

Selfhood's Aesthetic

If there is one idea that Iqbal's work is associated with, it is the idea of selfhood or khūdī. Khamenei describes it as 'the central theme of his poems', and summarises this theme succinctly.¹ The mainstay of Iqbal's poetry is the philosophical explication and aesthetic dramatisation of selfhood. However, his poetry is not simply a vehicle for the expression of an already formed idea of selfhood; instead, it is central to the very notion of his selfhood, which is why it is explicated in verse in the first place. Iqbal called attention to this in his letters, when he stressed that *Asrār-e Khūdī* (*Mysteries of the Self*, 1915, 2nd edition 1918) is a poem and not a philosophical argument, and that the value of 'poetic proofs' ('*shā'irāna sabūt*') cannot be assessed from a logical standpoint.² The character of his verse is best summed up by the ambiguity of the word '*khayālāt*' which occurs in a phrase he used in another letter, '*shā'irāna khayālāt*'.³ '*Khayālāt*' means 'thoughts, ideas' and 'imaginings, conceits', and so the phrase can be translated as both 'poetic imaginings' and 'poetic thoughts'. Iqbal's inclination towards aesthetically structured argumentation is also evident in his prose work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, in which he explicates his views of selfhood not in terms of a closely reasoned argument, but as a vision of individual selfhood. He cites from his own poetry in his explication of that vision, and the book concludes with a citation from the *Jāvid Nāma* to illustrate his notion of the self.⁴

For these reasons, the defining features of Iqbal's aesthetic are central to his notion of selfhood, and the politics of aesthetic self-invention are a key part of his political aesthetic. It is mainly through poetic conceits, metaphors and images that Iqbal articulates his notion of selfhood in his metrically measured verse. The aesthetic nature of khūdī is also evident in the way Iqbal's persona as a poet becomes an emblem for that selfhood. In the *Jāvid Nāma* the poet's quest for identity goes hand-in-hand with the articulation of selfhood. In the Urdu 'The Book of the Cup-Bearer', features of khūdī are intertwined with the poet's persona and his self-conscious awareness of his art. The penultimate couplet in the last section of this poem, which abounds in the conceits and images

of selfhood, refers to the poet's creative process. It knits together *khūdī*, his own interiority and discursive complexities ('*tāb-e guftār*'). The word '*tāb*' is well-chosen because of its multiple connotations as heat, capability or ability, and twisting. It accords with the complex relationship created in the couplet between the burning candle of the spirit ('*nafs*'), the burning nature of the poet's words, the heat of his ardour as a poet, and the discursive capacities of language itself. In contrast to Mir's and Sauda's poems on the cup-bearer, the figure of the *sāqī* is no longer external to the poet, but becomes the poet's self. The celebration of *khūdī* in Iqbal's poem is defined against its opposite in Mir's poem, *be-khūdī*, or the ecstatic loss of self: 'Here the wine of the loss of self ('*be-khūdī*') is drunk / Here time revolves entirely around loss of self ('*be-khūdī*')' (couplet 54). For Mir, the figure of the *sāqī* brings the ecstatic experience of losing one's self, whereas for Iqbal, in contrast, that figure augurs the intoxicating experience of an individuated, creative self.

The Contexts of Selfhood

As this contrast with *be-khūdī* in Mir's poem suggests, the first context of Iqbal's *khūdī* is notions of selfhood in circulation in Islamic artistic and philosophical culture. It is against these that he defines himself. However, in doing so, he recreates these notions of selfhood in relationships of continuity and discontinuity with his innovative concept of self. For Iqbal, these older ideas of selfhood were central to the development of Islamic mystical or Sufi thought, and had an important impact on other areas of life in Muslim societies. His concept of *khūdī*, of a creative individuated selfhood, is articulated against mystical notions of *fanā*, or the annihilation of the individual self in the presence of God. Schimmel defines the latter as 'the nullification of the mystic in the divine presence'.⁵ Iqbal defines it in his *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* as a sense that 'all feeling of separation is ... ignorance; and all "otherness" is mere appearance, a dream, a shadow—a differentiation born of relation essential to the self-recognition of the Absolute'.⁶ This finds expression in Mir's '*Sāqī Nāma*', when he links *be-khūdī* with *fanā*: 'We have arrived at self-annihilation ('*fanā*') through ecstasy ('*be-khūdī*') / We have found God through loss of self ('*fanā*')' (couplet 62). In contrast, in the concluding section of his poem of that title, Iqbal articulates his conviction of the unerasable reality of the self by making it central to the fabric of reality, and even the very ground of reality: 'Your fire does

not come from this bed of ashes / The world is from you, you are not from the world'.

John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866–1925), Iqbal's tutor at Cambridge, succinctly defined the essential characteristics of mysticism as 'the affirmation of a unity [in the universe] greater than that which is usually acknowledged', and, more crucially, as the 'affirmation that it is possible to be conscious of this unity in some manner which brings the knower into closer and more direct relation with what is known than can be done in ordinary discursive thought'.⁷ He argues that the latter can lead to a form of mysticism that denies the reality of the human personality.⁸ Schimmel describes this as the 'mysticism of personality'. Characterising mysticism as consciousness of one reality, or as 'love of the Absolute', she shows how this can lead to views of the world as a 'limited reality', which derives its existence from that Absolute. By extension, this includes the individual human self, and can result in the denial of its value. This is often figured in such images as the individual self vanishing like a drop in the boundless ocean, in which the latter is taken to represent the Absolute and Divine unity underlying the universe.⁹ As we shall see, Iqbal inverts and plays with these images in order to articulate his sense of *khūdī*.

Schimmel has shown how the theories of *fanā* and *baqā*, or 'annihilation, extinction', and 'everlasting life, duration' in God, are central topics of Sufism. They are crucial to the development of its esoteric philosophies with the invention of technical expressions, and the creation of an elaborate language of symbols and conceits in poetry, often designed to shock and perplex the reader.¹⁰ Iqbal engaged in detail with the aesthetics of Sufism. The concluding chapter of his incomplete Urdu work, written in 1912, *Tārīkh-e Taṣāvvuf* (*History of Mysticism*) is entitled 'Sufism and Poetry' ('Taṣāvvuf aur Shā'irī'), and lists verses from Sufi poetry, seen by him as potentially heretical. In his own verse, Iqbal creates a counter-aesthetic to this. However, the key aspect of Sufi philosophies of the self which he criticises is the view that the knower and the known are one, so that the grasp of God as an object of understanding in which subject and object remain distinct was replaced by the fusion of the human subject with God. This meant that Sufism became an experiential knowledge of the mysteries of God's unity, whereas for philosophers within Islam who were committed to ratiocination first and faith only secondly, such a knowledge was beyond the ken of human intellect.¹¹ More recent scholars have been in agreement with Iqbal, calling attention to the distinction between

varieties of mysticism in Islam, and especially between its philosophical varieties in which the Absolute is always beyond the grasp of the human intellect, and the prototypes of Sufism. These prototypes ranged from the mystic seeking a vision of God without a loss of identity or consciousness, to the mystic seeking an organic fusion with the Divine, in which there is a total identification of the human subject with its divine object, and the loss of all personal identity.¹²

While it is important to stress that Sufism is a broad and protean phenomenon, that cannot be described fully, what exercised Iqbal in particular was the language and conception of the self in one of its more powerful strands.¹³ In *Tārīkh-e Taṣāvvuf*, Iqbal stresses the huge impact Sufism had on the populace of Muslim countries from the time of early Islam, such that in the Sunni world in his time (according to him) no 'ālim was completely accepted who did not imbue his works and deeds with the hue ('rang') of Sufism.¹⁴ What also made Sufism so powerful was its dual character as popular practices and esoteric, elite philosophies, thereby influencing different sections of the population.¹⁵ Moreover, Iqbal argued that to a certain extent, the decline of Islam as a political power in the world can be traced to the influence of Sufi notions of self. For him, mystical notions of selfhood underpin otherworldly attitudes, which undermine the capacity to act effectively in the world. For this reason, he associated the prevalence of mysticism in a culture's history with the decline of that culture, not just in Islam, but also in Hinduism and the late Roman world.¹⁶ For him, countering those notions of selfhood becomes a way of reversing Islam's decline.

Iqbal makes a point of stressing the relevance of his work on Sufism for Indian Muslims in particular. In his letters, he argued that the kind of Sufism he counters in his texts was especially influential among Indian Muslims, hence *Mysteries of the Self* expressed that aspect of *khūdī* which was particularly pertinent to them in the present age.¹⁷ As Rizvi's magisterial history of Sufism in India has shown, Sufism played a major role in the spread of Islam in the subcontinent. In general, this Sufism was marked by a rejection of the intellectual variants of mysticism, as articulated by al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd.¹⁸ Moreover, this Sufism was also pivotal in popular Islam's accommodation of Hinduism.¹⁹ As such, Iqbal's concern with an alternative form of selfhood might also have contributed to the philosophical basis for a redefined Islam of Muslim separatism in India. In '*Rumūz-e Be-khūdī*' Iqbal contrasts Aurangzeb with Dara Shikoh, valorising the former in terms of securing the boundaries of Islam as a faith.²⁰ As part of Iqbal's political aesthetic, *khūdī* was central to his

understanding of the relationship between individual self and a newly defined Islamic community in India.

This leads us to the second context which marks Iqbal's concept of selfhood. *Khūdī* was also defined against the oppressive clichés of colonial ideologies in British India, for which Indians were members of groups defined by religion and caste, and not individuals in their own right. The official British view of India as a society dominated by primordial collective loyalties rooted in caste, religion or tribe (its sociology of multiple ethnicity, as one scholar has put it) was reflected in the truncated electoral system established by the British state.²¹ In addition, from the first decennial census of 1871 onwards, caste and religion were the key categories in the collection of statistical data on the Indian population, thereby reinforcing their importance as the determinants of political allegiances in the public arena. The prevailing presumption was that the numerical strength of communities, defined by these categories, should determine their share of resources. Since politics found it difficult to shake off the straitjacket of these communal categories, the colonial state in India was successful in forestalling the emergence of class politics at various levels of the Indian social hierarchy.²² As Ayesha Jalal has argued, it was because the colonial framework of representation was rooted in communal categories that individuals expressed their subjectivity through collective discourses, fashioned in a manner that made few concessions to diversities within communities.²³ While this led to some South Asian nationalists assuming, in Markus Daechsel's words, that 'nations and individuals are ontologically analogous', we shall see that in Iqbal's case the relationship between *khūdī* and group identity is more complex.²⁴ Iqbal's conception of selfhood is an attempt to reconstruct, on behalf of Indian Muslims in particular (although it need not be confined to them alone, as we shall see), a counter agency to the systematic negation of the humanity of the colonised subject by European colonialism. The images and conceits of *khūdī* counter that fixing of consciousness which characterised British ethnological views of the inhabitants of India, frozen by caste or religion. In addition, through the narratives and poetry of *khūdī*, Iqbal undermines the incarceration effect which the limiting and homogenising term 'Muslim' had, and continues to have, when used by those in the West. In Western usage, the term is generally rooted in suppositions about the static nature of the consciousness of any person identified as 'Muslim'.

