Tarbiyat-e-Khudi: A Model of Self-Development from Poems of Muhammad Iqbal in Asrar-i-Khudi

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One of the dilemmas of post-modern thought is the reductionistic approach to human ontology. This is further disparaged by the post-colonial mindset that has developed in the Indian subcontinent. Iqbal attempted to challenge these views by developing the concept of *Khudi* and presented a model of self-development (*Tarbiyat-e-Khudi*) in his work, *Asrar-i-Khudi*. *Khudi* can be defined as a life force, innate within the human existence, striving towards the achievement of its primordial goal of reuniting with its Ultimate Creator. It is cultivated through self-sufficiency, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, even self-assertion in the cause of truth, justice, duty, and morality. In this model of self-development, Iqbal proposed a three-stage spiritual development process: Obedience (*Ita'at*), Self-Control (*Zabt-e-Nafs*), and Divine Vicegerency (*Neyabat-e-Ilaahi*). This article makes a humble attempt at conceptualizing this model from a psychological lens with the intention of making it more applicable, accessible, and understandable.

Keywords: Iqbal, *tarbiyat-e-khudi*, self-development, Obedience (*Ita'at*), Self-Control (*Zabt-e-Nafs*), Divine Vicegerency (*Neyabat-e-Ilaahi*)

Iqbal, a Theosopher

Sir Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) is not just a philosopher. This distinction has to be clearly made before progressing further. Whenever and wherever the topic of Islamic philosophy is discussed, names like Imam Ghazali, Jalal ad-Din Rumi, Muhammad Iqbal, and others are mentioned. There exists a clear distinction between the philosophers mentioned above and others i.e. the role of religion, mainly Islam, and God in the development of thought. This role then contextualizes the epistemological approach to their topic of focus in philosophy. It sets the base and the tone for further discussions. According to Rudolf Steiner, *divine* is the highest aspect a man can look up to and he has the capacity to bring his highest destination into connection with this Divinity (Steiner, 1971). Therefore, the Divine Wisdom reveals to man his own being and destination, this is also referred to as theosophy. Since the Muslim philosophers mentioned above also relied heavily on Divine Wisdom, it may be more appropriate to refer to them as theosophers, those who maintain and develop the knowledge of God within their philosophical realms. This paper will focus on Iqbal's theosophical assertions on development of the self, or as he termed it, *Tarbiyat-e-Khudi* (Self-development).

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Defining *Khudi*

If we are to make an attempt at understanding the concept of *Khudi* as Iqbal had intended us to do, we must also consider the *zamaan* (time) and *makaan* (place) of its revelation. Iqbal's poetry appeared in the Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was a crucial time for the Muslims living there. They were struggling not only with their identity, but also with their lost status in the world. Due to the colonial control, a Muslim had to define himself through many identities such as, his *madhhab*, his caste, his country/state of origin, his family business, or his level of religious identification. Moreover, Indian Muslims, in the early 20th century, were recovering from their lost status in the subcontinent. Although Islam had reached the region during or shortly after the death of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Muslims didn't officially begin ruling India until the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206 (Lehmann, Wink & Wink, 1994). The 700-year rule ended partly due to colonial presence and partly due to other local uprisings against the Mughal Empire. Iqbal found it necessary to identify and present a concept of selfhood that may reconcile with the lost identity and status of the Indian Muslims. However, what he may not have realized at that time was the importance of these concepts in the lives of Muslims all around the world and for future progenies.

Operational Definition of *Khudi*

If there existed a list of terminologies that are challenging to conceptualize and define, *Khudi* would be among top. Numerous scholars have attempted to define *Khudi* in their own understanding. In a lecture by Muhammad Khalid (2011), a researcher from Aligarh, he posits that *Khudi* is synonymous to *Ruh*, it is that eternal spark that is present in every human being. He says that it requires firm determination and a great journey of transformation to realize that eternal spark. This journey is like the transformation of coal into a diamond. Every coal can transform into a diamond, but it has to go through different stages with determination and assertion. This journey is not easy; for one has to face many difficulties to reach their goal. Iqbal held that *Khudi* is a relationship with the Creator, universe and society.

