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## The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam

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**THE RECONSTRUCTION  
OF  
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT  
IN ISLAM  
Nasiha Begum**

This article is based on Iqbal's lectures '*The Spirit of Muslim Culture*', '*The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam*' and '*Is Religion Possible?*'.

**THE SPIRIT OF MUSLIM CULTURE**

THERE IS PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. This is clear from the words of a great Muslim saint, Abdul Quddus of Gangoh. He said, "Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned."

The mystic considers the repose of unitary experience as something the end while for the Prophet it is the start from which the journey of transformation and reformation begins. After getting into special type of consciousness, the mystic keeps himself aloof from rest of the community. He does not wish to return to the worldly living. But the Prophet's return is creative. He wants to judge the value of his religious experience and transform it into the reality. The prophet wants to bring positive and constructive changes in the human world on the basis of his religious experience, while the mystic lacks the elements of creativity and transformation and reformation. He by getting into the ultimate reality considers his job done.

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According to Iqbal, there is the need to understand the cultural value of a great idea in Islam, that is, the finality of the institution of prophet-hood. A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which “unitary experience” tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks new avenues of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. The personality of prophet is very unique in a sense that he explores infinite depths of reality out of finite centre of life. He accommodates new avenues of direction with the old ones.

The Holy Quran regards *wahi* (inspiration) as universal property of life. Human beings receive light from the inner depths of life according to his needs or those of the society he belongs to. Prophetic consciousness is a mode of generating individual thought and choice by providing readymade judgments, choices and ways of action.

Man is primarily governed by passion and instinct. Inductive reasoning makes man master of his environment. The old world produced some great systems of philosophy at a time when man was governed by suggestion. But that abstract thought cannot go beyond the systematisation of vague religious beliefs and traditions, giving us no command over the concrete situations of life.

The Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world. As far as, the spirit of his revelation is concerned he is a true picturisation of the modern world.

The birth of Islam is the birth of inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot always be kept in leading strings. In order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of prophecy, the constant appeal to reason and experience and emphases on nature, history and his-self as sources of human knowledge are all different aspects of the idea of finality.

God reveals his signs in inner as well as outer experience. It is therefore the duty of man to judge the knowledge yielding capacity of all aspects of experience. The idea of finality should not be taken to suggest that the ultimate fate of life is complete replacement of

displacement of emotion with reason. The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man.

The first-half formula of Islam, that is, “there is no god but Allah, or nothing whatever is worthy of worship except Allah,” has created and fostered the spirit of a critical observation of man’s outer experience by exploring the forces of Nature. The Quran sees signs of ‘the Ultimate Reality’ in the ‘sun’, the ‘moon’, ‘the lengthening out of shadows’, ‘the alteration of day and night’, ‘the variety of human colour and tongues’, ‘the alteration of the days of success and reverse among peoples’. The duty of Muslim is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them ‘as if he is dead or blind’, for he ‘who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come.’

The spirit of Islam can best be comprehended by utilising the three clear sources of knowledge that is Self, History and Nature. According to Iqbal, we start with the intuition of the self and rise to the intuition of the ultimate reality. Man’s in finding himself is to find God and the universe: “He who knows himself knows God.” According to Iqbal, intuition may be visualised as a double-edged sword in man’s hand: with the one, he reaches the ultimate reality; with the other, he accesses the universe. The knowledge yielded by intellect is sectional, piecemeal and fragmentary because it is involved in the labyrinth of space and time. The knowledge through intuition is not imparted partially and indirectly. It is incorporeal and eternal and leads directly to the incorporeal and the eternal.

The Quran takes into consideration both conceptual and non-conceptual attitudes toward existence. Iqbal fully endorses the non-classical attitude of the Quran and develops his own theory in consonance with it. The Quran has room for both metaphysics and empirical sciences. And it is through the metaphysical searchlight that Iqbal examines scientific researches and develops his own theory.

According to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite but capable to increase. Some Muslim thinkers studied the Quran in the light of Greek thought, which was only

speculative and contrary to the true spirit of Islam. Greeks were mainly interested in theory. *Ibn Hazim* emphasised 'sense perception' as a source of knowledge. *Ibn Tamiyyah* is of the opinion that induction is the only form of reliable argument. Hence, the method of observation and experiment started. *Al-Beruni* discovered reaction time and *Al-Kindi* propounded that sensation is proportionate to stimulus.

It is misunderstood that the experimental method is European discovery. Europe has been rather slow to recognise the Islamic origin of scientific approach and method. Robert Briffault, Roger Bacon and some other Western thinkers have acknowledged that both science and scientific outlook are the contributions of Muslim civilisation to the advancement of humanity. No other civilisation, given their metaphysical worldviews, could ever claim this credit.

The first significant point to note about the spirit of Muslim culture is that, for purposes of knowledge, it concentrates on the concrete and finite. Knowledge must begin with the concrete. It is the intellectual seizure of and power over the concrete that makes it possible for the intellect of man to pass beyond the concrete. Iqbal takes full cognisance of the visible and concrete reality. He does not encourage man's contemplative spirit to the extent that it may lead to his withdrawal from the world of matter, which with its temporal flux and shifting phenomena, is organically related to the Ultimate Reality. As the Quran says:

"O company of *djinn* [ghost] and men, if you can overpass the bounds of the heaven and the earth, then overpass them. But by power alone shall ye overpass them." (Quran, 55:33)

The thought of a limit to perceptual space and time staggers the mind. The Quran emphasises God the limit and further elaborates it as that the ultimate limit is to be sought not in the direction of stars but in an infinite cosmic life and spirituality. Now the intellectual journey towards this ultimate limit is long and arduous.

