




# ALLAMA MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND HIS THEORIES



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## Allama Muhammad Iqbal(1877-1938)

Allama Sir Muhammad Iqbal was a poet, philosopher and politician born in Sialkot, British India (now in Pakistan), whose poetry in Urdu, Arabic and Persian is considered to be among the greatest of the modern era and whose vision of an independent state for the Muslims of British India was to inspire the creation of Pakistan. He is commonly referred to as Allama Iqbal, Allama meaning "Scholar". Iqbal was a strong proponent of the political and spiritual revival of Islamic civilisation across the world, but specifically in India; a series of famous lectures he delivered to this effect were published as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. One of the most prominent leaders of the All India Muslim League, Iqbal encouraged the creation of a "state in northwestern India for Indian Muslims" in his 1930 presidential address. Iqbal encouraged and worked closely with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and he is known as Muffakir-e-Pakistan ("The Thinker of Pakistan"), Shair-e-Mashriq ("The Poet of the East"), and Hakeem-ul-Ummat ("The Sage of Ummah"). He is officially recognized as the "national poet" in Pakistan

### Early life

Allama Muhammad Iqbal was born in Sialkot, Punjab, British India (now part of Pakistan); the eldest of five siblings in a Kashmiri family. Iqbal's father Shaikh Nur Muhammad was a prosperous tailor, well-known for his devotion to Islam, and the family raised their children with deep religious grounding.

Iqbal was educated initially by tutors in languages and writing, history, poetry and religion. His potential as a poet and writer was recognized by one of his tutors, Syed Mir Hassan, and Iqbal would continue to study under him at the Scotch Mission College in Sialkot. The student became proficient in several languages and the skill of writing prose and poetry, and graduated in 1897. Following custom, at the age of 15 Iqbal's family arranged for him to be married to Karim Bibi, the daughter of an affluent Gujrati physician. The couple had two children: a daughter, Mi'raj Begam (born 1895) and a son, Aftab (born 1899). Iqbal's third son died soon after birth. The husband and wife were unhappy in their marriage and eventually divorced in 1916.

Iqbal entered the Government College in Lahore where he studied philosophy, English literature and Arabic and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, graduating cum laude. He won a gold medal for topping his examination in philosophy. While studying for his masters' degree, Iqbal came under the wing of Sir Thomas Arnold, a scholar of Islam and modern philosophy at the college. Arnold exposed the young man to Western culture and ideas, and served as a bridge for Iqbal between the ideas of East and West. Iqbal was appointed to a readership in Arabic at the Oriental College in Lahore, and he published his first book in Urdu, *The Knowledge of Economics* in 1903. In 1905 Iqbal published the patriotic song, *Tarana-e-Hind* (Song of India).

At Sir Thomas's encouragement, Iqbal traveled to and spend many years studying in Europe. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College at Cambridge in 1907, while simultaneously studying law at Lincoln's Inn, from where he qualified as a barrister in 1908. In Europe, he started writing his poetry in Persian as well. Throughout his life, Iqbal would prefer writing in Persian as he believed it allowed him

to fully express philosophical concepts, and it gave him a wider audience. It was while in England that he first participated in politics. Following the formation of the All-India Muslim League in 1906, Iqbal was elected to the executive committee of its British chapter in 1908. Together with two other politicians, Syed Hassan Bilgrami and Syed Ameer Ali, Iqbal sat on the subcommittee which drafted the constitution of the League. In 1907, Iqbal traveled to Germany to pursue a doctorate from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität at Munich. Working under the supervision of Friedrich Hommel, Iqbal published a thesis titled: The Development of Metaphysics in Persia.

## **Literary career**

Upon his return to India in 1908, Iqbal took up assistant professorship at the Government College in Lahore, but for financial reasons he relinquished it within a year to practice law. During this period, Iqbal's personal life was in turmoil. He divorced Karim Bibi in 1916, but provided financial support to her and their children for the rest of his life.