Shah (2012) in a speech about Allama Iqbal's vision of *Khudi* further asserted that *Khudi* symbolizes the realization of self. He says that *Khudi* is identifying and understanding one's ego. He calls *Khudi* a strand that connects creation with the Creator. As per Iqbal, man is not the purpose of the universe but the universe itself. According to Adfer Shah, Iqbal believed that man is the greatest of all creations and the only way a man can recognize and strike his maxima is *Khudi*. Without *Khudi*, man is a flower without fragrance. Hassan (1976) explains in his article that the word *Khudi* means self-reliance, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, even self-assertion. In a presentation titled *Iqbal and His Asrar-i- Khudi*, Shuxiong (1995) elucidates that *Khudi* is a complex thought. He says that Iqbal believed that *Khudi* represents the *principle of inner self of beings*. According to him, human being was the highest form of life and *Khudi* the highest form of human beings. He explained that Iqbal emphasized individuality. According

to him, individuality is strengthened if taken into practice; if the struggles are avoided, it would weaken the *Khudi* and make it idle.

According to Abdul Razak (2012), Iqbal gave a new concept and a philosophy that focuses on the deep inner potentials that lie within the human psyche. He elaborates that Iqbal believed the human ego has a relationship with the Creator, the community/society, with nature/universe, and the material world at large. The ego is developed in the most enriching manner by an individual who maintains and plays his part without severing his relationship with God, the community and nature.

Muhammad Irfan Iqbal concluded that *Khudi* necessitates the union of will to power and belief. It then reveals itself as *yaqeen* or a deep inner conviction (Iqbal, 2012). The pivotal aspect in the formation of self is this conviction to act and react to the sensual temptations of life. Yasmeen (1967) asserts that *Khudi* can be regarded as a reinterpretation of Quranic ideas in accordance with the facts of modern life since Quran presents the responsibility of man to himself and God Al-Mighty. Iqbal intended for the Muslims to re-capture the spirit of scientific adventurousness by emphasizing these Quranic ideas.

According to Badaiyuni (2003), most post-modern philosophers consider man as product of cultural evolutionary processes with high focus on just man. Iqbal, when referring to *Khudi* is asserting its universal existence with all beings, not just the man. Therefore, *Khudi's* objectives are also not limited to man, rather are moving towards infinity or the Absolute Being.

Keeping all the aspects in mind, we define *Khudi* as a life force, innate within the human existence, striving towards the achievement of its primordial goal of reuniting with its Ultimate Creator, cultivated through self-sufficiency, self-respect, self-confidence, self-preservation, even self-assertion in the cause of truth, justice, duty, and morality.

Model of Self-Development (*Tarbiyat-e-Khudi*)

Development of *Khudi* is thus mandatory to strive towards the path of spiritual ascension. In *Asrar-i-Khudi*, The Secrets of the Self, Iqbal begins to describe his thoughts and beliefs on the concept of *Khudi*. He writes the following in the introduction of this work:

"Physically and spiritually man is self-contained centre, but he is yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God, the less is his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the complete person. Nor that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary he absorbs God in himself." (Iqbal & Nicholson, 2019, *p.*6)

According to Iqbal, a person need not look for God to discover himself, rather he should look at himself to discover God. Parallel to the traditional view of mystical experiences, Iqbal recognized that a fully developed *Khudi* will nurture and promote the attributes of God. After

this process of self-development, the real meaning and purpose of human existence becomes clearer to the individual. Iqbal asserts that one needs to be prepared before proceeding toward this path of self-development by evoking three witnesses. Iqbal describes these in a poem in *Javed Nama*, which he also used to conclude his last lecture *in The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