Greeks understood the thought of Islam in a different way. The ideal of the Greeks was proportion, not infinity. The idea of finiteness appealed to Greeks while in the history of Muslim culture, the ideal revealed is the possession and enjoyment of infiniteness. The atomism of Democritus never became popular in the Islamic world, because it involved the assumption of an absolute space.

Ash'rite tried to overcome the difficulties of perceptual space in a manner similar to modern atomism. Nasir Tusi gave serious thought to the difficulties of demonstrating the certitude of Euclid's parallel postulate on the basis of perceptual space. He furnished basis for the hyperspace movement of our time. Al-Beruni felt the insufficiency of a static view of the universe. It turns the fixed into the variable and sees the universe not as being but as becoming.

Intuition reveals the Ultimate Reality as the Ego. This reality is being permanent, personal and eternal. It is the Creative Will and its creative activity that manifest itself in "becoming". It permeates and comprehends "becoming" and at the same time transcends "becoming" and cannot be identified with it.

Nay according to Iqbal, becoming is related to being, as character to man. Being and Becoming, time an eternity, are correlative. The ultimate self is prior to time. Time is not prior to the ultimate self. Becoming is to God as behaviour is to man. Iqbal has a different conception of Absoluteness, infinity, personality and individuality. Man and universe are related to God as the created to the Creator. They have meanings, significance and existence only in relation to God.

With the progress of mathematical thought in Islam, the idea of evolution was shaping itself. Iqbal not only believes in evolution but also tries to justify it in the light of the Quran. He pointed out that *Jahiz* was the first thinker who attributed changes in bird life due to migration and environment. *Ibn-i-Maskawaih* was the first thinker to present the theory in a systematic form. According to him, life is not the result of 'spasmodic creation'. It emerges out of matter and rising from one level to another, ultimately culminates in man. The combination of primary substances produced the mineral kingdom—the lowest form of life. A higher stage of evolution is the vegetable kingdom. The first life to appear is spontaneous grass, then plants and various kinds of trees, some of which touch the borderland of animal kingdom in so far as they manifest certain animal characteristics. Intermediate between the vegetable and animal kingdoms is a form of life that is neither animal nor vegetable, assimilating characteristics of the two (e.g. coral). The first step beyond this intermediary stage of life is the development of the power of movement and the sense of touch in tiny worms. The sense of touch, because of the process of differentiation, develops other

forms of senses until we reach the plane of higher animals in which intelligence begins to manifest itself in an ascending scale.

Humanity is touched in the ape, which undergoes further development and gradually develops stature and power of understanding similar to man. Here animality ends and humanity begins. The matter out of which the whole evolutionary process proceeds is not the ultimate reality and cannot be defined as independent of and separate from God. Iqbal believes in creative emergence, that is, the higher from the lower. But this process of emergence has before it infinite possibilities to realise. He does not stop at the present mental and physiological structure of man. Taking inspiration from Rumi, he points to the infinite vistas for the evolution and progress of man. He says that to cure the world from the pessimism and anxiety, generated by the modern theory of evolution, and to create an attitude of hope and kindle the fire of enthusiasm for life we need a Rumi. And he himself performs the task.

Iqbal explained the existence of some kind of space in relation to God. Proximity, contact and mutual separation do not apply to God. He described three kinds of space: the space of material bodies, the space of immaterial and the space of God. The space of material bodies is further divided into three: the space of gross bodies, the space of subtle bodies and the space of light.

Iraqi rejects 'parallelism' as well as interaction. According to him, there is no metaphysical 'dualism' of the soul and the body. No doubt one is distinct from the other but there is no gulf or cleavage between them. Both are the expressions of the same reality; they are constituted of the same stuff. The soul is a system of acts and so is the body. The body is not external to the soul or its accommodation to the external world. It is the habit or property of the soul. There is a difference of degree and not of kind. The soul is related to the body as God is related to the universe. As the universe is the objectification of God, the body is the objectification of the soul.

Iqbal defines the relation of the soul with the body on the analogy of the relation of God with the universe. It is not placed at some definite or particular point in the body. Human soul is neither at rest nor in motion. Passing through the infinite varieties of space we reach the Divine Space, which is absolutely free from all dimensions and constitutes the meeting point of all infinities. It is

not identical with the body either. It is neither inside nor outside the body; neither proximate nor separate from it. And yet it is in contact with its every atom. There is no causal relation between the soul and the body. Both are related to and have their source in the same reality and execute the purpose of that reality as a single and indivisible organic whole. He says:

“When I take up a book from my table, my act is single and indivisible. It is impossible to draw a line of cleavage between the share of body and that of mind”.

The body is necessary for the expression and manifestation of the soul. Our body owes its existence to the soul while our soul has its source in the Divine Reality. Alexander says that time is the mind of space and space is the body of time. Iraqi failed to discover the relation between Divine Time and serial time. Iqbal believes that serial time and space are subjective, not objective realities. But he disagrees with Kant in so far as acquisition of the knowledge of ultimate reality is concerned. Ultimate reality lies outside the normal level of experience, inaccessible to sense perception and pure reason. But the normal level is not the only knowledge-yielding level. In Iqbal’s view, our intuitive experience is not determined and systematised by space and time. When we dive within our own self and pass from sense perception to intuition of the self, we perceive reality, not as a concept or intellectual construction, not as a solid block or substratum underlying or holding together all experience but as a dynamic and creative flow living in pure duration in which time is divested of spatiality and appears in its organic wholeness. However, it is no less true that this stage is attainable only through profound meditation, when the appreciative self gets the upper hand and all its potentialities are unfolded. It is now that the psychological experience expands into the intuition of Ultimate Reality-God.

