



Unleashing the Power Within: The Transformative Concept of *Khudi* in Iqbal's Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Historical evidence shows that secularism and modernism have tempted contemporary man to prioritize temporal possessions over his spiritual needs as God's representative on Earth. In Muhammad Iqbal's expansive philosophical canon, the dual processes of obedience (*Ita'at*) and self-control (*Zabt-e-Nafs*) give rise to the concept of *Khudi* (selfhood), which serves as a revolutionary catalyst for individual agency and spiritual enlightenment. *Khudi* encompasses more than simply self-awareness; it encapsulates the limitless potential that resides in every person to transcend boundaries, mold their fate, and open heavenly possibilities. In Iqbal's revised view of selfhood, the path to a meaningful, creative, and resilient life lies in realizing one's inherent connection to the infinite rather than in identifying with one's ego. This research delves into the ways that practicing *Khudi* can help one connect with their inner strength, conquer challenges, liberate themselves from society limitations, and reach a state of divine oneness. Not content to just advocate for self-empowerment, Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* paves the way for revolutionary personal and collective transformation by shedding light on the latent force within, reawakening the dormant divine spark, and setting fire to a quest

Introduction

The modern individual has drifted far from the true essence of their existence, losing sight of life's ultimate purpose in the wake of global secularization and the intellectual distancing from the divine. In this state of confusion, humanity finds itself at odds with God, nature, and each other are struggling to understand its role as God's steward on Earth, and the place it holds in the grand hierarchy of creation. The absence of God from daily life has left modern man disconnected from his own Self, alienated from the natural world, and estranged from the broader human community. As a result, the world stands on the brink of environmental collapse and unending conflict, driven by a lifestyle that is unsustainable and void of deeper meaning.

In this study, we will delve into Iqbal's profound philosophical exploration of the ego and its intricate bond with the world. His philosophy offers a pathway to navigate the fractured human condition by reigniting a sense of purpose rooted in spiritual awakening. A closer look at the contrasting dynamics of the East and West that shaped Iqbal's thoughts on the ego will provide insight into how modern man can reclaim his divine connection. Through Iqbal's lens, we may uncover a roadmap for revitalizing the human spirit, rediscovering inner strength, and ultimately, finding purpose and balance in an age of uncertainty.

Situation in the West and Muslim world

There had been a long slump in Muslim intellectual achievement before to Iqbal's arrival on the intellectual scene, particularly in comparison to the West's meteoric rise in areas such as science, technology, and education. It appeared as though a number of elements were weighing down Islam's once-vibrant intellectual and spiritual inheritance.

The pervasiveness of the *wahdat-al-wujud* (unity of existence) doctrine was one such element; although it provided many with significant spiritual insights, it also caused many to take a passive stance toward the world. When taken out of context, this philosophical stance in undivided India contributed to apathy and acceptance of one's fate by making people feel cut off from the real world. The once-progressive Muslim intellect has started to turn inward, resulting in an unbreakable intellectual stagnation.

This was compounded by the fatalistic outlook encouraged by the pervasive conservatism among the Muslim populace. A lot of people had given up on changing their lives and accepted their fate as written in the stars, rather than welcoming change and innovation. Curiosity, creativity, and the desire to learn, which had once propelled Islamic civilization to its greatest heights, were stifled by this mental barrier.

Another layer of oppression was added when Western nations colonized the East. The desire for independence was stifled as India became one of many Muslim countries subjected to colonial control. In order to further their imperial goals, the conquerors gradually replaced indigenous educational systems with their own. In addition to being politically controlled, Muslim countries also became intellectually reliant on their conquerors. (Vahid, 1988)

Iqbal was compelled to act as a scholar and demand reform in response to the deplorable state of affairs in the Muslim world. So, in an effort to alleviate some of the more pressing issues confronting Muslims, he developed his ego philosophy. To be more specific, the following problems faced by Muslims inspired his ego philosophy:

- Muslims were no longer the dominant force in world politics following the collapse of the Mughal Empire. This meant that Muslims in Britain were systematically marginalized in many areas of public life, including schools;
- Muslims were no longer the dominant force in world politics following the collapse of the Mughal Empire. This meant that Muslims in Britain were systematically marginalized in many areas of public life, including schools;
- The subjection of all Muslim countries by Europe saddened Iqbal. They have lost all respect, decency, and self-worth as a result of this pitiful circumstance. It also made them emotionally and psychologically dependent on the West;
- The Muslims' passion and enthusiasm for life waned. Refraining from engaging in worldly pursuits in order to be near to God;
- Sufi teachings, which state that union with God is possible at the pinnacle of human spiritual development; Muslims developed an inferiority complex and began to adopt Western cultural practices as a means to overcome it. (Razak, 2013)

