

Belief in the Hereafter and Iqbal's Concept of Eternity: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the six pillars of Islamic belief required of a Muslim in order to complete his faith. Although the general conception of life after death and the Hereafter is found in all Divine Religions, the emphasis given in Islam is unique. A glance at the Holy Quran provides the idea that believing in the Hereafter is the most important issue in Islam after believing in God. The topic has covered nearly one third of the Holy Quran with more than 1200 Ayaats. It is almost impossible to find a page in the Quran in which the issue of the Hereafter is not mentioned. Believing in God and the Hereafter are coupled in the Quran approximately 30 times. Therefore, in Islamic Theology, believing in God and the Hereafter are considered the border between atheism and religious belief. Believing in the Hereafter in Islam means the soul and the body of the dead will rise on the Day of Resurrection to be judged. Righteous people will be rewarded with eternal blessings in Paradise while the sinful and disbelievers will suffer in Hell, in following, arguments about hereafter along with Iqbal's, critique on philosophers and concept of eternity would be discussed.

Keywords: Belief, Hereafter, Holy Quran, Islamic Theology, Believing in God, Philosophers



Importance of the Concept

Delineating the basics of this fundamental faith, Maulana Maududi writes:

“The word 'Aakhirah' (Hereafter) is a comprehensive one and it applies to an amalgamation of many beliefs which include: That man is not irresponsible in this world and he is answerable to Allah for all his deed. That the present system of the world is not infinite, but at a time, which only God knows, it will end. That after the end of this world, Allah Almighty will create another world in which He will re-create the entire human race that was born on earth from the beginning of creation to the Day of Judgement at once, and will gather them all and take account of their deeds, and will reward each one in full for what he has done.”¹

While mentioning the belief in the hereafter, the Holy Quran says:

وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ²

“Those who have perfect faith in the Hereafter.”

In exegesis of this verse, Pir Mohammad Karam Shah al-Azhari explains:

“It is not enough to just accept the concept of the life hereafter; it is necessary to have a perfectly firm with it – Iqan means a consummate perfection of knowledge where there is no room for doubt. And when the knowledge about a thing or fact becomes so thorough, it subjugates the intellect, the heart and the will; one can neither think nor do anything against it.”³

Rational and Quranic Arguments

In the Holy Quran, the concept of life after death has been mentioned at several place and some rational and deductive arguments on this have also been provided. Some of the deductive arguments are being mentioned hereunder:

i. Everyday examples

In Surah An-Nahl, it has been explained how Allah Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the Earth, enlivens the dead Earth through rain and He will resurrect the dead bodies the same way. The verse says:

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُسْمَعُونَ⁴

“And Allah pours down water from the sky, and by means of that brings the earth to life (i.e., makes it fertile and green) after it has become dead (i.e., barren and infertile). Surely, there is in it a sign for those who give ear (to advice).”

ii. Awakening from sleep

In Surah Az-Zumar, Allah Almighty says:

“Allah takes away souls at the time of their death and those whose death has not yet arrived during their sleep. Then He withholds those souls whose death He has ordained and sets other (souls) free till an appointed time. Surely, in it are signs for those who contemplate.”⁵

When a man falls asleep, a state of unconsciousness falls on him. In this sense, sleep is like death. Then, when the man wakes up, he again becomes conscious. This analogy depicts the resurrection after death. Under this law of nature, every man is being clearly shown as to how he will die and how he will be resurrected. A rational thinking man will surely learn the lesson of the hereafter in this everyday worldly event.

iii. Human nature

It is in human nature that he hates injustice and adores justice. Although he makes mistakes, sometimes, it does not mean that he is so by nature. For example, a thief steals from others but he himself wants his property to be safe. A murderer kills others but dislikes it happening to himself. So, by nature, man does not consider good and bad equal. Just as man does not consider good and bad to be equal, in the same way Allah does not consider them equal to each other. Therefore, spurning those who deny the Day of Resurrection, Allah Almighty said:

أَفَتَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ⁶

“Shall We (deprive) the obedient like the disobedient?”