Muslim thinkers focused on a dynamic conception of the universe. For Iqbal the universe as a phase in the life of God is growing and dynamic. Space is the dynamic appearance. There is no absolute space, given and static. He equally rejects the plurality of the space orders as presented by Iraqi. Iqbal emphasises time as more fundamental than space. It is related to space as soul is to body; it is the mind of space. The serial time is relative but the real time or pure duration is the matrix of the whole universe. Iraqi

could not realise this point due to his objective approach. In the same way, as he presents the stratification of space, he gives different varieties of time relative to varying grades of beings.

The time of the gross bodies is serial-divisible into past, present and future. Its nature is such that as long as one day does not pass away the succeeding day does not appear. The time of immaterial beings is also serial in character, but its passage is such that a whole year in the time of gross bodies is not more than a day in the time of an immaterial being. The highest scale we have in the Divine Time, that is, absolutely free from the quality of passage and does not admit of divisibility, sequence and change. It has neither beginning nor end; it is above eternity.

History is regarded as days of God. It is the most essential teachings of the Quran that nations are collectively judged and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. According to the Quran, every nation has its fixed period. God's judgment on nations is said to be more relentless than God's judgment on individuals. When a nation perishes, its good members meet the same doom as its bad ones, for the former failed to check the spread of evil.

History has given us the most fundamental principle of historical criticism. Accuracy of facts is an important condition of history and it depends on the reporter's personal character. The possibility of a scientific treatment of history means a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason and finally a fuller realisation of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time.

### **THE IDEALS OF QURANIC TEACHING**

THE BASIC IDEAS, which form the foundation of the Quranic teaching, are:

#### **Unity Of Human Origin**

"And we have created you all from one breath of life," says the Quran. God has created man in His own image. Man is a finite centre of experience, a self-conscious being with unity and privacy of experience. God creates man in order to reveal His treasure and this purpose is fully realised in the self-consciousness of man with the possibilities of becoming a mirror for the Divine glories. The perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement and depends for its growth on a people's entry into the main current of world events. The growth of 'territorial nationalism' has tended to

kill the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. On the other hand, the aim of Islam as a social movement was to make the idea a living factor in the Muslim's daily life.

**A Keen Sense Of  
The Reality Of Time And The Concept Of Life  
As A Continuous Movement In Time**

ONLY A MUSLIM could have viewed history as continuous, collective movement, a real inevitable development in time. It is a creative movement and not a movement whose path is already determined. According to Greeks, time was either unreal or moved in a circle. The movement if conceived as cyclic ceased to be creative.

Spengler's main thesis is that each culture is a specific organism, having no point of contact with cultures that historically precede or follow it. He shows in his thesis that the spirit of European culture is 'anticlassical'. This is entirely due to the specific genius of Europe and not to any inspiration it may have received from the culture of Islam. The anticlassical spirit of the modern world has really arisen out of the revolt of Islam against Greek mythology. According to him, a Magian crust has grown over Islam. "Magian culture" means the common culture associated with what he calls "Magian group of religions" – Judaism, ancient Chaldean religion, early Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam.

Iqbal's main purpose in the lectures has been to secure a vision of the spirit of Islam as emancipated from its Magian overlaying, which have misled Spengler instead of seeking light from the history of Muslim thought and experience, he preferred to base his judgment on vulgar beliefs as to the beginning and end of time. According to Magian religion, there is a struggle between 'good' and 'evil', with the power of evil prevailing in the middle period and the good finally triumphant on the Day of Judgment.

This is a misrepresentation. The Magian admitted the existence of false gods. Islam denies the very existence of the false gods. Spengler fails to appreciate the cultural value of the finality of prophet-hood in Islam. One important feature of Magian culture is a perpetual attitude of expectations, a constant looking forward to the coming of Zoroaster's unborn sons. The doctrine of finality in Islam can be regarded as a psychological cure for this attitude of Magian. Time creates important people exactly at the moment when they are

severely needed. According to *Ibn Khaldun*, power is needed for the development of religion and state and it depends on individuals and their strong leadership, but for that one cannot wait for the appearance of a special being (as Magian). According to Iqbal's firm belief, all traditions relating to Mahdi—*masihiyat* or *mujaddidiyat*—are the product of Persian and non-Arab imagination. And that certainly they have nothing to do with the true spirit of the Quran.

According to Iqbal, The ultimate ideal has its source in God and is directed towards God and is universal. Hence, it resolves all petty interests and selfish motives, knitting individuals into a most living unity.

### THE SPIRIT OF MOVEMENT IN THE STRUCTURE OF ISLAM

THE SEARCH FOR a purely psychological foundation of human unity becomes possible only with the perception that all human life is spiritual in its origin. Islam is only a practical means of making the principle of *Tauhid* (Divine Unity) a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. Since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature.

Change, which is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, should not be excluded from the eternal principles. The principle of movement in the structure of Islam is known as '*ijthihad*'--means 'to exert'. In the terminology of the Islamic law it means to exert with a view to form an independent judgment on a legal question. This idea has its origin in a well-known verse of the Quran: "And to those who exert we show our path". A clear cut *Hadith* is there for its justification.

When Muadh was appointed ruler of Yemen, the Prophet asked him as to how he would decide matters coming up before him. Muadh replied, "I will judge matters according to the Quran." "But if the Quran contains nothing to guide you," asked the Prophet. "Then I will act on the precedents of the Prophet of God," said Muadh. "But if the precedents fail," the Prophet questioned again. "Then I will exert to form my own judgment," answered the governor.