Are you in the stage of "life", "death" or "death-in-life",
Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify your station,
The first witness is your own consciousness—
--see yourself, then with your own light
The second witness is the consciousness of another ego---
See yourself, then with the light of an ego other than yourself,
See yourself then with God's light---
If you stand unshaken in front of this light,
Consider yourself as living and eternal as He!
That man only is real who dares---
Dares to see God face to face---
No one can stand unshaken in His presence;
And he who can, verily, he is pure gold,
Art you a mere particle of dust?
Tighten the knot of your ego;---
Re-chisel then, your ancient frame; And build up a new being.
Such being is real being;
Or else your ego is mere ring of smokes (Iqbal, 2016, *p.*173).

Here, Iqbal is describing the selfhood in three purposes or dimensions: self, others, and God. That a person must be able to become content in these before his self develops the ability to be in the presence of God Al-Mighty. This unity with God, in Iqbal's view, is the ultimate goal of a *Khudi*.

یہ جنت مبارک رہے زاہدوں کو
کہ میں آپکا سامنا چاہتا ہوں

These ritual worshippers may have their heavenly abode
I only desire to unite with you [O' Lord] (Iqbal & Khalil, 1997)

In Asrar-i-Khudi, Iqbal refers to a three-stage model of psychospiritual development or training (*Tarbiyat*) of Khudi in a set of poems:

در بیان اینکہ تربیت خودی را سہ مراحل است
مرحلۂ اول را اطاعت و مرحلۂ دوم را ضبط نفس،
و مرحلہ سوم را نیابت الہی نامیدہ اند

Showing that the training of the self has three stages: first stage is obedience, second stage is self-control, and third stage is divine vicegerency (Nicholson, 1920).

Uniqueness in Iqbal's Model of Self-Development

It is important to recognize the difference between a psychological-based model of self-development vs a theosophical-based model. As an example, if we studied Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we can identify that it is based on needs one has within this world. It is a biological-based, individualistic, reductionistic model that ignores even the role of social connection (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003; Rutledge, 2011). Even Maslow himself modified his model to accommodate its limitation by adding self-transcendence as another stage beyond self-actualization (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Nevertheless, his model is still considered self-centered and missing spirituality by viewing humans as evolving animals (Baqutayan & Saleh, 2012; Ismail, Anwar & Hamsan, 2011). When considering Islamic spirituality, many examples in history can be found when needs of the self were ignored by individuals, who were then able to become self-actualized (Alias & Samsudin, 2005).

Iqbal's model of self-development, however, has many distinct attributes unique to it. First, it provides a view of the human that is not comparable to animals. In fact, Iqbal recognizes the great potential of man where the sky is within his reach (Azmi, 1992). Secondly, Iqbal recognized that the life of a man does not begin with birth and end with death; he emphasizes the primordial beginning with a focus on post-mortem ending (Noorani, 2004). What drives and feeds the Khudi is the love of God which is primordial in nature (Kazmi, 2010).

Iqbal's model of self-development also complements a *hadith e qudsi* (divine prophetic narration): On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that Verily Allah ta'ala has said that Whosoever shows enmity to a *wali* (friend) of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with nafil (supererogatory) deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge (Bukhari & Khan, 2000).

In this hadith, the Prophet is also describing a similar stagewise model of coming closer to The Creator. Furthermore, Iqbal also mentions the importance of following the prescribed obligatory acts of worship in achieving the final stage of self-development. Lastly, Iqbal's idea of a Deputy of God is similar to what is described in this hadith where the believer's actions are that of God Himself.

Developmental Methodology

Since the authors are not literate in Farsi, the language in which these poems were written in, a linguistic analysis was conducted using several translations (Nicholson, 1920; Tariq, 1977) as well as usage of Farsi to English translation services. Afterwards, important keywords were isolated and understood based on their original meanings in the Farsi or Arabic language as well as their meaning in the context of the poem. Contextual understanding of the terms was often derived from within the poem itself or sometimes by considering its presence in other works by Iqbal.