Iqbal noticed that, in contrast to the Muslim world, the West was home to a plethora of brilliant scientists who were uncovering the mysteries of nature via the application of science and technology. The West may have amazed the entire globe with its inventions and discoveries, but it failed, in Iqbal's view, to resolve the most vexing problems pertaining to human life. Why are we here, how did we come to be, and where do we fit in God's grand scheme of things? This is just one of many profound questions that scholars and scientists have failed to fully address. On top of that, Iqbal saw firsthand how the West's infatuation with power and greed for material prosperity drove its people. Colonialism and the First World War, in Iqbal's view, stripped them of their humanity.

Time and again throughout his poetry, Iqbal bemoans the fact that modern life has become so mechanistic that people, especially in the West; fail to grasp its ultimate meaning and purpose. Such a circumstance does not, in his view, prove that man was created for a specific purpose. He was in agreement with Western scientific inquiry as a whole, but he disagreed with their secular worldview. He claims that Westerners achieve technological dominance but suffer from an absence of inner harmony and peace. He attributes this to the Western mentality of prioritizing material possessions over one's spiritual well-being. Iqbal provided an explanation for the terrible plight of Westerners by stating:

“A peculiar dilemma has befallen the modern man as a result of his scientific specialization and philosophy of criticism. While his Naturalism has granted him unparalleled power over nature's powers, it has also stripped him of any hope for his own future. Because of this, contemporary man no longer lives "soulfully," or from the inside out, as his intellectual pursuits have taken center stage. When it comes to economic life, he is at odds with himself, and when it comes to politics, he is at odds with others. He is becoming more and more weary of life as a result of his inability to rein in his vicious egotism and his insatiable need for riches”. (Iqbal, 1991, p.265)

As a person who thought critically about the state of humanity, Iqbal gave an honest appraisal of the situation and spoke his criticisms of people everywhere in an impartial manner. He didn't stop at critiquing the West; he also laid out the common misconceptions held by Easterners about how to deal with the outside world. People in the East, and Muslims in particular, were caught up in a web of pseudo-mysticism, which was completely at odds with what was happening in the West. They should have been doing what God had commanded—helping to build the world—but instead they were doing the exact opposite. Their outlook on life was characterized by Iqbal's analysis of the circumstance as:

Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life, and thus preparing him for participation in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thralldom. (Iqbal, 1996, p.148)

Iqbal, seeing the plight of his fellow humans in the East and West, urged everyone to live their best lives. Reading Iqbal's ego philosophy, one gets the impression that he advocated a life that satisfies both man's spiritual and material desires. A balanced lifestyle, in his view, may do wonders for a man's ego development. Iqbal also believed that the best way for humanity to advance is for the East and the West to work together, combining their best traits. The Qur'an describes the perfect man, and we can create him by combining the Eastern practice of *dhikr* with the Western practice of *fikr*, which refers to science, technology, and intellectual understanding. The Qur'an's message is '*Fikr*' and '*dhikr*,' in Iqbal's view. (Ali, 1988)

Iqbal ideas on the Human Ego/Self/*Khudi*

The self means "Ego, subject, I, me". This refers to the individual rather than the object or the sum of all objects. In every field of study, the self plays a key role. Regarding religious matters, "how impossible it is to discuss the deeper problems of religion with any adequacy save on the basis of a carefully considered theory about the essential nature of the human self" The concept of punishment and vengeance disappears from ethics when the self is rejected. "For every issue with human behavior to exist, there must be an individual with the capacity for self-aware and value-differentiating behavior." Its significance is recognized in philosophy due to the fact that many of the facts and difficulties encountered by philosophical disciplines originate from actions performed by ourselves, and another reason is that we engage in this activity when we philosophize about the data we collect. (Qaiser, 1989)

A prevalent theme in Sufi literature is the identification of the soul with the self. The Persian word "*Jan*," meaning "life," is used both for the physical body and the spiritual self, serving as a synonym for the Arabic word "*Ruh*" in mystical poetry. A similar conflation of ego and soul occurs in philosophical writings. (Hakim, 1959)

The theory of ego, or *khudi*, is at the heart of Iqbal's work. This is an undeniable fact for him. There are two primary ways in which the human ego serves its purpose here on Earth. First of all, it hasn't battled or conquered its environment. With this victory, it becomes closer to God, the most free person in the universe, and achieves freedom. Second, in order to achieve immortality, the ego must be in a perpetual state of tension. The ego gains control of both space and time when it achieves immortality and freedom.

