

Original Article

Political and Cultural Dimensions in Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's Thoughts: A Critical Examination

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Abstract

This study explores the multifaceted existence and significant philosophical contributions of Muhammad Iqbal, a prominent figure in British India who is widely respected for his roles as a philosopher, poet, and politician. Iqbal's intellectual fabric intertwines a unique combination of political and cultural viewpoints, establishing him as a significant character in the history of South Asian intellectual discourse. This study aims to analyse Iqbal's politico-cultural worldview by closely examining the intricate relationship between his political ideas and cultural philosophy. This research delves into the intricate examination of Iqbal's vision for a Muslim state and the transforming concept of "Khudi" (selfhood), revealing the profound influence of his political thought. Concurrently, the analysis explores Iqbal's cultural philosophy, skillfully amalgamating traditional and contemporary elements while highlighting the crucial significance of language and literature in revitalising culture. The study highlights the interdependent connection between Iqbal's political principles and his cultural revitalization, demonstrating how these factors jointly influenced the socio-political environment of South Asia. In conclusion, this study highlights the lasting significance of Iqbal's perspectives, offering a thorough comprehension of his heritage and its continuous impact on the intellectual and political discussions within the region.

Keywords: Muhammad Iqbal, philosophy, Muslims, South Asia, thoughts

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, 1977 was devoted to honoring Iqbal's memory, and an analysis of the philosopher-poet's teachings was conducted in front of the evolving global landscape. Iqbal's contributions to thought in Pakistan hold a defined context; Iqbal emphasizes Islamic inter-nationalism and Muslim nationalism. (Aziz, 1987). However, the ideas became more firmly established in 1977 the thinking solidified over 1977 has made excellent headway in understanding Iqbal's location in the broader framework of the bigger world. Iqbal has undoubtedly addressed Muslims within the historical context of the twentieth century. However, certain parts of his beliefs are far more applicable to the average

man's situation in the modern world. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the politico-cultural viewpoint that directs and controls the activities of men's everyday lives in terms of Iqbal's ideas (Allana, 1967).

Poetry was Iqbal's principal medium of expression during the course of his extensive professional career. This occurred during the most significant first 35 years of the twentieth century. Still, he also spoke in prose about significant problems, which must be studied carefully and analyzed methodically. Iqbal's work deserves thorough consideration and a systematic investigation. He was a pivotal figure in the political views of Islam in India, and he was an active participant in political life in India. He could have been the subcontinent's



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most significant modern Muslim. With an international viewpoint, he considered the changing interpretations of global events as the course of history (Ahmad A. Q., 2021). Iqbal started as a poet, focusing on his own subjective experiences. However, he quickly moved away from this style of writing and developed an interest in the lives of people in their natural settings (Jalal, 2001). This compelled him to confront the status of humanity at the time, which led him to give up on this literary style. As a result, he earned the reputation of being the man's poet. Iqbal perceived the Indian human scene as one that required his creative and intellectual endeavors, and it was defined by colonialism—the British imperial government's structure in India at the time (Malik H., 1971).

COLONIAL SHADOWS AND FOSTERING UNITY

In hindsight, however, two questions caused Iqbal's artistically sensitive political awareness to suffer severe and irreparable damage. And they were: Why did colonialism get a foothold on the subcontinent in the first place? And who could ever make it through something as terrible as this? Iqbal was strongly convinced that the people of India had lost their collective memory due to colonialism (Jalal, 2001). This, of course, meant that their past was repressed and kept to themselves. Therefore, a significant portion of his work consisted of imparting his audience's historical understanding, and he quickly turned into a champion for history in a political climate that refused to embrace such an understanding of the subcontinent. He did this by writing in a style that was accessible to his audience (Kamran, 1980). His early poems construct a mental image of history in an area ruled by foreign monarchs by singing of the Indo-Aryan memory and the glorious deeds of Muslims in the past (Maruf, 1977). This creates a mental picture of history. Therefore, as a creative endeavor, Iqbal's poetry, in its early phase, fulfilled one essential political goal: it preserved the collective memory from annihilation while under the grip of colonial power.

