

MAN GOD RELATIONSHIP IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM OF IQBAL

*SHAGUFTA BEGUM**

What is the general structure of this universe in which we are living? Is this a readymade universe? Is there any element which is of permanent nature? Who is the creator of this universe? What is the nature of man and what is the relationship of man and God? These questions are common to philosophy, religion and science and they have explored these issues from their own viewpoints. The concepts of man and God are so interwoven that we cannot study them separately.

From the time man has began to think about universe, he has an intuitive feeling that there is multiplicity in the universe and beyond this multiplicity there must be one reality, of which this phenomenal world is an exposition. Then question arises what is this one reality? Ancient Greek philosophers for the first time thought over this question. According to Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximandar and Democritus the reality was material in nature. According to Plato, the ideas or Forms are real and this phenomenal world is merely shadows or reflection of the same. These Forms and Ideas reside in a world of ideas. All cognition through senses and experience is illusion, this world is merely a shadow and ultimately going to be disappearing and absorb into that absolute Idea, from which it was firstly emanated. Plato was unable to explain motion of things in the world. Ideas in his thought are motionless, thus, the universe would be motionless too and the universe would be an absolutely static universe. On the other hand, this is a world of

*Dr. Shagufta Begum is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of the Punjab, Lahore-54590 (Pakistan).

change and motion. Plato did not explain the unceasing becoming of things.

According to Iqbal, Greek philosophy has been a great cultural force in the history of Islam, but it took two hundred years to perceive that the spirit of the Quran was anti classical. Aristotle's concept of a static universe; his categories of thought and his logic played an important role in shaping the philosophical development of both east and west. In East Buddah's doctrine of "Nirvan" was essentially identical with the idealism of Plato. Islamic world within three centuries, after the death of Hazrat Muhammad (*Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) suffered the vortex of pantheism and the new creed of Sufism was developed. It was nothing but idealistic pantheism as it believed that God is immanent and man will ultimately absorbed to God. The unreality of this world was very much emphasized. Muhyddin Ibn Arabi, in Muslim mystics is a typical representative of this school of thought.

Iqbal, the profoundest thinker of the Muslims, takes the problem of man, God and universe relationship and elaborates his views in a very impressive way by saying:

"The main purpose of the Quran is to make in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe."¹

To explain the man and its relationship with God has always been the object of man's searching and satisfaction-seeking mind. This is man's intuitive desire that seeks and finds satisfaction in postulating a superhuman or supernatural agency or agencies as the cause or causes of the inexplicable events or phenomenon in the world. The advocates of the theory of mechanical evolution held that everything of this world evolved from the primordial elements matter, motion and force. Life and mind are merely expressions of it. But human life is not determined only by mechanistic principles.

"Human being interested in realization of higher end, that they looked before and after, pine for what is not, are facts at which the scientific mind looks askance, though

the subject matter of the aesthetic, moral and religious aspirations does not come within the purview of science.”²

Science refused to admit the existence of God as the sole creator of the universe, on the plea that it is not capable to understand the problem of creation out of nothing. On the other hand, belief in the existence of such Divine personality forms the corner-stone of true religion.

Descartes was the first thinker who made a serious and systematic effort to reach the Ultimate Reality. He said, “I think I am.” This is true reality which cannot be denied. A firm belief on one’s existence is a thing which is free from any kind of doubt and vagueness. Descartes has made this certitude the basis of his philosophy. He deduces the external world, God and ethical laws from it. Afterwards, Leibniz and Bergson also made the conscious experience, the basis of their investigation. Iqbal also belongs to this tradition. According to him conscious experience is an authentic source to reach the Ultimate Reality.

According to Iqbal, there are three levels of experience. These are the level of matter, the level of life and the level of mind. These are the subject-matter of Physics, Biology and Psychology respectively.

