small town in Iran. From his native province, Fars, he went to Baghdad, the center of mystic tradition during the ninth and tenth centuries. In Baghdad, the classical
Tasawwuf had developed, beginning with the austere ascetic preacher Hasan-al-Basri (d. 728), the ardent lover, Rabi’a al-Basri, leading to the sober, self-controlled al-Harith b. Asad al-Muhasibi (d. 837), Sari al-Saqati, and finally to al-Junayad (d. 910). Beside these great teachers, there lived a great number of Sufis trying to experience the gnosia of God, and striving for the fana fillah (the passing away from self) and the baqa billah (remaining with God).

Mansur-al-Hallaj openly announced the mystery of Divine Love and exclaimed An’l Haqq (I am the creative Truth), a statement utterly unacceptable to orthodox Muslims and moderate mystics. Therefore, most of the Sufis of the time (with the exception of Shaikh Ibn-al-Khafif and Ali Rudhbari) neither agreed with Hallaj’s mystic theories of the Huwa Huwa (man is the personal and living witness of God) nor understood the meaning of his famous statement ‘Ana’l-Haqq. This is not at all the cry of an intoxicated lover who has lost self-control but the quintessence of his mystic doctrine, which should not be interpreted in a pantheistic sense.

During the Middle Ages, Hallaj had become not only the poetical hero of painful love, but also in the views of later Sufism, a representative of the concept of Wahdat-al-Wujud (pantheistic monism). This doctrine had been fully developed in the mystical philosophy of Ibn-al-Arabi. In the thirteenth century, later Muslim mysticism become deeply submerged in the idea of Wahdat-al-Wujud and the work of classical Sufis including al-Junayad and Hallaj were interpreted in the light of Ibn-Arabi’s monistic philosophy. The development of Indo-Muslim poetry (especially the songs of the Punjabi, Kashmiri and Sindhi mystics) is the most charming expression of this trend of thought.29
Iqbal could see Hallaj praised as the first man openly to announce the essential unity of God and the soul, and the first martyr of love killed by the fanatical theologians, who were far from understanding the mystery of Divine Love. Discussing different aspects of Sufi metaphysics, Iqbal wrote in his doctoral dissertation *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (1908) that the Sufi “School became wildly pantheistic in Hussain Mansur Hallaj, who in the true spirit of the Indian Vedantist, cried out—I am God ‘Aham Brahman Asmi’.

He echoed similar sentiments about Hallaj in the following verses of his *Zabur-i-Ajam*:

Do not speak of Sankara and Mansur!

Search for God always in the way of the Ego!

Be lost in thyself in order to realize the Ego!

Say ‘Ana’i-Haq’ and Become the siddiq of the Ego! \(^{30}\)

Here Iqbal brackets Hallaj with the most erudite commentator of the Upanishads, Shankara, who is perhaps the greatest representative of pure “mysticism of infinity” and the most important philosopher of the *Vedanta* system of Indian Philosophy.

Between writing his doctoral dissertation and composing the *Zabur-i-Ajam*, Iqbal became familiar with French Orientalist Louis Massignon’s studies on the mystic doctrine of Hallaj. Massignon introduced the scholarly world to the Persian mystic in 1914, when he edited and published Hallaj’s *Kitab-al-Tawasin*. Eight years later, he published his monumental treatise on Hallaj, *La Passion d’al-Hosayn ibn-Mansour al-Hallaj*. Iqbal probably read *Kitab-al-Tawasin* in 1918 or 1919. He referred to it in a letter (May, 17, 1919) to Maulana Aslam Jairajpuri, admitting that the fundamental ideas of Hallaj
had now become clear to him. Nevertheless as yet he showed no sympathy for the famous martyr of love.