It is evident from the above verse that the believers and the disbelievers, the pious and the transgressors, the faithful and the traitors are not equal to Allah. Then, there will be a day when He will award the good people with Paradise and the evil-doers will be sent eternally to Hell.

iv. Aspirations for the future

Plants and inanimate (non-living) things, etc. have no hopes or aspirations

but man has many desires in himself which are impossible to get fulfilled in this world; so, there must be a place where all his desires can be fulfilled. This is what Satan had whispered to man. Allah Almighty says:

“But Satan created doubt in the hearts of both (Adam and Hawwa [Eve]) in order to make manifest to them their private parts which were hidden (from their eyes). He said: ‘(O Adam and Hawwa [Eve],) your Lord has not forbidden you (eating fruit of) this tree, but (because, eating it,) you both will transform into angels (free from human characteristics), or both of you become (its) permanent residents (i.e., never will you be deprived of this station of proximity).”⁷

v. *From nonexistence to existence and vice versa*

In Surah Surah al-A'raf, Allah Almighty says:

“Say: ‘My Lord has enjoined justice. And set your direction aright (towards the Ka'ba) on every occasion and place of prostration. And worship Him, devoting your obedience sincerely to Him alone. As He has originated your (creation and life) so will you return (towards Him).”⁸

In Suah Al-Balad, Allah Almighty asks:

“Does he think that no one has seen him (making this extravagant spending)?”⁹

The above verses make it amply clear that when we did not exist, when there was nothing, then Allah created us, and gave us our existence. Our presence in this world is the proof of this. And, the way Allah has created us now, He will also resurrect and re-create us. We should always keep in mind when the Lord of the Earth and the skies gave us existence from nothing, then why would he find it difficult to raise us again. The Lord of the Worlds has the power and authority to create something from nothing.

vi. *Fingerprints and other forensic evidence*

Today, with the help of science, man has become able to do registration through fingerprints. And, how the One who has given each person this unique identity in fingerprints, can Himself remain unaware of us. Can anybody even think that there will be no registration of us and no record of our deeds with Him? See the divine sayings in this regard:

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ ۚ بَلَىٰ قَدِيرِينَ عَلَيَّ أَنْ تُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ¹⁰

“Does man think We shall not at all collect his bones (which will decompose into dust particles after his death)? Yes, of course! We have also the power to restore and set right even his finger joints and finger tips.”

vii. Re-creation

Allah Almighty, the Creator of the Universe, says that to him, creating a few billion of human beings and then resurrecting them after death is just like doing it to one human being. Allah says in Surah Luqman:

مَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا نَبْعَثُكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ¹¹

“Creating you all and raising you all (after death) is (in Allah’s power) like (creating and raising) a single person. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”

viii. Which is more complicated: man or universe?

To put forward another argument in this context, the Holy Quran invites human to ponder whether the birth of a human being is difficult or that of the heavens and the earth and everything in between that Allah Almighty created. Allah says:

ءَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ ۚ بَنَاهَا¹²

“Is it you who are harder to create, or (the entire) galactic universe that He has built?

The pertinent question that arises here is: can the Creator of the Earth and the skies not create another Earth and skies like these? Has his creative prowess ended after this creation? Can he not disrupt this mortal system and create a new eternal system under new laws? God's power is infinite; it is not bound by a few laws which He Himself has issued. This system of the universe has been established by Him on movement, which created time. The change of time shows that the universe is changing. As Allama said:

ۛ یہ کائنات ابھی نا تمام ہے شاید

کہ آ رہی ہے دما دم صدائے کن فیکون¹³

Rational Arguments on Belief in the Hereafter

i. Worldly testimony and belief in hereafter

Allah Almighty did not limit himself to merely describing the testimony of the Hereafter in divine books, but rather He showed it practically by setting up examples in this world. For this purpose, He chose some nations and warned them through his messengers to lead their lives according to the injunctions of Allah Almighty; otherwise, His punishment will be inflicted on them in this very world.

