

# A SYNTHESIS OF BASIC CONCEPTS IN IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY

(A Systems Approach)  
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(This paper tries to link together the basic concepts in Iqbal's philosophy through a Systems approach. A system consists of a processing unit that operates on inputs in a describable fashion to produce an output. In this paper, the processing unit is the social environment and the individuals are the input. They interact and contribute to the "output" which is al-Ummah or *al-Millat*. Where Iqbal's verses have been quoted, the basic idea, rather than the literal translation, is given.)

## 1. Thought Processes in Iqbal

A basic fact about Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy is that not only is it inspired by the Holy Quran but it is also an exposition and an elucidation of Quranic concepts. He measures his own thinking and that of other thinkers against these concepts. His thought processes are directly derived from the Quran, the processes that were used by Abraham while affirming his faith in the Almighty.

Observing people worshipping idols and heavenly bodies such as the moon, stars and the sun, Abraham doubted their wisdom. Is this right? He asked this question over and over again. From these observations and questions came the answer that Allah is He who created the Heavens and the Earth. Iqbal uses this thought process and seeks knowledge on the basis of doubt. Fig. I shows how, according to Iqbal, doubt leads to *knowledge*, and *knowledge* to *belief* which should be so strong as would motivate a person to *action*. Says Iqbal:

ہمائے علم تا افتد بدامت  
یقین کم کن، گرفتار شکے باش  
عمل خواہی؟ یقین را پختہ ترکن  
یکے جوے دیکے بین دیکے باش

[کلیات اقبال فارسی صفحہ ۲۱۱]

In order to seek effective knowledge, put your held beliefs to the test of doubt or searching enquiry. The resultant knowledge should so reinforce your beliefs that it will motivate you to action.

It is to be noted that action follows a strong belief. A belief that fails to stimulate one to action, is not a true belief, and therefore, is not based on correct knowledge. The basic question or doubts were thus not relevant. It is that ultimate knowledge about which Iqbal says in the words of Rumi:

علم را برتن زنی ، مارے بود  
علم را بردل زنی ، یارے بود

[کلیات اقبال - فارسی صفحہ ۶۶]

Superficial knowledge is harmful whereas true knowledge is a genuine guide.

## 2.The Place of the Individual in the System

Most of Iqbal's writings are related to an exposition of the system and its ingredients. At the base is the individual and in it resides his ideal *Momin*: the ultimate height to which a man could reach to become Allah's representative on earth. It is this ideal individual who changes the destiny of nations.

نگاه مرد مومن سے بدل جاتی ہیں تقدیریں  
اور

جہاں میں اہل ایمان صورت خورشید جیتے ہیں  
ادھر ڈوبے ادھر نکلے، ادھر ڈوبے ادھر نکلے

[کلیات اردو صفحہ ۲۷۱]

[کلیات اردو صفحہ ۲۷۳]

The believers are like the sun. Even when they suffer temporary setbacks they are sure to bounce back.