The primary author then isolated the terms in a developmental order in an attempt to create a model that would best illustrate the intention of Iqbal. This model was further divided into sub sections to make it understandable for the readers. Face validity of the model was assessed by discussing it and having it reviewed by various scholars of *Iqbaliyat* in the United States.

Stage 1: Obedience (اطاعت)

Iqbal begins by comparing a man's self with a camel. This is a very astute analogy because not only is a camel an animal with its animalistic features and desires, it is also an animal that has many higher-level qualities and can be further trained. Figure 1 illustrates the specific qualities Iqbal mentions in this section.

Figure 1
Obedience (Ita'at) and its qualities as presented by Muhammad Iqbal
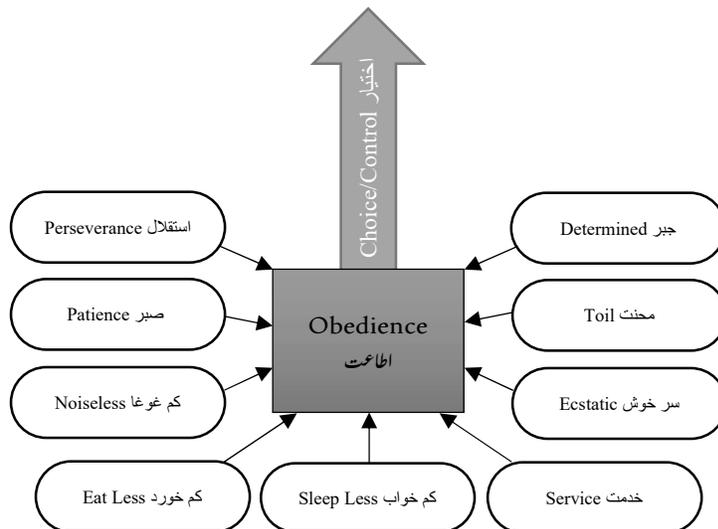
According to Iqbal, a desire to be in service, work hard, exercise patience, and perseverance are the fundamental qualities necessary to initiate this journey. And all of this is accomplished without any *noise* or knowledge to the surroundings. This self, has awareness into all aspects of his surroundings is and is well-versed and well-educated. It gives up its desires to eat and sleep and fulfills itself through hard work. This individual enjoys his hard work without complaining because this is taking him towards his Ultimate Destiny. He is not frightened by his speed, because he keeps himself steady and consistent.

Iqbal further emphasizes the importance of following the *faraiz* or obligations that God has made clear for humans. Following these obligations will lead to *Husn-ul-Ma'ab*- the best place for dwelling. He states that controlling of impulse through force increases control over the self. Obedience brings worth unto a man. Iqbal makes it clear that this obedience must only be towards God and no other entities such as celestial bodies. This confinement in obedience turns wind into fragrance and perfume into musk. Everything in the universe from plants to stars are in obedience to the will of God. Just as the natural laws create perfection in the systems of universe, these laws of obedience are necessary to create resilience within the self. Lastly, Iqbal asks the person to not complain about these obligations and requirement of obedience. Rather, a believer must stay within the bounds maintained by the beloved Prophet ﷺ. He emphasizes that determination leads to *ikhtiyar* or control.

Stage 2: Self-Control (ضبط نفس)