With the political expansion of Islam systematic legal thought became an absolute necessity. Jurists of *Sharia* recognise three degrees of *ijthihad*:

- **Ijthihad Fi'l-Shar** is a complete authority in legislation. That is practically confined to the founders of the school;
- **Ijthihad Fi'l-Madhhab** is a relative authority. It is exercised within the limits of a particular school; and
- **Ijthihad Fi'l-Masa'il** is a special authority, which relates to the determining of rule of law applicable to a particular case left undetermined by the founders.

Iqbal expressed his views deeply regarding the first degree of Ijthihad. Sunnis had accepted the theoretical possibility of the first degree, but in practice it has always been denied ever since the establishment of the schools. This attitude is entirely against the dynamic outlook on life expressed by the Quran.

There are certain reasons of this intellectual attitude that have reduced the law of Islam practically to a state of immobility.

1. The clash between the conservative thinkers and the Rationalists was because of a misunderstanding of the ultimate motives of Rationalism. Conservative thinkers regarded the Rationalist Movement as a force of disintegration and considered it a danger to the stability of Islam. The main purpose of the conservative thinkers was preserving the social integrity of Islam and utilising the binding force of *Sharia* and thus making the structure of their legal system as stubborn as possible. According to Iqbal this is baseless scholastic controversy:

“Are the words of the Quran created or uncreated? In which belief does lay the salvation of the ummah? Are the idols of Lat and Manat chiselled by Muslim Theology? Not sufficient for the Muslims of today.”

2. The rise and growth of ascetic *Sufism*, which gradually developed under influences of a non-Islamic character. The mystic method has attracted some of the best minds in the history of mankind. But it is detrimental to some of the equally important interests of life and is prompted by a desire to escape from the arduous task of the conquest of matter through intellect.

Empirical science is very necessary stage in the life of contemplation. According to the Quran, the most important use of the universe is striving to overcome the hurdles offered by it sharpens our insight and intellect and prepares us for an insertion into what lies below it.

Sufism has emphasised the distinction between *Zahir* [outer; visible] and *Batin* [inner; invisible] and this created an attitude of indifference to all that applies to Appearance and not to reality. Muslims found security in blindly following the schools because of the intellectual mediocrities and the unthinking masses of Islam.

The destruction of Baghdad, the centre of Muslim intellectual life was indeed a great blow. Fearing for the future of Islam, the conservative thinkers of Islam focused all their efforts on the one point of preserving a uniform social life and left no room for innovative ideas in the law of Shariah. Their leading idea was social order. But they did not observe that the ultimate fate of a nation or people does not depend so much on organisation as on the worth and power of individual men. The only effective power that challenges the forces of decay in a people is the bringing up or creating awareness in self-concentrated individuals. Then they would be able to disclose new standards and reveal the depth of life.

Ibn Taimiyyah and Suyuti claimed freedom of *ijthihad*. The essential thing about these modern movements is the spirit of freedom. They rose in revolt against the finality of the schools and vigorously assert the right of private judgment. The idea of *ijthihad* has been flourishing in the religious and political thought of the Turkish nation. According to Iqbal, we have to reevaluate our intellectual inheritance. If any original contribution to the general thought of Islam cannot be made, the rapid movement of liberalism in the Islamic world can be checked by healthy conservative criticism.

There are two main lines of thought in Turkey: the Nationalist Party and the Party of Religious Reform. The nationalist party is deeply interested in state, sidelining religion. They emphasised the separation of church and state. In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not distinct domains. The nature of an act is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act that ultimately determines its character. The mistake is the division of the unity of man into two distinct and separate realities. The truth is that matter is spirit in space-time reference. The essence of *tauhid* is equality, solidarity and freedom.

The state, from the Islamic standpoint, is the transformation of these ideal principles into space-time forces. The Ultimate Reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual and its life consists in its temporal activity. Criticism is the most peculiar point of modern thought and it discloses that the merely material has no substance until we discover its spirituality. The state, according to Islam, is only an effort to realize the spiritual in a human organisation.

The primitive Christianity, started as a monastic order, had nothing to do with civil affairs and obeying the Roman authority practically in all matters. Clashes arose between the state and the church. Islam, on the other hand, is from the very beginning a civil society. It has great potentialities of expansion and development by interpretation. The nationalists' theory of state, therefore, is misleading because it suggests dualism, which does not exist in Islam.

The Religious Reform Party emphasised that Islam harmonise idealism and positivism. And as a unity of the eternal truths of freedom, equality and solidarity has no fatherland.

Modern culture is another form of barbarism and it is the result of an over-developed industrialism. Over the course of history, the moral and social ideals of Islam have been de-Islamised through the influence of local character and pre-Islamic superstitions. The universal and impersonal character of the ethical ideals of Islam faded with the process of localisation. The only alternative is to remove from Islam the hard crust that has immobilised an essentially dynamic outlook of life, rediscovering the original truths of freedom, equality and solidarity with a view of rebuilding our moral, social and political ideals out of their original simplicity and universality.

The *caliphate* or *Imamate* can be vested in a body of persons or an elected assembly. The Republican form of government is not only consistent with the spirit of Islam but has also become a necessity in view of the new forces that are set free in the world of Islam.

Ibn Khadun mentions three views of the idea of universal Caliphate in Islam. These are:

- Universal Imamate is a Divine institution and is consequently indispensable;

- It is merely a matter of expediency; and
- There is no need of such an institution.