There are two contexts, then, which mark Iqbal's work on selfhood; the first is internal to the category of Islam, in the form of a dominant

Sufi language of selfhood, and the second is external to it, in the form of a colonising West whose impact on the power of Muslim societies in the world was traumatic and profound. This double context is recreated in some of Iqbal's other writings, such as his presidential address at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League in 1932, in which he brings together anti-colonialism and tensions internal to Islam (as reflected in the categories 'Arab' and 'Persian'), as factors relevant to the formation of a Muslim state in India (see Chapters 4–5).

A play between continuity and discontinuity is also evident in the relationship between Iqbal's work and the category of the West. On the one hand, *khūdī* is clearly anti-colonial in its provenance, especially in its pan-Islamic manifestations. But at the same time, as we shall see in Chapter 6, Iqbal's work engages in considerable detail with modern European philosophy. He ties this philosophy and science with Islamic philosophy in lines of continuity as he constructs a narrative for a modern Islam. The interplay between continuity and discontinuity is further evident in the way he reconstructs Islamic Hellenism in his work (see Chapter 7) and is a crucial dimension of his cosmopolitan eclecticism.

The Transgressions of Selfhood

The transgressive nature of Iqbal's notion of *khūdī* is signalled by the term itself. Schimmel has stressed that the word has highly negative connotations in Persian, implying selfishness and egotism.²⁵ The standard Persian-English dictionary by Steingass defines the term as meaning 'selfishness, conceit, egotism'.²⁶ The term thus carries a transgressive charge, which is maintained by Iqbal in his English prose works. Throughout *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal uses the term 'ego' to render the Persian term. In the previous chapter we saw how Iqbal's rupture from classical poetics was in part signalled by the way in which the poet's persona is an active issue in his work. The transgressive nature of *khūdī* is articulated in the poet's occasional hyperbolic characterisation of his own role, in contrast to the self-effacing presence of the classical poet. Thus, 'Answer to the Complaint' opens by referring to the poet's audacious criticism of God in 'Complaint'.²⁷ It refers to his seditious and quarrelsome ('*fitna gar*') complaint and its artful cunning ('*chālāk*'), and opines that the poet's outspokenness pierced the firmament. The poem pictures the angels in the firmament complaining

of how the poet, like all earth-dwellers, lacks manners (*ādāb*) and how insolent (*shokh va gustākḥ*) he is. This diction of rudeness, of having an 'attitude problem', conveys the sense of *khūdī* well. By characterising his complaint thus, the poet foregrounds the excesses of his notion of selfhood.

These consciously hyperbolic excesses, however, are manifestations of Iqbal's attempt to centralise selfhood as a category. In his poetic conception of the nature of the universe, Iqbal sees it as a system of primary selves which are substantial realities, that is, as substances which cannot be erased, but which are not thereby static; rather they are evolving and travelling. However, the kernel of this conception is the contention that as human selves approach God, rather than losing their individuality (which is what is imagined to happen under the concept of *fanā*), they become even more individuated. Iqbal ends *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* by asserting that 'the end of the ego's quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it'.²⁸ Reinterpreting the Qur'ān, Iqbal argues that 'it is with the irreplaceable singleness of his 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 ... whatever may be the final fate of man it does not mean the loss of individuality'.²⁹ As can be seen from this citation, Iqbal applies his master language of individual selfhood to God, who is also described variously as an 'ego', so that the transgressive charge of the word *khūdī* is in play in his conception of God as well.³⁰ Both God and human individuals are conceived of in the same terms; the difference between them lies in the degrees of selfhood they possess: 'Only that truly exists which can say "I am". It is the degree of intuition of "I-amness" that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being'.³¹ At times there is a slippage between selfhood and God as an ultimate or absolute self, as when he reflects on the properties of selfhood and its 'directive agency' in general, by reinterpreting a verse from the Qur'ān that represents God's 'creative activity'.³² This slippage is also evident in his poetry. In the sixth section of the Urdu 'The Book of the Cup-Bearer', selfhood is an absolute category. It is seen as eternal, and as participating in relations and yet separate from them, and as inhabiting a world of space and time, while transcending that world. It is also seen as the primary ground of reality, with the world issuing from it. This is captured in a couplet in the seventh section of the poem, already cited, in which the poet asserts

that 'the world is from you, you are not from the world'. Khūdī begins to look suspiciously like God. In other poems, the ontological equality of the human self and God is audaciously expressed, as in the 'Prelude in Heaven' in the *Jāvid Nāma*, which ends with the angels singing of how a handful of earth, man, will one day be so perfectly modulated ('*mauzūn shud*'), that the heart of God will bleed from its impact (couplet 92). Iqbal even applies the language of selfhood to matter, which is seen as 'a colony of egos of a low order out of which emerges the ego of a higher order'.³³

In his conception of selfhood, then, Iqbal dramatically inverts the Sufi notion of fanā. In doing so, he reads the Qur'ān in innovative ways, reinterpreting 33:72 referring to the burden of trust borne by man as 'the trust of personality' and the 'acceptance of selfhood'.³⁴ He also reinterprets another verse in the Qur'ān in terms of 'the emergence and multiplication of individualities, each fixing its gaze on the revelation of its own possibilities and seeking its own dominion'.³⁵ This echoes the picture he draws of the first day of creation in the *Jāvid Nāma*, where the emergence of individual entities is depicted thus: 'Everywhere, out of the taste and joyous yearning for self-habitude / Arose the cry "I am one thing, you are another"' (couplet 61).³⁶ In this master image of selfhood, some other key terms of the Sufi lexicon are inverted, such as that of 'ishq or love. Schimmel has discussed in detail the many permutations of the concept of love in the development of Sufism; as she puts it, 'the whole complex of love was so inexhaustible that the mystics invented different degrees and used different terms to classify it'.³⁷ In his English work, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (1908), Iqbal discusses some of these 'infinite' degrees of love and concepts of the world as 'an eternal drama of love'.³⁸ In essence, though, 'ishq might be rendered as the process of effacing the mystic lover's attributes so that he or she can abide in the essence of God, imagined as the Beloved. This is succinctly expressed in Fariduddin 'Attar's (1145/6–1221) poem, *Manṭiq ut Ṭair* or 'The Conference/Speech of the Birds'.³⁹ The opening section describing the vale ('*vādī*') of love contains powerful images of the force of love nullifying the seeker's being, thereby preparing him or her for union with the Beloved: 'Until the cord of your own existence has been burnt / How in joy can your heart be set on fire?' The lover's longing to return to God is also expressed in terms of the fish's longing to return and immerse itself in the sea: 'The fish thrown out of the sea onto the shore / Throbs with longing to fall back to the sea'.⁴⁰ Iqbal, however, recasts 'ishq in terms of his language of khūdī. In an explanatory note

he wrote for Nicholson's translation of *Mysteries of the Self*, Iqbal explains his concept of love:

The Ego is fortified by love (Ishq). This word is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideals and the endeavour to realise them. Love individualises the lover as well as the beloved. The effort to realise the most unique individuality individualises the seeker and implies the individuality of the sought, for nothing else would satisfy the nature of the seeker.... Thus, in order to fortify the Ego we should cultivate love, i.e the power of assimilative action.⁴¹

The third section of Iqbal's poem, *Mysteries of the Self*, entitled 'An Exposition Showing that Selfhood is Strengthened by Love', begins with this connection between selfhood and love in its opening couplets: 'The point of light whose name is *khūdī* / Is the spark of life beneath our dust / By love it is made more lasting / More living, more burning, more glowing'. For 'Attar, the vale of love is a station on the way to the vale of fanā; for Iqbal, in contrast, it is a force which further individualises the self, and is at the root of its assimilating expansiveness. The self seeks to assimilate others through its love, but at the same time individualises these others since nothing else can satisfy it. Assimilation would result in the loss of its own selfhood. It is tied to others in reciprocal bonds of individuality.

Given this master narrative of selfhood, it is not surprising that Iqbal celebrates the separateness of selfhood in various ways, rather than seeing it as an obstacle in the way of God. In doing so, he appropriates Sufi figures for his own purposes. As mentioned earlier, the *Jāvid Nāma* begins by alluding to the first line of Rumi's *Maṣnavī*: 'Man, in this world of seven colours / Is always on fire with lamentation, like a lute'. Rumi's *Maṣnavī* opens by speaking of the reed's ('*nay*') tale, complaining of separations (the word is in the plural in Rumi's text). The plaintiveness of the music produced by the reed-flute or *nay* is imagined as the reed's longing to return to its reed-bed, because, the poet says, everything that is far from its source ('*aṣl*') seeks to return to union ('*vaṣl*') with it. Iqbal's poem, however, although it begins with an allusion to this, normalises those separations as a necessary part of selfhood. Key Sufi figures of the past (in this case al-Hallaj in 'The Sphere of Jupiter', the sixth section of the *Jāvid Nāmā*) are recast as speaking the language of selfhood.⁴² 'The whole world has been founded on Selfhood' (couplets 1113–14); 'Selfhood is everywhere visible, yet invisible'. He also celebrates separation: 'Our fire increases out of separation ('*firāq*') / Separation ('*firāq*') is congenial to our life' (couplet 1085). In the same

section of the poem, other figures are imagined as uttering this language: 'The fire of separation (*'soz-e firāq'*) is the substance of life / How sweet is the intoxication of the day of separation / The very name of union (*'vaṣl'*) does not come to my words / If I seek union, neither He remains nor I' (couplet 1228). As we saw in the last chapter, one of the features of the arts of servitude which Iqbal comments on in *Bandagī Nāma* is its addiction to grief and lamentation, which he argues deadens one's emotive and experiential capacities. However, he contrasts this with another kind of grief, which is our constant companion (*'hamdam'*). This grief is described in typical images of selfhood, and is thus linked to the expansiveness and intensity of selfhood itself (couplets 42–44). It is an unavoidable part of the reality of separate individuality, and is distinct from other kinds of grief which characterise the arts of servitude.