سيرة الفكر في فلسفة اقبال

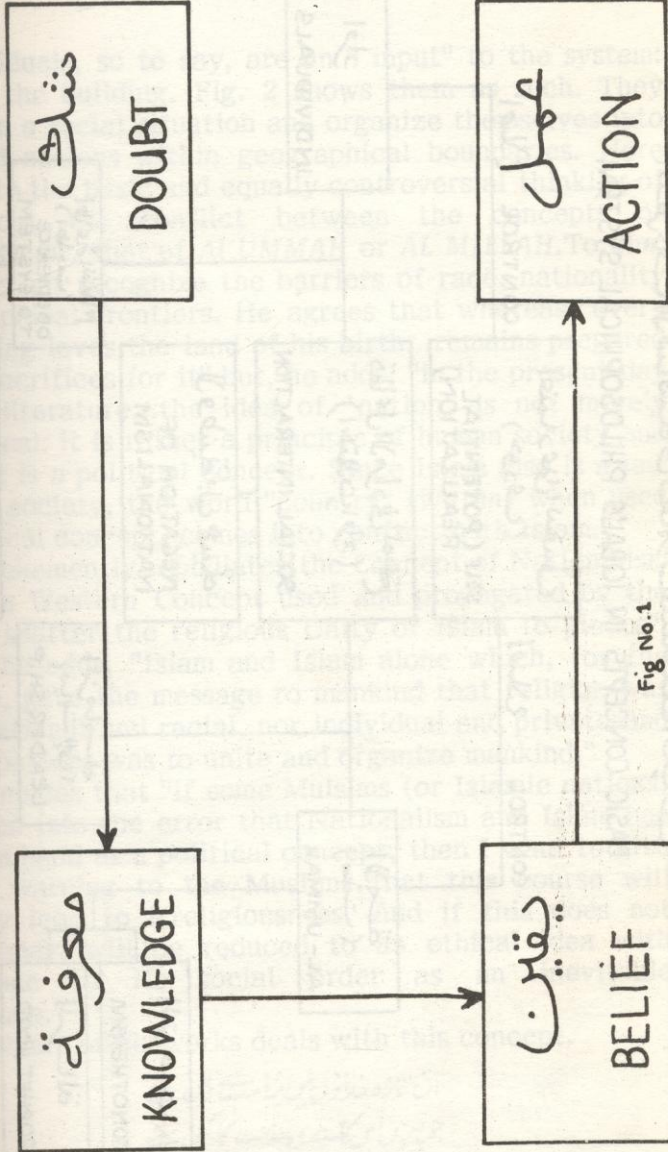


Fig No.1

# النظريات الاساسية في نظام الفلسفة اقبال BASIC CONCEPTS IN IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

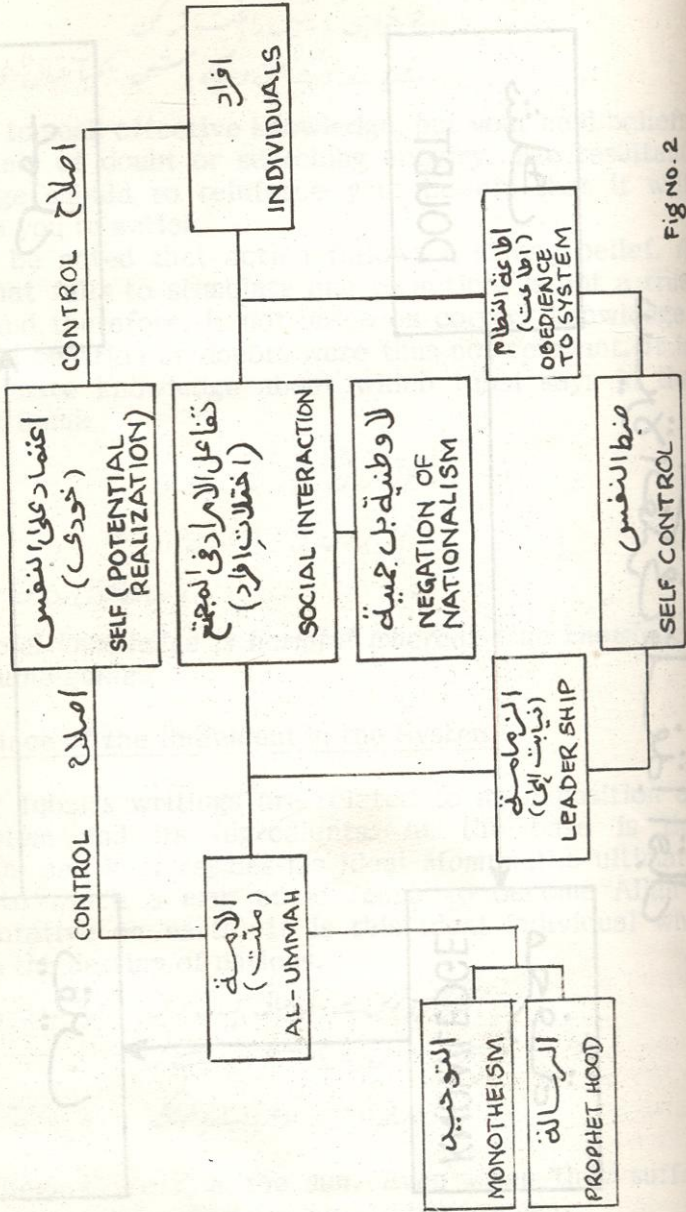


Fig No. 2

### 3.The “Processor” and Concepts of Nationalism & Al-Ummah

The Individuals, so to say, are an “input” to the system: bricks of the building. Fig. 2 shows them as such. They interact in a social situation and organize themselves into tribes and nations within geographical boundaries. Here we come to the basic and equally controversial thinking of Iqbal about the conflict between the concepts of Nationalism and that of *Al UMMAH or AL MILLAH*. To him, Islam does not recognize the barriers of race, nationality or geographical frontiers. He agrees that whereas “every human being loves the land of his birth...remains prepared to make sacrifices for it” .but, he adds, “in the present day political literature...the idea of ‘nation’ is not merely geographical: it is rather a principle of human society and as such, it is a political concept. Since Islam also is a law of human society, the word “country” (*Watan*) when used as a political concept, comes into conflict with Islam.” He thus vehemently repudiates the Concept of Nationalism which is a Western Concept used and propagated by the West “to shatter the religious Unity of Islam to pieces”. “It was” he adds, “Islam and Islam alone which, for the first time, gave the message to mankind that religion was neither national and racial, nor individual and private”and that “its purpose was to unite and organize mankind.” Iqbal concludes that “if some Muslims (or Islamic nations) have fallen into the error that Nationalism and Islam can go hand in hand as a political concept, then I want to give a timely warning to the Muslims that this course will ultimately lead to irreligiousness. And if this does not happen, Islam will be reduced to an ethical idea with indifference to its social order as an inevitable consequence.”

A greater part of his works deals with this concept.

ان تازہ خدائوں میں بڑا سب سے وطن ہے  
جو پیرہن اس کا ہے وہ مذہب کا کفن ہے  
یہ بت کہ تراشیدہ تہذیب نوی ہے  
غارِ گر کا شانہ دینِ نبوی صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم ہے

Nationalism is the greatest of new gods (created by the West) and adherence to it means destruction of Islam. Because:

قوم مذہب سے ہے مذہب جو نہیں تم بھی نہیں

[بانگ درا - کلیات اردو صفحہ ۲۰۱]