When an individual gains control over himself, he will encounter his lower self or *Nafs*. *Nafs*, in Islam, does not solely carry a negative meaning or connotation. A *nafs* can be in various states. The lowest *nafs* is one that is hedonistic and animalistic in its inclinations. A *nafs*, according to Iqbal, has four innate attributes (see Figure 2): It is self-conceited (*khud par ast*), stubborn and rebellious (*khud sar ast*), self-growing and egotistical (*khud parwar ast*), and self-governed (*khud sawaar*).
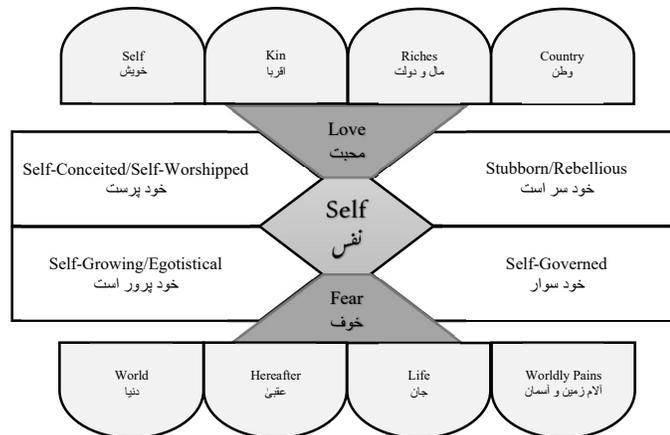
The self has the ability to grow itself, however, if not controlled; it can become rebellious and oppositional. A person, who has the ability to keep his self under control, is a true man and reaches the ultimate goal.

هر کہ بر خود نیست فرمانش روان
می شود فرمان پذیر از دیگران

He who cannot give orders to his *nafs* always surrenders to the orders of others (Nicholson, 1920, Line 853-854). According to Iqbal, there are two driving forces that feed the *nafs*: love and fear. The most common fears are of this world, the hereafter, fear of losing life, and fear of worldly pains. The most common loves are of self, kinship, wealth, and nationalism. These often lead to sins and transgressions.

تا عصائی لا الہ داری بدست
ہر طلسم خوف را خوابی شکست
ہر کہ حق باشد چو جاں اندر تنش
خم نگردد پیش باطل گردنش

As long as the person holds true to *La ilaaha ila Allah*, all fears are vanished. A body that contains within itself The Truth, will never surrender to The Falsehood (Nicholson, 1920, Lines 863-866). That *Khudi* will never fear anything but God al-Mighty. He who contains his self within the kingdom of *La*, will be free from the chains of this world. This person may then stand up against the evils of this world.

Iqbal then speaks about the merits of the five pillars of Islam (profession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, & pilgrimage). He asserts that these pillars are meant to fight the forces of our *nafs* and help an individual in his journey towards becoming the Deputy of God. Iqbal states that *No God* is a shell and prayer is the pearl contained within it. *Salaat* is a lesser form of *Hajj* for the heart of a believer. Fasting overcomes the body's desire to eat and drink on demand. Hajj requires a believer to leave his family, country, and wealth behind and brings him closer to his *millat*. *Zakat* vanishes the love of money from the heart of the believer and brings all believers on the same state. All the obligations are designed to strengthen the *Khudi*. Obtain the self-control by using the *dhikr* of *Ya Qawi* (The Most Strong).

پختہ ی محکم اگر اسلام تست
اہل قوت شو ز ورد یا قوی

If your Islam is strong, you are impregnable
Draw your strength from "O' Almight One!" (Nicholson, 1920, Lines 890-891)