Modern Turkey favours the second view. They consider 'the universal Imamate' as a failure. Most of the other Muslim countries looked askance at Turkey. According to Ibn Khaldun, the most powerful man as *Imam* in the country should be accepted.

Iqbal says that Muslims must be strong and powerful to form a living family of republics. They must know their own self deeply. A true and living unity must be achieved. It seems to Iqbal that God is slowly revealing the truth that Islam is neither nationalism nor Imperialism but a 'league of nations' which recognised artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only and not for restricting the social horizon of its members. If the aim of religion is the spiritualisation of the heart, then it must penetrate the soul of man and it can best penetrate the inner of man if its ideas are clothed in his mother tongue.

Turkey is enjoying the fruits of modern Islam. New situations are suggesting new points of view and are welcomed. Fresh interpretations of principles are encouraged. Turkey is on the way to creating new values. In his life has begun to move and change, giving birth to new desires and is bringing new difficulties and suggesting new interpretations.

The question is whether the law of Islam is capable of evolution. Professor Horten says:

"The spirit of Islam is so broad that it is practically boundless. With the exception of atheistic ideas alone it has assimilated all the attainable ideas of surrounding peoples, and given them its own peculiar direction of development."

Liberal movement is welcomed in Islam but it constitutes the most critical moment in the history of Islam. Liberalism has a tendency to act as a force of disintegration. The idea, which appears to be working in modern Islam, will wipe off the broad human outlook. Our religious and political reformers in their zeal for liberalism may overstep the proper limits of reform in the absence of check on their youthful fervour. We should take lesson from the great European war. It is the duty of Muslim

leaders to move forward with self-control and a clear insight into the ultimate aims of Islam as a social polity.

The universal, all-embracing spirit of Islam is always encouraging constructive thoughts of development in spite of the rigorous conservatism of our doctors. A keen study of the enormous legal literature of Islam is sure to rid the modern critic of the superficial opinion that the law of Islam is stationary and incapable of development. Unfortunately, the conservative Muslim public is not yet quite ready for a critical discussion of the *fiqh*.

Iqbal expounds that (a) from the earliest times, practically up to the rise of the Abbasids, there was no written law of Islam apart from the Quran; (b) from about the middle of the first century up to the beginning of the fourth, nearly nineteen schools of law and legal opinion appeared in Islam, and (c) the supposed rigidity of our recognised schools vanishes and the possibility of a further evolution becomes perfectly clear by carefully studying the four accepted sources of the Mohammadan law. This shows how eagerly our early jurists worked in order to meet the necessities of a growing civilisation. They used to take a wider view of things and to study local conditions of life and habits of new peoples that came within the fold of Islam. They gradually passed from the deductive to the inductive attitude in their efforts at interpretation.

### **SOURCE OF MUHAMMADAN LAW**

QURAN is being the primary source of sharia, which aspires to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his relation with God and the universe. The ultimate aim of the guiding principles in Islam is man's higher life.

Primitive Christianity attached no value to the preservation of the state, law, organisation and production. It simply does not reflect on the conditions of human society. The Quran considers it necessary to unite religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation. The dynamic outlook of Islam cannot be hostile to the idea of evolution. The spirit of man in its forward movement is restrained by forces, which seem to be working in the opposite direction. Life moves with the weight of its own past on its back and in the process of social change the value and

function of the conservative forces cannot be lost sight of. Past cannot be altogether rejected.

Islam is non-territorial in its character, aims to furnish a model for the final combination of humanity by drawing its adherents from a variety of mutually repellent races and then transforming this atomic aggregate into a people possessing a self-consciousness of their own. Islam, by means of its well-conceived institutions, has succeeded to a very great extent in creating something like a collective will and conscience in this heterogeneous mass. In the evolution of such a society even the immutability of socially harmless rules relating to eating and drinking, purity or impurity have a life-value of its own, giving a society a specific inwardness and secures external and internal uniformity which counteracts the heterorganic forces concealed in a composite society. The critics of these institutions must try to secure a clear insight into the ultimate significance of the social experiment embodied in Islam. They must look at their structure, not the social advantage or disadvantage, but ponder over the larger purpose which is being gradually worked out in the life of mankind as a whole.

The intensive scope of the Quranic principles virtually acts as 'an awakener' of human thought. Nearly half the triumphs of Islam as a social and political power were due to the legal acuteness of the jurists. The legal-judicial system of Islam is excellently worked out. But with all their comprehensiveness these systems cannot claim any finality. The *Ulema* of Islam, being accepting the theoretical possibility of a complete *ijtihad*, claim of finality. This attitude should not be maintained any longer in such an ever changing scenario. The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to reinterpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life is, perfectly justified. The teaching of the Quran that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors should be permitted to solve its own problems. The equality of man and woman in point of divorce, separation and inheritance is possible according to Muhammadan Law.

The Islamic law aims at protecting five things: Din [religion], Nafs [soul], Aql [mind], Mal [wealth] and Nasl [race]. Application of this test does work as a rule relating to apostasy tend to protect the interests of the faith in this country in view of the intense conservatism of the Muslims of India – Indian judges cannot but stick to the standard works. The result is that while the peoples are moving, the law remains stationery.

Men and women are equal. The problem is that there is an error in the interpretation of the Quran by the learned. The equality of man and woman in point of divorce, separation and inheritance is possible according to Mohammadan Law. Marriage is a social contract. The wife at the time of marriage is at liberty to get the husband's power of divorce delegated to her on stated condition and thus secures equality of divorce with her husband. From the inequality of their legal shares it must not be supposed that the rule assumes the superiority of males over females.

