

# IQBAL'S ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS TIME- CONCEPTS AND HIS OWN VIEW OF TIME

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Time is a central concept in Iqbal's philosophy. From various accounts we know that the tradition "la Tasubbu ad-dahr" i.e. "Do not vilify Time (for Time is God)" accompanied Iqbal all his life.<sup>58</sup> He even surprised Henri Bergson with it when he visited the French philosopher in Paris. "He took his prophetic word for a designation of that over-whelming reality of which time and space are only aspects"<sup>59</sup> In 1933, he wrote, "If dahr is continuous and extended and it is Allah himself-what then, is space ? Just as if time is a kind of reflection on dahr, so space must also be a kind of reflection or dahr".<sup>60</sup> Iqbal emphasizes time more than space. Time is more fundamental than space, it is related to space as soul is to the body. It is the mind of space.<sup>61</sup> Pure duration is the matrix of the whole universe.<sup>62</sup>

## **Newton: absolute time**

Newton conceives of time as he conceives of space, as a kind of actually subsisting framework in which objects are set, and so as belonging to the actual in the same fashion for every kind of individual observer, however he may observe and without reference to any condition.<sup>63</sup> According to Newton, all motion may be accelerated or retarded, only the flow of absolute time cannot be changed. The same duration with the same persistence occurs in

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<sup>58</sup> Schimmel, A. M. *Gabril's Wing*, Leiden, 1963, p. 290.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>61</sup> *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahor, 1962, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Kbatoun, J. *The Place of God, Man and Universe in the Philosophic System of Iqbal*, Karachi, 1963, p. 103.

<sup>63</sup> Haldane, V. *The Reign of Relativity*, London, 1922, p. 42.

the existence of all things, whether the motion be rapid, slow or zero.<sup>64</sup> Iqbal refers to Newton's description of time as "some-thing which in itself and from its own nature flows equally" and says that the metaphor of stream implied in this description, suggests serious objections to Newton's view of time. "We cannot understand how a thing is affected on its immersion in this stream and how it differs from things that do not participate in its flow. Nor can we form any idea of the beginning, the end, and the boundaries of time if we try to understand it on the analogy of a stream. Moreover, if flow, movement, or 'passage' is the last word as to the nature of time, there must be another time to time the movement of the first time, and another which times the second time, and so on to infinity".<sup>65</sup> Thus, according to Iqbal the notion of time as something wholly objective is beset with difficulties.

### **The Ash'arites: atomic time:**

Time, though it cannot be regarded as objective, is not to be regarded as something unreal. Iqbal also admits that although we possess no sense-organ to perceive time, it is a kind of flow, and as such has a genuine objective or atomic aspect.<sup>66</sup> Modern quantum theory which assumes the discontinuity of matter, confirms the Ash'arite theory of atomic time. Iqbal quotes Professor Rongier in support: "Contrary to the ancient adage, Nature non facit saltus, it becomes apparent that the universe varies by sudden jumps and not by imperceptible degrees. A physical system is capable of only a finite number of distinct states. Since between two different and immediately consecutive states the world remains motionless, time is suspended, so that time itself is discontinuous: there is an atom of time."<sup>67</sup> According to the Ash'arites then, time is a succession of individual "nows". It follows that between moments

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<sup>64</sup> Siddiqi, R. "Iqbal's Conception of Time and Space" in Iqbal as a Thinker, Lahore, 1966, pp. 73-74.

<sup>65</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 73-74.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

of time there is an unoccupied moment of time or a void of time.<sup>68</sup> Iqbal finds the idea of atomic time unsatisfactory.<sup>69</sup> The idea is due to the ignorance or neglect of the psychologically subjective aspect of time and considers time almost as a created, objectively given fact, whereas a personal, living, creator is posited. Now if this creator is living one must somehow be able to predicate a time of this creator.<sup>70</sup>

In Iqbal's words, "we cannot apply atomic time to God and conceive Him as a life in the making, as Professor Alexander seems to have done in his lectures on Space, Time and Deity."<sup>71</sup> A better understanding of Divine Time can be obtained through introspection, seizing that experience of appreciative time which alone can account for creativeness. In this way, time precedes space psychologically, and is the source of space.<sup>72</sup>

### **Time and Relativity**

As we have seen, Iqbal is in general agreement with the theory of relativity as regards the concepts of space and time but he raises one objection to it. Iqbal thinks that Einstein's theory considers to be unreal. "A theory which takes time to be a kind of fourth dimension of space must, it seems, regard the future as something already given, as indubitably fixed as the past. Time as a free creative moment has no meaning for the theory it does not pass, events do not happen we simply meet them".<sup>73</sup>

According to an eminent mathematician, Iqbal has a misconception about the theory of relativity which regards time as a fourth dimension not of space, but of the space-time continuum. Thus the theory gives as much

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<sup>68</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 73.

<sup>69</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal" *Die Welt Des Islams* (N. S.) Leiden, 1954, Vol. III.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 75.

<sup>72</sup> Bausani, A. "The concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", p 180.