Figure 3

The role of five pillars in self-control
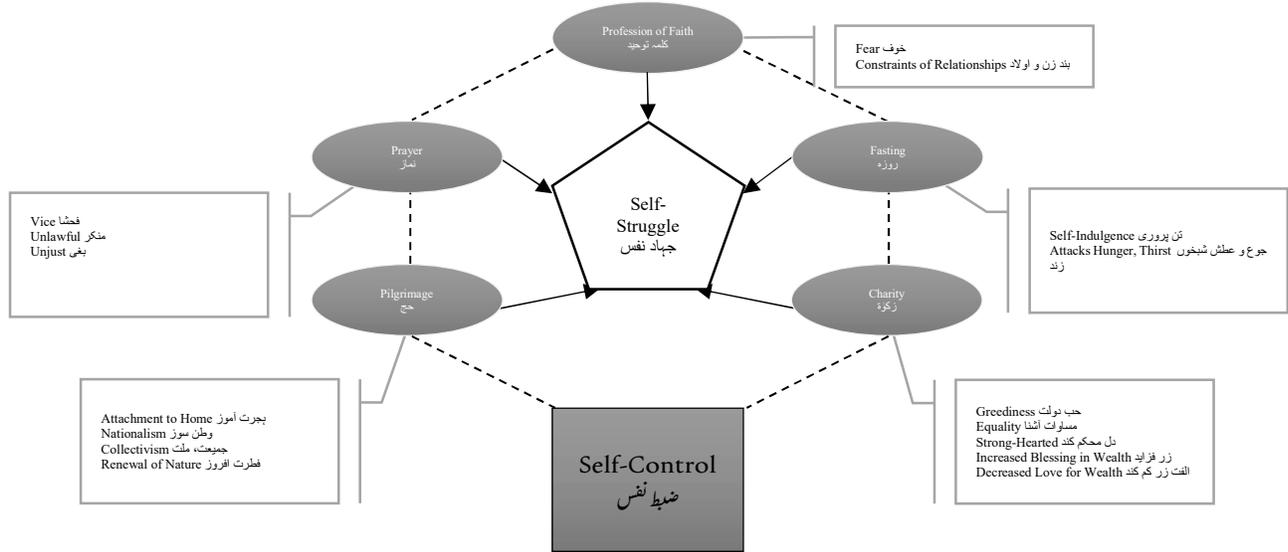
In the above mentioned figure the role of five pillars of Islam has been explained with reference to self-control.

Stage 3: Divine Vicegerency (نیابت الٰہی)

Iqbal now comes back to his initial camel analogy. He states that if a man is able to tame his camel (referring to the *Khudi*), he is able to rule the known and unknown as the deputy and a representative of God al-Mighty. This is a level that is above all levels and comes with benefits one cannot imagine. We have categorized these qualities of a Divine Vicegerent into three categories: prophetic, intra/interpersonal, and universal.
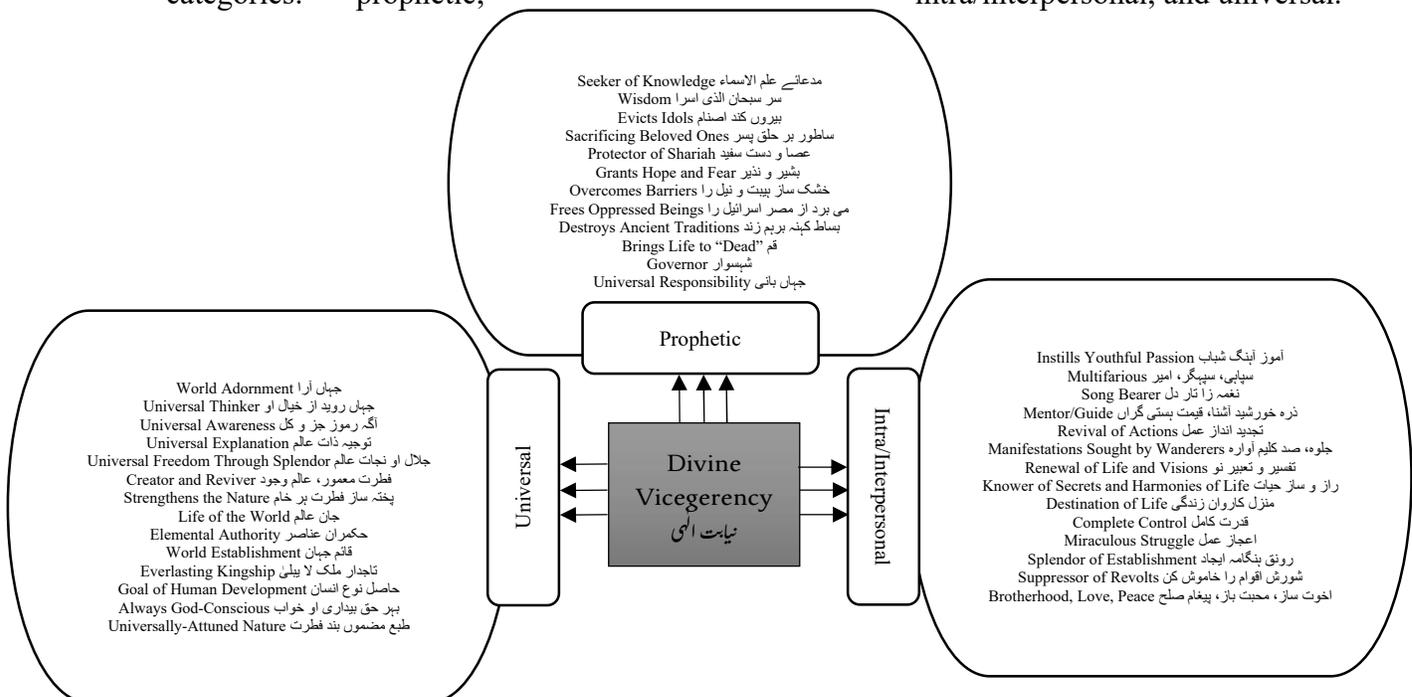
Iqbal reminds us that prophets, as deputies of God on earth enjoyed certain benefits. Therefore, a vicegerent of God also has similar miracles such as having knowledge, knowing secrets of the universe, wisdom, bringing life to dead (hearts), and governing or utilizing all creation. Furthermore, the vicegerent of God also protects the laws of God in this world, he destroys the metaphysical idols and makes sacrifices others only imagine. He overcomes barriers and frees the oppressed just as Moses did with the Israelites. According to Iqbal, he is on top of every aspect of this *millat* and leads the way for others to follow.