The nations who obeyed the Allah Almighty, were awarded with glory and the status of a superpower in this world. These nations include the followers of Prophet Moses (عليه السلام), Prophet Solomon (عليه السلام), Prophet Jesus (عليه السلام) and the last prophet Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH). On the contrary, the nations who refused faced the wrath of the Almighty in this world. Their examples include the nations of Prophet Noah (عليه السلام), Prophet Hud (عليه السلام), Prophet Saleh (عليه السلام) and Prophet Shuaib (عليه السلام). Allah did not stop here only describing the concept of the Hereafter, rather He made the progeny of Hazrat Ibrahim (عليه السلام) a living specimen. Both the two branches of Abraham's descendants, Bani Israel and Bani Ismael, were treated in this world as they will be treated in the Hereafter.

ii. Contradictions-riddled universe

Just as cause and effect, soul and body and nature and will together form one thing, so does the the world form a whole with the Hereafter, so that in the absence of one, the other remains incomplete. As Allama Iqbal says:

“The imprudent ones consider death is the end of life

This apparent evening of life is the morning of perpetual life!”

iii. Limitations of mind and senses

The question whether there is life after death is related to matters beyond our senses and sensory experiences. All we feel is that a person who was breathing and moving with his will only a few moments ago, has now lost all signs of life and something, which had provided this static, nameless, immobile substance with the power of growth and movement has departed from his body. Here the question arises: where did that thing go? Does it now exist apart from the body or has it disappeared? And then will its relationship with the body or any other similar body be established again or not? As far as our

senses and empirical knowledge are concerned, we cannot answer this question in negatv or in affirmative because we never felt this thing before and we don't feel it even now. Insofar as science is concerned, this question is completely out of its scope. A person who says on the basis of science claims that there is no life after death, he deviates from science. From a scientific point of view, one may say that I know nothing of what happens after death (because it is beyond my sensory capacitis and empirical knowledge), but if he says, "Because I do not know what happens after death, I know that nothing happens after death," then surely he will be crossing the limits.

In terms of rationality, Prof. Khurshid Ahmad writes:

“As far as rational reasoning is concerned, it leaves us only at the limit of ‘ought to be’. Now as for the question whether there is really such a world, our intellect as well as knowledge are unabe to resolve it. Here the Qur'an helps us. It says that what your intellect and your nature demand is actually going to happen. The current world system, which is based on physical laws, will be broken at a certain time and a new system will be installed wherein the Earth, the sky and all things therein will be in a different form. Then, Allah Almighty will recreate and gather all human beings before Him. There, the record of the deeds of every person, every nation and the entire humanity will be preserved without any error and neglect.”¹⁴

Iqbal's Critique on William James and Nietzsche

It is important to know the intellectual background of Allama Iqbal to understand the arguments on his concept of eternal life or the belief in the hereafter. Allama Iqbal was well aware of the views of the philosophers of the past and in his fourth sermon on 'Man's Self, His Freedom and Immortality', he describes their concepts and also criticizes them, among them William James and Friedrich Nietzsche are the most prominent figures.

i. William Jmes and Iqbal

For William James (1842-1910), the central reality of the universe is an infinite force from which everything sprouts. He name this inner soul of all beings as God. He argues that one who realizes this fact can call it by any

name. He may call it Nur Rahmani, the Lord, the 'Soul' or the Almighty. According to Dr. Naeem Ahmed:

"If a person finds the truth, he will know that he is the beginning and he is the end, everything is from Him and in Him and there is no existence of anything else. He is our soul; we are given life by Him. The difference between us and Him is that we are individual souls and He is an infinite soul in which we and all other souls and beings are included. But in terms of essence, divine life and human life are the same. The difference between them is not of the essence, but of degree and quantity."¹⁵

James asserts that the greatest purpose of life is to remain connected with the divine life; the greater a man's connection with the divine life, the more divine powers in him. By developing a sense of divinity within ourselves and establishing an inner connection with life itself, our lives begin to be imbued with this source of grace:

"We can stay in hell as long as we want. It is not necessary for a human being to suffer and suffer." We can ascend to any kind of heaven we want. When we try to rise to higher places, all the higher powers of the universe start assisting us."¹⁶

Irrespective of minor differences in their viewpoints, Iqbal and William James agree with each other in their respective philosophical positions on the following points.

