**Question: Discuss Iqbal’s concept of the Self.**

**Answer: Muhammad Iqbal** was a twentieth century Indian poet and philosopher. As a poet, he ranks among the greatest of Urdu and Persian poets. His poetry carried a message to inspire the heart, elevate the mind and to guide, rather than to merely entertain and please the listeners. As a thinker, he was well grounded in various branches of traditional Islamic studies and was also well acquainted with the old as well as with the new and contemporary schools of thought.

Iqbal lived in a period when Western imperialism was imposed on the East due to which traditional education, economy, politics and society were overwhelmed by new ideology and beliefs. The society was overburdened with materialism and as a result spiritualism had become a myth. In this environment, Iqbal fostered his philosophy of the self, or *Khudi*, as he called it.

Iqbal’s philosophy of *Khudi* is presented in his book ‘Asrar-e-Khudi’ (Secrets of the Self) which he wrote in Persian. In this work he presents the idea of creative self-affirmation as a fundamental Muslim virtue. This was a strong condemnation of the classical Islamic belief that perfection and spiritual peace are attained by passive absorption in contemplation of God and divine things.

Iqbal considers the self to be the irreducible component of human existence. It is the essence of being human. The essence of a thing is that without which it will not be what it is. The self of a man is that without which he will not be who he is. In this respect, Iqbal’s Self corresponds to the concept of ‘rooh’ (soul) in the Quran.

‘Rooh’ is that divine spark which is present in every human being, and was present in Adam when he was created by Allah. Hence Allah ordered to the angels to prostrate before Adam. In the Quran, man is called the deputy of Allah on earth. He is the superior of all the creatures. This Universe and whatever is in it all are created by Allah for man. Therefore, Iqbal in a very clear and loud voice emphasizes on maintaining the identity and individuality of man so that he rightfully deserves the place Allah has given him.

However, one has to make a great journey of transformation to realize the Self. This can be understood via the analogy of fragrance and seed. Every seed has the potential for fragrance within it. But to reach its fragrance the seed must go through all the different changes and stages. First breaking out of its shell. Then breaking the ground to come into the light and developing roots at the same time. Then fighting against the elements to develop leaves and flowers. Finally reaching its highest stage by attaining the fragrance that was hidden within it. In the same way, to realize one’s self, a man needs to go through multiple stages, including submission to God and cultivation of self-control in order to deserve one’s place as the deputy of God.

To conclude, Iqbal believes ardently that human beings are the makers of their own destiny and that the key to destiny lies in the development of one’s self. Therefore, he does not like the man who does not exert himself to become what he can. Such a man makes no demands on himself and his being in the world makes no difference to the world. He happens to be in the world as it is — the given world — and leaves it just the way he had found it. Only by being convinced of the importance of the self, and by leading a life of self-affirmation, self-expression and self-development, an individual can rise.