Iqbal's inversion of Sufi terms and concepts is enacted aesthetically in the reversal of a whole range of images which are found in Sufi verse.⁴³ Here we will only concentrate on ocean imagery. As mentioned earlier, in Sufi poetry, *fanā* is figured in such images as the individual self vanishing like a drop in the boundless ocean, which is taken to represent the Absolute and Divine unity underlying the universe.⁴⁴ This image of the ocean is found in 'Attar's poem, where it is often contrasted with a drop of water. In the Peacock's tale, the majesty of God is compared to a vast ocean (*'daryā-ye 'azīm'*), and the poet asks: 'When to the ocean you are able to find the way / Why chase after a drop of dew (*'shabnam'*)?' The individual self is contrasted to the ocean to evoke its fragility as well as trembling awe at the majesty and beauty of the ocean: 'A water drop, painfully quivering from head to foot, / How should it ever be able to do battle with the sea?' The state of *fanā* is also imagined in terms of drowning one's self in God, or *istighrāq*, which is used in Sufi terminology for the total absorption in God by the adept, who loses self-consciousness through a complete concentration on God's unity. The depiction of the vale of poverty (*'faqr'*) and annihilation (*'fanā'*) opens with images of the loss of consciousness, figured in terms of obliteration in the ocean, where the heart finds nothing but being (*'būdaqī'*) in the state of being lost.⁴⁵

Iqbal's inversion of this imagery has different permutations. In one form, selfhood is imagined to be a drop of water which expands to encompass within itself the ocean, as in the sixth section of 'The Book of the Cup-Bearer' (Urdu), where the question asked in the poem 'What is *khūdī*?' is responded to in a series of images and conceits, including one of the ocean contained within a drop of water. Similarly, in *Mysteries of the Self* the poet's tumultuous persona, and so his selfhood,

is represented as a 'storm-ridden dew drop'. One character in the poem advises: 'Do not pass away from selfhood but persist in its completion / Be a drop and drink the ocean' (couplet 694). Here the play on Sufi terms is intensified by the use of the word 'baqā' for persistence, which in the Sufi lexicon refers to the state of subsistence in God following the stage of self-annihilation.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in this poem, Iqbal challenges other characters to embrace their selfhood in terms which diminish the power of the ocean: 'Let the ocean beg you for your storms / Let it complain of the straitness of its own skirts / Let it reckon itself less than a wave / And glide along in front of your feet'. This is preceded by the question: 'Are you a drop of water? Don't dissolve at your own feet / Surge forward like a wave (*'talātum kosh'*) and wrestle with the sea' (couplets 657–58, 654).

Iqbal's inversion of ocean imagery is sometimes combined with other images which are a part of the interplay between aesthetic tradition and poetic innovation. As we have seen, in his Urdu poem, 'Khizr on the Road', the labourer's political acquiescence in relation to capital is figured as being like a bud, passively accepting the dew in its lap in the garden, as opposed to that high courage (*'himmat-e ālī'*) which does not even accept the sea. Elsewhere, the substance of *khūdī* is expressed in terms of the pearl in the sea which retains its individuality, as when the creativity of decline is linked to the rejuvenation of selfhood in the second section of 'Tulū'e Islām': 'The signs of the tears of the Muslim are born in the spring rain / Pearls will be born in the sea of the Friend of God'.

The Continuities of Selfhood

However, Iqbal's inversion of Sufi concepts and images needs to be seen in terms of the interplay between continuity and discontinuity in his work as a whole. As we saw in the last chapter, Iqbal's persona as a poet is a consciously divided one. The same willed alienation from the tradition he defines himself against characterises his orientation towards Sufism. In a letter of December 30, 1915, Iqbal wrote of how his natural (*'fiṭrī'*) and ancestral (*'ābā'ī'*) inclinations were towards Sufism as represented by the monism (*wahdat al-wujūd* or 'unity of being') of Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240).⁴⁷ But after studying the Qur'ān and Islamic history, Iqbal says he fought an internal and fearful (*'khofnāk'*) struggle (he uses the word *'jihād'* here) against those inclinations. In another letter, he refers to how his father was a follower of the monistic teachings of Ibn

'Arabi so that he was brought up on a diet of his teachings. Elsewhere, he described how his constitutional inclination was towards a mysticism of union with God, but how he was constrained by the needs of the time to define himself against the notion of fanā which is central to that form of mysticism.⁴⁸ As Rizvi has stressed, it was the mystical philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi which played a key role in the development of Sufi thought and practices in India.⁴⁹ As in the case of his aesthetics, Iqbal was self-consciously opposed to those strands of Sufism which, on another level, he was perfectly at home in.

Iqbal reinterprets and appropriates Sufism by constructing lines of continuity between his notion of *khūdī* and Sufi thought, even as he inverts that thought. In his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he is at pains to stress that Sufism 'revealed fresh regions of the self by making it a special study of [human] experience'. What was problematic for Iqbal was more its 'set phraseology shaped by the thought-forms of a worn-out metaphysics'.⁵⁰ He also discusses Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind's 'idea of a whole universe of inner experience'.⁵¹ In his Urdu letters, he makes a similar distinction between its esoteric philosophy and its ethical content.⁵² In *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal adds that 'devotional Sufism alone tried to understand the meaning of the unity of inner experience which the Qur'ān declares to be one of the three sources of knowledge, the other two being History and Nature'. In this context, Iqbal contrasts devotional Sufism with what he called 'Magianism', that is, the abstruse philosophical outlook of the different creed-communities who had been absorbed into Islamic culture, and 'whose intellectual outlook had been formed by the concepts of a culture which had long dominated the whole of middle and western Asia'.⁵³ One of the major themes of *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* is the role which pre-Islamic Persian belief systems played in metaphysical thought after the advent of Islam in Persia. The first part of the study is devoted to this pre-Islamic thought, and the second to Greek dualism, with Iqbal tracing how 'the Persian mind had to struggle against two different kinds of Dualism—pre-Islamic Magian Dualism, and post-Islamic Greek Dualism'.⁵⁴ *Tārīkh-e Taṣāvvuf* is also concerned with the role of pre-Islamic belief systems in the development of esoteric Sufi philosophies in Persia.⁵⁵ Iqbal reinterpreted Sufism as focusing on the interiority of selfhood and its experiences. He redeployed its vocabulary of inner experiences to fill the category of the individual self with inner content. Key figures such as al-Hallaj are recast as representing not the experience of the 'drop slipping into the sea, but the realization and

bold affirmation in an undying phrase [i.e. the phrase 'I am God/the Truth', '*anā'l ḥaqq*'] of the reality and permanence of the human ego in a profounder personality'.⁵⁶ At the same time, by rescuing the inner experiential content of Sufism from its esoteric philosophical framework, Iqbal was putting into play his own reconstruction of Islam. He describes his 'main purpose' in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* to be 'to secure a vision of the spirit of Islam as emancipated from its Magian overlayings'.⁵⁷ As we shall see in Chapter 5, this also became increasingly central to his geographical and political imagining of pan-Islam.

We have seen how Iqbal's notion of *khūdī* sometimes amounts to a form of self-divinisation, in which there is a relationship of ontological equality between God and the individual human self, both of which are represented in the language of 'ego-hood'. The human self is variously described as being God's 'co-worker', a free personal agent who 'shares in the life and freedom of the Ultimate Ego', and an entity that is 'consciously participating in the creative life of his Maker'.⁵⁸ Some commentators have seen Iqbal's concept of God as marking a break from the conception of God as an infinite deity in the Qur'ān, but there is nothing self-evident about the concept of God in the Qur'ān, as the history of theological disquisition in Islam shows.⁵⁹ These elements of self-divinisation, though, can be seen as a continuation of Sufism in Iqbal's conception of it, rather than a rupture from it. Here Iqbal could be seen as developing the Sufi notion of '*insān-e kāmīl*', usually translated as 'the Perfect Man'. Nicholson succinctly sums up this key Sufi notion as teaching that 'every man is potentially a microcosm, and ... when he has become spiritually perfect, all the Divine attributes are displayed by him, so that as saint or prophet he is the God-man, the representative and vice-regent of God on earth'.⁶⁰ Schimmel has shown how one of the pillars of Ibn 'Arabi's philosophical system is the veneration of Muhammad, who assumes the role of the Perfect Man. He is the total theophany of the divine names, the whole of the universe in its oneness as seen by divine essence. Muhammad is the prototype of the universe as well as man, since he is like a mirror in which each sees the other. The Perfect Man is necessary to God as the medium through which He is known and manifested.⁶¹

Iqbal's notion of selfhood encompasses this notion of the Perfect Man. The heading of Section 9 of *Mysteries of the Self* refers to three stages of *khūdī*, of which the third is 'Divine Regency'. This third stage ('*marḥala*') is an exposition of Iqbal's interpretation of the Perfect Man. In essence,

this is a conflation of the poetics of selfhood with the notion of prophets as messianic leaders. Alongside allusions to Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and to Jesus as 'as the salvation (*'naġāt'*) for all the world', the poet refers to how the figure of the Prophet, as a Perfect Man, creates new worlds: 'A hundred worlds like this world of parts and wholes / Bloom, like roses, from the seed (*'kishṭ'*) of his imagination' (couplet 453). This recalls the creativity of the poet in a reformed Islamic artistic culture: 'Sea and land are hidden within his water and clay / A hundred new worlds are hidden in his heart / Until tulips blossom in his mind / No song of joy and no lament is heard' (couplets 349–50). In this section, the poet also conflates the Prophet as the Perfect Man with the figure of the *sāqī*, when he asks the Divine Viceregent to give back once more the cup of the wine of love (couplet 476). This invocation of the *sāqī* is reinforced by referring to the advent of the Viceregent in terms of the coming of spring, the association between the *sāqī* and spring being a conventional one: 'The leaves are scattered by Autumn's cruelty / Like the spring, pass over our garden' (couplet 479). This is reminiscent of the poet's own figuring of his creative potency in the prologue to the poem, when he likens himself to a spring cloud (couplet 29). The cup-bearer, the prophet and the poet are linked together in a composite figure, as one possible apotheosis of *khūdī* in an aesthetically rendered self.

The elements of self-divinisation in Iqbal's work, then, are an extension of the notion of the Perfect Man. They resonate with what one scholar has called 'self-divinizing expressions of ecstasy' by mystics such as al-Bistami (d. 874).⁶² Iqbal also subsumes rather than inverts the figure of Satan as he had been constructed in Sufi traditions.⁶³ Schimmel has outlined how the manifold aspects of Satan developed through the centuries by Sufis were echoed by Iqbal, but also how he extends those aspects, thereby producing a 'multicolored picture' of Satan.⁶⁴ Alongside his reproduction of Satan as the true monotheist, a conception which formed an important strand in Sufi representations of Satan, Iqbal also appropriates Satan within the terms of one aspect of *khūdī*, namely the necessity of cultivating the 'virtues' which lead to and help maintain technological progress and economic success. In *Payām-e Mashriq*, Satan's seduction of Adam, and the latter's subsequent expulsion from Paradise, is seen as essential to the subjugation of nature by humanity through technological progress. This five-part poem 'The Subjugation of Nature' (discussed in the previous chapter) ends with Adam's plea to God, in which he defends Satan, and in the typically transgressive terms of selfhood, boasts of his own subsequent achievements, which

appear God-like: 'Venus was my mirror, the moon adored me / My reason dominated the entire universe / I penetrated the earth and flew up to the heavens / I bound the atom and the sun with my magic' (Part 5, couplets 3–4).