The nation is subject to the existence of religion and religion alone.

And therefore:

اے مصطفوی خاک میں اس بت کو ملادے

[بانگ درا - کلیات اردو صفحہ ۱۶۰]

O, followers of Islam, destroy the concept of Nationalism completely.

And again:

ایک ہوں مسلم حرم کی پاسبانی کے لیے  
نیل کے ساحل سے لیکر تاپخاک کاشغر  
ان کی جمعیت کا ہے ملک و نسب پر انحصار  
قوت مذہب سے مستحکم ہے جمعیت تری  
دامن دیں ہاتھ سے چھوٹا تو جمعیت کہاں  
اور جمعیت ہوئی رخصت تو ملت بھی گئی

The Muslims should remain united from one end of the world to the other to defend the ka,aba, i.e. Islam. Muslims should remember that the

western social system is based on race and nationality but theirs was based on religion without which the Islamic nation or Ummali cannot have any existence.

جو کرے گا امتیاز رنگ و خون مٹ جائیگا  
ترک خرگاہی ہو یا اعرابی والا گھر  
نسل اگر مسلم کی مذہب پر مقدم ہو گئی  
اڑ گیا دنیا سے تو مانند خاک رہگزر

[بانگ درا – کلیات اردو صفحہ ۲۶۵]

Whether it be a Turk in a royal tent, or an Arab of a very high pedigree, whoever discriminates on the basis of colour or blood will vanish altogether. If the Muslims start preferring race or nationality to religion, they will disappear from the world.

Here, one should remember what our Holy Prophet said in his last Friday's address:

Listen, O' people of the world, he said, you have one Allah and you are branches of the same tree. Therefore, an Arab over non-Arab, a red over black and black over red has no preference except for righteousness.

#### 4. Al-Umma as the "output" of the System

Social interaction takes place in the "processor" which is the immediate environment but this "Processor" should contribute directly to the strenght of *Al-Umma* which is the output of the system. The Individuals and sub-systems or nations are subservient and an integral part of this larger system.

Says Iqbal:

ملت کے ساتھ رابطہ استوار رکھ  
پیوستہ رہ شجر سے امید بہار رکھ



You should strengthen your bonds with  
Millah for, branches will only bear fruit if  
they remain attached to the tree.

Iqbal seeks guidance from Rumi and asks:  
How can Al-Umma's unity be strengthened?

Answers Rumi:

تجھ پہ روش ہے ضمیر کائنات  
کس طرح محکم ہو ملت کی حیات

[بال جبریل صفحہ ۱۴۰]

دانہ باشی مرغکانت برچند  
غنچہ باشی کو دکانت برکند  
دانہ پنہاں کن سراپا دام شو  
غنچہ پنہاں کن گیاه بام شو

[کلیات اردو صفحہ ۴۳۲]

If a nation cuts itself from the Islamic System, it will become weak  
and "eaten up" by stronger nations.

