

**ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND ITS
CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**
A Discourse on Selected Issues

THAMEEM USHAMA

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Islamic Thought and its Contemporary Relevance

[A Discourse on Selected Issues]

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EIGHT

Muhammad Iqbal's Theory of Selfhood

Adibah Abdul Rahim

Muhammad Iqbal was born on Friday, 9 Nov 1877¹ in Sialkot and died on 21 April 1938 in Lahore. He was one several Muslim thinkers who emerged in the early twentieth century with the idea of reconstructing religious thought in Islam. A major theme of his many discussions is related to the concept of *khūdi* or selfhood and his philosophy of *khūdi* or 'self' is significant because it is at the core of his philosophy, upon which the rest of his thought is based. This philosophy of self has been found in Iqbal's works in Persian, *Asrār-i-khūdi* and *Rumūz-i-Bekhudi*.² *Asrār-i-khūdi* was translated to English by Professor R. A. Nicholson from Cambridge University under the title *The Secrets of the Self*. It deals with the philosophy of the self or individual personality and contains the central theme of Iqbal's philosophy. *Rumūz-i-Bekhudi* was translated to English by Professor A. J. Arberry under the title *The Mysteries of Selflessness*. This book deals with an individual's relation to society in an Islamic state. In addition, the idea of self subsequently developed throughout all of Iqbal's poetical works, and more systematically in his lectures which have been collected under the title *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.

Self-Negation in Other Religion

Iqbal's deep and broad knowledge of sociology and the history of different cultures convinced him that the main cause of Oriental decadence was a philosophical system that inculcated self-negation and self-abandonment. Instead of encouraging man to overcome life's difficulties, the system taught him to seek peace by running away from those difficulties.

¹ There has been a confusion regarding the exact date of Iqbal's birth. Some writings stated 1873 and 1876. The general consensus is 1877.

² Published in 1915 and 1918.