Achieving immortality and freedom isn't the only goal of the ego; it must also contribute to humanity's progress toward perfection by bringing out a new breed of man. This ideal man is the pinnacle of human achievement. This ideology is based on the firm belief that there are three paths that humanity can take in its evolution: the pursuit of personal freedom, the attainment of immortality, and the creation of supermen. In what ways can we achieve this evolution? By strengthening one's character, is Iqbal's response. Every man has an obligation to do what strengthens his character and stay away from what damages it. "The idea of personality gives us a standard of value: it settles the problem of good and evil," he says. Things that strengthen character are excellent, whereas those that diminish it are harmful. From a person's unique perspective, we must evaluate works of art, religious texts, and ethical codes. (Vahid, 1988)

Iqbal defines *Khudi* as an individuating principle that gives each aspect of creation its own distinct place in the universe; this principle is universal and cosmic in nature, according to Iqbal. He sees it as a guiding principle for developing one's own identity and expressing one's own will. But *Khudi* remains a mystery to Iqbal. In most circumstances, we are unable to comprehend it since its nature is concealed from us. Throughout his extensive poem *Asrar-e-Khudi*, he frequently alludes to these aspects of *Khudi* while simultaneously praising its boundless potential for advancement. The fundamental concept of *Asrar-e-Khudi* is *khudi* as a creative principle, which is the reality underlying the universe's system. The other theme is that the limitations and determinants of *khudi* are determined by its strength. Here are the first few lines of *Asrar-e-Khudi*:

The forms of life are the manifestations of Khudi,
Whatever I behold is due to the effects of Khudi
When khudi got awakened in me,
It made manifest the phenomenal world to me.
Hundred worlds are hidden within your essence. (Ashraf, 1955, p.7)

According to Iqbal, the creative principle known as *Khudi* undergirds the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, respectively, and serves as a means of will to power. It has boundless, unrestricted flexibility in its response. Since *khudi's* actions and projects are a manifestation of the divine intent in history, Iqbal argues that it should constantly adhere to the self-imposed limits of divinity. Since his theory suggests that Khudi is both historical and Tran historical, it does not include any paradoxes.

Iqbal has emphasized self knowledge and self-awareness. He does, however, stipulate that one must train oneself before expressing their essence when he advises that one should do so. Being able to express one's will effectively requires mastery and competence.

So, it's clear that studying what makes a person's ego or personality strong is crucial to understanding man's evolutionary trajectory. As per Iqbal, the following are many methods of self-improvement based on values.

Iqbal says that the feeling of one's self is present in every person. But unless a man develops a yearning to achieve some higher objective or objectives, his self is not awakened. In this regard Iqbal used the word Love, Faqr, Courage, *Kasb-i-halal* and Creative and Original Activity are specific terms (Siddiqui, 1996, p.76). Let's deal these significant values:

Love: - Love, in Iqbal's view, is the regenerative force that may rescue humanity from its vices and unravel the mysteries of life. Iqbal believed that love, in its purest form, gives rise to sublime ideas and deeds in this world. Assimilation and absorption of the beloved's outstanding qualities is what love is to him. "It signifies the desire to assimilate, to absorb," he defines it. The development of principles and the pursuit of their fulfillment constitute its pinnacle. Both the lover and the beloved are uniquely shaped by love. Because nothing less would fulfill the essence of the seeker, the pursuit of the most distinctive personality both defines and implies the sought-after. (Qaiser, 1989) Here is how Iqbal explains the link between love and ego:

The luminous point whose name is the self,
Is the life-spark beneath our dust.
By love it is made more lasting,
More living, more burning, more glowing.