While maintaining his legal practice, Iqbal began concentrating on spiritual and religious subjects, and publishing poetry and literary works. He became active in the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, a congress of Muslim intellectuals, writers and poets as well as politicians and in 1919 became the general secretary of the organization. Iqbal's thoughts in his work primarily focused on the spiritual direction and development of human society, centered on experiences from his travel and stay in Western Europe and the Middle East. He was profoundly influenced by Western philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and Goethe, and soon became a strong critic of Western society's separation of religion from state and what he perceived as its obsession with materialist pursuits.

The poetry and philosophy of Mawlana Rumi bore the deepest influence on Iqbal's mind. Deeply grounded in religion since childhood, Iqbal would begin intensely concentrating on the study of Islam, the culture and history of Islamic civilization and its political future, and embrace Rumi as "his guide." Iqbal would feature Rumi in the role of a guide in many of his poems, and his works focused on reminding his readers of the past glories of Islamic civilization, and delivering a message of a pure, spiritual focus on Islam as a source for socio-political liberation and greatness. Iqbal denounced political divisions within and amongst Muslim nations, and frequently alluded to and spoke in terms of the global Muslim community, or the Ummah

### **Political career**

While dividing his time between law and poetry, Iqbal had remained active in the Muslim League. He supported Indian involvement in World War I, as well as the Khilafat movement and remained in close touch with Muslim political leaders such as Maulana Mohammad Ali and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He was a critic of the mainstream Indian National Congress, which he regarded as dominated by Hindus and was disappointed with the League when during the 1920s, it was absorbed in factional divides between the pro-British group led by Sir Muhammad Shafi and the centrist group led by Jinnah. In November 1926, with the encouragement of friends and supporters, Iqbal contested for a seat in the Punjab Legislative Assembly from the Muslim district of Lahore, and defeated

his opponent by a margin of 3,177 votes. He supported the constitutional proposals presented by Jinnah with the aim of guaranteeing Muslim political rights and influence in a coalition with the Congress, and worked with the Aga Khan and other Muslim leaders to mend the factional divisions and achieve unity in the Muslim League

## **Works in Persian**

Iqbal's poetic works are written mostly in Persian rather. Among his 12,000 verses of poem, about 7,000 verses are in Persian. In 1915, he published his first collection of poetry, the *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self) in Persian. The poems delve into concepts of ego and emphasize the spirit and self from a religious, spiritual perspective. Many critics have called this Iqbal's finest poetic work. In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, Iqbal has explained his philosophy of "Khudi," or "Self." He proves by various means that the whole universe obeys the will of the "Self." Iqbal condemns self-destruction. For him the aim of life is self-realization and self-knowledge. He charts the stages through which the "Self" has to pass before finally arriving at its point of perfection, enabling the knower of the "Self" to become the viceregent of Allah. Also in Persian and published in 1917, this group of poems has as its main themes the ideal community, Islamic ethical and social principles and the relationship between the individual and society. Although he is true throughout to Islam, Iqbal recognises also the positive analogous aspects of other religions.

## **Death**

In 1933, after returning from a trip to Spain and Afghanistan, Iqbal's health deteriorated. He spent his final years working to establish the *Idara Dar-ul-Islam*, an institution where studies in classical Islam and contemporary social science would be subsidized, and advocating the demand for an independent Muslim state. Iqbal ceased practicing law in 1934 and he was granted pension by the Nawab of Bhopal. After suffering for months from a series of protracted illnesses, Iqbal died in Lahore in 1938. His tomb is located in the space between the entrance of the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort.