Such an assumption would be against the spirit of Islam. The share of the daughter is determined not by any inferiority, but due to her economic opportunities and the place she occupies in the social structure. The daughter, according to Muhammadan Law, is held to be full owner of the property given to her by both the father and husband at the time of her marriage. She is entitled to dowry. Her maintenance is responsibility of the husband. So it is now clear that there is no material difference between the economic position of sons and daughters. Modern society with its bitter class struggles compelled us to study Islamic law with reference to the impending revolutions in modern economic trends. Thereby, determining certain fundamental aspects and foundational principles with a fresh, creative and innovative faith.

**HADITH** is the second source of Muhammadan Law, that is, the traditions of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H). Traditions are differentiated in purely legal and non-legal traditions. Regarding the legal tradition, there arises a very important question as: how far they embody the pre Islamic usages of Arabia? Which are in some cases left untouched and in other modified by the Prophet. Such an inquiry is difficult to make.

The prophetic method of teaching, according to Shah Waliullah, is that the law revealed by a prophet takes special notice of the habits, ways and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specifically sent. The prophet who aims at all embracing principles can neither reveal different principles for different peoples nor leaves them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train a particular people and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal *shariah*. In doing so, he emphasises the principles underlying the social life of all mankind, applying them to concrete cases in the light of the specific habits of the people immediately before him.

The shariah values (*ahkam*) resulting from this application (for instance, rules relating to penalties for crimes) are in a sense specific to that people and since their observance is not an end in itself. Therefore, they cannot strictly be enforced in the case of future generations. Abu Hanifah made practically no use of these traditions. He introduced the principle of *istihsan*, that is, "juristic preference", which necessitates a careful study of actual conditions in legal thinking throws further light on the motives that determined his attitude towards this source of Muhammadan Law.

The traditionalists insisted on the value of the concrete case as against the tendency to abstract thinking in law. The life-value of the Quranic legal principles can be understood by carefully and intelligently studying the literature of traditions in the prophetic spirit.

IJMA is the third source of Muhammadan Law. No single Muslim country has ever given any practical importance to it. It rarely assumed the form of a permanent institution in any Muslim country. Possibly, its transformation into a permanent legislative institution was in clash with the political interests of the kind of absolute monarchy that grew up in Islam immediately after the Fourth Caliph Ali. It was favourable to the interest of the Umayyad and the Abbasids caliphs to leave the power of *ijthihad* to individual *mujtahids* rather than encourage the formation of a permanent assembly, which might become too powerful for them.

Pressure of the new world forces and the political experience of European nations emphasise values and possibilities of the idea of *ijma* to the minds of modern Islam. The growth of the republican spirit and the gradual formation of legislative assemblies in Muslim lands are welcoming steps. The transfer of the power of *ijthihad* from individual representatives of schools to a Muslim legislative assembly which, in view of the growth of opposing sects, is the only possible form *ijma* can take in modern times will secure contributions to legal discussion from laymen who happen to possess a keen insight into affairs. Only then we can give our legal system an evolutionary outlook.

A misleading statement made by a European critic that *ijma* can repeal the Quran is totally wrong. It seems that he is misled by the word "naskh". This word, when used in discussions relating to the Ijma of the companions, meant only the power to extend or limit the application of the Quranic Rule of Law and not the power to repeal or supersede it by another rule of law. Even in the exercise of this power, the legal theory is that the companions must have been in possession of a shariah value (*hukm*) entitling them to such a limitation or extension.

The question is whether later generations are bound by a decision made unanimously by the companions. It is necessary in this connection to discriminate between a decision relating to a question of fact and a question of law. In the former case, Muslims are bound by their decisions because the companions alone were in a position to know the fact. In the later case, the question is one of the interpretations only and the later generations are not bound by the decision of the companions. The Sunnah of the companions is binding in matters which cannot be cleared up by *qiyas*, but it is not so in matters which can be established by *Qiyas*.

The Ulama should form a vital part of a Muslim legislative assembly helping and guiding free discussion on questions relating to law. The only effective remedy for the possibilities of erroneous interpretations is to reform the present system of legal education in Muhammadan Countries, to extend its sphere, and to combine it with an intelligent study of modern jurisprudence.

QIYAS is the fourth basic source of fiqh is *qiyas*, that is, the use of analogical reasoning in legislation. Prevailing different social and agricultural conditions in counties conquered by Islam, the school of Abu Hanifah seems to have little or no guidance from the precedents recorded in the literature of traditions. The only alternative open to them was to resort to speculative reason in their interpretations.

The school of Abu Hanifah tended to ignore the creative freedom and arbitrariness of life and hoped to build a logically perfect legal system on the lines of pure reason. The legists of Hijaz were in clash with the legists of Iraq and their tendency to imagine unreal cases which they rightly thought would turn the Law of Islam into a kind of lifeless mechanism. These controversies among the early legists led to a critical definition of the limitations, conditions and correctives of *qiyas*. The legists of Iraq originally emphasised the eternal aspect of the 'notion', while those of Hijaz laid stress on its temporal aspect. Their criticism of Abu Hanifah and his school brought out the necessity of observing the actual movement and variety of life in the interpretation of juristic principles. The school of Abu Hanifah, which fully assimilated the results of this controversy, is absolutely free in its essential principle and possesses much greater power of creative adaptation than any other school of the Mohammadan Law.