<sup>73</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 30-39.

reality to time as to space.<sup>74</sup> It is to be pointed out that Iqbal did not presume to understand the implications of the theory of relativity, since he was not a mathematician. “It is not possible”, he said, “for us laymen to understand what is the real nature of Einstein’s time.”<sup>75</sup>

Ouspensky: time as the fourth dimension of space:

Iqbal objects to the conception of time held by the Russian writer Ouspensky in his book *Tertium Organum*.<sup>76</sup> Ouspensky regards time as a fourth dimension of space and conceives the fourth dimension to be the movement of a three-dimensional figure in a direction not contained in itself. Just as the movement of the point, the line and the surface in a direction not contained in them gives us the ordinary three dimensions of space, in the same way the movement of the three dimensional figure in a direction not contained in itself must give us the fourth dimension of space. And since time is the distance separating events in order of succession and binding them in different wholes, it is obviously a distance lying in a direction not contained in the three-dimensional space. It is perpendicular to all directions of three-dimensional, space and is not parallel to any of them, Ouspensky describes our time-sense as a misty space-sense and argues that our psychic constitution is such, that to one-dimensional, two-dimensional or three-dimensional beings the higher dimension always appears as succession in time.<sup>77</sup> In other words, what appears to us as time is really space. This means that time is not a genuine creative movement, and what we call future events are not fresh happenings but things already given and located in an unknown space. Iqbal points out that in his search for a fresh direction Ouspensky needed a real serial time, i.e. a distance separating events in the order of succession. Thus time which was viewed as succession, at one stage. is reduced, at another stage, to what does not differ in anything from other

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<sup>74</sup> Siddiqi, R. “Iqbal’s Conception of Time and Space”, pp. 29-30.

<sup>75</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p 39.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.. pp. 39,40.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40.

lines and dimensions of space.<sup>78</sup> Ouspensky regarded time as a genuinely new direction in space because of its serial character. It is divested of this character. In Iqbal's opinion it cannot be regarded as an original directions.<sup>79</sup> Iqbal has another objection to Ouspensky's viewpoint. Razi-ud-Din Siddiqi writes, "Iqbal is right when he objects to the theory of serial time put forward by Ouspensky...that on the basis of this theory, it would be possible, by a careful choice of the velocities of the observer and the system in which a given set of events is happening, to make the effect precede the cause".<sup>80</sup> "It appears to me", writes Iqbal, "that time regarded as a fourth dimension of space really ceases to be time."<sup>81</sup>

### **Time as relative: Dawani and Iraqi:**

Mulla Jalal-ud-Din Dawani and 'Iraqi take a relativistic view of time. According to the former if we take time to be the kind of span which makes possible the appearance of events as a moving procession and conceive this-span to be a unity, then we cannot but describe it as an original state of Divine activity, encompassing all the succeeding states of that activity. Dawani adds that a deeper insight into the nature of succession reveals its relativity, so that it disappears in the case of God to whom all events are present in a single act of perception.<sup>82</sup>

Iqbal finds Iraqi's view of time even more satisfactory.<sup>83</sup> 'Iraqi conceives of infinite varieties of time, relative to the level of being intervening between materiality and pure spirituality. The time of gross bodies may be divided into past, present and future, and until one day is over the succeeding day does not come. The time of immaterial beings also possesses a serial character but

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>80</sup> Siddiqi, R. "Iqbal's Conception of Time and Space", p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>83</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", p. 131,

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. Rising to the highest level we reach Divine time which is absolutely free of the quality of passage, and does not admit of divisibility, sequence and change. It is above eternity, having neither beginning nor end. The priority of God is not due to the priority of time; on the other hand, the priority of time is due to God's priority. The Quran describes Divine time as the "Mother of Books" in which the whole of history freed from causal sequence, is gathered up in a single super-eternal "now".<sup>84</sup>

As has been pointed out, Iqbal's conception of "time in God" differs. in fact, even from Iraqi's viewpoint, being based on psychological experience unknown to the Muslim philosophers.<sup>85</sup> According to Iraqi's conception of Divine Time, divine knowledge is the same as "omniscience in the sense of a single indivisible act of perception which makes God immediately aware of the entire sweep of history regarded as an order of specific events, in an eternal "now".<sup>86</sup> Iqbal does not hesitate "to carry the robust anthropomorphic conception of God in the Quran to its farthest consequences. Denying God this "passive omniscience' of traditional theology"<sup>87</sup> Iqbal says, "By conceiving God's knowledge as a kind of reflecting mirror, we no doubt save His fore-knowledge of future events, but it is obvious we do so at the expense of His freedom. The future certainly pre-exists in the organic whole of God's creative life, but it pre-exists as an open possibility, not as a fixed order of events with definite outlines."<sup>88</sup>

### **Razi and the debate on time:**

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<sup>84</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 75-76.

<sup>85</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammed Iqbal". p. 181.

<sup>86</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 78.

<sup>87</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", pp. 181-182.

<sup>88</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 79.

For Iqbal, Fakhruddin Razi sums up the debate on time in Muslim thought with a declaration of skepticism concerning the real nature of time.<sup>89</sup> Razi's book is mainly explanatory.<sup>90</sup> This does not surprise Iqbal since Razi's method was, on the whole, objective, and "a purely objective point of view is only partially helpful in our understanding of the nature of time. The right 'course is a careful psychological analysis of our conscious experience which alone reveals the true nature of time."<sup>91</sup>

### **McTaggart: the unreality of time:**

Iqbal refers to Dr. McTaggart's argument relating to the unreality of Time. According to McTaggart, time is unreal because every event is past, present and future, "Past, present and future are incompatible determinations. Every event must be one or the other, but no event can be more than one. But every event has them all. If M is past it has been present and future. If it is future, it will be present and past. If it is present, it has been future and will be past. Thus all the three incompatible terms are predicable of each event, which is obviously inconsistent with their being incompatible, and inconsistent with their producing chance"<sup>92</sup> The illustrate the point let us take a concrete example. Queen Anne's death is past to us, it was present to her contemporaries and future to William III. Thus the event of Queen Anne's death combines characteristics which are incompatible with each other.<sup>93</sup>

In Iqbal's opinion, McTaggart's argument proceeds on the assumption that serial time is final. "If we regard past, present, and future as essential to time, then we picture time as a straight line, part of which we have travelled

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<sup>89</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", p 181.