Iqbal's Drunkenness

There is one final aspect of the continuity between and rupture from Sufism in Iqbal's notion of *khūdī* which needs to be considered. Iqbal also appropriates a Sufi lexicon and poetic diction in his verse, almost wholesale, which instead of inverting, he redeploys to expand his own vocabulary of selfhood. There are numerous instances of this, but here we will deal with the imagery and diction of intoxication. There is a vast and detailed Sufi vocabulary surrounding wine and drunkenness, with a plethora of esoteric meanings attached to each aspect of drinking and intoxication. In his magisterial *Sufi Symbolism*, Nurbaksh lists some 82 symbols representing different aspects of wine and gradations of intoxication and stupefaction. The *sāqī* symbolises the Absolute Beloved as well as the master of the Sufi path, 'the bearers of divine grace and the providers of inspiration, who strengthen the hearts of gnostics through the disclosure of mysteries and the elucidation of metaphysical truths'. He can also symbolise God 'who bestows the wine of love to his lovers, in whom they are said to be effaced and annihilated'. The figure can further refer to 'the unveiling of love which brings about intoxication'. Drunkenness is succinctly defined as a mystical state in which the lover's being, that is, his personal identity, becomes enveloped by love. Different degrees of drunkenness are also discriminated, with the most extreme, 'wasted-drunk' ('*mast-e kharāb*'), defined as 'the complete absorption of the heart in the love of the Beloved', 'the complete absorption of the heart in God such that no consciousness remains to attend to life's basic necessities, and wherein one realizes the degree of Divine Union'. Drunken brawling is explicated by citing al-Hallaj: 'Brawling within the state of intoxication represents the Lordship's own internal quarrel with Himself'.⁶⁵

In Iqbal's poetry, this vocabulary of drunkenness and dissoluteness is appropriated to represent not the loss of any sense of self, but the exciting project of individuated selfhood and its self-consciousness. Unlike some of the images discussed earlier, here the imagery is not reversed, but is instead inflected differently. In the first section of 'The Book of the Cup-Bearer', for example, the poet asks the cup-bearer for

the wine ('may') which burns the veil ('*purdah*'), the wine with which all creation is drunk. This resonates with Sufi symbolism in which 'may' (as opposed to other kinds of wine) represents the theophanies of God, the Absolute Being which is immanent in all things. The veil signifies anything that obstructs one from God.⁶⁶ But as the poem progresses, the secret which the poet asks the cup-bearer to reveal is *khūdī* itself, not the presence of God, and it is a *khūdī* which is drunk in company but at the same time seeks solitude (Section 6). Here, then, intoxication signifies a notion of selfhood at odds with Sufism. It also indicates the problematic relationship between interiority and the external realm of politics.⁶⁷ Similarly, elsewhere intoxication is used to represent the agency of selfhood in the world, that is, its setting of goals and its purpose-driven activity. In the second section of *Mysteries of the Self*, entitled 'Showing that the Life of Selfhood Comes from the Creation and Birth of Aims and Goals ('*maqāṣid*')', goal-oriented activity is depicted as 'like the shining dawn', and his readership is addressed in this political polemic: 'Rise, you who are ignorant of life's secret / Rise intoxicated with the wine of purposefulness' (couplets 156–57).

In the *Jāvid Nāma*, too, the vocabulary of intoxication is appropriated for the language of *khūdī*. This epic poem, as we shall see, is a journey of selfhood, in which the poet's ascent through the spheres plots the development of selfhood. Along the way, the poet encounters al-Hallaj in the Sphere of Jupiter who invites him to 'Be partner with the ring of wine drinking dissolutes / Beware of allegiance to a master ('*pīr*') who is not a man of tumult' (couplet 1056). In the same sphere Ghalib's song also invites the poet to 'change the rules of heaven / Let us change fate by revolving a heavy measure of wine' (couplet 1057). The final couplet of the *Jāvid Nāma*, when God speaks to the poet, also uses the language of wine and intoxication: 'So slender is your cup that the tavern has been put to shame / Seize a glass, drink wisely, and be gone!' This couplet in particular resonates with the complex construction of *khūdī* in Iqbal's work as a whole, and requires further explication here.

The *Jāvid Nāma* is modelled on the account of the Prophet Muhammad's ascension or *mi'rāj*, as referred to in the Qur'ān, Chapter 81: 19–25, and 53: 1–21, when he stood in the presence of God without being annihilated.⁶⁸ For Iqbal this becomes the perfect emblem of selfhood, for which, as we have seen, 'it is with the irreplaceable singleness of his individuality that the finite ego will approach the infinite ego'.⁶⁹ Given that the *Jāvid Nāma* ends with the poet facing God and retaining his

self, it is instructive to consider how Iqbal represents the mi'rāj in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

'Muḥammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned'. These are the words of a great Muslim saint, 'Abd al-Quddūs of Gangoh. In the whole range of Sufi literature it will be probably difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of 'unitary experience'; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the repose of 'unitary experience' is something final; for the prophet it is the awakening, within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated to transform the human world.⁷⁰

This passage needs to be interpreted in the light of Iqbal's political aesthetic of selfhood. Many of its resonant phrases are applicable to it. First, as we have seen, the creation of a 'fresh world of ideals' is an important part of *khūdī*. This aspect of it is poetically rendered in the second section of *Mysteries of the Self*, on the need for the self to form ideals, and it is central to selfhood as a form of political agency. Second, throughout Iqbal's poetry there is a concern with the 'forces of history'. As we have seen, the historical decline of Islam plays a key role in Iqbal's aesthetic, and some of his poems, such as 'Complaint' and 'Answer to the Complaint', represent the grand sweep of Islamic history. These poems also suggest ways in which the revival of a reinterpreted faith-based selfhood might 'control the forces of history', and restore Islam's power in the contemporary world. Third, as we have seen, *khūdī* is defined against the mystical repose of 'unitary experience' as something final. Iqbal's audacious rendering and appropriation of the mi'rāj in the *Jāvid Nāma* for his project of selfhood brings together the figures of the prophet, the mystic and the poet, each of whom is transformed in relation to the others, within an aesthetic and philosophical framework of rupture alongside continuity.

As we have seen, the *Jāvid Nāma* concludes with a speech by God. This speech reinforces Iqbal's notion of *khūdī*, advising the poet not to gamble away his 'signet-ring' of selfhood, and describing him as having come forth brighter than the all-illuminating sun, so that he ought to live more intensely, in order to 'irradiate every mote'.⁷¹ Like the drop and

the ocean, Iqbal often reverses the relationship between the mote and the sun to express the expansiveness of selfhood; he also identifies the latter with the sun to symbolise its power and the warmth of its ardour. This forms one of the lines of imagery in *Mysteries of the Self*, but it also occurs in the *Jāvid Nāma*. In the Prelude, Rumi outlines the significance of the mi'rāj in the scheme of selfhood. He exhorts the poet in the context of a face-to-face encounter with God thus: 'Do not let go of one particle of the glow you have / Tighten the glowing knot in yourself / It is better to increase one's self-glow / It is better to test one's self before the sun' (couplets 131–32). Similarly, in the context of building up selfhood, al-Hallaj tells the poet in 'The Sphere of Jupiter': 'A mote through limitless yearning becomes the envy of the Sun / In its breast are contained a hundred suns' (couplet 1088). Rumi's speech reminds us of how the poet's selfhood tests and maintains itself in the face-to-face encounter with God, rather than being obliterated in fanā.

An important aspect of *khūdī* is the ontological equivalence of God and the human self, and God himself is conceived of in terms of individual selfhood. The content and imagery of God's speech reflects back to the poet the notion of *khūdī*. With this in mind, we can unravel the double meaning of the final couplet of the poem: 'So slender is your cup that the tavern has been put to shame / Seize a glass, drink wisely, and be gone!' In Sufi terminology, different kinds of cups have different connotations. The word which Iqbal uses in this couplet is 'jām', which is said to symbolise the heart of the Sufi, and its capacity as the space where divine theophanies and illuminations of the Infinite Being appear. The tavern in its various forms symbolises the heart of the Sufi who has realised union with God, and the abode of Sufi masters. Here, in the wine-house, the cup and goblet of all the archetypes of existence are eternally brimming with wine, while the wine-worshippers have fallen down drunk.⁷² The couplet could be read in conventional terms as signifying the poet's humility before God, the limited nature of his self and his incapacity to drink (the narrowness of his heart), which disgusts the tavern's inhabitants. But within the framework of selfhood, the couplet can have an inverse meaning to this one. It is the tavern that is being disgraced here ('*ruswā*', which translates as disgraced, humiliated, dishonoured), not the poet. The smallness of the poet's cup might signify the protection of his selfhood, the countering of fanā by the project of *khūdī*, and the refusal to be annihilated in the presence of God, which is further underlined by the wise nature ('*hakīmāna*') of the poet's drinking. The narrowness of his cup thus evokes the transgressions, even the

bold arrogance, of selfhood, its refusal to lose itself in the intoxication of self-annihilation.

Thus, the final couplet of the *Jāvid Nāma* has a double meaning. Both these meanings are in interplay with each other and cannot be disentangled. This double meaning reflects the aesthetics of *khūdī* in Iqbal's work, which enacts a rupture from Sufism while keeping Sufism in play through the very process of inversion. The force of Iqbal's inversions relies on the power of what is inverted for it to make sense. Constructed continuities highlight the discontinuities created by rupture. As in the case of his classical poetics, Iqbal recreates the world he enacts his rupture from, and both tradition and innovation sustain each other. The result is a fusion of ecstatic love poetry in a Sufi mode with a political and religious reconstruction of an inverted selfhood, that tries to ground both Muslim separatism and, as we shall see, pan-Islam.

Notes

1. Khamenei, 'Iqbal', pp. 138–41.
2. *Asrār-e Khūdī*, in Iqbal, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl Fārsī*, pp. 3–78; Qureishi, *Rūh-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 153 to Maharajah Kishan Parshad, May 10, 1916.
3. *Ibid.*, Letter 64 to Shakir Siddiqui, Dec 7, 1912.
4. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 157.
5. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 144.
6. Muhammad Iqbal. 1907. *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. Lahore: Bazm-i Iqbal, n.d., p. 91. See also p. 89.
7. J. McT.E McTaggart. 1934. *Philosophical Studies*. London: Edward Arnold, p. 47. For a discussion of the relationship between McTaggart and Iqbal, see Javed Majeed. 1993. 'Putting God in His Place: Bradley, McTaggart, and Muhammad Iqbal', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(2): pp. 208–36.
8. McTaggart, *Philosophical Studies*, p. 60.
9. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 4–5.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 142–45, 12–13.
11. Muhammad Iqbal. 1985. *Tārikh-e Taṣāvvuf*, ed. Sabir Kalurvi. Lahore: Maktabāh-ye Ta'mir-e Insāniyyat, pp. 55–56.
12. Majid Fakhry. 1994. *Philosophy, Dogma and the Impact of Greek Thought in Islam*. Aldershot: Ashgate, Chapter 19.
13. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 3.
14. Iqbal, *Tārikh-e Taṣāvvuf*, pp. 28–29.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
17. Qureishi, *Rūh-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 532 to Khan Muhammad Niyazuddin Khan, Jan 20, 1925; and Letter 1119 to Qazi Nazir Ahmed, May 12, 1937.
18. S. A. A. Rizvi. 1978 (1983). *A History of Sufism in India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2 vols.