The essential principle of this school (i.e. *qiyas*) is only another name of *ijthihad* that was permitted in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. The closing of the door of *ijthihad* is pure fiction, suggested partly by the crystallisation of legal thought in Islam and partly by that intellectual laziness, which is especially in the period of spiritual decay turned great thinkers into idols. The present attitude cannot be explained in the light of the foundational principles and the structure of our systems. Muslims can proceed towards reconstruction with penetrative thought and fresh enthusiastic experience. Mere adjustment to modern condition of life should not be made.

### WHAT DOES HUMANITY NEED?

TODAY, humanity needs three things:

- a spiritual interpretation of the universe;

- spiritual emancipation of the individual; and,
- basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on spiritual bases.

Personal revelation can bring living conviction and not the pure reason. The reason that pure thought has little influence upon men, while religion has always elevated individuals and transformed societies as a whole. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life and the result is a perverted ego, seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich.

Europe today is the greatest hinderance in the way of man's ethical advancement. Muslims have these ultimate ideas on the basis of revelation and with him the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction. Muslims ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on the earth. Muslims today should appreciate their position, reconstruct their social life in the light of ultimate principles and evolve the spiritual democracy being the ultimate aim of Islam out of the partially revealed purpose of Islam. It is not a life of self-negation and self-effacement that is to be aimed at but a life full of struggle and creative activity directed towards the absorption of Divine attributes that leads ultimately to the perfection of the self and immortality.

Sense experience and intellectual pursuits, meditation and intuition, love and prayer, all characterise this struggle and creative activities. It is through this approach that Iqbal tries to lead society from a state of confusion and conflict to one of order and harmony from the realm of illusions to the kingdom of truth, from the chaotic whirl of appearance to stability within and outside.

We do not grow up in a finished world. The universe itself is growing and dynamic and we fully participate in its growth. For this purpose we need power and vision, both of which give not only life and vitality but restore that faith and hope which bring to life the greatest depth and ceaseless activity, well enlightened by and directed towards its source of the ideal God.

### **IS RELIGION POSSIBLE?**

THE WAY TO INTUITION, according to Iqbal, lies through religion. Intuition of the self, as a psychological experience, is approachable to all even at the normal level. But the higher intuition or the intuition

of God is achieved gradually through a definite course, only as religious consciousness expands in intensity and richness. Religion is not to be confused with mysticism. Higher religion is only a search for a higher life. It is essentially an experience, recognising the necessity of experience as its foundation, long before science came to practice. It is a genuine effort to clarify the human consciousness.

### **PERIODS OF LIFE**

RELIGIOUS LIFE can be divided into three periods: faith, thought and discovery. In the first period, religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a people accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command. Here individual's inner growth and expansion cannot be elaborated much. Then there is rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority. Here religious life seeks its foundations in a kind of metaphysics—a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view.

In the third period, metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. Here religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power and the individual achieved a free personality not by releasing himself from the fetters of law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness. According to a Muslim Sufi: "No understanding of the Quran is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to Prophet. Unless the Book's each verse and part, be revealed unto your heart, Interpreters though much profound, its subtle points cannot expound."

The Book is not imposed as something external but is revealed to a prophet. It belongs to the period of discovery or intuition. According to a Muslim Sufi philosopher: "God is a percept; the world is a concept." The external world is only an intellectual construction and that there are other levels of human experience capable of being systematised by other orders of space and time. These levels are in which concept and analysis do not play the same role as they do in the case of our normal experience. The level of experience to which concepts are inapplicable cannot generate any knowledge of a universal character because concepts alone are

capable of being socialised. The standpoint of a man who relies on religious experience for capturing reality must always remain individual and incommunicable. It does not mean that the religious man's pursuit is futile. In fact, the incommunicability of religious experience gives us a clue to the ultimate nature of the ego. Conservatism is very bad in religion because it shatters the ego's creative freedom and closes up the paths of fresh spiritual enterprise. That is why the medieval mystic techniques can no longer produce original discoveries of ancient truths.

Religion in its higher manifestation does not imply a life denying and fact-avoiding attitude. It does not work as an external imposition on the free and spontaneous expression of human personality. On the contrary, it opens fresh and more fruitful direction to communicate with the ultimately real. It awakens and actualises the level lying close to the normal level, directing one's vision to the inner side of the self. It regenerates the inner powers and possibilities of the human self. It expands and enriches the fields of human thought and emotion. It unlocks fresh spiritual sources. It confers upon man the power to overcome his intellectual reconstruction and to penetrate through the crust of causal sequence. It enables man to come into contact with the everlasting and eternal source of life and power.

We treat individuals as mere functions and do not try to reach the inmost individuality of men. The climax of religious life is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual selfhood. It is in contact with the 'most real' that the ego discovers its uniqueness, its metaphysical status and the possibility of improvement in that status. The experience that leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact, but a vital fact, and attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation cannot be captured in the net of logical categories.

The method of dealing with reality by means of concepts is not at all a serious way of dealing with it. Religion, being the mode of actual living, is the only serious way of handling reality. As a form of higher experience it is corrective of our concepts of philosophical theology or at least makes us suspicious of the purely rational process which forms these concepts.

Science can afford to ignore metaphysics altogether but religion cannot. There are potential types of consciousness, lying close to our

normal consciousness. If these types of consciousness open up possibilities of life giving and knowledge yielding experience, then religion as a form of higher experience is possible.

Every culture has a form of naturalism and every form of it ends in some sort of atomism. The 'ultimate reality' is knocking at the door of our conscience from other directions as well. The modern man's naturalism has given him an unprecedented control over the forces of nature but has robbed him of faith in his own future. The modern man has ceased to live from within due to results of his intellectual activity. In the domain of thought he is living in open conflict with himself and in the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others. He is entirely cut off from the depths of his own being. The technique of medieval mysticism has taught man self-denial and made him perfectly satisfied with his ignorance and spiritual slavery instead of reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life and preparing him for being participant of history. Modern Muslim is busy in seeking fresh sources of energy in patriotism and nationalism that is sickness and the strongest force against culture.