<sup>90</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 76.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>92</sup> McTaggart, J. E. "The Unreality of Time", *Mind!*, London, 1908, Vol. XVII. New Series, No. 65, p. 468.

<sup>93</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 57.

and left behind, and part lies yet untravelled before us. This is taking time, not as a static absolute holding the ordered multiplicity of fully-shaped cosmic events, revealing serially, like the picture of a film, to the outside observer”.<sup>94</sup> Iqbal refers to C.D. Broad who points out that a ‘future event cannot be characterized as an event Before the death of Queen Anne the event of her death existed only as an unrealized possibility.’<sup>95</sup> Iqbal’s answer to McTaggart’s argument is that the future exists only as an open possibility and not as a reality. When an event is described as being both past and present it cannot be said to combine incompatible characteristics.<sup>96</sup> The fallacy is in regarding ‘E is occurring now’ as analyzable in a way similar to the analysis of ‘X is red’, not only is ‘now’ regarded as a quality like ‘red’, but a confusion is made between E, an event, and X, a substance”.<sup>97</sup> Iqbal states that when an event X does happen it enters into an unalterable relation with all the events that have happened before it. These relations are not at all affected by relation of X with other events which happen after X by the future becoming of Reality. Hence there is no logical difficulty in regarding an event as both past and present.<sup>98</sup> Iqbal admits, however, that McTaggart’s argument “requires much further thinking” even though it does not touch real time or pure duration to which the distinctions of past, present and future do not apply.<sup>99</sup>

### **Nietzsche: cyclic time:**

Iqbal criticises Nietzsche’s view of time as it appears in connection with his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence<sup>100</sup> in the third book of Thus Spake Zarathustra. Nietzsche introduces the theme of Eternal Recurrence. This doctrine states “that all things recur eternally, and we ourselves with them,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>97</sup> Cleugh, M.F. Time, London, 1937, p. 152.

<sup>98</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought In Islam, p. 58.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

and that we have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us.”<sup>101</sup> So for Nietzsche, “everything goes, everything comes back: eternally roll, the wheels of being”.<sup>102</sup> Whatever is happening now will happen again and has happened before. The great things of the world recur, but so do tile small. The return is “not a new life or a better life or a similar life: I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life in the greatest things and in the smallest”.<sup>103</sup> according to Nietzsche, time is not a subjective form ; it is a real and infinite process which can only be conceived as “periodic”.<sup>104</sup> On the principle of the conservation of energy, the quantity of energy in the universe is constant. The world is a closed off unity in which there can be no, dissipation of energy. The amount of energy being fixed, various combinations of energy-centres recur an infinite number of times.”<sup>105</sup> Time is thus pictured by Nietzsche as repeating itself in identical cycles. It has no beginning or end. Iqbal regards Nietzsche’s viewpoint as a kind of mechanism based on the hypothetical constancy of quantity of energy.” According to Iqbal, Nietzsche does not “seriously grapple with the question of time. He takes it objectively and regards it merely as an infinite series of events returning to itself over and over again.”<sup>106</sup>

Iqbal points out the difference between Nietzsche’s concept of time and his own concept as described in *Asrar-e-Khudi*. Life to Nietzsche is repetition, to *Asrar-e-Khudi* creation. The perfection of the Ideal Person according to Islam consists in realizing this aspect of time which can be described only as the eternal “now”. To Nietzsche there is no such thing as the eternal “now”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Holingdale, R. J. Nietzsche, London, 1965, p. 199.

<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Magill. F. N. *Masterpieces of World Philosophy*, London, 1963, p. 690.

<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Holingdale, R. J. Nietzsche, p. 199.

<sup>104</sup> *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 114.

<sup>105</sup> Enver, I. H. *The Metaphysics of Iqbal*, Lahore, 1963, p. 53.

<sup>106</sup> Siddiqi, R. “Iqbal’s Conception of Time and Space”, p. 21-22.

<sup>107</sup> *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 115.

### **Ibn Khaldun: time as movement:**

Iqbal commends the work of the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun who broke away from the magian conception of time as a circular movement and regarded the historical process as a free creative movement and not as a process which had already been worked out with definite landmarks.<sup>108</sup> This view has been put forward with greater accuracy in modern times by Bergson.<sup>109</sup> Bergson “linked the solution of the problem of time with such vital problems as liberty and personality, thus forestalling Iqbal’s active valuation of time as a sword. Iqbal corrects Bergson in a theistic sense, pointing to a direction that Bergson himself was eventually to follow in the course of his religious evolution.”<sup>110</sup>

### **Bergson: serial and non-serial time:**

In his view of time, Iqbal comes nearest to Bergson of whom he says “among the representatives of contemporary thought Bergson is the only thinker who has made a keen study of the phenomenon of duration in time”.<sup>111</sup>

Bergson uses “time” in two senses. In its narrow or superficial sense it means spatialized or clock time. In its wider or real sense it is conceived as “duree”<sup>112</sup> which is not mere blank lastingness, enduring through a hypostatized, spatialized Time ; it is cease-less continuous flow in which all things live and move and have their being.<sup>113</sup> Like Heraclitus, Bergson insists that the notion of ceaseless change is fundamental, but unlike him he does

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<sup>108</sup> Vahid, S. A (Editor) Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal, Lahore, 1964,p. 24.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 251 and 296.

<sup>110</sup> Bausani, A. “The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal”, p. I83.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> The Reconstruction of Religions Thought in Islam, p. 46.

