

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

QURAN THROUGH THE LENS OF IQBAL



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Allama Iqbal Background

- A treasured poet-philosopher of Pakistan whose remarkable works are largely based on the Quran and hadith.
- He had a profound love for the Quran. He was so confident his heart was filled with the Quran, he made these claims in his works.
 - “If my heart is not clean and is not a jewel, and in the heart it’s not filled with the words of the Quran, Oh Prophet of Allah, destroy this whole philosophy of mine, don’t let anyone remember who I am, make everyone forget all my work, everything I’ve done, destroy it. I don’t want anyone to know about me.”
 - “Oh Allah, you know my inner condition just like you know my outer condition. Oh Allah, you know the poetry I’ve written and said in my life and they are all filled with gems of Quran and tafsir of Quran. In my heart, if there’s anything other than the harf of the Quran, Oh Allah then just humiliate me in front of everybody On the Day of Judgement. Take me out of your garden, deprive me from kissing the blessed feet of the Prophet SAW.”

- “If you don’t listen to the Quran as if it’s being revealed directly to you, respect is the first element to benefit from the words of Allah SWT and the words of the Prophet SAW.”
- He captures moments in history and eloquently puts it in a few words.
- Everything he writes, he attributes it as “divinely given to him from his heart”.
- His ritual every morning before he starts writing; he wakes up for tahajjud, prays fajr solat, he then asks his servant to bring the Quran. He will recite it all the way to ishraaq. His chai is served at this time, along with a pen and paper.
- His insights and wisdom propagates self-realization while reiterating the need for the ummah to revert to Islamic values.
- A main theme and foundation of his philosophy is the concept of ‘ishq, which can be defined as deep and intense love in one’s heart.

Understanding The Concept of ‘Ishq

- Iqbal believes ‘ishq is the essence of life.
 - It is an element that is already within us and love is the foundation in our lives.
- It doesn’t matter who we are, as long as we have love, love manifests in different ways.
- He explains this in a poem: “It is love that is behind everything. It is the destination but it is also the journey.”
- Love is what motivates a person, be it a leader, a thief or an oppressor.

'Ishq for The Prophet SAW

- The one who deserves the most love is the Prophet SAW because of what he has done for us, his ummah. He is also the person that Allah SWT loved the most.
- In this journey of 'ishq for the Prophet SAW, Iqbal addresses how we can be the one that changes people. But it can only happen if the guiding force behind us is the Prophet SAW.
- We have to change our lifestyle and sacrifice for our beloved. The Companions displayed 'ishq in their hearts and they were motivated by 'ishq for the Prophet SAW.
- 'Ishq allowed the Companions to withstand anything that came their way. They were willing to give everything out of love and sacrifice for the Prophet SAW, until their last breath. Here are some examples.
 - Talha Ibn Ubaydillah who earned the title the living martyr, stood by the Prophet SAW and used his body and hands to catch the arrows meant for the Prophet SAW in the Battle of Uhud.
 - Ammar Ibn Yasir went through many difficulties after his parents were martyred but his determination and love for the Prophet SAW made him strive against the enemies of Islam in various battles until he himself was martyred.
- In a poem, Iqbal notes that the only way Iblees can take away our belief of Islam and Allah SWT is to take the spirit and love the believers have for the Prophet SAW out of our bodies. As Muslims, what's keeping us upright is our love for the Prophet SAW, without it we will be fragile.
- The Prophet SAW has to be the most important thing to us on this Earth. Our love for him has to be immersed in every single vein of our body.

- Iqbal writes in “An Incident Of The Battle Of Yarmuk” of how people had so much love for the Prophet SAW, the purpose of their life was to just be with him again.
 - It describes a young man who sought permission from Abu Ubaidah to fight as he impatiently waits to be reunited with the Prophet SAW
 - There is a level of sacrifice required for this level of love.
 - When we love someone so much, we yearn for them, make dua and make an effort to be with them in the akhirah.
 - We have to develop the same kind of love for the Prophet SAW. If we love the Prophet SAW, we should make dua and strive to be with him in Jannah.
- Allah SWT says:

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشَّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions. (4:69)

- The presence of people who have love for Allah and the love of the Prophet SAW in them, changes people around them. This is what we should aspire to be.
- Our hearts should be etched with the love for our Prophet SAW deeply, just as the Prophet SAW himself had ‘ishq for his ummah.

Levels of Love

- Before we can achieve 'ishq, we need to recognize there are different stages in love.
- Imam Al-Ghazali says, the journey of love starts with ma'rifah (knowing).
 - For example, to know the Prophet SAW is to love him. How much do we know about him? We should know everything. This should be the most important thing in our lives.
 - The more we learn, the more we love him. The more we love him, the more we start to see his life develop in our homes.
- The second stage is muhabbat (desire).
 - For example, our desires should lead us to be closer to the Prophet SAW.
 - We should worry about how our lives will end when the Angel of Death comes and whether or not we will be a part of the gathering with the Prophet SAW.
 - Iqbal says, "People think that death is the end of life, rather it is the night of this life and the morning of the eternal life, the real life."
- When love requires a level of sacrifice, it becomes itaat (obedience).
 - How much are we willing to give up and do for love? No matter what tests Allah SWT puts us through, we must be prepared for anything He sends our way.
 - Iqbal speaks to Allah SWT saying, "I'm not asking for too much. I just want your love, I want to love you, I want to love the Prophet. I don't want anything much."
 - His obedience to Allah SWT made him express his need of just wanting to be close to the Creator.