19. *Ibid.*; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, Chapter 8.
20. See the section entitled 'The Story of the Tiger and Alamgir'.
21. David Washbrook. 1982. 'Ethnicity and Racism in Colonial Indian Society', in Robert Ross (ed.), *Racism and Colonialism*. The Hague: Leiden University Press, pp. 143–81. Farzana Sheikh. 1989. *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Kenneth W. Jones. 1981. 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census,' in Gerald Barrier (ed.), *The Census in British India: New Perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 73–99.
22. Markus Daechsel. 2006. *The Politics of Self-expression: The Urdu Middle-class Milieu in Mid-twentieth Century India and Pakistan*. Abingdon: Routledge.
23. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, pp. 41–42.
24. Daechsel, *Politics of Self-expression*, p. 51.
25. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 42.
26. F. Steingass. 1892 (1988). *A Persian-English Dictionary*. London: Routledge, p. 483.
27. 'Answer to the Complaint' appears in *Bāng-e Darā*, in Iqbal, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl Urdū*, pp. 199–208.
28. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 156–57.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–94.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 47–49, 50–51, 57–58, 61–62, 75, 85, 86–87.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
36. Literally, the cry is 'I am another (*dīgaram*)', you are yet another' (*tū digarī*), which conveys a stronger sense of the separateness of individuation, in that each entity is already 'another'.
37. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 131–32.
38. Iqbal, *Metaphysics*, pp. 94–116 discussing al-Ishraqi, and pp. 144–45 discussing Bahauallah.
39. Fariduddin 'Attar. 1373 A.H. *Manṭiq ut-Tair*. Tehran: Dībā.
40. Peter Avery. 1998 (2001). *The Speech of the Birds*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, line 3343, 3345.
41. R. A. Nicholson (transl.). 1920 (1983). *Muhammad Iqbal's The Secrets of the Self*. Lahore: Ashraf Press, 1983, pp. xxv–xxvi.
42. Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj c. 858–922, was a controversial Sufi figure whose death in Baghdad is an important reference point in the history of Sufism. He was arrested and imprisoned for reportedly uttering the words '*Ana al-ḥaqq*' ('I am God/Truth'). He was accused of claiming to be divine, and was executed in 922.
43. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, pp. 104–5 discusses how Iqbal recasts mystical images of wine.
44. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 4–5.
45. Avery, *Speech of the Birds*, couplets 833, 335, 231, 809, 1085–86, 3944–48, and note 99, p. 479.
46. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 143–45.

47. Although the translation 'unity of being' is generally accepted, Schimmel has pointed out that the term '*wujūd*' literally means 'finding', 'to be found' and is thus more dynamic than 'existence'. Thus *waḥdat al-wujūd* also means the unity of existentialisation and the perception of this act. See *ibid.*, p. 267.
48. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 133 to Khwajah Hassan Nizami, Dec 30, 1915, Letter 143 to Shah Suleiman Phulvarui, Feb 24, 1916, and Letter 156 to Maharajah Kishan Parshad, Jun 24, 1916.
49. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. 2.
50. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 72.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.
52. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 141 to Khan Muhammad Niyaz ud din Khan, Feb 13, 1916.
53. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 77.
54. Iqbal, *Development of Metaphysics*, p. 147.
55. Iqbal, *Tārīkh-e Taṣāvvuf*, pp. 31–34.
56. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 77.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 86–87, 58.
59. M. S. Raschid. 1981. *Iqbal's Concept of God*. London: R. K. Paul, pp. 59–60, 62. For my comments on this, see Majeed, 'Putting God in His Place', pp. 208–36.
60. Nicholson, *Muhammad Iqbal's The Secrets of the Self*, p. 79.
61. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 272.
62. Peter J. Awn. 1983. *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 11.
63. The best study of this is Awn, *ibid.*
64. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 193–97.
65. Javad Nurbaksh. 1984. *Sufi Symbolism*. London: Khaniqahi-Nimatullah Publications, Vol. 1, pp. 160–62, 209, 208, 212.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 143–44; Javad Nurbaksh. 1991. *Sufi Symbolism*. London: Khaniqahi-Nimatullah Publications, Vol. 5, pp. 1–10.
67. This is discussed further in Chapter 3.
68. 'Mi'rādī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993 (hereafter *El2*), Vol. 7, pp. 97–105, p. 97.
69. Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 99.
70. *Ibid.*
71. In the first section of *Asrār-e Khūdī*, the signet-ring is used to dramatise the acquisition and loss of selfhood: 'If the seal-ring had had more substance ('*pukhta*') by nature / It would not have suffered from wounds / Since it derives its value from bearing the name of another / Its shoulder is galled by the weight of another's name' (couplets 127–28). Conversely, one's own signet-ring, bearing one's own name, symbolises selfhood and the ability to imprint it on the world.
72. Nurbaksh, *Sufi Symbolism*, Vol. 1, lines 130–32, 200–4.

Khūdī and *Be-khūdī*: Selfhood and its Fluctuations

In the last chapter, we saw how Iqbal's inversion of Sufi concepts is paralleled by his inversion of the conventional images of Sufi poetry. This results in a poetic argument which ranges from stressing the metaphysical substantiality of selfhood to overt politicisations of it. In this poetic argument, his divided attitude to Sufism and classical poetics is brought together, and his willed alienation from both is dramatised in terms of the aesthetic interplay between tradition and innovation.

However, there is another important aspect to Iqbal's political aesthetic of khūdī. In a letter of January 4, 1920, responding to some verses sent to him by their author for his criticisms, Iqbal described his correspondent's will power as being erased (Iqbal uses the word 'fanā' here) by the power of poetry. The price of the imagination, Iqbal adds, is the will power and determination which the poet has to express.¹ Elsewhere in his letters he suggests that the writing of poetry is not a consciously willed process, but an inborn talent, or a God-given gift, over which the poet has no control. The poet is not always aware of the meanings of his words.² We have already seen how for the classical poet his or her identity was not an active issue in their work, whereas Iqbal strove to make his persona an open question in his poetry. The definition of his poetic persona was closely involved with the construction of khūdī. In order to achieve this, he had to alienate himself from classical poetics and Sufism, and even write against the fundamental conception of his poetry in that tradition to will into being that selfhood. In doing so, poems enact khūdī as a process, in which selfhood fluctuates. The fears and hopes of this selfhood are posed in the poet's expression of his confusion in the Sphere of Venus in *Jāvid Nāma* (Section 4), as to his station ('I know not where my station is / I know this, that it is far from friends') and his fearfulness of both union and separation ('*firāq*') (couplets 759, 764). The fluctuations of khūdī as process are especially apparent in one of his key poetic arguments, *Mysteries of the Self*, a work which he referred to in his letters as the purpose of his life, and as discussing the 'reality' ('*ḥaqīqat*') and 'strength' ('*istiḥkām*') of selfhood.³

The Fluctuations of *Khūdī*

The prologue of *Mysteries of the Self* encapsulates the movements of selfhood in the poem as a whole. There are five movements in the prologue. The first begins with the figure of the poet at dawn in a garden ('When the world-illuminating sun struck the path of the night'), overcome by grief, 'moistening the face of the rose' with his tears, and washing sleep away from the eye of the narcissus. The poem, then, begins with a figure of the poet not dissimilar to that of grief-stricken poets lampooned in *Bandagī Nama* as practitioners of the arts of servitude. But like the dew, the poet has a regenerating effect on the garden; his mournful verse is sown by a gardener in the soil of the garden, who also weaves together the poet's lament. The first four couplets refer to the poet's creative potential, but as yet the poet is material in the hands of an external agency, who plants his verse and weaves his discourse.

In the second movement, the poet constructs his own spacious interiority, reversing and multiplying the opening image of dawn by proclaiming that within his breast are a hundred dawns. The garden image is also re-used by being internalised, with the poet referring to how his garden is beautiful before the leaves are green, and how it contains roses that have yet to bloom. Here, the sense of deep inwardness is evoked by the use of the words '*andar nihān*', or 'inside the within', so as to suggest a strong sense of 'within-ness'. In addition, the poet declares that though he is a mote ('*zarra*'), the radiant sun ('*mihr-e munīr*') is his. In this couplet, both hemistiches rhyme with each other through the use of an izafat compound, which includes the first person possessive pronoun ('*ān-e man ast*' and '*garībān-e man ast*'), so that there is a double reinforcement of the poet's power to take possession of what was initially external to him.

Thus, what was external to the poet, the scene of the garden at dawn, now represents the potentialities of the poet's own inner space: 'From the East my dawn arrives and defeats the night / Fresh dew settles on the rose of the world' (couplet 15). In contrast to his earlier reliance on others, the world is seen as his own musical instrument to play upon (couplet 9). As we saw in Chapter 2, the transgressive nature of *khūdī* is sometimes manifested in hyperbolic excess. Here the poet's hyperbolic extension of his own power, immediately after the conventional opening of the poem, heightens that transgressive effect. However, this hyperbole is modulated by a note of nervous anticipation, suggested by the sea and the mountains as yet untouched by the poet's

sun ('Untouched is the sea by my crimson rays / Untouched are the mountains by the colour of my henna', couplet 13), and by the poet's own anxiety at his shimmering newness as a sun: 'The eye of existence is not familiar with me / I rise, my body trembling, from fear of showing myself' (couplet 14).

The rest of this movement establishes a repertoire of arresting images of *khūdī*, which the poet will call upon as his selfhood develops in the poem. It establishes the poetic ground for what it is to follow. All of these conceits and images are inversions or reversals of conventional ones, such as reversing the relationship between a drop and the ocean (couplet 20, cited earlier, and couplets 26–27: 'No river can contain my sea of Oman [i.e., Persian Gulf] / Whole seas are needed to contain my storms'), or imagining the poet as a spring cloud bringing much needed rain to the bed of roses.

The fluctuating nature of selfhood in the prologue is also signalled by the third movement of the prelude (couplets 37–47). This begins with the poet's invocation of the *sāqī* to fill his cup with wine, and to 'pour moonbeams into the night time of my thoughts' (couplet 43). In this section, the poet combines a reliance on the *sāqī* as external to himself, with a representation of the transformative potency of his own verse. This evokes his fluctuating subject-position in relation to others, and enacts the difficulties of *khūdī* as the assertiveness of self-definition. The poet becomes a fulcrum in which different subject-positions meet and separate, a site of transition from passive acquiescence to an active agent. This is captured in the following couplets: 'Rise *Sāqī*, and pour clear wine into my cup / Pour moonbeams into the night time of my thoughts / That I might draw the wanderer to his destination / And give the onlooker a taste of restlessness / And become an ardent seeker on a new quest / And become a champion of a new desire' (couplets 43–45). Here, the end rhyme of the first person of the present stem of '*shudan*', 'to become', underlines the poet's sense of a potential first person agency, even as it is framed within an invocation to the *sāqī*.

The fourth movement of the prologue (couplets 48–93) recapitulates these previous processes of self-formation. Here the fledgling poet seeks encouragement from Rumi, who addresses the poet in order to inspire him on his poetic mission. Moreover, Rumi's address enacts the play between tradition and innovation which we find in Iqbal's verse as a whole. He invokes conventional images, conceits and figures, from references to proclaiming the secrets of the Sufi teacher's wine (couplet 66), to allusions to the figures of Leila and Majnun (couplet 68).⁴

Rumi also refers to the opening of his own *Maṣnavī*, when he exhorts the poet to be like the reed-flute ('*nay*') and bring a message from the reed-bed ('*nīstān*', couplet 68). At the same time, Rumi exhorts the poet to create a new style ('*andāz*') for his own song, thereby refreshing and recreating the poetic assembly with his strains (couplet 69), and encourages him to start a journey on a new path, putting aside the passionate melancholy of old (couplet 71).