<sup>113</sup> Cleugh, E. M. Time, p. 109.

not stultify the notion by permitting cyclic repetition. For him, *duree* evolves ever new and newer forms, that is, it is genuinely creative.<sup>114</sup>

Like Bergson, Iqbal distinguishes between the serial and non-serial aspects of time. The former is associated with what Iqbal calls the efficient self and the latter with the appreciative self. The efficient or practical self is related to the spatial world. While retaining its unity as a totality, the efficient self reveals itself as a series of discrete (quantum) states. The time of this efficient self is just a dimension of the space-time continuum. It is of the serial character postulated by the Ash'arites.<sup>115</sup>

The time in which the efficient self lives is the time of which we predicate “long” and “short”. It is hardly distinguishable from space. Time, thus regarded, is not true time, according to Bergson.<sup>116</sup> the appreciative ego lives in pure duration, i.e. change without succession According to Iqbal, the unity of the appreciative ego is like that of the germ in which the experiences of its ancestors exist, not as a plurality, but as a unity in’ which every experience permeates the whole. There is no numerical distinctness of states in the totality of the ego, the multiplicity of whose elements is wholly qualitative. There is change and movement but they are not divisible. Their elements inter-penetrate and are wholly non-serial in character. The time of the appreciative self is a single “now” which the efficient self spatializes into a series of “nows”.<sup>117</sup>

Bergson also points out the difference between time as infected by the idea of space and pure time: “When we speak of time we generally think of a homogeneous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity. Would not time, thus understood, be to the multiplicity of our psychic states what intensity is

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Siddiqi, R. “Iqbal’s Conception of Time and Space”, pp. 32-33.

<sup>117</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 47.

to certain of them—a sign, a symbol, absolutely distinct from true duration? Let us ask consciousness to isolate itself from the external world, and, by a vigorous effort of abstraction, to become itself again. We shall then put this question to it: does the multiplicity of our conscious states bear the slightest resemblance to the multiplicity of the units of a number? Has true duration anything to do with space? ...If time as the reflective consciousness represents it, as a medium in which our conscious states form a discrete series so as to admit of being counted, and if on the other hand our conception of number ends in spreading out in space everything which can be directly counted, it is to be presumed that time, understood in the sense of a medium in which we make distinctions and count, is nothing but space it follows that pure duration must be something different.”<sup>118</sup> It has been pointed out that Bergson does not deny succession to pure duration. For him the flow of pure duration is a succession of interpenetrating states. Iqbal takes away succession to pure duration. For him the flow of pure duration is a succession of interpenetrating states. Iqbal takes away succession altogether. For him pure duration is eternity in the sense of change without succession.<sup>119</sup>

### **Bergson: pure duration known intuitively**

Iqbal agrees with Bergson that pure duration is known intuitively rather than intellectually. Bergson points out the barrenness and artificiality of intellectual abstraction which cannot perceive the organic unity of life. “Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality”.<sup>120</sup> Iqbal’s distinction between intellect and intuition, like Bergson’s is in alignment with his distinction between spatialized time and *duree*. In “Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadid,” Iqbal says:

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48,

<sup>119</sup> Bergson, H. *Time and Free Will* (translated by Pogson, F. L.), London, 1910, pp. 90-91.

<sup>120</sup> Sharif, M. M. “Iqbal on the Nature of Time”, *Iqbal Review*, October, 1960, p. 37.

ابد را عقل ما نا  
سازگار است  
'یکی' از گیر و دار او  
هزار است  
چولنگ است او  
سکون رادوست دارد  
نیند مغز و دل بر  
پوست دارد  
حقیقت را چو ما سع  
پاره کر دیم  
تمیز ثابت و سیاره  
کردیم  
خرد در لا مکان طرح  
مکان بست  
چو زناری زمان را بر  
میان بست  
زمان را در ضمیر کود  
ندیدم

Unable to perceive infinity,  
The intellect just multiplies pure unity.  
Lame, it likes to stand still ;  
And blind, gives up the kernel for the shell.  
The stars and plants that we see  
Are fragments of reality  
Creations of the intellect  
Which must dissect.  
We never saw Time with our inner sight  
And have invented year and month and day and night.

(Translation by Husain, H. “The New Rose-Garden of Mystery”, p. 7)

and again he comments upon the inadequacy of the intellectual approach to the question of time:

خرد بھر ابد ظرفی ندارد  
نفس چون سوزن  
ساعت شمارد

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<sup>121</sup> Cleugh, B. M. Time, p. 116.

تراشد روزها، سحرها  
نگیرد شعله و چنید  
122 شررها

The Intellect counts every breath With a clock's hand,  
As if breath were 'Time's unit So it can never comprehend  
And take the measure of Infinity.  
It only fashions night and day,  
Imaginary parts of 'Time.  
Afraid to seize the flame,  
It gathers sparks alone.

(Translation by Husain, H. "The New Rose-Garden of Mystery", p. 13)

He compares the intuitive and the intellectual mode of perceiving reality:

ضمیر زندگانی  
جاودانی ست  
به چشم ظاهرش بینی،  
123 زمانی ست

Life's essence is eternal, though

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<sup>122</sup> Bergson, H. Creative Evolution (translation by Mitchell, A.), London, 1911, p. 322.

<sup>123</sup> Zabur-e-'Ajam, p. 216.

Seen with the body's eye

It is a part of Time

(Translated by Husain, H. "The New Rose-Garden of Mystery", p. 13)

Thus for Iqbal, it is "only in the moments of profound-meditation when the efficient self is in abeyance, that we sink into deeper self and reach the inner centre of experience."<sup>124</sup> However, it is to be remembered here that Iqbal does not agree with Bergson in thinking that thought only spatializes living process. For him, in its deeper movement, that is "in its true nature", thought "is identical with life"<sup>125</sup>.