Lessons From The Poem 'Fatima Bint Abdullah'

- Iqbal speaks about a little girl in Libya, who could only serve soldiers water during the Italo-Turkish War between the Italian army and the Muslims in 1911.
- Fatima was attending to wounded Ottoman soldiers but died a martyr after being shot mercilessly by an Italian soldier.
- Despite being an 11-year-old, he highlights how she possessed the one quality of 'ishq that separated her from everybody else.
- He depicts how her love for Allah SWT and her willingness to sacrifice anything for the love of the Prophet SAW, were manifested through her actions.
- Iqbal describes the dust that touches her body as "dancing out of joy" because it is so happy to cover the sacred body of the young martyr.
- This poem goes to show that our deeds are not magnified by how much we do, but how sincere we are in doing what we do.
- If we want to be a flower in the garden amongst the Companions and great people like Fatima, then we must make this intention and be prepared for whatever comes our way.
- If we develop true love for Allah SWT and Prophet SAW, then it will become easy for us to overcome anything. Everything that is impossible will become possible.

Internalizing 'Ishq

- 'Ishq is found to be the best quality among the most successful people to walk the face of this Earth. Loving and yearning for somebody will teach everyone individually how they should manifest that love.
- Our benefit to the ummah is to benefit others.

- We not only have to show our love for the Prophet SAW by what we do, but by bringing out the best in ourselves and in our lives.
- If we love the Prophet SAW, we should not disappoint him, we should not hurt his feelings. Instead, we should make him proud with our actions.
- In one of his greatest poems, Iqbal wrote, “Oh Allah you are rich and independent, and I’m poor and dependent, Oh Allah, on the Day of Judgement when my turn comes for hisab and kitab for accountability, let me just slide. Oh Allah, if you do not answer this call of mine, then I have one request, if you decide to take my accountability, do not take my hisab and kitab anywhere near the Prophet SAW, because I don’t want to disappoint him.”
- We must internalize this concept of ‘ishq by thinking about our lives, and taking practical steps and methods to bring it into our lives.
- ‘Ishq teaches us the different fundamentals and ideas of life. Life is an opportunity and everyone is given this opportunity. We should aspire to do our best and leave a mark in this world. The pinnacle of this concept is called **khudi** (self-awareness).

Understanding The Concept of Khudi

- Iqbal entails that the essence of life is to love, while the essence of love is khudi.
- It is a complex philosophical concept that can be loosely translated to as self, self-awareness or self-consciousness.
- A simplified meaning of it is if a person is able to identify and understand themselves. Example, a person looks in the mirror and reflects on himself or herself.

- Stripped from pride and ego, this person is only concerned about themselves. They understand their strengths and weaknesses, recognize their mistakes etc.
- A person of khudi doesn't care what people say about them, but only cares about what Allah SWT says about them.
- In finding themselves, the person of khudi is always finding a way to better themselves and their surroundings. Here are some examples.
- Makkah was a barren desert, but Prophet Ibrahim AS gave new life to it. He brought water, built the kaaba, turned it into a sacred city, and now Muslims visit it annually from all over the world to perform Hajj.
- The Prophet SAW went to Madinah and turned it into a sanctuary. He revived the city, uplifted its people and established the ummah.
- As believers, we must reach the epitome of khudi as it will never make us compromise our Deen. At the end of the day, we must remember that dunya will not last long, but Deen will.
- Khudi will make us pure and noble that no amount of wealth or authority in the dunya could ever match. Iqbal says, "The true king is the one who has understood himself".
- If we understand ourselves, we will not forget who we are and we will remember Allah SWT.
- Allah SWT says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient. (59:19)

Steps To Achieve Khudi

- According to Iqbal, the first step to achieve khudi is that we must identify who we are.
- Secondly, we need to understand the purpose of our life, followed by our potential and talent.
- Once we identify all of the above, we can excel and perfect what we are creating.
- Iqbal likens the purpose of our life to the pearl in an oyster shell, and the water that goes into the mouth of the oyster shell is defined as an example of khudi.
 - Only when the water goes in the shell, the pearl comes out. This means that when we understand who we are and know the purpose of our life, we can produce something.
 - It is a reminder that we have the potential and talent, and all we need is to recognize our capability and keep on nourishing it.
- Once we develop khudi in our lives by introspecting and understanding ourselves, only then will we see the signs of Allah SWT.
- Iqbal emphasizes that “Allah SWT will put this world at your service, if you understand khudi.”