Matter, according to Iqbal, is a structure of events. Life and consciousness are purely spiritual in nature. He rejects the ancient concept of matter and declares ‘life’ as a spiritual principle. Charles Darwin had explained life and consciousness in a mechanical way, but Iqbal says that life is superior to matter. Matter and life are not two different things. Reality is one but science does not give any systematic and overall view of reality. Iqbal says:

“It is a mass of sectional views of Reality. Fragments of a total experience which do not seem to fit together.”³

Natural science is not able to answer the question of mutual relationship of matter, life and mind. Iqbal criticizes the natural sciences which are unable to answer these questions.

“... the various natural sciences are like so many vultures falling on the dead body of Nature, and each running away with a piece of flesh.”⁴

It doesn't show Iqbal's hatred for natural sciences but a keen desire to know the reality as a whole. At another place, he admires natural sciences in this way:

“There is no doubt that the theories of science constitute trustworthy knowledge, because they are verifiable and enable us to predict and control the events of nature.”⁵

The right way to know the true nature of reality is a careful analysis of conscious experience. Our perception of the things that confront us is superficial and external but the perception of our own self is internal, intimate and profound. When we fix our gaze on our own conscious experience what we find? Bergson answers:

“I pass from state to state. I am warm or cold. I am merry or sad, I work or I do nothing, I look at what is around me or I think of something else. Sensations, feelings, volitions, ideas — such are the changes into which my existence is divided and which color it in turns. I change then, without ceasing.”⁶

There is nothing static in the inner life of a man, all is constant movement, unceasing flux of states, a perpetual flow there is no halt no resting place. When we think about constant change, it is unavoidable not to think about time. A keener insight into the nature of conscious experience reveals two aspects of the self, the appreciative and the efficient. On its efficient side it enters into the relation with external world. This is practical self of daily life, deals with the external order of things. The time in which this self lives is a time which we predicate as long or short or we can call it serial time in the words of Bergson. The other side of the self is appreciative self which use to remain alien to us due to our constant pursuit of the external world.

The self (ego) reveals itself as a unity of what we call mental states. Mental unity is absolutely unique in nature. The concepts of space and time are different for body and ego. The ego is not space bound in the manner in which body is space bound. Time span of the ego is different from the time span of the different bodily events. Then what is this I'? Iqbal says:

“It is this unique interrelation of our mental states that we express by the word ‘I’.”⁷

Bergson explains that we are only assured of this reality that we exist.

“The existence of which we are most assured and which we know best is unquestionably our own, for of every other object we have notions which may be considered external and superficial, where as of our selves our perception is internal and profound.”⁸

The same thing was also discussed by Descartes when he said, “cogito ergo sum” (I think I am) he said it is my conscious existence which is undoubtedly. The real personality of a man is not a thing it is an act. The whole reality lies in man’s directive attitude. Mind and body become one in any action.

“The system of experiences we call soul or ego is also a system of acts. This does not obliterate the distinction of soul and body; it brings them closer to each other.”⁹

Ultimate Reality according to Iqbal is spiritual and he calls the Ultimate Reality an ego. “I have conceived the Ultimate Reality as an ego; and I must add now that from the Ultimate Ego only egos proceed.” The world, from the mechanical movement of atoms to the free movement of thought in the human ego is the self revelation of the ‘Great I am’ Verily! I am Allah! no God there is but I; so worship me, and establish prayer for My remembrance (Al-Quran, 20:14). The matter according to Iqbal is a collection of low degree egos. There are degrees in expressing ego hood. This ego hood gradually rises and reaches its height in man. “And assuredly We have created man and We know what so ever his soul wispereth unto him, and we are

nigher unto him than his jugular vein.” (Al-Quran, 50:16) Man in which ego hood reaches its height, occupies a genuine place in the heart of Divine Creative Energy and so possesses a much higher degree of reality he is the only being who is participating in the creative life of his maker. Iqbal says:

“It is born out of his own creative freedom where by he has chosen finite egos to be participators of His life, power and freedom.”¹⁰

The finite ego proceeds from the Infinite Ego and gets its identity. Now it acquires its recognition keeping the gap between the Ultimate Reality and itself. For this reason Iqbal has given the example of pearls

“Like pearls do we live and move and have our own being in the perpetual flow of Divine life.”¹¹

The reality of pearl is water and it spends its life in water but does not lose its individuality.