### **Bergson: time as creative**

Iqbal shares with enthusiasm an idea found both in the Qur'an and in Bergson's philosophy, namely, that time is creative. Bergson vehemently opposed the old idea expressed in Ecclesiastes that "there is nothing new under the sun".<sup>126</sup> On the contrary, he urges, that if we picture duration as a ceaseless flow, we are bound to hold some kind of an evolutionary view in conjunction with it.

Time is not static, it is a process continually working towards ever new forms which cannot be predicted.<sup>5</sup> He takes the example of a painter. "The painter is before his canvas, the colours are on the palette, the model is sitting—all this we see, and also we know the painter's style: do we foresee clearly what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem: we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist ; but

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>125</sup> Zabur-e-'Ajam, p. 228.

<sup>126</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 47-48.

the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art.”<sup>127</sup>

According to Bergson, “science can work only on what is supposed to repeat itself—that is to say, on what is withdrawn, by hypothesis, from the action of real time.”<sup>128</sup> and thus “concentrated on that which repeats, solely preoccupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of times Iqbal also points out that creation and not repetition is the characteristic of real time. “If time is real, and not a mere ‘repetition of homogeneous moments which makes conscious experience a delusion, then every moment in the life of reality is original, giving birth to what is absolutely novel and unforeseeable. To exist in real time is not to be bound by the fetters of serial time, but to create it from moment to moment to moment and to be absolutely free and original in creation. Creation is opposed to repetition which is characteristic of mechanical action. That is why it is impossible to explain the creative activity of life in terms of mechanism”.<sup>129</sup>

### **Bergson: time as non-teleological movement**

Despite the many similarities between the thought of Bergson and Iqbal, there are certain significant differences. Bergson denies the teleological character of Reality on the ground that it makes time unreal. According to him “the portals of the future must remain wide open to Reality otherwise it will not be free and creative”.<sup>130</sup> Thus if teleology is admitted the primordial freshness of *duree* will be nullified. Iqbal points out that this objection only holds good so long as teleology means the acting out of a plan in view of predetermined purpose. As Professor Bausani observes “such a religious predestinationism would destroy the freedom of both God and man”.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, pp. 51-52.

<sup>128</sup> Cleugh, E. M. Time, p. 119.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>130</sup> Bergson, H. Creative Evolution, p. 360.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

Teleology is to be understood not as a mechanical but as a vitalistic-creative process—a line not already drawn, but a line in the drawing—an actualization of open possibilities. The world-process “is purposive only in this sense that it is selective in character and brings itself to some sort of present fulfillment by actively preserving and supplementing the past”.<sup>132</sup> For Iqbal, then, ultimate Reality “is pure duration in which thought, life and purpose interpenetrate to form an organic unity”<sup>133</sup> In his opinion, Bergson’s mistake was that he overlooked the forward-looking aspect of consciousness which makes it teleological”.<sup>134</sup>

According to Iqbal, Bergson was wrong in that he considered pure time as preceding the Person, of whom alone both pure duration and *elan vital* can be predicated”.<sup>135</sup> Pure time cannot keep the multiplicity of objects and events together. The multiplicity of nature broken up into innumerable instants can only be grasped by the appreciative act of a lasting self which can build it up together in a lasting synthesis”.<sup>136</sup> For Iqbal, time although an essential element in reality, is not reality itself”.<sup>137</sup> In Greek and Hindu thought time was bound to things visible and escape from it was possible only through self-annihilation but Iqbal boldly introduces Time into the very heart of God.<sup>138</sup> God is not the unmoved mover, the God portrayed by the Qur’an is an active, changing and living God.<sup>139</sup> For Iqbal, God lives in eternity: and in serial time. The former means change without succession

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>133</sup> *The Reconstruction-of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 50.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>135</sup> Bausani, A. “The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 161.

<sup>136</sup> *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>138</sup> Khatoun, J. *The Place of God, Man and Universe in the philosophic System of Iqbal*, p. 109.

<sup>139</sup> Bausani, A. “The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 161.

while the latter is organically related to eternity in so far as it is a measure of eternity.<sup>140</sup>

In Javid Mama, Iqbal attempts to portray life in the non-serial time of the world beyond creation:

" در گشتم از حد این کائنات  
پا نهادم در جهان بی چهارت  
بی یمین و بی یسار است این  
جهان  
فارغ از لیل و نهار است این  
جهان"  
"اندر آن عالم جهان دیگری  
اصل او از کن فکان دیگری  
لا زوال و هر زمان نوع دگر  
نادِ اندر وهم و آید در نظر  
هر زمان او را کمال دیگری  
هر زمان او را جمال دیگری  
روز گارش بی نیاز از ماه و مهر  
گنجد اندر ساحت او نه  
سهر"<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>141</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 58.

I passed beyond the bounds of this universe  
And set foot in the undimensioned world,  
A world without both right and left,  
A world devoid of night and day.  
In that universe was another world  
Whose origin was from Divine fiat,  
Undecaying, and every moment transformed,  
Unimaginable, yet there clearly visible,  
Every moment clothed in a new perfection,  
Every moment clad in a new beauty.  
Its time had no need of moon and sun;  
In its expanse the nine spheres are contained.