## **Concept of khoodi/Ego**

The concept of khudi are the higher self is synonymous with Allamah Iqbal, who was the greatest philosopher poet of the modern era. His stature and visionary outlook being perceived to be head and shoulder above the times that he and his contemporaries lived in, the greatest tribute to his stature among poets is that even to this day, poets, academicians, researchers and scholars of Urdu, Persian, poetry and philosophy the world over simply can not but approach his works except with the deepest of awe and admiration at the depth of his thoughts

## **Asrar-e-Khudi**

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perspective. Many critics have called this Iqbal's finest poetic work. In Asrar-e-Khudi, Iqbal has explained his philosophy of "Khudi" or "Self".

### **Meaning**

Iqbal's use of term "Khudi" is synonymous with the word of "Ruh" as mentioned in the Qur'an. "Ruh" is that divine spark which is present in every human being and was present in Adam for which God ordered all the angels to prostrate in front of Adam. However one has to make a great journey of transformation to realize that divine spark which Iqbal calls "Khudi". A similitude of this journey could be understood by the relationship of fragrance and seed.

### **Example of seed**

Every seed has the potential for fragrance with in 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 developing roots at the same time. Then fighting against the elements to develop leaves and flowers. Finally reaching its pinnacle by attaining the fragrance that was hidden with in it. Same way to reach one's 'Khudi' or 'ruh' one needs to go through multiple stages which Iqbal himself went through and encourages other to travel this spiritual path. Like not all seeds reach the level of fragrance, many die along the way incomplete. Same way only few people could climb this mount Everest of spiritually, most get consumed along the way by mentalism. He charts the stage through which the "self" has to pass before finally arriving at its point of perfection, enabling the knower of "self" to become the vicegerent of Allah on earth. Iqbal beliefs the answers to essential questions regarding the Ego or important in determining morality for both the society and the individual.

### **Universal principal**

Iqbal presents his concept of Khudi as a universal cosmic principle which primarily works as an individuating principle responsible for providing each unit of creation a particular station or a unique position in the cosmos. He conceptualizes it as a principle of self-assertion, self-manifestation, self-realization, self-completion or self-development. Yet, Iqbal views Khudi as something mysterious. Its nature is generally hidden from us and so in most cases we cannot understand it.

### **Theory of Ummah**

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) belonged to the age of early twentieth century. He had a profound insight into the holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and had delved deep into the Western thought. His Islamic knowledge and his study of philosophy in the West equipped him with a good access to the sources of both Islam and Western modernism. His approach to Islam is thus on broader basis than that of the traditional theologians and the Western educated Muslims. Iqbal's later poetry particularly poetical works in Persian and the lectures, entitled "*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*" testifies to his objective and dynamics. Keeping this in view,

this paper discusses the Social Philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, with a special focus on

### **Iqbal's Views on the Concept of *Ummah***

The term *Ummah*, frequently interpreted as “Muslim community”, designates a basic concept in Islam. The Qur’anic concept of *Ummah*, occurring sixty four times in Quran, mostly designates a people to whom a Prophet was sent by God or a people who are objects of a divine plan of salvation. According to these analyses, the term *Ummah* refers to a single group sharing commonly religious orientation.<sup>1</sup> As Community is generally defined as a group of people organized together in a space-time, so the Islamic community is one where its members share Islamic principles and duties in common. It is different from ‘nationality’ in the western sense of the term because it is against the territorial boundaries.<sup>2</sup> his views on *Ummah* and Islamic Society.

### **Unity of ummah**

Iqbal believes in the universality of the *Ummah* (Muslim community) and is of the view that the body and soul of the *Ummah* are composed of a belief in the unity of God, and this very unity is the basis of the affinity of thought among Muslims. In similar manner *Risalat* (Prophethood) creates a spirit of oneness among the Muslims. It is because the Muslims received the message of God and the mission of life through the Prophet. In the view of Iqbal the commonness and solidarity of the Muslim. *Ummah* depends on Prophethood and that millions of Believers are joined together into one religion because of the Prophet. The whole Muslim *Ummah* draws inspiration from him.<sup>7</sup>

The main result of *Tawhid* and *Risalat* is that the *Ummah* is not circumscribed by territorial limitations. A Muslim does not belong to India, Rome, or Syria. His destiny is Islam; in other words, the *Ummah* demands unity of hearts and belief rather than that of race or territory.<sup>8</sup>

This shows that Iqbal's concept of *Ummah* is a universal community of Believers, crossing all barriers of caste, colour, race, nationality and territory.