- i. Both of the proponents of the idea that movement and multiplicity are the essence of the universe and that human freedom, evolution and uniqueness are affirmed.
- ii. Both advocate intentionalism and consider intention to be of fundamental importance. They believe biological life is not aimless but has goals and objectives within itself.
- iii. Both believe in an unending evolution of life and the universe.
- iv. Both lay great emphasis on experience for fact-finding.
- v. Both are anti-coercion and pro-human freedom.

There was a copy of William James's booklet 'Human Imortality' in which he has addressed two objections in the light of his philosophical standing. The

first objection is about the assumption that the human mind is a productive function of the mind.

Darwinian materialism explains all spiritual and mental actions in material terms, and it was due to this reason that the mind or mental actions were considered a by-product of the actions of the mind itself. This means that with death the mind will also disappear. William James says that to think of consciousness or soul as a function of the human mind is just like thinking that “Steam is a function of the tea-kettle,” or “Light is a function of the electric circuit” or “Power is a function of the moving waterfall”. Just as when a ray of light passes through a prism, it scatters into the seven colors of the rainbow and these seven colors cannot be imagined as a function of the prism. In the same way, consciousness should be considered the transmissive or permissive function of the mind. Consciousness temporarily engages or takes over the mind. Therefore, consciousness does not perish with the mind's murmuring.

ii. Nietzsche's Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence and Iqbal

After discussing William James, Allama Iqbal mentions in some detail is Nietzsche with his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Before delving into Allama's critique, it seems apt to discuss Nietzsche's doctrine. Nietzsche mentions three stages of the evolution of the human soul. First it becomes a camel, then it becomes a lion and later it manifests itself as a child. At the level of the camel, the soul bears the burden of duties and dos and don'ts with patience and perseverance. Freed from coercion and authority, the human soul attains the status of a lion where it is blessed with authority and freedom, and it dictates its own law. At the level of a lion, though the soul gets freedom, it cannot create new values for itself. So it takes the form of child which is an amalgamation of innocence and oblivion. At the level of the child, the soul forgets its old levels and affirms, in its innocence, new life and new values. Explaining Nietzsche's point of view, Dr. Naem Ahmed comments:

“By overpowering his animal instincts, man beings can achieve higher levels of creativity. This high level of capabilities and unique and prestigious position is not the birthright of a human being, rather it has to be achieved through hard work. And whoever reaches this level, will become a superhuman.

Nietzsche believed that such superhumans have been born in different periods in the past. In other words, it can be said that the same superhumans or perfect men has been born in varioustimes in history and they will continue to come to this world in the future as well. This theory of Nietzsche is called the doctrine of eternal recurrence.”

(Naeem Ahmad, Dr, Iqbal ka Tasawur Baqa-e-Dawam, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2016, p.120)

While discussing this doctrine, Nietsche says:

“Everything goes, everything returns, the wheel of existence rolls for ever. Everything dies, everything blossoms anew; the year of existence runs on for ever. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; the same house of existence builds itself for ever. Everything departs, everything meets again; the ring of existence is true to itself for ever. Existence begins in every instant, the ball there rolls around every here. The middle is everywhere. The path of eternity is crooked.”¹⁷