(Translation by Arberry, A. J. "Javid Namah", pp. 113-14)

### **The Qur'an and the two aspects of time**

Serial time comes into existence only by the very act of creation<sup>142</sup> "The Time of the Ultimate Ego is revealed as change without succession, i.e. an organic whole which appears atomic because of the creative movement of the ego. This is what Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra mean when they say that time is born with the act of creation by which the Ultimate Ego realizes and measures, so to speak, the infinite wealth of his own undetermined

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<sup>142</sup> Bausani, A. "The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal", p. 162.

possibilities”.<sup>143</sup> Hence it is possible for Iqbal to interpret logically the two contrasting statements on creation in the Qur’an: “All things have we created bound by a fixed decree and our command is no more than a single word, like the twinkling of an eye” (54: 50)<sup>1</sup> and “do thou trust in him who liveth and dieth not ; and celebrate his praise who bath created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six days ; and then ascended his Throne ; the Merciful”. (25: 60)<sup>144</sup>

Viewed intellectually, one Divine day, in the terminology of the Qur’an and the Old Testament becomes equal to a thousand years. But from another view-point, the process of creation is a single act as swift as the twinkling of an eye. Iqbal illustrates this point further. The sensation of red is caused by a wave-motion of the frequency of 400 billions per second and is practically incalculable, yet it is received by the eye in a single momentary act of perception.<sup>145</sup>

### **Time t to sum up**

Iqbal believed that “a keen sense of the reality of time and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time is typical of Islam”.<sup>146</sup> We have seen the importance he attaches to time in his own philosophy. His concept of time “fits in nicely into the general movement of revival of personalism which is underway in today’s religious philosophy”.<sup>147</sup> Professor Buasani observes, “Iqbal’s own contribution is that of Islamic experience, which we would do well to consider with greeter attention and appreciation”.<sup>148</sup> Professor Schimmel thinks that the religious importance of Iqbal’s ideas about time deserves special attention, for “what he wanted was surely not to add a new system of scientific explanations to this most difficult problem,

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Javid Namah, pp. 178, 178-80.

<sup>146</sup> Schimmel, A. M. Gabriel’s Wing, p. 292.

<sup>147</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 76-77.

<sup>148</sup> Sale, G. Translation of The Koran, London, no date, p. 275.

but to draw the attention of the Muslim world back to the contact with the living God. Through a revaluation of the two fold aspect of time he aimed at an actualization of this burning but long forgotten issue for Muslim religious life”<sup>149</sup>.

### Time (and space) In Iqbal’s poetry

In his poetry, Iqbal often describes serial time as the Zunnar, the magian’s girdle. This symbol “shows Iqbal’s fine psycho-logical insight—he could not yet foresee what H. Corbin proved many years later that the Zunnar is the typical Zurvanistic symbol<sup>150</sup>”. Zurvan is the old Iranian God of Time. He is conceived as a sorcerer whose spell has to be broken. The person of God recognizing the personal creative activity of God, and realizing this power in his or her own self can break the spell of Zarvan by participating in God’s time.<sup>151</sup>

Most of Iqbal’s ideas on time are brought together in “Nawa-e-Waqt” a poem “which has been praised by Dr. Razi-ud-Din Siddiqi, Pakistan’s well known authority on atom-physics, as a perfect commentary on Einstein’s theory of relativity”<sup>152</sup> It is worth quoting in full:

خورشید به دامنم انجم به  
گریبانم  
در من نگری هیچم، در خود  
نگری جانم  
در شهر و بیابانم در کاخ و

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid . p. 393.

<sup>150</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 48-49.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>152</sup> Bausani, A. “The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 185.

شبستانم

من دردم و درمانم، من عیش

فراوانم

من تیغ جهان سوزم من چشمه

حیوانم

چنگیزی و تیموری مشتی ز

من غبام

هنگامه افرنگی یک جسته

من شرار

انسان و جهان او، از نقش و

من نگار

خون جگر مردان، سامان بهار

من

من آتش سوازنم من روضه

رضوانم

آسوده و سیارم، این طرفه

تماشایین

در بادئه امروزم، کیفیت فردا

بین

پنهان به ضمیر من، صد عالم

رعنائین

صد کوکب غلطان بین، صد

گنبد خضرا بین

من کسوت انسانم، پیراهن

یزدانم

تقدیر فسون من، تدبیر فسون

تو

تو عاشق لیلائے، من دشت

جنون تو

چون روح روان پاکم، از چندو

چگون تو

تو راز درون من من راز درون

تو

از جان تو پیدایم در جان تو

پنهانم

من رهرو و تو منزل، من مزرع

و تو حاصل

تو ساز صد آهنگرے، تو گرمی

این محفل  
 آوارئه آب و گل! درباب مقام  
 دل  
 گنجیده به جامے بین، این قلم  
 بی ساحل  
 از موج بلند تو سر برزده  
 طوفانم  
 153

In my bosom I hold the sun and the stars,

If you look within me, I am nothing, if you look within yourself, I am life itself.

My dwelling-place are cities and deserts, palaces and solitary dens;

I am malady and balm, I am joy abundant

I am the world-vanquishing sword, I am the fountain of eternal life.  
 Chingez and Temur raised but specks of my storm, The turmoil of the West  
 is but a spark of my fire; Humans and their universe are my handiwork ;  
 From the labour of great persons my spring is born ;

I am the fire of hell and the peace of heaven.

See this wondrous phenomenon—I am still, yet I move;

In the crystal ball of my present see the glimpse of future days.

See hidden in me a thousand glorious worlds.

Thousands of swift-moving stars and thousands of blue skies.

I behold humanity; I am the garment of God. Destiny is my chant and free action yours,

You love a Laila, I am the wilderness where you roam so wildly.

Like the soul I am free of your how and wherefore ; You are the secret of my being and I of yours ; I rise out of your soul and I am hid in your spirit ? I am the traveller and you the destination.

I the field and you are of the harvest

I am the field and you are the harvest.

You are a hundred-toned instrument and this company's glow;

O wanderer on sea and land, return to your heart;

See in my cup an ocean limitless;

You are the lofty wave from which my storm arose.

Space and Time are not absolute realities, Says Iqbal.

چشم بر زمان و بر مکان

این دو یک حال است از

احوال جان<sup>154</sup>

Open wide your eyes upon Time and Space,

For these two are but a state of the soul.