“It is not merely by receiving and intellectually shaping the impressions, but mainly by molding the stimuli to ideal ends and purposes that the total self of man realizes itself as one of the greatest energies of nature. In great action alone the self of man becomes united with God without using its own identity, and transcends the limits of space and time.”¹²

From the side of Wahdat-ul-Wujud the finite ego is just like a drop of water and it loses its individuality in the sea of infinity of Ultimate Reality. But, according to Iqbal, the finite ego after meeting with the Ultimate Reality does not lose its identity. By getting closer to ‘it’, it becomes reflector of the Ultimate Ego. This is the point where we can see that Iqbal is the follower of panentheism (Wahdat-ul-Shahood) rather than pantheism (Whadat-ul-Wujud). Matter according to Iqbal is the outcome of the divine creative will; it is the external expression of the Divine Life.

There are two ways for man to know the reality. First is that we select the way of observation and think over the symbols of

the Ultimate Reality. The other way is to opt the direct relation through our inner self. Through it we can get touched with those aspects of reality too, which are beyond our sense perception. Inner experience is 'ego' at work. We can appreciate ego in perceiving, judging and willing. The ego nourishes when it clashes with other egos. Thus, the presence of others is a blessing in Iqbal's thought. Prayer is a direct relationship with God. Man directly communicates with Him and gets an experiential knowledge of His existence. He is a co-worker of God in this universe who implements His rules and regulations. When the man is attracted by the forces around him, he gets more energy due to this clash. He has the capacity to build a new and waster world in the depths of his inner self.

"It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes."¹³

The important thing is the attunement of man's attitude to God which results in his moral and spiritual escalation. This is an instrument to realize the axis of one's faith and thought and, thus, discovers his real personality in a "larger whole of life". This is the height to which a man could elevate himself. Iqbal extends the sphere of prayer by declaring that:

"All search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer. The scientific observer of nature is a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer."¹⁴

Another aspect of God man relation could be understandable by the Quran's clear and distinct viewpoint. The Quran in its simple and forceful manner emphasizes that man is vicegerent to God on earth. He is chosen of God.

"Afterwards his Lord chose him Adam for himself and turned towards him" (Al-Quran, 20:22) with all his faults, is meant to be a representative of God on earth. "When thy Lord said to the angels, "verily I am about to place one in my stead on earth" they said, "wilt Thou place there one who will do ill there

in and shed blood, when we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" God said, "Verily I know what you know not." (Al-Quran, 2:30). The man is the trustee of a free personality "verily we proposed to Heavens and to the Earth, and to the mountains to receive the "trust", but they refused the burden and they feared to receive it. Man undertook to bear it, but hath proved unjust, senseless!" (Al-Quran, 33:72) Now we refer back to that Quranic message Iqbal has interpreted that the "main purpose of the Quran is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe."

The true realization of this consciousness is basically a way of knowledge. The discursive reason is the only form of knowledge available to man. But it could not be able to give a comprehensive view about the nature of God. All our efforts to built the relationship with Him is simply to know Him more and more. A. C. Ewing observed, all kinds of arguments give some support to the belief not that they are really conclusive.

REFERENCES

- 1 Allama Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 7.
- 2 Fazlur Rehman, *Philosophy, Science and Other Essays*, p. 3.
- 3 Allama Mohammad Iqbal, *Op cit.*, p. 33.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 34.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 33.
- 6 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 1.
- 7 Allama Mohammad Iqbal, *Op cit.*, p. 80.
- 8 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 1.
- 9 Allama Mohammad Iqbal, *Op cit.*, p. 84.
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 64.
- 11 Syed Abdul Vahid, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal's Thoughts*, p. 115.
- 12 Allama Mohammad Iqbal, *Op cit.*, pp. 57-58.
- 13 *Ibid*, p. 10.
- 14 *Ibid*, p. 73.