To Allama Iqbal, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, which should be interpreted as a very strict mechanism (that is, a chain of cause and effect in which man is forced), is based on a hypothesis of science instead of a proven fact. Nietzsche did not even consider the problem of time. He would have dismissed it as extraneous, believing that time consists of an endless series of events that will continue to recur forever. However, if the movement of time is distanced, the concept of continuity becomes unbearable, which Nietzsche himself realized. He did not take his theory as perpetuity but as a theory of life which makes the concept of perpetuity bearable. Allama Iqbal says:

“And what makes immortality bearable, according to Nietzsche? It is the expectation that a recurrence of the combination of energy-centres which constitutes my personal existence is a necessary factor in the birth of that ideal combination which he calls "superman". But the superman has been an infinite number of times before. His birth is inevitable; how can the prospect give me any aspiration? We can aspire only for what is absolutely new, and the absolutely new is unthinkable on

Nietzsche's view which is nothing more than a Fatalism worse than the one summed up in the word Qismat. Such a doctrine, far from keying up the human organism for the fight of life, tends to destroy its action-tendencies and relaxes the tension of the ego.”¹⁸

Iqbal's Concept of Eternity

In the end, here is discussed Iqbal's concept of eternity. In the last part of his fourth sermon in “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,” Iqbal presents his concept of eternity. He writes:

“And what makes immortality bearable, according to Nietzsche? It is the expectation that a recurrence of the combination of energy-centres which constitutes my personal existence is a necessary factor in the birth of that ideal combination which he calls "superman". But the superman has been an infinite number of times before. His birth is inevitable; how can the prospect give me any aspiration? We can aspire only for what is absolutely new, and the absolutely new is unthinkable on Nietzsche's view which is nothing more than a Fatalism worse than the one summed up in the word Qismat. Such a doctrine, far from keying up the human organism for the fight of life, tends to destroy its action-tendencies and relaxes the tension of the ego.”¹⁹

Explaining it further Allama says, “Before, however, we take the details of the Qur'anic doctrine of personal immortality we must note three things which are perfectly clear from the Qur'an and regarding which there is, or ought to be, no difference of opinion:

- i. That the ego has a beginning in time, and did not pre-exist its emergence in the spatio-temporal order. This is clear from the verse which I cited a few minutes ago.
- ii. That according to the Qur'anic view, there is no possibility of return to this earth. This is clear from the following verses :

²⁰حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ

“(The infidels go on doing their misdeeds) until when death

comes to one of them, he will say: My Lord send me back, so that I may act righteously in that (world).”

iii. That finitude is not a misfortune:

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا²¹

“Whoever is (dwelling) in the heavens and the earth (whether an angel, a jinn or a human being) will appear just as a servant before the Most Kind (Lord).”

This is a very important point and must be properly understood with a view to secure a clear insight into the Islamic theory of salvation. It is with the irreplaceable singleness individuality that the finite ego will approach the infinite ego to see for himself the consequences of his past action and to judge the possibilities of his future.

Allama Iqbal further says:

“With these three points clearly grasped, the rest of the doctrine is easy to conceive. It is open to man, according to the Qur'an, to belong to the meaning of the universe and become immortal.”²²

Allah Almighty says:

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى²³

Does man think that he will be left for nothing (without any reckoning)?

According to him:

“It is highly improbable that a being whose evolution has taken millions of years should be thrown away as a thing of no use. But it is only as an ever-growing ego that he can belong to the meaning of the universe.”²⁴

Allama further goes on to say:

“The records of Sufistic experience indicate that Barzakh is a state of consciousness characterized by a change in the ego's attitude towards time and space. There is nothing improbable in it. It was Helmholtz who first discovered that nervous excitation takes time to reach consciousness. If this is so, our present physiological structure is at the bottom of our present view of time, and if the ego survives the dissolution of this