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<sup>154</sup> Schimmel, A, M.Gibriel's Wing, p. 298.

(Translation by Arberry, A. J. “Javid Namah”, p, 33)

Serial time is not only related to but derives its reality from pure duration:

تیرے شب روز کی اور حقیقت ہے کیا  
ایک زمانے کی رو جس میں نہ دن ہے نہ رات<sup>155</sup>

What other sense have your nights, what have your days, but one Long blank current of time empty of sunset or dawn? (Translation by Kiernan, V. G., “Pomes of Iqbal”, p. 38)

In his Lectures, Iqbal said, “timeless experience embodies itself in a world-making or world-shaking act and in this form diffuses itself in the time-movement and makes itself effectively visible to the eye of history”.<sup>156</sup>

He repeats this thought again in his famous poem on the Mosque of Cordova—the Essence reveals it’s possibilities in a tangible form in serial time:

سلسلہ روز و شب نقش گر  
حادثات  
سلسلہ روز و شب اصل  
حیات و ممات  
سلسلہ روز و شب تار حریر

<sup>155</sup> Schimmel, A. M. *Gibriel’s Wing*, p. 296.

<sup>156</sup> Schimmel, A. M. “Time and Eternity in the Work of Muhammad Iqbal”, *Proceedings of the International Congress for Religions, Marburg, 1961*. pp. 55-56.

دو  
 جس سے بناتی ہے ذات اپنی  
 قبائے صفات  
 سلسلہ روز و شب ساز ازل  
 کی فغان  
 جس سے دکھاتی ہے ذات زیر  
 و ہم ممکنات<sup>157</sup>

Day succeeding to night—moulder of all time's works

Day succeeding to night—fountain of life and death.

Chain of the days and nights—two-coloured thread of silk

Woven by Him that is, into His being's robe.

Chain of the days and nights—sigh of eternity's harp.

Height and depth of all things possible, God-revealed

(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., "Poems from Iqbal", p. 37)

Space and time are brought into existence by the very act of creation and are then broken into moments:<sup>158</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Schimmel, A. M. "The Javid Namah in the light of the comparative History of Religions," "The Pakistan Quarterly, Winter 1956, Vol. VI No. 4, p. 184.

<sup>158</sup> Payam-e-Mashriq, pp. 102-103.

مری صراحی سے قطرہ قطرہ نئی حوادث  
ٹپک دے ہیں  
میں اپنی تسبیح روز و شب کا شمار کرتا  
159 دانہ دانہ ہوں

New tidings slowly come drop by drop from my pitcher Gurgling of time's new sights.

As I count over the beads strung out on my threaded Rosary of days and nights.

(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., "Poems from Iqbal", p. 50)

In Javid Nama, Zarvan the God of serial time, instructs the adept' how to conquer him and how to read the Eternal Now<sup>160</sup>:

من حیاتم من مماتم من نشور  
من حساب و دوزخ و فردوس و  
حور  
آدم و افرشته در بند من است  
عالم شش روزه فرزند من است  
هر گلے کز شاخ میچینی منم

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<sup>159</sup> Javid Namah,, p. 19.

<sup>160</sup> Bal-s-Jibr11, p. 121.

ام هر چیزمے که می بینی منم  
در طلسم من اسیر است این  
جهان  
از دم هر لحظه پیر است این  
جهان  
لی مع الله هر کرا در دل  
نشست  
آن جوانمردمے طلسم من  
شکست  
گر تو خواهی من نباشم در  
میان  
لی مع الله باز خوان از عین  
جان<sup>161</sup>

I am life, I am death, I am resurrection,

I am the Judgment, Hell, Heaven and Hour, Man and angel are both in  
bondage to me,

This transitory world is my own child ;

I am the matrix of everything that you see.

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<sup>161</sup> The Reconstruction of Rollous Thought In Islam, p. 184.

This world is a prisoner in my talisman,  
Every moment it ages through my breath.  
But he who has in his heart 'I have a time with God'  
That doughty hero has broken my talisman ;  
If you wish that I should not be in the midst,  
Recite from the depths of soul 'I have a time with God'.  
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., "Javid Namah", p. 34)

The Prophet's saying "Li ma'a Allah waqt"<sup>162</sup>, i.e. "I have a time with God (where even Gabriel has no access) "through which many mystics have expressed their unitive experiences "has become, in more or less explicit form, a leit motif of Iqbal's whole thinking, beginning from the *Asrar*".<sup>163</sup> It is interesting to note that this saying has been quoted several times by Rumi and other mystics have built a whole edifice of mystical meanings upon it. For instance, Hujwiri says: 'Waqt is that whereby a man becomes independent of the past and the future he has no memory of the past and no thought of that which is not yet come"<sup>164</sup>

In a section of *Asrar-e-Khudi* entitled "Time is a sword" Iqbal gave his first detailed exposition of the concept of time. He wanted to make it clear that "that world of time is not to be regarded as a world of shadows signifying nothing, a play of illusion on the edge of a void as the Hindu

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<sup>162</sup> Bal-Jibril, p. 126.

<sup>163</sup> Schimmel, A. M. Gabriel's PM g, p. 294.

<sup>164</sup> Bale-Jibril, p. 175.

mystagogues had preached. Time is real and time is important".<sup>165</sup> Time becomes a cutting sword !

من چه گویم سسر این  
شمشیر چیست  
آب او سرمایه دار از زندگی  
ست  
صاحبش بالاتر از امید و بیم  
دست او بیضا تر از دست  
کلیم<sup>166</sup>

How shall I say what is the secret of this sword ?

In its flashing edge there is life.

Its owner is exalted above hope and fear,

His hand is whiter than the hand of Moses.