ہے زندہ فقط وحدت افکار سے ملت  
وحدت ہو فنا جس سے وہ الہام بھی الحاد  
وحدت کی حفاظت نہیں ہے قوت بازو

آتی نہیں کچھ کام یہاں عقل خداداد

[کلیات اردو صفحہ ۴۹۷]

In order to survive, the Islamic nation should develop self-reliance, strength and unity.

Again:

فرد و قوم آئینہ یکدیگراند  
سلک و گوہر کہکشاں و اختراند  
فرد میگیرد ز ملت احترام  
ملت از افراد می یا بد نظام  
پیکرش از قوم وہم جانش ز قوم  
ظاہرش از قوم و پنهانش ز قوم  
وحدت او مستقیم از کثرت است  
کثرت اندر و حدت او وحدت است

[اسرارورموز-کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۸۶]

The Individual and the nation (Al-Ummah) are each others reflection, the one getting its strength from the other.

### 5. Development of the Individual's Potential

Since an Individual is the basic ingredient of the system, Iqbal prescribes three stages that would enable him to realize his full potential and contribute most to the maintenance and development of the system.

The first stage is complete adherence and *obedience* to the system. He says, the one who ventures for the conquest of the moon and the stars has to follow essential physical laws.

Similarly:

بادازنداں گل خوشبو کند  
قید بُورا نافہ آ ہو کند  
می زنداختر سوئے منزل قدم  
پیش آئینے سر تسلیمخیم  
باطن پر شے ز آئینے قومی  
تو چراغافل زایں ساماں روی

[اسرارورموز- کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۴۱]

All other phenomena we observe are subject to the laws of nature and therefore:

پر کہ بر خود نیست فرمانش رواں  
می شو فرمان پذیر از دیگران  
[ایضاً]

The individual should stringly adhere to the laws laid down in the Islamic system.

The second stage in the development and process of the realization of the individual's potential is self-control.

Here:

پر کہ بر خود نیست فرمائش رواں  
می شود فرمان پذیراز دیگران

[کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۶۴]

A person who is unable to control himself will be controlled by others.

Self control, says Iqbal, comes from dherence to the five basic tenets of Islam: (1) belief in the Unity of Allah which is like the Staff of Moses in your hands enabling you to destroy all “magic” i.e. forces working against the system. (2) Prayer, which is

a sword in your hands with which you can save yourself from all vices;

ورکف مسلم مثال خنجر است  
قاتلِ فحشا و بغی و منکراست

[ایضاً صفحہ ۴۳]

(3) Fasting, which tells you that eating alone is not the purpose of life; (4) Haj or Pilgrimage to Mecca, which destroys the idea of Nationalism and:

طاعتے سرمایہ جمعیتے  
ربط اوراق کتاب ملتے

It is a means to strengthen the Unity of *Al-Ummah*; and (5) Zakat (tax for *Al-Ummah*) which is aimed at destroying the love of worldly belongings and wealth and maintaining a balance between the rich and the poor.

The third stage is leadership or becoming the representative of Allah on earth, *Khalifat Allah Fi at ard*. This stage will follow after an individual has realized his full potential through obedience to the System and Self-Control. It is at this stage when

لیا جائے گا تجھ سے کام دنیا کی امامت کا

You will be called upon to shoulder the responsibility of world leadership.

## 6. The Concept of “Self”

The Individual develops and contributes maximally to the maintenance of the system if he is ever careful in realizing his hidden potential. The more the self realization, the greater will be his growth. This realization of potential is broadly the concept of “Self” or “Khudi” in Iqbal and it is around this concept that Iqbal’s thinking revolves.

“Self” or “Ego” (which Iqbal himself used as an alternative translation of “Khudi”)\*\* is a philosophical construct and Iqbal uses it in an almost opposite sense against its use in sufi or mystic literature or even in romantic poetry where “Self” completely identifies sometimes with nature and sometimes with God or the “beloved”. To Iqbal

“Self” is never to be identified. It is something that is constantly nourished. The only identity he recognizes is its merger with *Al- Ummah*.