In this way, the dialectic between innovation and tradition in the ongoing aesthetic process of the poet's *khūdī* is central to the poet's relationship with Rumi in this section of the poem. Iqbal appropriates the figure of Rumi, a master figure in traditional Sufi poetry, to legitimise his own innovative political aesthetic. Although the poet is the addressee here, Rumi's address is itself written by Iqbal, and so Rumi is already supplanted by Iqbal's sense of his own poetic mission. This orientation towards the future is further indicated by Rumi's final words, 'O bell of the caravan, awake' (couplet 72). *Bāng-e Darā* or 'The Caravan's Bell', was to be a collection of Iqbal's verse, published in 1923. Iqbal also casts his relationship with Rumi in a way which alludes to the play between *fanā* and *khūdī* in his reworked Sufi universe: 'I am a wave that finds its place in his [Rumi's] sea / So that I might become a glistening pearl' (couplet 53). Here the ending of both hemistiches with the first person form of the present participle of '*kardan*', to do or make, underlines the sense of the poet's agency being defined in relation to others, through the play of imagery which enacts that interaction, and recalls the Sufi background which the poet breaks from.

These fluctuations of selfhood, and the dramatisation of its struggle to define itself, are also evident in the final movement of the prologue. Here the poet asserts himself and his own aesthetic in the wake of Rumi's rousing address, but again in terms of a fluctuating process. He proclaims what is to be the central notion of his aesthetic as a whole: 'I unveiled the secret of *khūdī* / I showed the wondrous secret of *khūdī*' (couplet 75). But this couplet is immediately followed by one referring to his own unfinished condition, so that selfhood remains a project and a process, rather than something given from the start. Part of the poet's self-assertion is also evident in the representation of his poetic self-awareness. Iqbal calls attention to the qualities of his own verse self-reflexively; that is, he explicitly states the qualities of his verse, but in verse which at the same time exemplifies those qualities. He distances himself from poetry ('*shā'iri*') and the charming style of the

Persian poets of the past, with their stress on beauty ('*ḥusn-e andāz-e bayān*', couplets 87, 89) but does so in the rhyming couplets of the traditional *maṣnavī* form, much loved by these poets. In doing so, he modulates conventional imagery by referring to his aim to make the drop co-equal with the sea, and the sand grow into the desert (couplet 86).

The prologue ends with a couplet which appeals to the reader not to find fault with the wine-cup, but to pay attention instead to the taste ('*zauq*') of the wine itself. This privileges content over form, bending the traditional poetic form to make it transparent to the poet's innovative content of *khūdī*, and it does so by innovatively inflecting traditional imagery of wine to suggest a reversal between form and content (previous poets focused on form at the expense of meaningful content, he will do the opposite). This reversal is rendered in the rhyming couplets of the *maṣnavī* form, and so this final couplet of the prologue exemplifies the multiple levels of the interaction between tradition and innovation in Iqbal's verse. It enacts the creation of harmonious dissonance which is key to his distinctive style, and to the process of selfhood which that style articulates.

In its fluctuations between a dependency on external others, and the creation of the agency of selfhood, the prologue sets the tone and defines the movement of selfhood in other sections of *Mysteries of the Self* too. Thus, Section 10 of the poem, 'Explicating the Secrets of the Names of Ali', mirrors the movements of the prologue. This section begins with the poet as a passive recipient of Ali's life-giving attributes, drawing power from them (couplets 483–86). Ali is then opened up as a model to emulate (couplets 496–98; 502–5), and here rather than being a passive recipient, the poet and the addressee begin to become active agents, moulding the world and their environments (couplets 509–18). Again, the role of the poet is crucial here, as he becomes a fulcrum for the interplay between passivity and active agency, and a site for the creation of selfhood. Different sections of the poem as a whole also capture these movements of selfhood, with separate sections detailing what strengthens and what weakens the self (for example, Sections 2 to 5), and other sections explicating views of selfhood within Islamic culture opposed to *khūdī*, which have to be overcome (for example, Sections 6, 7 and 14).

The prologue to *Mysteries of the Self*, then, enacts selfhood as a process. It dramatises the struggle for selfhood and agency, and establishes a repertoire of images, conceits and poetic strategies, which criss-cross the poem as a whole, held together as an aesthetic unit by the rhyming

couplets of the *maṣnavī* form. These are constantly being developed and re-developed in the text, articulating the self-fashioning of *khūdī* which is the poem's subject matter. For this reason, the poem reads like a draft of its own meaning, explicating its rationale as it develops.

The first section of the poem after the prologue, for example, on how 'the system ('*nizām*') of the universe develops from *khūdī*', recasts earlier versions of images which relied on discrete and stable entities being measured against each other in terms of their size. These become unstable and are related to each other through the creative work of selfhood. Thus, in the prologue, as we have seen, the poet presents a vibrant scene of mountains and the sea as yet untouched by the poet's 'dancing rays' (couplet 13). This anticipatory scene of the poet's own arrival is also an anticipation of how this imagery is to be reworked. In the invocation to the *sāqī*, the latter's wine is seen as giving the weight of a mountain to a straw (couplet 40). We have also seen how in the prologue the expansiveness of selfhood is rendered in part by the way in which the drop is to be co-equal with the sea, and the sand grows into the desert. Following the prologue, though, the first section of the poem represents the creative work of *khūdī* in terms of its self-multiplication and self-unification thus: 'It dissolved itself and created atoms / It was scattered for a while and created deserts / It wearied of dispersion / And through re-uniting itself it became the mountains' (couplets 113–14). Here the contestation between sand and desert, straw and mountain, which relies on the differences of size between discrete entities for the forcefulness of the poetic inversion behind *khūdī* to work, is unravelled. These entities now merge into each other as part of the process of selfhood creating its own playful universe. The playful purposefulness of selfhood is also captured in this section by the use of verbs to express the Self's activities: 'It rises, kindles, falls, glows, breathes / Burns, shines, walks, and flies' (couplet 109). Here the use of the third person singular form of these verbs, without a separate pronoun, highlights the dynamic and active nature of the way *khūdī* manifests itself. The centrality of selfhood to this poetic universe is also underlined by the way its acquisition and loss is expressed in terms of the changing shapes of entities: 'When the mountain leaves itself, it becomes a desert / And complains that the sea surges over it / The wave, so long as it remains a wave in the sea's embrace / Can make itself a rider on the sea's back / The candle also concatenated itself / It built itself out of atoms / Then it made a practice of melting itself and fled from itself / Until like tears it trickled down its own eye' (couplets 121–22, 125–26).

A similar process occurs in the 14th section of the poem, where there is an imagined dialogue between a mountain and a river, each becoming an emblem of different aspects of selfhood. In Chapter 1, we saw how rivers played an important symbolic role in Iqbal's aesthetic landscape. They are also an evocative emblem of the poet's selfhood; in the *Jāvid Nāma*, the poet goes by the name of 'zinda rūd' or 'living stream'. In this section of *Mysteries of the Self*, the river Ganges mocks the Himalayas for its statuesque immobility, stressing that life springs from continual movement, and that motion is the wave's essence (couplets 639–40). The Himalayas reply by pointing to how the river's end is not a defined selfhood, but instead fanā, since it sinks into the sea. In contrast, the mountain represents the adamant substance of individuality, resistant to erosion by water (couplet 653). Its inner fire also creates rubies, diamonds and other gems, which cannot be damaged by water (couplet 652). In other sections of the poem, such as Section 12, jewels are contrasted to ephemeral drops of water, with the poet punning on the idea of 'āb' or 'water' as both liquid (in this case a dew drop) and the lustre or water of a jewel. In asserting itself as a more adequate emblem of selfhood, the mountain gives yet another inflection to the image of the garden, exhorting the river to be self-contained like the rose in the garden, and not to spread its perfume abroad (couplet 646). It also expresses the long time span that is needed for self-growth and the development of selfhood, referring to how its being grew and reached the sky (couplet 649). After this dialogue between mountain and river, the section ends with the poet exhorting the drop of water to wrestle with the sea, forcing the sea to beg the drop for its own storms, or to become the water of a jewel (couplets 654–58). This is also the appeal at the end of Section 12, where the earlier association between the poet and the dew in the opening of the prologue, as discussed earlier, is broken. Here the self-exhortation is to be a diamond, not a dew drop, and become massive in nature, like a mountain (couplets 591–92).

On the one hand, then, the river personifies some elements of Iqbal's thought which endorse movement and travel (we will see how important the latter is for Iqbal), and the mountain suggests immobility; but then the mountain comes to personify other aspects of *khūdī*, and the river comes to be an inadequate emblem of it. At the same time, aspects of the garden are reworked to represent one dimension of selfhood, namely its self-containment. In this movement of images, the river has to transform itself in relation to the ocean, while the ocean becomes aware of its own inadequacy, suing the drop of water for storms.

The restlessness of *khūdī* is enacted, then, not only through the content of its images, but also in the way these images are shown to be inadequate to any full expression of what selfhood might be; each symbolic entity gives way to others in the twists and turns of selfhood as it interacts with its landscape. This landscape becomes a site for its self-reflection, with mountains, rivers and oceans reminding the self of how it can imaginatively appropriate qualities essential for its own growth.

Each separate section of the poem, then, refashions the poem's repertoire of images in accordance with the station of the self in that particular section. Having established selfhood as a basic principle in the first section, the second section of the poem moves on to the means for engendering it through the creation of desire ('*ārzū*'). Desire suggests a lack which has to be overcome or fulfilled, and which therefore energises *khūdī* into action, and even brings it into being. In this section, certain images are recast, this time in connection with the celebration of desire as a permanent part of selfhood: 'Desire adorns *khūdī* in uproar / It is the wave of restlessness in the ocean of *khūdī*' (couplet 142). Here selfhood and the ocean are conflated, so that the image of the ocean is recast from the perspective of the interiority of selfhood. This image of introspection, processing inwardly the external expanse of the ocean, is balanced by a couplet celebrating the separation of the reed from the reed bed, that recalls the opening lines of Rumi's *Maṣnavī*: 'Away from the reed bed the reed flourished / The music was freed from its prison' (couplet 147). Here the connection between the state of flourishing and the condition of freedom is underlined by the end rhyme of '*ābād shud*' and '*āzād shud*', brought together through the separation of the reed from its own source, just as Iqbal brings together Rumi's opening lines with his own departure from it in his own couplet. Whereas in Rumi the reed-flute's music bewails its separation, here the existence of the music of separation is a sign of the creative freedom of selfhood. This bringing together through separation is another instance of Iqbal's creation of harmonious dissonance in his verse.