According to Iqbal, the community is an entity whose functions and activities are motivated by power and a spirit of triumph. The unity acquired through the emergence of several individuals gives the community a unique personality of its own.<sup>9</sup> Iqbal's theory of *Ummah* owes much to his concept of ego (self). Ego to Iqbal is the awareness of the individual about his own position and potentialities.<sup>10</sup> According to him, a nation also has its Ego, which has all the attributes of the individual Ego. Vigour, force, power, determination, will to rise and move forward, and courage to fight, are the characteristics of the collective Ego of the community. Iqbal has drawn a graphic picture of the Muslim community in his famous poem entitled *Shikwa* (Complaint). In this poem he states that the Muslim *Ummah* at the time when it was endowed with a sense of purpose and spirit of triumph, during this period, though small in number, the Muslims fought with power and vigour to spread the message of God. They never hesitated to shed their blood provided the cause was righteous and the mission devoid of all ulterior motives.<sup>11</sup>

Iqbal put forward ideals and the principles of Muslim *Ummah* with full efficacy in his poetical and prose works. In the eye of Iqbal, *Tawhid* (oneness of God), *Risalah* (prophethood) and *Akhuwah* (brotherhood) are the foundational principles of Muslim ummah.

Regarding *Tawhid*, Iqbal means stickness to the belief in one God (Allah), single value, single truth and moving forward to this single Divine goal. *Tawhid*, states Iqbal, is the fundamental principle that unites Muslims in a single community where they can have a proper and full expression of their divinely conscious life.

According to Iqbal, *Tawhid* is the basic and fundamental principle that unites the entire Islamic world. Iqbal's second basic guiding principle of Muslim *ummah* is *Risalah* (Prophethood). Iqbal had a firm conviction in *Risalah*.<sup>14</sup> Iqbal views that it is an important duty to illustrate the truth and the validity of prophethood and its finality in the raising of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>15</sup> Iqbal was against the materialistic ideals of the secular community, based on country, race and language and stands for Tawhid preached by Prophet Muhammad and considers it the solid and valid fabric of Islamic community.<sup>16</sup>

Iqbal considers the basis of Muslim *Ummah* in the adherence to Prophet Muhammad by stating:

“The essential difference between the Muslim community and other communities of the world consists in our peculiar conception of nationality. It is not the unity of language or country or the identity of economic interest that constitutes the basic principle of our nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the universe, and participate in the same historical tradition that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam. Islam abhors all material limitations, and bases its nationality on a purely abstract idea, objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities. It is not dependent for its life principle on the character and genuine of a particular people, in its essence it is non-temporal, non-spatial”.

## Conclusion

Iqbal was a firm believer in religion without which the social system cannot work properly. That is why he focussed his efforts on the revival of Islam and the protection of Islamic society. He believed Islam to be the most valuable contribution to world thought. Islamic society has a permanent element in its structure of thought, such as the unity of God, the finality of Prophethood, the sharia't, the Islamic code of law and Akhuwah, (Brotherhood). To Iqbal, the stable character of a society directly depends upon the essential regard for the ultimate realities that govern life. From the above assessment of Iqbal's views it can be said that Iqbal defines *Tawhid*, *Risalah*, and *Akhuwah* as the foundational and basic principles of *Ummah* (Muslim community). For him, if a community deviates from any of these principles, it will deviate from the actual goals. Thus, Iqbal was the most dynamic scholar-philosopher of the twentieth century, who gave many valuable ideas and vehemently emphasized that Muslims should hold fast to the teachings of the Qur'an in order to progress in life