structure, a change in our attitude towards time and space seems perfectly natural. Nor is such a change wholly unknown to us. The enormous condensation of impressions which occurs in our dream-life, and the exaltation of memory, which sometimes takes place at the moment of death, disclose the ego's capacity for different standards of time. The state of Barzakh, therefore, does not seem to be merely a passive state of expectation; it is a state in which the ego catches a glimpse of fresh aspects of Reality, and prepares himself for adjustment to these aspects. It must be a state of great psychic unhingement, especially in the case of full-grown egos who have naturally developed fixed modes of operation on a specific spatio-temporal order, and may mean dissolution to less fortunate ones. However, the ego must continue to struggle until he is able to gather himself up, and win his resurrection. The resurrection, therefore, is not an external event. It is the consummation of a life-process within the ego. Whether individual or universal it is nothing more than a kind of stock-taking of the ego's past achievements and his future possibilities.²⁵

Iqbal believes that such changes (i.e. those in the nature of time and space) are not one-sided and unfamiliar to us. In the world of dreams, the concentration of impressions in mind is extraordinary and the dimensions of space and time change altogether while dreaming. Similarly, the memory of a person nearing death increases immensely. Therefore, Iqbal does not consider life after death as an external event, rather he sees it as the destination of self-evolution. The Qur'an offers a similar argument by asking that is Allah Almighty who brought you into the world when you were not a thing worth mentioning (al-Insan, 76 : 1) and who made you set many stages of development, not able to resurrect you or bring you in a from beyond your imagination?

With reference to first birth, Iqbal's attention is on the biological evolution and he considers it to be in accordance with the Quranic teachings. He believes that because of the signs given by the Qur'an, a new glimpse of reality appeared in the eyes of the philosophers of Islam. It was Jāhiz (d. 255 A.H.)

who first hinted at the changes in animal life caused by migrations and environment generally. Later, the views presented by Jahiz were further elaborated on by "Ikhwan al-Safa". In the same way, Ibn Maskwiya (421 A.H.) presented a clear and modern theory about the origin and evolution of man from multiple angles. In the present age, the theory of evolution, instead of creating enthusiasm, has caused a wave of depression and hopelessness among people. The reason for this is that it has been assumed without reason that the humans have reached the final destination after millions of years of evolutionary journey and as an accident, there is no constructive aspect in death. Iqbal invites through Rumi's theory of evolution to put an end to pessimism and cynicism.

“It was only natural and perfectly consistent with the spirit of the Qur'an, that Rūmī regarded the question of immortality as one of biological evolution, and not a problem to be decided by arguments of purely metaphysical nature, as some philosophers of Islam had thought. The theory of evolution, however, has brought despair and anxiety, instead of hope and enthusiasm for life, to the modern world. The reason is to be found in the unwarranted modern assumption that man's present structure, mental as well as physiological, is the last word in biological evolution, and that death, regarded as a biological event, has no constructive meaning. The world of today needs a Rumi to create an attitude of hope, and to kindle the fire of enthusiasm for life,”²⁶

Second Creation: Physical or Spiritual?

Another issue that has been contentious among Muslims is whether a person's second creation will be physical or merely spiritual. Shah Waliullah considers the same type of body necessary for the afterlife, which the soul or self can make its place, even if it is not of dirty material! Iqbal considers this debate unnecessary because whatever concept we establish of the body without reasoning, it is possible that it cannot be fully applied in other worlds. We cannot come to any final conclusion about the second creation and what we must accept from the Qur'an is that it is a reality. We cannot know anything about its nature, nor is it useful to reason about it. This is enough for faith

and hope to consider death as the beginning of new life.

Iqbal thinks that the Heaven and the Hell are states, not localities. He writes:

“However, according to the teachings of the Qur'an the ego's re-emergence brings him a "sharp sight" (50: 22) whereby he clearly sees his self-built "fate fastened round his neck. Heaven and Hell are states, not localities. Their descriptions in the Qur'an are visual representations of an inner fact, i.e. character. Hell, in the words of the Qur'an, is "God's kindled fire which mounts above the hearts" - the painful realization of one's failure as a man. Heaven is the joy of triumph over the forces of disintegration. There is no such thing as eternal damnation in Islam. The word "eternity" used in certain verses, relating to Hell, is explained by the Qur'an itself to mean only a period of time (78: 23). Time cannot be wholly irrelevant to the development of personality. Character tends to become permanent; its reshaping must require time. Hell, therefore, as conceived by the Qur'an, is not a pit of everlasting torture inflicted by a revengeful God; it is a corrective experience which may make a hardened ego once more sensitive to the living breeze of Divine Grace. Nor is Heaven a holiday. Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which "every moment appears in a new glory.”²⁷