Transmute thy handful of earth into gold,
Kiss the threshold of a Perfect man.
From the wine of love spring many spiritual qualities:
Amongst the attributes of Love is blind devotion.
Be a lover constant in devotion to the beloved,
That thou mayst cast thy noose and capture God. (Vahid, 1988, pp.47-48)

Poets, mystics, and religious philosophers from all over the world have all written beautifully about the role love plays in shaping human character, but no one has ever used the term "love" in such a broad sense or placed such an emphasis on love's role in shaping human personality as Iqbal. For Iqbal, the renowned mystic poet Maulana Rumi may be the closest contemporary.

Here, in the West, readers might get a glimpse—albeit a partial one—of Iqbal's conception of love through this lovely paragraph from Thomas Kempis:

“Love feels no burden, thinking nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility; for it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible. It is therefore able to undertake all things, and it completes many things, and brings them to a conclusion, where he who does not love, faints and lies down”. (Vahid, 1988)

An individual's ego or self is motivated to constantly strive for its own freedom when such an understanding of Khudi and *ishq* is imparted. He is free to do what he pleases, within the bounds that he sets for himself or that God sets for him. However, he has attained the intimacy with God. However, God's intervention becomes nonexistent when a flawless man achieves even the closest proximity to God. He says:

Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqdeer se pahle
Khuda bandey se khud poochhey batta teri raza kya hai
Take your Khudi to such a height that before
Making your destiny God may seek to know your wish. (Ali, 1992, p.44)

Faqr:- The scorn for the benefits that the bulk of people seek, whether in this life or the next, is what *faqr* Iqbal means. The mentality that allows a man to pursue any goal, ignoring all pleasures and rewards other than the pursuit of worldly aims, is known as *faqr*. The common understanding of the word is "beggary" or "to beg," and *faqir* fits this description perfectly; he subsists only on the generosity of others. It is critical that we now grasp Iqbal's intended meaning of the term *faqr*. (Vahid, 1988)

Iqbal tells us that just as that just as love or *Ishq* (the highest end of life) strengthens the self of a man, so (begging) weakens it. He believes that no one should have to rely on others for their survival. Defining "*Su'al*" (begging), he explains that it encompasses whatever acquired without exerting one's own effort. A wealthy man's son, who relies on his inheritance to support himself, is reduced to begging. To the same extent, so is the individual who steals other people's ideas without generating his own. Loving someone is like taking action, whereas asking is like sitting on your hands. Being passionate about something motivates people to take action, whereas being content to rely on material possessions or mental constructs rather than their own efforts keeps them from moving forward.

Iqbal condemns inaction and glorifies or give much importance to action. Every action is based on some idea or thought. But Iqbal lays more emphasis on action than thought. Why is it so?

A person's thoughts are not everything to Iqbal. If one wants to be powerful and perfect, he should set lofty goals for himself, and he thinks it is a man's duty to know and discover himself. None of this can be accomplished without thinking. However, after these matters are resolved. The game of life is action, plain and simple. You are here to take action. This is a playing field. Without doing something, even the most brilliant ideas are useless. A person's actions determine the quality of their life. Iqbal says:

Action makes life a paradise or a hell.

Man in his origin is concerned neither with light nor fire. (Siddiqui, 1996, pp.78-9)

In short, action is unavoidable as well as profitable for human life. Those who toil away at their dreams should be the only ones to receive life's rewards. According to Iqbal, the essence of living is doing, and the real measure of doing good deeds is striving to make each day better than the one before.

Begging not only keeps man from doing anything, but it also keeps him from developing admirable traits like self-respect and an attitude that values happiness more than material possessions. One can protect themselves from the world's basic temptations by placing less value on financial wealth. The

faqir's only motivation is the joy he derives from working for a good cause; he has no hidden agendas. Iqbal goes on to state, in reference to the limiting influence of wealth and worldly goods. He says:

Oh self-respecting Faqr your time is fast coming,

The greed for gold and silver has sapped the spirit of Western nations. (Vahid, 1988, p.50)

There isn't much room for improvement in this *Faqir* description. Absolute selfishness is the defining characteristic of a Faqir. Similar to the Hindu principle of *Nishkama Karma*, which states to do deeds without expecting any outcomes or fruits, he works for the benefit of the world without considering personal gain either now or in the future.