The Vacillations of Be-*khūdī*

These fluctuations of *khūdī*, then, dramatise the process of selfhood in *Mysteries of the Self*. However, there is another aspect to these fluctuations, which involves the question of selflessness or be-*khūdī* in Iqbal's poetry and thought. As if to offset the possible anarchic consequences of his scheme of selfhood, the ninth section of *Mysteries of*

the Self, 'Showing that the Education of the Self has Three Stages: Obedience, Self-Control, and Divine Regency', is characterised by a different set of images altogether, representing the need to confine selfhood within the limits of law. The section begins with the image of the camel as exemplifying the traits of 'service and toil' ('*khidmat va maḥnat*'). This model of patience is recommended to the reader, who is exhorted to carry the burdens of religious duty ('*farā'iz*'). The theme of necessary restrictions on *khūdī* is underlined by a new permutation of garden imagery, which now expresses the importance of structuring selfhood by restraining it: 'Imprisonment in the flower-bud makes the air fragrant / Confinement in the navel of the musk-deer makes the perfume become musk' (couplet 416). The reversal of the imagery of selfhood is reinforced by the grammatical structure of this couplet, in which imprisonment and confinement are the grammatical subjects. It is as though selfhood has willingly exchanged places with constraint. This imagery of selflessness has its own set of permutations too, so that, like *khūdī*, it is a process as well. Thus, in the second part of this section which depicts self-control, the camel becomes an image of self-conceit, obstinacy and self-will (couplet 424). In the Persian, these are compound terms, conjoining '*khūd*' with nouns or verbs to produce negative connotations (thus, '*khūd-parast*', '*khūd-savār*', '*khūd-sar*'), so that the reversal of *khūdī* appears to be even more complete; the term 'self' now appears in a new lexical world. Furthermore, the camel becomes a symbol of the body and sensuality, which the reader is exhorted to control (couplet 445).

This process of constraining selfhood is continued in another of Iqbal's extended poetic arguments, *Mysteries of Selflessness*, which Iqbal repeatedly referred to in his letters as the second part of his *maṣnavī*, thereby suggesting that he viewed both *Mysteries of the Self* and *Mysteries of Selflessness* as one continuous text.⁵ In the ninth section of *Mysteries of the Self*, the poet refers to liberty ('*ikh̄tiyār*') as being born from constraint ('*jabr*'), (couplet 413). The poetic argument of *Mysteries of Selflessness* is an explication of a neo-Kantian position, that in order to be free one has to willingly submit to the law. For Iqbal this willing submission of *khūdī* to the law is essential to the formation of an Islamic community. The focus on the societal in *Mysteries of Selflessness* is immediately apparent from its diction of community, which is absent from *Mysteries of the Self*. The key terms which run through the poem are '*qaum*', '*waṭan*', '*millat*', '*jamā'at*', '*ṣoḥbat*', and very occasionally '*ummat*'. In keeping with this, the poetic argument seems to reverse the images of selfhood. In *Mysteries of the Self* a typical symbol of selfhood which the reader is

asked to identify with is the burning candle, as opposed to the moth which immolates itself in the flame. In the last section of the poem, the poet also identifies with the candle, imagining himself as the candle that burns openly, and burning for others. He also complains that it is not easy for a candle to burn alone (couplets 852, 841, 856). In the section of the poem outlining Plato's influence on Sufi notions of the self, he characterises the notions he defines selfhood against as glorifying the extinguished candle (couplet 319).

In *Mysteries of Selflessness*, on the other hand, in the 'Dedication to the Muslim Community' which opens the poem, he exhorts his readers to 'learn the mystery of the ardour of the moth / Make your nest in the flame' (couplet 6). Here the use of the singular of '*rumūz*', '*ramz*', for mystery, ties this image closely to the title of the poem. Similarly, the emperor Aurangzeb is represented as the moth fluttering around the flame of God's unity ('*tauḥīd*', couplet 195). In the section on Prophet Muhammad's mission to 'found freedom, equality and brotherhood among all mankind', he refers to the pan-Islamic community as 'a moth devoted to Muhammad's flame' (couplet 261). This Islamicisation of the image is continued in the section on the objective of an Islamic community being the 'preservation and propagation of God's unity'. Here he invokes the image of the moth fluttering around the candle again: 'The moth's heart carries the delightful taste ('*zauq*') of burning / For that joy it circles the candle' (couplet 725). The word '*zauq*' has multiple connotations. While it means taste and delight, it is also a Sufi term, which Iqbal defines in *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* as an 'inner perception' which reveals 'non-temporal and non-spatial planes of being'. He argues that 'it is the study of philosophy, or the habit of reflecting upon pure concepts, combined with the practice of virtue', which sharpens this sense of discrimination.⁶ The basic importance of this notion of seeing is clear when in the *Jāvid Nāma* he defines religious faith in Islam as 'attaching the eye to the invisible ('*ghā'ib*')'. This vision includes denying distinctions between tribes and ethnic groups, and especially denying the 'supremacy of the Arabs' (couplets 466, 469) so that in the ultimate analysis '*zauq*' as a perception of the non-material reality of God's unity and a sociological vision of the nature of Islam become conflated.

This conflation of religious belief's faith in the unseen with a sociological vision of a faith community is also clear in the reversal of other characteristic images of *khūdī*. When figuring the triangular relationship between the individual, God and the Prophet, the poet writes:

'In God the individual, in him the community ('*millat*') lives / In his Sun's rays resplendent' (couplet 231). The ardent faith of the first generation of Muslims is represented similarly: 'Their motes were radiant in the flame of that sun's sanctuary [i.e. the Prophet]' (couplet 262). Elsewhere in the poem, the poet reinstates the conventional imagery of the garden in spring, and its associations with the *sāqī* and his wine, to figure a Muslim community which is unbounded by time. Here I cite from Arberry's elegant translation:

In Spring thou hast heard the clamorous nightingale,
 And watched the resurrection of the flowers;
 The buds arrayed like brides; from the dark earth
 A veritable city of stars arise;
 The meadow bathed in the soft tears of dawn
 That slumbered to the river's lullaby.
 A bud bursts into blossom on the branch;
 The breeze new-risen takes it to her breast;
 A bloom lies bleeding in the gatherer's hand
 And like a perfume from the mead departs.
 The ring-dove builds his nest; the nightingale
 Takes wing; the dew drops softly, and the scent
 Is sped. What though these mortal tulips die,
 They lessen not the splendour of the Spring;
 For all the loss, its treasure still abides
 Abundant, still the thronging blossoms smile.
 The season of the rose endures beyond
 The fragile eglantine, yea, it outlives
 The rose's self, the cypress, and the fir;
 The jewel-nourishing mine bears jewels yet,
 Unminished by the shattering of one gem.
 Dawn is departed from the East, and night
 Gone from the West; their too-brief-historied cup
 Visits no more the wine vat of the days;
 Yet, though the draught be drunk, the wine remains
 Eternal as the morrow that awaits
 When all our yesterdays are drowned in death (couplets 481–93).⁷

In this extended poetic passage, the restlessness of selfhood is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, we have a moving and lyrical meditation on the transitory nature of spring in the phenomenal world, which gives way to the garden in spring as an ideal image that remains undiminished by its instantiation in the temporal world. This ideal spring is a metaphor for the abiding nature of the Muslim community, despite

its historical fluctuations in the temporal world. The flow of wine is like the flow of time, but that which generates its flow remains, grounding the permanence of an imagined Islamic community.

In many ways, then, it would appear that the aesthetics of be-*khūdī* dominates in *Mysteries of Selflessness*. In the prelude to the poem on 'the bond between individual ('*fard*') and community ('*millat*'), the poet sets out his argument that the individual self only makes sense if it is constrained and structured by community. In their relationship, the individual and community mirror each other; it is only by fettering the individual that he or she can be free (couplets 46, 59–62). In this same section, this relationship is presented again in terms of garden imagery: '*Khūdī* negates itself in the community ('*jamā'at*') / So that from a petal it can become an orchard' (couplet 75). However, as in the case of *khūdī*, the aesthetics of be-*khūdī* is self-reflexive as well, so that the latter does not imply an absence of self-consciousness. Thus, in the prelude again, in order to illustrate the reciprocal relationship between community and the individual, the poet uses the following analogy: 'The word that sits outside its own couplet / Shatters the jewel of the theme ('*mazmūn*') in its own pocket' (couplet 59). Selflessness and its role in the formation of a sense of community is compared to the rhyming couplets of Iqbal's own poetry with its extended poetic theme of community. Each word must have its place within the constraints of the rhyming couplets of the *maṣnavī* in order for the theme of be-*khūdī* to be articulated. Elsewhere in this poem Iqbal represents aspects of selflessness in similar terms. The relationship between individual Muslims and the community is described as akin to 'strings on one lute of the same concord' (couplet 278), and the centrality of Muslim law to an Islamic community's identity is represented thus: 'As sound controlled gives rise to a melody / So when control is absent from sound, dissonance is the result / In our throats a breath is but a wave of air / Which when constricted in the reed becomes a note' (couplets 529–30). Here the fact that each hemistich as well as each couplet rhymes with the other, so that there is a fourfold rhyme, creates the aural harmony which the poet images as an emblem of a harmoniously imagined Muslim community. At one point in the poem, the poet even equates the advent of Islam with the very possibility of measured articulation: 'We were a word unvoiced in the world / Through his apostleship we became a measured verse' (couplet 218).

Iqbal's commitment to the traditional forms of poetry, and especially rhyming couplets (in one of his letters he describes metre as the 'fortress

of poetry' which should never be given up), is a formal dramatisation of be-khūdī as well as a reflection of it.⁸ The dialectic between khūdī and be-khūdī in his work as a whole is in a sense already contained within the interplay between the constraints of the rhyming couplets and the metre of the maṣnavī form in *Mysteries of the Self*, and the restless images of inversion and expansiveness which characterise that selfhood. However, in the interplay between self and selflessness, the relationship of individual to community is sometimes presented as subtler than simply a mirror reflection of each other. In the section on the first pillar of the Islamic community as the unity of God, Iqbal writes: 'The heart is a station to itself and to alienation (*'begānagī'*) / Passion is intoxicated when the cup is shared' (couplet 130). The couplet here suggests how a community is formed through shared self-alienation, which at the same time makes the self at home with itself; this is further underlined by the rhyming of *'begānagī'* with *'paimānagī'* (a measure, a cup), so that the relationship between that alienation, measured sharing, and being at home is reinforced. At other points, the relationship is represented as a series of complex mediations in which the original substance of khūdī is not erased but transformed (here I cite Arberry's polished translation again):

If thou wilt take a drop of April shower
 And nurture it within the garden's close
 Till, like the dew of the abounding Spring,
 A rosebud takes it to its near embrace,
 Then, in the rays of heaven-glittering dawn
 Whose magic knots the blossoms on the branch,
 Thou shalt draw out the lucent element
 Within its substance, all the ecstasy
 Of leaping in its trembling particles. (couplets 663–66)⁹

The measured verse here adds to the tranquil picture of a long drawn out process. In this process, the ecstasy of leaping and the careful tending within the garden's close becomes emblematic of the nurturing of an individual self through the different levels of mediation into a community of selves.