However, even in the country's collective memory, India's political landscape during British imperial rule was extremely fractious. The many historical perspectives might be thought of as running concurrently. Without any unifying idea and a concerted effort, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to properly manage the crisis for the benefit of the people of India. Iqbal advocated the concept of geographical nationalism, in which

the territory of India was considered the sacred motherland for the two primary populations, and He sought to bring the many collective memories of the subcontinent's Muslims and Hindus into harmony (Sailen, 2010). He argued that the division of communities and ethnic groups mainly resulted from psychological views. After these restricting and culturally constrained attitudes have been eradicated and changed, a more gratifying principle will emerge, settling the inner and exterior tensions plaguing the Indian problem. The poetry of Naya Shawala pushes conflicting racial and religious communities to rise beyond their narrow perspectives and find ways to combine their identities into a more creative whole (Kamran, 1980).

Iqbal's religious, philosophical, and socio-political views fully reflected the complexity and contradictoriness of the social nature of the subcontinent's Muslim populace participating in the national liberation movement (Zafar, 2014). Because of the multi-lingual and multi-racial character of the Muslim inhabitants of the subcontinent as well as the financial hardships of the Muslim minority vis-a-vis relatively affluent Hindu majority, Iqbal felt the need for a new national ideology capable of cementing together a multi-lingual and multi-racial people with widely different local cultures and customs based on their shared faith, Islam, the oneness of God and finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Sherwani, 2012). However, forming a new national ideology is almost always linked with the reformation of religion. Iqbal was perhaps the first reformer of Islam who tried to find in it not only the spiritual expression of the nationalist aspirations of the Muslims of colonial India but also the basis of a path of social development that would be distinct from the capitalist path of the west intoxicated by the frenzy of national aggrandizement (Sevea, 2012).

To grasp fully the development of Iqbal's concept of Muslim Nationalism or Millat, I think it would be proper to give a brief account of the historical circumstances and his times that prompted him to express his views about Muslim Nationalism. Muslims entered the subcontinent as conquerors and thereafter ruled here for about nine centuries. During this long period, the Muslims scattered all over the subcontinent and, along with them, their specific cultural heritage. As the time passed, one dynasty was replaced by another. But after the death of the last great Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb, no single

effective ruler in the subcontinent could stop the onslaught of the British. The whole subcontinent was subdivided into greater or smaller states ruled by princes either absolutely independent or only formally accepting the authority of practical power-less Moghul king at Delhi (Saiydain, 1965). The British fully exploited the differences between the rulers of different states to the maximum benefit of their own. The War of Independence of 1857 was only a half-hearted attempt by the Muslims to overthrow the British yoke. Having ruled the subcontinent for so long, Muslims could not easily reconcile themselves with the changed circumstances. The Muslim community in India had a decline in political influence and status after 1857, followed by a decline in their social and economic conditions (Sevea, 2012). This situation was entirely used by the Hindus, who prospered day and night. Besides, the system of education that the British introduced in the subcontinent denied all the chances of progress to the Muslims. But in these adverse circumstances, Syed Ahmed Khan came to the rescue of his people. He was convinced that the political and economic prosperity of the Muslims could be achieved only by absorbing Western learning and science and by reconciliation with the British. He was also the first person who use the word "nation" instead of community for the Muslims of India (Aziz, 1987).

EMERGENCE OF MUSLIM NATIONALISM

Syed Ahmed Khan's ideas, the activity of the educational societies he founded, and the Aligarh College directly influenced the formation of Iqbal's views. Iqbal knew and understood the opinions of Syed Ahmed Khan on the patriotic unity of Hindus and Muslims, which belonged to the first period of his educational activity." Iqbal accepted his idea of the necessity of vigorous action by man in the name of social good, by which Syed Ahmed Khan meant primarily the interest of the Muslims (Yahya, 2013). However, Iqbal did not share his desire to isolate the Muslims from the all-Indian movement because the representatives of the various religious communities in India allegedly had no common national interest. Up until 1905, when he traveled to Europe for the first time to pursue his studies, Iqbal had focused most of his efforts on the fervent advocacy of national unity that cut across religious divides, saying that without it, it was impossible to realize the lovely ideals of freedom and independence (Saiydain, 1965).

Nevertheless, the inherent inconsistency of his nationalist perspectives became evident in his unwavering dedication to the Islamic faith despite his efforts to transcend religious divisions. This circumstance played a significant role in shaping the subsequent development of his perspectives.