Courage: - No human being can do great things in this world if he has moral and physical courage. The only way to overcome the challenges that come your way is to be brave, because it is the only way to advance. Only the feeble give way to difficulty. When faced with adversity, the brave can only grow in character and reveal their inherent strengths. Those who are brave can endure wounds that weaken others, but they will rise above their fears because of this. No amount of cowardice, capitulation, or willingness to give in can overcome the power of conviction. Demonstration of forces has no effect on the courageous, who refuse to bow to any behests except those of God:-

“Let your Love burn all doubts,

Be subservient only to truth which will make a lion of you”. (Vahid, 1988, p.51)

"Living dangerously" and resisting all powers that want to impede the enjoyment of legal rights is the royal road to prosperity, an idea that Iqbal persistently promotes on the younger generation. Iqbal says:

“The code for men of courage is truth and fearlessness,

God's lions know not the cunning of a fox”. (Vahid, 1988, p.52)

Thus, bravery involves more than only braving bodily threats. It functions as a foundation for human character, a fulcrum around which other qualities revolve.

Kasb-i-Halal (Lawful Acquisition):- The phrase's expressiveness and inclusivity make it applicable to all areas of human endeavor, serving as a guide for human behavior. "Lawful earning" is the direct

translation of the phrase. Nonetheless, the expression denotes gaining knowledge and possessions by one's own hard work and perseverance, as stated by Iqbal. Therefore, it forbids any consideration of self-renunciation and instead advises a life of active combat for ego. It is detrimental to one's ego to take pleasure in material possessions for which one has not really labored. Even inheriting wealth is considered bad and does not fall under *Kasb-i-halal*. (Vahid, 1998)

Creative and Original Activity: - Iqbal encourages a life of action for the correct growth of ego by glorifying *Kasb-i-halal*, as we have seen. In order to maintain and strengthen the ego, he goes on to say that any activity must be creative and original. We must firmly reject the futile practices of mimicry and imitation. He says:

Do not de-mean your personality by imitation,
Preserve it, as it is a priceless Jewel. (Vahid, 1988, pp.54-55)

Iqbal emphasized the importance of man's autonomy and inventiveness. Additionally, he cites the Qur'an, which lists other creators beside God. Rather than being based on a person's religious beliefs or lack thereof, Iqbal argues that the essential distinction between a believer and an unbeliever is that the former is a creator and the latter is not.

So, Man's *Khudi* is an expression of his desire for individuality and originality. Since being free is essential to the creative process, it follows that freedom and creativity are complementary and mutually supportive. In addition, the human ego displays the Divine attributes of freedom and creativity in order to mold and form its unique historical position in accordance with its ambitions. Thus, freedom is the essence of the ego and the wellspring of all other values and principles. Iqbal argues that human *Khudi* exist for the sole purpose of achieving liberation.

Furthermore, according to Iqbal there are several characteristics in our life which hinders to develop our true self. Fear, Grief, Disappointment, Imitation, Segregation from community and Slavery are considered as disvalues in human life. These are characteristics or forces of *Nafs-e-Ammara* or the conventional self, which if allowed to dominate, would doom the destiny of man as ascending spirit thus rendering impossible the realisation of true self. What happens to man when *Nafs-e-Ammara* is in the

driver's seat is that he stops caring about God and starts worshipping things like women, other men, and money. (Arasteh, 1972) Here, the question naturally arises: how can we overcome these negative forces? Iqbal suggests that fear, sorrow, and disappointment arise from a lack of faith in God and the absence of the burning passion of *Ishq*. Yet, the cure is simple and that is by cultivating unwavering faith in God and igniting the flame of *Ishq* within our hearts, we can dispel these afflictions. The path to healing, he asserts, is found in *Tawhid*, *Faqr*, and *Ishq*. For when a person truly fears God, they fear nothing else. He says in a verse:

“The one prostration (before God) which you do with such a heavy heart,
Saves you from a thousand prostrations (before others)”. (Qaiser, 1989, p.136)

Conclusion: *Khudi*, in Iqbal's worldview, is more than just a rallying cry for personal agency; it's a path to enlightenment and discovery. By praising the importance of developing one's latent abilities, Iqbal encourages us to break free from conformity and build a unique identity that is in sync with God's plan and our own unique human mission. By empowering people to accept and celebrate their unique qualities of independence, bravery, and creativity, *Khudi* acts as a powerful agent of change. Iqbal hopes that by doing this, we can all rise to the level of the individual and advance as a species. When we tap into our inner strength, we do more than just change ourselves; we pave the way for a greater revolution in how we think, what we do, and our spiritual progress, which will ultimately lead to a future where everyone can live according to their own terms.

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