There are other ways, too, in which *Mysteries of Selflessness* dramatises the dialectic between be-khūdī and khūdī. Section 3 on the life-sapping emotions of 'despair (*'yās'*), grief and fear', which a belief in the unity of God overcomes, recalls the second section of *Mysteries of the Self*, where, having established selfhood as basic principle, Iqbal moves onto the

means for engendering it through the creation of desire. The allusion to that section is signalled by the first hemistich in this section of *Mysteries of Selflessness* on how a living death is the result of the amputation of desire (couplet 145). As was suggested, desire suggests a lack which has to be overcome or fulfilled, and which therefore energises self into action, and even brings selfhood into being. By the same token, each self's recognition of lack is necessary for the tying together of each individual selfhood with other individualities. Hence the meditation on despair in *Mysteries of Selflessness*. The means to overcome despair for Iqbal lie in religious faith, and especially the belief in the unity of God, which becomes central to his imagining of a Muslim community, whose main purpose is to preserve and propagate that belief. The overcoming of despair as an ongoing emotional experience is an essential component of the processes of selfhood and selflessness, and for the sense of unity created by a belief in the oneness of God. It is part of the process of linking together the singular experiences of individuals into the shared experiences of a community, and in this, individuality is not effaced but is central to the construction of a group identity. In keeping with the dialectical link between opposites in Iqbal's verse, the keenness of despair and fear is part of the emotional experience of a self-reflexive faith, as opposed to the blindness of a static faith with an attenuated emotional life in which such emotions have no place.

Khūdī or Be-khūdī?

The interplay between *khūdī* and *be-khūdī*, then, is central to Iqbal's vision of an Islamic community, for which, in Iqbal's words, 'Islam is a method of personal illumination on the one hand and social experiment on the other'.¹⁰ Selflessness also seems to be a sociological, communal rendering of the Sufi notion of *fanā*. In one of his letters, he defines selflessness in terms of leaving one's personal and individual inclinations and opinions behind in order to follow God's commands; he adds that this is a version of *fanā*.¹¹ Given the stress on the Islamic community and the theological-moral imperatives that bind it together, *be-khūdī* might also be seen as Iqbal's return to Sufism as originally representing, in his conception of it, living one's everyday life according to the tenets of Islamic belief and practice, and as the practice of sincere worship.¹² Schimmel is in agreement with Iqbal's conception of early Sufism when she describes Sufism in the formative period of Islam as 'mainly an

interiorization of Islam, a personal experience of the central mystery of Islam, that of *tauḥīd*'.¹³

Given that *Mysteries of Selflessness* follows *Mysteries of the Self*, it might appear that ultimately be-*khūdī* has priority in Iqbal's political aesthetic. At times, certainly, the former reads as an attempt to discipline and contain what Hardt and Negri have called 'liberated singularities'.¹⁴ This is also Arberry's view, who sees *Mysteries of Selflessness* as a response to the possible anarchic consequences of the 'Iqbalian conception of selfhood'.¹⁵ However, I shall argue here that it is *khūdī*, and not be-*khūdī*, that has political and aesthetic priority in Iqbal's work.

First, the real interest of be-*khūdī* derives from its interplay with selfhood, but the converse does not hold; *khūdī* is of interest in its own right. The very constitution of the term be-*khūdī*, with the prefix 'be' signifying negation, privileges selfhood. Unless *khūdī* was there in the first place, there would be no work for be-*khūdī* to do, and the make-up of the latter term reflects this. Similarly, while the harmonious dissonance of Iqbal's poetry might be read as a way of resolving the tension between selfhood and selflessness, the distinctiveness of that poetry lies in its striking a dissonant note. Without that, Iqbal's poetry would swing between a lacklustre reproduction of the styles of classical poetry and an empty didacticism. Secondly, in terms of the chronology of Iqbal's work, *Mysteries of Selflessness* is succeeded by the *Jāvid Nāma*, with its appropriation of the *mi'rāj* as a motif for the journey of selfhood. The audacity of that appropriation is itself testimony to the power of *khūdī*. Thirdly, in aesthetic terms, be-*khūdī* is a return to the aesthetic conventions which Iqbal breaks from, or at least it reverses the characteristic images of selfhood. However, this reversal occurs through the prism of *khūdī* itself. Be-*khūdī* acquires its aesthetic significance and poetic value from the self-consciousness of the former. The images in *Mysteries of Selflessness* are only noteworthy and surprising because the scene has been set by the poetic argument for selfhood in *Mysteries of the Self*, with its images of inversion and strategies of rupture. Otherwise the images in *Mysteries of Selflessness* would not merit critical attention. Fourthly, the images of selflessness tend to highlight, through constraint, the very intensity of selfhood, from the image of the wave immobilised in the gem, to that of the imprisoned bird, which washes from its wing the will to fly, yet seeks new stratagems every moment, tying difficult knots which it resolves with ease (couplets 678, couplets 683–86). This self-referring vocabulary of the twisting and

turnings of selfhood is foregrounded by constraint rather than displaced or erased by it.

Fifthly, *Mysteries of Selflessness* begins with a complex series of meditations, constructed by the poet, to create a community out of his political aesthetic. In other words, the poem begins with images of selflessness which are contained within the figuring of the poet's own selfhood, as creating the communicative nexus which makes a community possible: 'From the liquid blue sky an ocean trickles / Momentarily over my burning heart / Which I channel narrower than a brook / So that I may fling it into your garden's dish' (couplets 20–21). This complex sequence of expansiveness and multiple containment dramatises the poet's wilful curtailment of himself within the framework of his poetic creativity. A similarly complex series of poetic moments concludes this opening section of the poem, stylishly rendered by Arberry thus:

Love, like the tulip, has one brand at heart,
And on its bosom wears a single rose;
And so my solitary rose I pin
Upon your turban, and cry havoc aloud
Against your drunken slumber, hoping yet
Tulips may blossom from your earth anew
Breathing the fragrance of the breeze of Spring (couplets 40–42).¹⁶

Here the processes of exchange, rooted in love ('ishq) as an act of assimilation, and the interchanging of positions under its connective processes, captures the multiple levels of creative endeavour which are involved in the poet's selfhood articulating the communicative ethic necessary for the creation of a community. This self-transmutation as a part of the poet's communicative capacity is also evoked in another set of intertwined images in this opening section: 'When love first cast my breast in the style of lamentation / Its flame made my heart a molten mirror / Like a rose I pluck my blossom apart / That I may hang this mirror before you' (couplets 24–25).

Finally, as Iqbal's poetic argument in *Mysteries of Selflessness* develops, the distinctive language of selfhood resurfaces even more strongly, this time in the context of defining his ideal Muslim community in the fourth part of the poem, 'Summary of the Poem's Meaning'. It is in this part of the poem that the poet, through a series of analogical correspondences, creates an ontological equivalence between the human self and God as he outlines the contours of his utopian Muslim community, and the virtues necessary for the creation of that community. In the section

explicating the chapter of 'pure faith', on God's unity, the reader is asked to model his own self-reliance on God's self-subsistence. An abstract theological concept regarding the nature of God becomes the model for each individual Muslim's economic self-subsistence. This recalls the self-divinisation of *khūdī*, and reinforces its priority.

It is clear, then, that *khūdī* has priority in Iqbal's work. It is perhaps for this reason that a rich but irresolute vocabulary of fragmentation, plurality and multiplicity in relation to unity recurs throughout Iqbal's prose texts, in a variety of metaphysical and philosophical contexts. A flavour of this diction can be conveyed by listing some instances. These include discussions of the primal oneness of being and the plurality of things in Ismaili thought, Zoroastrian conceptions of the interdependence of 'visible diversity' and 'eternal unity', the notion of unity, multiplicity and relations in the work of Mulla Hadi, the 'fundamental problem of the diversity of things' in pre-Islamic Magian dualism and post-Islamic Greek dualism which Persian metaphysics struggled against, notions of unity and plurality in J. S. Haldane, the interpretation of a verse in the Qur'ān as referring to 'the emergence and multiplication of individualities', an argument as to the nature of the ego and 'the mutually penetrating multiplicity we call experience' (again in relation to a verse in the Qur'ān), the 'inadequacy of logical understanding' vis-à-vis 'a multiplicity of mutually repellent individualities with no prospect of their ultimate reduction to a unity', the relationship between the Ash'arite 'scheme of atomism' and 'spiritual pluralism', the question as to whether space and time 'can hold together the multiplicity of objects and events' or whether it is 'the appreciative act of an enduring self only which can seize the multiplicity of duration—broken up into an infinity of instants—and transform it to the organic wholeness of a synthesis', 'the unity of the appreciative ego' and its individual experiences 'not as a plurality, but as a unity in which every experience permeates the whole', 'the appreciative self' synthesising instants of time into a 'coherent wholeness of personality', 'fragments of a total experience which do not seem to fit together', 'the necessary supplement to our own fragmentary meanings', 'the unanalysable wholeness of mystic experience', consciousness as 'something single, presupposed in all mental life' as opposed to 'bits of consciousness, mutually reporting to one another', and the question of 'mental unity'.¹⁷ As this list demonstrates, these terms begin to acquire a valency and presence of their own, over and above any attempt to explicate them. The repetitive use of these terms severs them from any argumentative

or hermeneutic purpose, suggesting that Iqbal's work remains embedded in questions of unity and plurality, on metaphysical, religious and political levels. These questions are irresolvable precisely because of the radical content and priority of his concept of individual selfhood.

Notes

1. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 329 to Maulana Girami, Jan 4, 1920.
2. *Ibid.*, Letter 64 to Shakir Siddiqui, Dec 7, 1912, Letter 840 to Dr Muhammad Abbas Ali Khan, Apr 10, 1934, and Letter 300 to Hajji Muhammad Ahmed Khan Sitapuri, Mar 29, 1919.
3. *Ibid.*, Letter 73 to Maharajah Kishan Parshad, Mar 7, 1914, and Letter 94, to Khawaja Hassan Nizami, Feb 6, 1915.
4. For an excellent exposition of these figures in Islamic literature, see Michael W. Dols. 1992. *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
5. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letters 118, 170, 200 to Maharajah Kishan Parshad, Sep 30, 1917, Nov 1, 1916, May 19, 1917; Letter 138 to Akbar Allahabadi, Feb 4, 1916; Letters 141, 179, 229 to Khan Muhammad Niyazuddin Khan, Feb 13, 1916, Feb 7, 1917, Nov 4, 1917; Letter 158 to Sirajuddin Pal, Jul 10, 1916; Letter 220 to Maulana Qadir Girami, Sep 3, 1917.
6. Iqbal, *Metaphysics*, p. 111.
7. A. J. Arberry, transl. 1953. *The Mysteries of Selflessness*. London: John Murray, pp. 33–34.
8. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 840 to Dr Abbas Ali Khan, Apr 10, 1934.
9. Arberry, *Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. 48.
10. B. A. Dar. 1967. *Letters and Writings of Iqbal*. Karachi: Iqbal Academy, p. 81.
11. Qureishi, *Rūḥ-e Makātīb-e Iqbāl*, Letter 258 to Akbar Allahabadi, Jul 20, 1918.
12. Iqbal, *Tārīkh-e Taṣāvvuf*, pp. 32, 56, 91.
13. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 17.
14. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Camb., Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 83.
15. Arberry, *Mysteries of Selflessness*, p. xi.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
17. Iqbal, *Metaphysics*, pp. 50, 51, 135, 147; Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, pp. 35, 70, 82, 5, 58, 44–45, 38, 39, 33, 15, 14–15, 81, 79.

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Javed Majeed

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