Hallaj describes Divine Love, uses the term ‘Ishq, a word that means dynamic love. However, its connotation was in Hallaj’s days suspect even among the Sufis. For the relationship between man and God not even the term Mahabbat a more static conception of love, had been accepted by the pious Muslims of the ninth and early tenth centuries. This ‘Ishq, which Hallaj describes as the ‘Divine Essence’, is an active and creative force, it tries to draw man nearer to God. The goal of Divine Grace is to make man partake of this essential love. Love, involves numerous afflictions—separation from people, from family and friends and openly invites tears, grief and sighs. Iqbal has rightly expressed the situation in the following words in Javid Namah:

No Life

It is to live without a secret smart

Do learn to hold a fire beneath thy feet.31

Such type of love means longing for death, the real lover hopes to be slain as an offering fulfilling religious duty. That is why Hallaj’s devoted prayers repeating the cry: “Kill me. My intimate, for is being killed is my life.” These passionate words are the beginning of the Hallaj’s well known Qasida (Diwan no. 10), Which was studied by later mystics, including Suhrawardi, Halabi, Ibn-Arabi, and especially, Mawlana Rumi.

Following generations of Sufis have tried to explain this dangerous statement of the martyr-mystic in different ways and its theological foundation being forgotten by most of them. According to some of the Sufis, Hallaj, in the state of ecstasy, completely lost his personality and God spoke through his mouth.
Hallaj’s concept of *Ana’l-Haqq*, does not imply that human nature (*naust*) is identical or inter-changeable with the Divine (*Lahut*). As for instance, to take a less elaborate simile-water does not become wine when they are mixed. The following lines by Hallaj are most expressive, ‘The sufi is he who aims for the first at reaching God, the creative truth. Until he has found what he seeks, he takes neither rest nor does he give heed to any persons.’ When Hallaj reached the place where he was alone with God he said:

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.

We are two spirits dwelling in one body.

If thou seest me, thou seest Him;

And If thou seest Him, thou seest us both.\(^32\)

Hallaj further writes, “We are two spirits fused together (*halalna*) in single body.” This, however, also does not prove his belief in *hulul* (*absorption*). Hallaj’s concept is identical with that of the leading Christian mystic, St. John of the Cross, two natures (God and man) in a single spirit and love of God! Actually, Hallaj meant that his ‘I’ was acted upon by Divine Grace. Nicholson explains it in this way:

According to Hallaj the essence of God’s essence is love. Before the creation, God loved Himself in absolute unity and through love revealed Himself to Himself alone. Then, desiring to be hold that love-in-aloneness, that love without otherness and duality, as an external object. He brought forth from non-existence an image of Himself, endowed with all his attributes and names. This divine image
is Adam, in and by whom God is manifest-divinity objectified in humanity.\textsuperscript{33}

Hallaj’s concept of \textit{Ana’l-Haqq} may find an interesting parallel in Iqbal’s exposition of Ego. Discussing the mystic ideas of Hallaj in one of his lectures delivered at Madras in 1925, Iqbal revealed his changed attitude toward the martyr, acknowledging especially the divine side of Hallaj’s ‘I’:

Devotional Sufism alone tried to understand the meaning of the unity of inner experience which the Qur’an declares to be one of the three sources of knowledge the other two being History and Nature the development of this experience in the religious life of Islam reached its culmination in the well-known words of Hallaj: ‘I am the creative Truth.’ The contemporaries of Hallaj, as well as his successors, interpreted these words pantheistically; but the fragment of Hallaj, collected and published by the French orientalist M. Massignon, leave no doubt that the martyr saint could not have meant to deny the transcendence of God. The true interpretation of his experience, therefore, is not the drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and bold admiration in an undying phase of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality. The phrase of Hallaj. Seems almost a challenge flung against the \textit{Mutakallimun}. The difficulty of modern student of religion, however, is that this type of experience, though perhaps perfectly normal in its beginning points in its maturity, to unknown level of consciousness.\textsuperscript{34}

Defining the nature of \textit{Iman} (belief) as a living assurance begotten of a rare experience, Iqbal also discussed Hallaj’s Divine “I” in relation to other luminaries of Islam. In the history of religious experience in Islam, which
according to the Prophets, consists in the creation of Divine Attributes in man. This experience has found expression in such phrase as “I am the creative Truth” (Hallaj) “I am Time” Muhammad(s), “I am the speaking Qur’an (Imam Ali), ‘Glory to me” (Bayazid) etc. 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.35