مدعائے ''علم الاسما'' ستے
سر ''سبحان الذی اسرا'' ستے

"He is the final cause of 'God taught Adam the names of all things,' and He is the inmost sense of 'Glory be to Him who transported His servant by night'." (Nicholson, 1920, Lines 917-918). His hand splits a river, and his anger dries the Nile. His *Qum* bring life to the dead hearts (Nicholson, 1920, Line 925). His very existence is evidence for the existence of the universe. Intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities of a Divine Vicegerent include being a mentor and a guide for others, renewing life and visions, instilling youthful passion, revival of actions, and suppressor of revolts. He has complete control, he is multifarious, and he teaches and practices love, peace, and brotherhood. He adorns the world with his presence, his thoughts and awareness are universal. He is the life of this world and strengthens the nature from every deficiency. He is always conscious of God and his place in this world as the representative of God. Iqbal states that this dirt was able to meet with its Creator, now a deputy will emerge from its mere dust. He asks the man to stand up and spread love, care, and peace. *"Mankind are the cornfield and you the harvest, you are the goal of Life's caravan*." (Nicholson, 1920, Line 958-959)

نوع انساں مزرع و تو حاصلی
کاروان زندگئ را منزلی

Conclusions

Iqbal provided a novel and a practical psychosocial model of self-development in his poem *Asrar-i-Khudi*. His model is unprecedented in many aspects when compared to other models of self-development. Most importantly, the basis of this model is derived from the Quran and Sunnah. It gives man the most eminent place and denies man's likenesses to animals. In the model of Iqbal, a self can reach its highest position in these three stages Obedience, Self-control, and Divine Viceregency. The self that yearns to reach its ultimate goal abandons all his bodily desires and wishes. Iqbal also emphasized the importance of obligatory acts of worship or the duties towards Allah. These rituals prime the self to become obedient and strive towards the goal with hard work and forbearance and struggle against the *nafs*. For Iqbal, reaching the level of becoming a Deputy of Allah ﷻ is an innate goal that every human must strive to achieve. For Muslims, this goal than provides us with a focus that not only strengthens our identity but also elevates our status in this world and in the next.