حضور ملت از خود در گذشتن  
دگر بانگ انا الملت کشیدن

The height to which “Self” can reach is its complete merger with *Ummah* when an individual can say “I am the *Ummah*” but one is in no case allowed to say I am God or *Ana al Haq* as said Mansur Hallaj

انا الحق جز مقام کبریا نیست  
سزائے او چیاہست یا نیست ؟  
اگر فردے بگوید سرزنش بہ  
اگر قومے بگوید ناروا نیست

[ارمغان حجاز- کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۷۰]

God, and God alone can say *Ana al Haq*. If an individual says it he ought to be punished. However, it is permissible for a nation or *Ummah* to say it because in that case the *Ummah* is identifying itself with the system bestowed by God on mankind.

مثال دانہ کارم خودی را  
برائے او نگہدارم خودی را

[زبور عجم – کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۱۷۴]

I am sowing “Self” or “Ego” in my heart just like a seed and I always take care of it.

“Self” taken as a “seed” has an inherent potential and it is in this sense that its realization is required in individuals as well as nations. Iqbal explains this sense of the term by further developing the example of a seed.

It has full potential to grow into a tree and bear fruit. If that potential remains dormant, it is destroyed. Similarly an individual or a nation (or *Al-Ummah*) has an inherent potential to grow. If that potential is not realized, the individual or the nation will not grow or at the most will have a stunted growth. In other words, Khudi(Self) performs two functions: potential development which is capacity creation and potential realization which is capacity utilization. It thus acts as a bond between the individual and the *Ummah* and makes them dependent on each other to an extent that the development of the one is the strength of the other . This function is further illustrated in Fig. 3:

KHUDI AS A BOND BETWEEN THE  
INDIVIDUAL & THE UMMAH



Fig No. 3

## 7. Evaluative Criteria for Al-Ummah –

The System as depicted in the systems diagram treats Individuals as “inputs” to the Social “Processor” where they interact and ultimately form into and contribute to the strength of *Al-Ummah* which is the “output” of the system.

An “output”, in order to judge the efficiency of the system, is evaluated against the criteria of quality and quantity of production. Evaluative criteria in Iqbal, to judge the strength of *Al-Ummah* and the efficiency of the system is the adherence of *Al-Ummah* or its sub-systems (individuals and nations) to two basic factors which he describes as “basic pillars”, viz.

A. *Al-Tawheed* or Monotheism

B. Al-Risalat or belief in the system

Al-Tawheed

*Tawheed* to Iqbal is all embracing:.

دین از حکمت ازو آئین ازو  
زور از و قوت از و تمکین ازو

[اسرار و رموز - کلیات فارسی صفحہ ۹۱]

It is the sole criterion for religion, wisdom, legal structure, power and stability.

*Al-Ummah* is the body but *Tawheed* is its spirit and it is because of belief in *Tawheed* that all national and racial distinctions have vanished under the Islamic system and it is because of this belief that we attained the state of:

یک زبان و یک دل جاں جاں شدم

Unity of thought, hearts and spirits



Any deviation from a belief in *Tawheed* and reliance on *Ghair Allah* (any power other than Allah) is *Shirk* -idolatry and takes one out of the fold of *Al-Ummah*;

#### B. Al-Risalat

The second evaluative criterion for maintaining efficiency in the Islamic System is absolute and firm belief in Al Risalat or the System itself that has been bestowed on mankind by Allah through his “Messenger”, Mohammad (peace be on him).

To Iqbal:

از رسالت در جهان تکوین ما  
از رسالت دین ما آئین ما !  
از رسالت صد هزار مایک است  
جزو ما از جزو ملا ینفک است!

[اسرار و رموز - کلیات فارسی صفحه ۱۰۱]

Our very existence and our system is sustained by our belief in the message delivered to us by Allah through Muhammad (peace be on him) and it is because of this belief that we are one and a part of each other.

And:

دانش از دست دادن مردن است  
چون گل از باد خزاں افسردن است

*Any deviation from the system means utter destruction.*

Says Quran

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

And hold fast all together to the system bestowed by Allah and be not disunited

Therefore our prayer to Allah is to unite our hearts so that by his favour we remain brethren in a real sense; to save us from the brink of destruction which is no less than *حُضْرَةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ* i.e. the pit of fire; and to make clear His communication that we may follow *Siratul Mustaqeem*, the right path.

Thus, deviation from any one of the two criteria, i.e. *Tawheed* and *Risalat* takes one out of the fold of *Al Ummah*. The existence of deviant groups would indicate defective working of the system as a whole and would require control and correction of the sub-systems (nations and individuals) through development of reliance in “self” or *Khudi*,