(Translation by Nicholson, R. A. The Secrets of the Self, p. 134)

To one who is bound by serial time, the poet says:

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 295. 4. Javid Namah, p. 22.

<sup>166</sup> Javid Namah, p. 297.

اے اسیر دوش و فردا درنگر  
در دل خود عالم دیگر نگر  
در گل خود تخم ظلمت  
کاشفی

وقت را مثل خطے پنداشتی  
باز با پیمانہ لیل و نہار  
فکر تو پیمود طول روزگار  
مسلمی ؟ آزاد این زناد باش  
شمع بزم ملت احرام باش  
تو کہ از اصل زمان آگہ نئہ  
زندگی از دہر و دہر از  
زندگی ست  
لا تبسو الدہر فرمان نبی  
ست<sup>167</sup>

Look O thou enthralled by Yesterday and Tomorrow,  
Behold another world in thine own heart,  
Thou hast sown the seed of darkness in the clay,

Thou hast imagined Time as a line ;  
Thy thought measures length of Time  
With the measure of night and day,  
Art thou a Moslem ? Then cast off this girdle.  
Be a candle to the feast of the religion of the free.  
Knowing not the origin of Time,  
Thou art ignorant of everlasting life.  
Life is of Time, and Time is of Life:  
“Do not abuse Time” was the command of the Prophet.

(Translation by Nicholson, R. A. The Secrets of the Self, pp 135-138).

Hujwiri also refers to Time as a sword which “cuts the root of the future and the past, and obliterates care of yesterday and tomorrow from the heart. The sword is a dangerous companion: either it makes its master a king or it destroys him”<sup>168</sup>. For Iqbal, to live in pure duration is to be at the centre of destiny.<sup>169</sup> “It is time regarded as an organic whole that the Qur’an describes as ‘Taqdir’ or the destiny”.<sup>170</sup> By participating in God’s time, a human being is no longer the vehicle of serial time, he or she is the rider of the mount.

ایام کا مرکب نہیں راکب ہے

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Singh, I. The Araent Pilgrim, London, 1951, p. 89.

<sup>170</sup> Asrar-e-Khudi, p. 80.

The “qalandar” is not the mount of time but the rider of the mount.

Real life is possible on “this still point of time”.

تو از شمار نفس زنده نمیدانی  
 که زندگی به شکست طلسم  
 ایام است<sup>172</sup>

All thy life is breath to take,

Knowing not, frail man,

That true living is to break

The days' talisman.

(Translation by Arberry, A. J., *Persian Psalms*, p. 58)

From “There is no god but God” too Iqbal infers that human beings must free themselves from the bondage of serial time through Love

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<sup>171</sup> Asrar-e-Khudi, pp. 81.82,

<sup>172</sup> Hujwiri quoted in Schimmel, A. M. *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 298.

اعتبار از لا اله داریم ما  
هر دو عالم را نگه داریم ما  
از غم امروز و فردا رسته ایم  
باکسے عہد محبت بستہ ایم

173

We have honour from “There is no God but Allah”,

We are the protectots of the universe.

Freed from the vexation of today and tomorrow,

We have pledged ourselves to love One.

(Translation by Nicholson, R. A. The Secrets of the Self, p. 140)

Love also frees a person from the limitations of the intellect:

خرد ہوئی ہے زمان و مکاں کی  
زناری  
نہ ہے زمان نہ مکاں لا اله الا

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<sup>173</sup> Bausani, A. “The Concept of Time in the Religious Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal”, p. 162.

Intellect is the bondage of time and space,

There is no time or space, nothing but “There is no god but God”.

Iqbal refers to the highly personal character of the experience of time by quoting the story of the Seven Sleepers (Sura 18: 19)<sup>175</sup>

مه و سالت نمى ارزد به يک

جو

به حرف "کم بشتتم" غوطه زن

شو<sup>176</sup>

Your months and years are meaningless and vain: Think over the Qur'an's “How long did you remain?”. (Translation by Husain, H. The New Rose-Garden of Mystery, p. 7)

Iqbal does not tire of saying:

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<sup>174</sup> The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, p. 49.

<sup>175</sup> Zarb-e-Kalim, p. 36.

<sup>176</sup> Zabur-a-Ajam, p. 93.

حساب روزش از دور فلک

177

نیست

The Self's day is not measured by The revolutions of the sky.

(Translation by Husain, H. The New Rose-Garden of Mystery, p. 7)

or of stressing the importance of love through which the soul is freed from the bondage of time, and led to the “me ‘raj” (the Ascension) of pure duration:

زمانه که حسابش ز سال و ما

178

ہے  
نیست

The reckoning of which is not by years or months.

and so, in unforgettable lines, Iqbal gives a message based on his life-long philosophy

ستاروں سے آگے جہاں اور بھی

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<sup>177</sup> Asrar-e-Khudi, p. 85.

<sup>178</sup> Zarb-e-Kalim, p. 7.

ہیں  
ابھی عشق کے امتحان اور بھی  
ہیں  
قناعت نہ کر عالم رنگ و بو  
پر  
چمن اور بھی آشیاں اور بھی  
ہیں!  
اسی روز و شب میں الجھ کر  
نہ رہ جا  
کہ تیرے زمان و مکان اور بھی  
ہیں!<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Schimmel, A. M. Gabriel's Wing, p. 294.

123 Zabur-e-'Ajam, p. 216.

124 Zabur-a-Ajam, p. 237.

125 Payam-e-Mashriq, p. 219-

126 Bal-e-Jibril, pp. 89-90.

There are yet other worlds beyond stars, There are yet other tests of  
Love to come.

With this world of hue-and-scent be not content, For there are other  
gardens too to see ; Be not entangled in this Day and Night; For you have  
other times and spaces too.