Iqbal's initial visit to Europe, spanning from 1905 to 1908, heightened his dedication towards Islam as a means to realize his aspirations for his homeland. Following his arrival from Europe in 1909, the philosophy of Muslim Nationalism became more evident in his religious, intellectual, and literary endeavors. The fundamental principle behind this ideology was the belief that the spiritual cohesion rooted in Islam constituted the paramount and essential characteristic of the nation's social fabric (Iqbal, ARMGHAN-E-HIJAZ, 1938). Islam is presented in this ideology as a means of fostering national cohesion and fundamentally assimilating political philosophy. From a historical perspective, it can be observed that the emergence of Muslim Nationalism predates the dissemination of pan-Islamism. This belief system emphasized the importance of unity among those practicing Islam, regardless of their differences in terms of state, territory, ethnicity, and nationality.

Before he left for Europe in 1905, Iqbal's political thought of Muhammad Iqbal was locally centered on its creative context before moved to Europe. The individual's understanding of nationalism was based on the notion of a collective territory, and he maintained that the populace's sense of self was formed from the notion of a unified nation. On the contrary, his sojourn in Europe allowed him to witness the practical manifestation of territorial nationalism. He discovered, much to his dismay, that different European states were engaged in conflict with one another for various aims on the broader globe (Ali Khamenei, 1991). In addition to this, he saw an internal split in the way that Europeans thought. He thought that the everyday process of reason had elevated materialism to the status of a new deity, which required complete devotion and worship from modern man. He said this because he believed that materialism had exalted ordinary reason. Even though he had a high regard for Europe's achievements, he found it difficult to accept its traditional geographical configuration (Mirza, 2013). As a result, it was only natural for him to move abroad to accomplish his political and patriotic goals. The collective geo-historical

memory of the Muslim world presented him as an issue that deserved serious examination and offered him as a topic.

THE CHALLENGES OF MUSLIM RIGHTS

Iqbal was the first Muslim thinker to express a non-geographic, but rather a creative and experiential, premise of extra-territorial and transnational oneness. He did this by focusing on creativity and experience rather than geography. Outside of the confines of physical space, this oneness existed. Iqbal viewed the Muslim world as a historical phenomenon that could enhance the human situation and lead to higher personal growth and ultimate fulfillment (Iqbal, *Ilm-ul-Iqtisad*, 1900). He regarded the Muslim world as a historical phenomenon that held the ability to improve the human condition. After coming to this insight, Iqbal drew a connection between the path that India's destiny will take and the more fantastic Islamic world (Ahmad A. Q., 2021). This change in focus reflected a step away from an idealized image of soil as being indifferent to the circumstances of actual people.

Because of his exposure to European nationalism, Iqbal could comprehend the significance of the majority vote in a democratic system. This was because Iqbal was born in Europe. He was aware of the fact that the democratic process might be exploited by the majority to completely eradicate minority groups if that was the objective of the group. He also admitted that Muslims in India were up against an ethnic majority to govern the country effectively for historical reasons and would never trust a Muslim-led administration to rule the nation properly. He said this was a challenge since the ethnic majority would never trust a Muslim-led government to administer the country effectively (Ahmad Z. , 1981). Minority groups were required to safeguard and protect themselves from total dehumanization and erasure since the concept of the numerical majority produced worry and terror unless the majority was well educated. Minority groups were forced to do this because the idea of the numerical majority caused anxiety and fear (Sevea, 2012).

Iqbal was inspired by the promise of rebirth for mankind in the notion of an Islamic community, which he learned about via his exposure to European civilization and the ethnic and cultural context in India. This idea continued to gain ground in the ten years that followed the conclusion of World War I in 1918 (Nafi, 2004). In 1929 Through a series of lectures titled

"Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam," he examined the relationship between the Muslim community and the religion of Islam in terms of the contemporary world. However, the lectures' overarching theme that the Islamic community may give hope to mankind, even in a post-modern framework of thinking, still resonates today (Purohit, 2015). During his address at the annual session of the AIML at Allahabad in 1930, His position was one of endorsement for the establishment of an independent Muslim state within the boundaries of the Indian subcontinent. He commented that the State will demonstrate Islam's capacity to play a part in the future world system that is capable of regenerating itself, and he said this observation (Allana, 1967).