From the above excerpt, it is clear that, according to Iqbal, eternity belongs to divine life, which cannot be divided into moments and instances, nor can beginning and end be attributed to it. Since the finite self has a starting point, it cannot be called eternal, even though life is eternal. However, it will be called Sempiternal or Immortal in the words of Iqbal.

To Iqbal, hell is not a place of eternal damnation. After living in torment for a certain period of time, the people of Hell will be forgiven and sent to Paradise. In this context, Iqbal means a certain period of time by the Quanic word "Khulood" (Abiding). In the Quran, the words "Khulud" (Abiding) and "Dawam" (Eternity) have appeared for both the people of Hell and the people of Paradise. But about the people of Heaven, it has been declared

“forever” instead it has been said:

“(Now) the Fire is your abode in which you will reside forever, except what Allah may will. Verily, your Lord is Most Wise, All-Knowing.”²⁸

From this verse, it is clear that a provision has been provided for the people of Hell that if Allah wills, He can forgive them according to His wisdom and expediency.

Criticism on Iqbal's Concept

According to Altaf Ahmad Azami:

“Iqbal's views on Heaven and Hell are not supported by the Holy Quran. It is not correct to call Hell as a reformatory or rehabilitation home.”²⁹

In this regard he further writes:

“The existence of Hell is actually related to the manifestation of Allah's law of justice. Don't you see that everywhere in this world there are beautiful scenes of His lordship and mercy? It is the result of His unfathomable mercy that the unbelievers are also benefiting from that in this world and they have all the necessities of life. But what is known as the Hereafter will be revealed with His mercy and justice. This law will precisely decide who will be deserving of His mercy and who will be deprived of it.”³⁰

According to Azmi, Heaven and Hell are two different consequences of our actions. He writes:

“The law of justice is related to criminals and wrongdoers while the law of mercy is for the righteous. Heaven and hell are actually two different consequences of our actions, the good and comfortable result is called Heaven and the painful result is Hell.”³¹

Unlike Azmi, Mohammad Sohail Umar explains Iqbal's concept in a different way, which makes another meaning clear:

“Heaven and hell have been interpreted as conditions and the places have not been declared, so we guess that there is a lack of translation here. The word "States" should be translated as

"stages," depending on the context."³²

Conclusion

Obviously, Belief in the Hereafter is one of the fundamental beliefs in Islam. Allah Almighty is, indeed, Merciful and Forgiver, but He is also Almighty and Just. His justice continues to manifest itself in this world, but in the Hereafter His justice will be revealed with perfection. In the above discussion, the Islamic belief in the Hereafter has been proved by deductive and rational arguments, alongwith Iqbal's concept of eternity. Concludingly, it is said that Iqbal opened new avenue of thinking about above fundamental belief. He tried his best to address those philosophical questions which arose in his time. Now it is duty of contemporary Muslim scholars to defend their faith with modern logical answers.

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- ⁷ Al-‘Arāf, 7 : 20
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- ⁹ Al-Balad, 90 : 7
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²³Al-Qiyāma 76: 36.

²⁴Iqbāl, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 95-96.

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²⁸Al-An'am, 6 : 128

²⁹Altaf Ahmad 'Azmi, *Khutbāt-e-Iqbāl: Aik Mutalā'a* (Lahore: Muktaba Qasim-ul-Aloom, n.d), 174.

³⁰'Azmi, *Khutbāt-e-Iqbāl: Aik Mutalā'a*, 175-176

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