Iqbal reinterprets Hallaj’s declaration of Ana’l-Haqq (I am the Truth) in a radically new-way. Haqq means both God and Truth: Ana means ‘I’ as well as amnness, i.e., ego. He translated this statement as ‘Ego is the truth, to justify his doctrine of the ego, as the source of time and all that was, is and to ‘be’. Man, thus, does not remain a creature but attains the status of Creator.

Having overcome his first critical interpretation of Hallaj’s ideas, Iqbal saw in the mystic a sublime example of living faith. It is therefore, not astonishing that in the Javid Namah the famous Sufi is presented a representative of a truly dynamic individual, perhaps a forerunner of the poet himself. Iqbal even puts into Hallaj’s mouth a ghazal (lyric) (which had appeared earlier in Payam-i-Mashriq, and called him the ardent preacher of desire and free will. More than that, these two topics in the chapter “Heaven of Jupiter” are especially interesting. Although their discussion in conjunction with Hallaj may at first sight seem stranger to those readers who are not acquainted with his philosophy. Nevertheless, one must admire Iqbal’s erudition and art because he chose, in addition to the notorious and perhaps dangerous doctrine of Ana’l-Haqq, other important ideas of Hallaj including the Prophetlogy and the concept of Satan as the only true worshipper.
Although Iqbal was not very faithful to Hallaj especially in his treatment of the mystic’s doctrine, \textit{fana} (annihilation) as he was able to summarize the ideas of early Islamic Sufism on paradise in the alleged words of Hallaj:

- The ascetic is stranger in this world,
- The lover is stranger in this world.\textsuperscript{36}

For the real lover of God does not wish anything but God Himself, a subject often treated in Sufism, beginning with Rabi’a and her fellow-mystics and continued by Iqbal.

Iqbal became acquainted with Nietzsche’s work quite early. Although the ideas of the German philosopher deeply influenced his philosophy of activity but they could not be more than a milestone on his spiritual journey.

Hallaj and Nietzsche were both conceived by Iqbal as fighters against fossilized and petrified religious system and this similarity led them toward the same fate and this is what Iqbal felt about himself already in 1917. Iqbal warned some friends not to explain his concept of ego (which had appeared in the \textit{Asrar-i-Khudi}). He couched this warning in a Persian verse pointing to the fate of Hallaj:

- On the gibbet, thou canst say it.
- But on the pulpit thou canst not say it.\textsuperscript{37}

However, two decades later he summed up:

- The mystery is unfolded in two words,
- The place of love is not the pulpit but the gibbet.\textsuperscript{38}

Iqbal openly compared himself to Hallaj, he put into the mouth of the martyr-mystic (in the great scene in Jupiter-Heaven in \textit{Javid Namah}), in the
verses of unforgettable beauty. Hallaj, in his memorable monologue, tells the poet that the sound of the trumpet of resurrection had been in his breast but his people had preferred to go toward the cemetery and he complains that the theologians of his time do not know that the spirit is from God (the Ruh Allah is from the Amr Allah), as stated in the Qur’anic revelation, (Sura, XVII, 8f). The same sentiments were expressed by Hallaj in his Diwan:

By God, the breath of the (uncreated) spirit breathes

Into my body like Israfil’s blowing into the trumpet! 39

Love was, for him, the real resurrection. Hallaj sang the great melody for all those who were spiritually inclined and had never felt the enrapturing force of love, which bears the greatest affliction without complaint, nay with utmost joy.

Iqbal admires the qualities of brave love, activity and loving desire in the great mystic. He felt that he too was called to blow the trumpet of resurrection in his native land, to help to shape a living world and to stimulate humankind by the message of eternal desire and happiness.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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13. Ibid., pp. 82-83.


29. Hafeez, Malik., op. cit, pp. 311-12.