Neither the technique of medieval mysticism, nor nationalism, nor atheistic socialism can cure ills of a despairing humanity. The modern world stands in need of biological renewal. Religion can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the greatest responsibility of scientific advancement and restore to him that attitude of faith is capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition and a civilisation that has lost its spiritual unity due to its inner conflict of religious and political values.

Religious experience is perfectly natural. It possesses a cognitive value for the recipient and a capacity to centralise the forces of the ego and to grant or offer him a new personality. Prophet takes into account the ground realities and the life and movement with a view to create new patterns of behaviour for mankind. We must bring change in our present attitude in order to climb on the heights of truth. We must welcome every sort of challenging task. The essential nature of religion is outside the domain of analytical psychology.

Our modern psychology has left us stand in a very deplorable condition about the nature of the religion. The result of these modern psychological theories is that religion does not relate the human ego, to any objective reality beyond oneself. It is a kind of biological device. Sexual self-restraint is only a preliminary stage in the ego's evolution. The ultimate purpose of religious life is to make the ego's evolution towards the destiny of the ego. Higher religious life concentrating on special experiences of reality seriously affects the destiny of ego as a possible permanent element in the constitution of reality. The modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer fringe of religious life and is still far from religious experience.

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi does not take intuition as the spiritual experience that at its highest stage leads to complete extinction and effacement of every finite existence and to complete absorption of the finite self into the all-comprehensive reality of God. The picture of such an experience is presented in the experience of Abdul Momin, which is described as follows:

“Heaven and Earth and God's Throne and Hell and Paradise have all ceased to exist for me. When I look round I find them nowhere. When I stand in the presence of somebody I see no body before me; nay even my own being is lost to me. God is infinite. No body can encompass Him; and this is the extreme limit of spiritual experience. No saint has been able to go beyond this.”

Sheikh Sirhindi does not take the state presented here as the extreme limit of spiritual experience beyond which no saint can go. According to Sheikh Sirhindi, there are five stations of spiritual life: Qalb (the heart), Rooh (the spirit), Sirr (the inner), Khafiy (the hidden), and Akhfa (the hidden). They are called *Alam-i-Amr* (five essences of the realm of the spirit). *Alam-i-Amr* must be passed through before one reaches that unique experience which symbolises the purely objective.

*Modern Europe*, Nietzsche's mental history is not without a parallel in the history of Eastern Sufism. But it was a failure. His vision was mainly determined by his internal forces and remained unproductive for want of expert external guidance in his spiritual life. Allama Iqbal wished that Nietzsche were born in the times of Sheikh Sirhindi to receive spiritual light from him.

“Would that he had lived in Ahmed's time,  
So that he might have attained eternal joy.”

And he himself could be Nietzsche's spiritual mentor, were he be in Iqbal's times:

"If that Frankish sage  
Were present in this age  
Him Iqbal would teach  
God's high place and reach"

## CONCLUSION

THE RELIGIOUS and the scientific processes though involving different methods are identical in their final aim i.e. the most real. They are parallel to each other and are really descriptions of the same world with the difference only that in the scientific process the ego stand point is necessarily exclusive, while in the religious process the ego develops and inclusive attitude. Both of them are directed to the purification of experience in their respective spheres. Religion is far more anxious to reach the ultimately real than science.

A distinction must be made between experience as significant of the normally observable behaviour of reality and experience that of the inner nature of reality. In the domain of science, its meaning is realised in reference to the external behaviour of reality, while in the domain of religion it is taken as representative of some kind of reality and its meanings in reference mainly to the inner nature of that reality is discovered. The practical student of religious psychology has a keen sense of objectivity as that of the scientist in his own sphere of objectivity. Working as a critical analyst of experience strives to eliminate all subjective elements with a view finally to reach the absolute objective.

This final experience is the revelation of a new life process, which is original, essential and spontaneous. The eternal secret of the ego is that the moment he reaches this final revelation he recognises it as the ultimate root of his being.

For Iqbal this growth and development is determined from within. It reveals the element of self-guidance and directive control in man. It discloses that the finite ego lives in pure duration, which implies that it is not fettered by the serial time, but is a creative and purposive reality. Elements of mystery and emotions are absolutely lacking in the religious experience. To secure a wholly non-emotional experience, the use of music in worship is forbidden and to

emphasise the necessity of daily congregational prayers in order to counteract the possible anti-social effects of solitary contemplation.

The religious experience is perfectly nature and possesses a biological significance of the highest importance to the ego. The only danger to the ego in the Divine quest is the possible relaxation of his activity, caused by his enjoyment of and absorption in the preceding experiences.

The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something. It is in the ego's effort to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his objectivity and acquire a more fundamental "I am". Iqbal's intuition promises to give the direct vision of the being. It promises to bring man face to face with the very essence of God.

The end of the ego's quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality. It is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it. The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act 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 remade by continuous action. It is a moment of supreme bliss and also a moment of the greatest trial for the ego.

According to Iqbal, we must participate in growth of the universe. This approach is essential for bringing man into touch with the everlasting fountain of life and power and for giving that vision which is essential for resolving all conflicts, inner and outer, in the socio-political domain, which is not possible without internalising every apparent externality. It raises humanity above bondage and division, internal and external conflicts and all painful opposition; and it is so because it is based upon true and living experience, the religious experience.