THE INTERPLAY OF EGO, POLITICS AND CULTURE

In Iqbal's view, politics and culture do not revolve around the idea that people are driven to their very limits by a desire for wealth. However, this does not imply that Iqbal was unconcerned about the plight of people and nations that were struggling economically. Iqbal was an advocate for maintaining balance in human life between the pursuit of spiritual and material goals. According to his politico-cultural worldview, the subjugation of the human ego necessitated the political enslavement of nations. In addition, it suggested that to achieve one's ideal of complete political liberty, one must first fully realize one's ego (Zafar, 2014). The ego slumbers through life as a lifeless object situated within a social environment that is severely limited. Removing political control provides a fresh lease on life and opens up boundless opportunities for its continued expansion. The human ego is a creative force that must expand, and that expansion must be forward-looking on both the horizontal and the vertical axes for success (Ahmad A. Q., 2021).

Iqbal's political and philosophical ideas offer the individual a feeling of purpose and where they should go (El-Affendi, 2004). After the environment has been altered, it is difficult to stop the growth of the ego because it has already begun. Iqbal wrote a poem for the Russian people, praising them for their innovative new society but strongly cautioned them against the dangers of materialism. The poem was addressed to the Russian people. For them to transcend the material and enter the spiritual realm, he motivates them to foster their shared ego to its maximum capacity for innovation. This will allow them to make the transition. Iqbal maintains that the ego is responsible for bridging the

physical and spiritual gap (Sherwani, Speeches, writings and statements of Iqbal, 1995). At the nexus of the horizontal and vertical, the Divine materializes within the human being. If the ego is unable to function properly within this framework, then the children of Adam are in for a string of regrettable events.

The idea of ego expansion has both political and cultural underpinnings. Originates as a result of the actions of a person. Iqbal contends that the human ego is without purpose and without the eternal principles that govern human behavior. The shattered state of the human psyche can put us in even more difficult circumstances. When love and reason are brought together, the human spirit can flourish. As a plea for harmony between the two aspects of an individual's sense of self, the Western tradition must first become more in line with its Eastern roots. Then, the rational human mind must become more in tune with the emotional human heart. Until these two conditions are met, there cannot be a happy reunion. This reunification is necessary for the rebirth of the human ego (Mirza, 2013). If having a second birth does not improve one's fate, then all political philosophies and movements are pointless and have no bearing on the world. The individual's entrance into this three-dimensional realm was facilitated through birth, which is how one might liberate oneself and break free from all constraints. However, it is essential to note that this particular birth does not involve the combination of clay and water, as discerned by those possessing a vibrant and compassionate spirit. Iqbal makes contributions to the scholarly publication known as *Javid Numah* (Sherwani, Speeches, writings and statements of Iqbal, 1995). The initial birth is a consequence of limitation, whereas the subsequent birth is a deliberate choice; the former birth remains concealed, whereas the latter birth becomes evident; the former birth occurs amidst sorrow, while the latter birth is accompanied by joy, as the pursuit of knowledge drives the former birth, while the latter birth transcends all boundaries; the former birth necessitates the passage of time, while the latter birth merely employs it as a mechanism for arrival. Both the birth of a child and the taking of a man, which are both events that involve tearing, are announced by the call to prayer. One of these tears is of the womb, and the other is of the world (Zafar, 2014). The first originates in the center of one's chest, and the second stems from one's mouth. Every time a watchful spirit enters the body of a living person, this ancient inn, which represents our planet, is

shaken to its very foundations (Allana, 1967).

Iqbal's political-cultural theory holds that, despite the ever-changing geo-historical circumstances of the modern world, the human ego's political and cultural destiny is already set in motion (Sailen, 2010). The idea that the human ego is doomed to a certain cultural and political destiny stems from this perspective.

CONCLUSION

Iqbal's primary concern revolved around the future of India as a unified entity, with particular emphasis on the position of Muslims inside the country. This apprehension stemmed from the Hindus' significant numerical majority and material affluence, which persisted until Iqbal's lifetime. He empathized with the Indian Muslim community's sense of despair upon realizing that they were confronted with both political subjugation and spiritual and economic destitution. He experienced a profound sentiment that the conduct of Islam, as he observed, deviated from its intended essence. He voiced his opposition towards individuals who either lacked comprehension or intentionally misrepresented the authentic essence of Islam. Despite his desire for harmony and amity among diverse religious communities in India, he found it increasingly difficult to conceive of a unified Indian nation due to the vast array of climates, races, languages, creeds, social systems, and cultural patterns in the country.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any competing interest.

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