Figure 5
Complete model of self-development (Tarbiyat-e-Khudi)
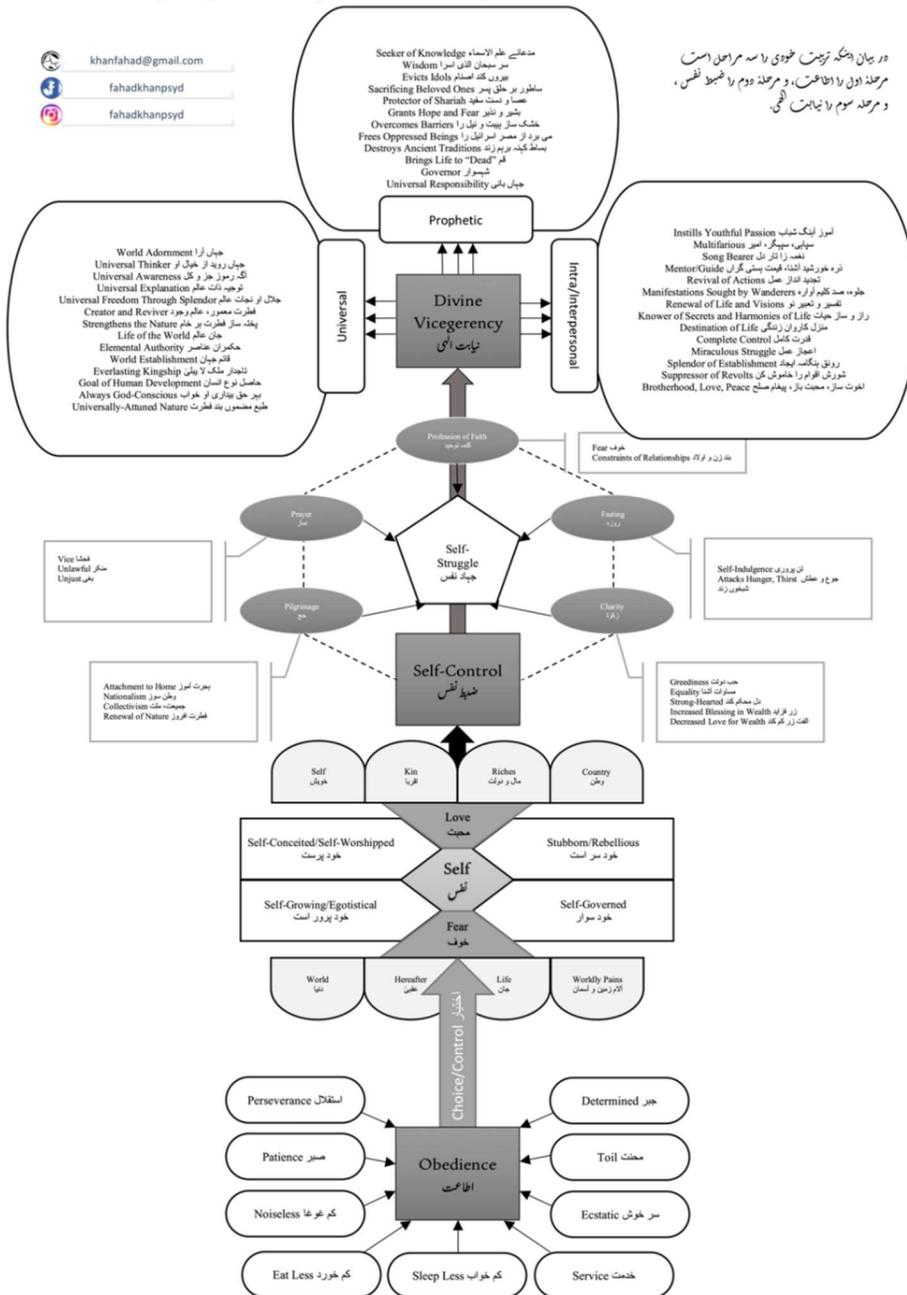
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