

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND THE PERFECT MAN:
THE RESTORATION OF MUSLIM DIGNITY THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF
PHILOSOPHY, POETRY, POLITICS AND CONSERVATIVE ISLAM

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PREVIEW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Linda Kay Nix, without whose patience and long suffering this work would never have been completed. Her understanding and encouragement during the long Icelandic winters when I burned the midnight (and noontime) whale-oil in the pursuit of an understanding of Muhammad Iqbal and Islam are responsible for the completion of this work.

I acknowledge and appreciate the patience and direction my committee provided in the preparation of this dissertation. Dan Cowdin Ph.D. (Mentor), Clark Merrill Ph.D. (Reader) and James Hersh Ph.D. (Reader) provided insightful guidance in the development and direction this work ultimately took. I especially appreciated their expertise in their respective fields and their persistence in keeping in touch with me as my Navy career took me all over the world.

ABSTRACT

MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND THE PERFECT MAN: THE INTEGRATION OF PHILOSOPHY, POETIC ART, POLITICAL IDEAL AND CONSERVATIVE ISLAM IN THE RESTORATION OF MUSLIM DIGNITY

Muhammad Iqbal lived at multiple human crossroads: of history as British Colonial power waned in India, of the human relationship with technology during the crisis of Modernism, and of the awakening of political Islam to its mortal conflict with the West. Iqbal perceived an attack on human dignity due to the “Mega-Technique” of Colonialism. In this dissertation, I present an inter-disciplinary humanities study of Iqbal’s prescription for the restoration of Muslim dignity: the Perfect Man. I will demonstrate how his philosophy, poetic art, political idealism, and conservative Muslim faith are integrated in this concept and how it contributed to the establishment of the state of Pakistan and the contemporary Muslim identity.

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1

MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND THE PERFECT MAN: THE RESTORATION OF MUSLIM DIGNITY THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF PHILOSOPHY POETRY, POLITICS AND CONSERVATIVE ISLAM

Introduction

...In 1934-35, he [Heidegger] was to argue that the poet, the philosopher, and the state founder were the authentic creators necessary for bringing forth the new historical world at the proper time. (Zimmerman 1990, 114)

Muhammad Iqbal was a poet, a philosopher, a political activist and is known today in Pakistan as the spiritual father of that country. Through his poetry, philosophical thought and political activity he worked for nearly thirty years to bring about cultural change in his native India and a new historical reality in his part of the globe. That new historical world was established in 1947, ten years after his death, with the establishment of the Muslim homeland and state of Pakistan. Iqbal perceived an attack on the human dignity of Muslims as a result of the occupation and exploitation of his homeland through British Imperialism. His doctrine of the Perfect Man, incorporating his philosophical, political, and religious views was his prescription for the restoration of that dignity, which he effectively communicated through his popular poetry. This dissertation presents an inter-disciplinary humanities study of this concept, examining its philosophical, religious and political foundations and its impact on Muslim dignity, as well as its continuing political and human influence.

In this chapter, I will introduce my dissertation topic, provide a short biography of Iqbal and his thought, discuss the researchable question, and present my research rationale. I will also discuss how this dissertation reveals original insight into Iqbal's thought and the methodology I have adopted, incorporating elements of humanities qualitative research, history of ideas, and a classical hermeneutic in attempting to explicate Iqbal and his impact on the modern world.

Iqbal's Life and Work

Born in Kashmir, Muhammad Iqbal lived from 1877 to 1938, an extremely volatile period of world history. A citizen of a mature British colonial world, he was educated in the best British and Western intellectual tradition in India, Cambridge, and Munich. During his life, he would observe the crisis of Western culture demonstrated in two world wars as well as the decline of British Colonial rule in India. His presence at the nexus of these historical events provided an opportunity for Iqbal to make a significant contribution to the future of the Muslims of India and the world.

Very early in his career, Iqbal was renowned as a poet. Much of his intellectual dialogue and exhortation were conducted through the medium of his poetry in the Urdu and Persian languages. He published hundreds of poems on a variety of subjects, including the themes of "self-hood" (*Khudi*), the "Perfect Man," the resurgence of Islam, and the failures of the Western culture. It was initially through his poetry that Iqbal gained an audience in India, with his passionate reflections on the Islamic legacy and his novel philosophical forays finding a sympathetic hearing. Even today, his poetry is put to music and sung in the Islamic world. While his philosophical musings are often difficult to follow, the beauty and passion of his verse communicated to a deep emotional longing

within the Muslims of his native India, a longing for a return to Islam's historic greatness. Reynold Nicholson notes the emotive power of Iqbal's poetry in the introduction to his translation of Iqbal's *Asrar-I-Khudi*:

....In the poem, naturally, this philosophy presents itself under a different aspect. Its audacity of thought and phrase is less apparent, its logical brilliancy dissolves in the glow of feeling and imagination, and it wins the heart before taking possession of the mind. (Iqbal 1915, xxx)

Iqbal took advantage of the popularity of his poetry to communicate his religious, political and philosophical ideas to a wide audience.

Iqbal was also a philosopher. Earning a Master of Arts degree in philosophy in India under the guidance of the well-known British scholar, Sir Thomas Arnold, he earned awards in that discipline, and served as a professor of philosophy at Oriental College in Lahore (1901 – 1905). He left India to attend Cambridge University (1905-8) where he studied under the British neo-Hegelian, John E.M. McTaggart and James Ward (Schimmel 1963, 37). While in Britain, he also wrote a scholarly dissertation, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, which earned him the Ph.D. degree at the University of Munich in 1907. During his time in England, he also studied sociology, law, and politics and had opportunity to lecture publicly on Islam (Beg 2004, 3-20). He experienced firsthand the benefits of Western education and technology, while his studies enabled him to interact deeply with a wide range of Western intellectuals.

Iqbal returned to India in 1908 and later questioned the value of the time he spent in Europe. "I dwelt a while with the Westerners, sought much and saw scarcely"(Iqbal 1932, 44). Yet as a result of his studies, he developed a new philosophy based upon the Persian concept of *Khudi*, selfhood or ego. "...What then is life...It is individual: its highest form so far is the Ego (*Khudi*) in which the individual becomes a self-contained

exclusive centre” (Vahid 1948, 43). He built a complete system around the concept, encouraging the Muslims of colonial India to strengthen their selfhood and to fight for their cultural and religious heritage, thus becoming a “Perfect Man.” This Perfect Man would exemplify *Khudi*, as well as a number of other important characteristics, including *Faqr* (worldly detachment), action, and intense devotion to *Allah*. This most advanced personality could be experienced only through obedience and self-control that would culminate in vice-regency to God (Iqbal 1915, 72).

Be a conqueror of earth; that alone is worthy of a man.
Thou art soft like a rose. Become hard as stone,
That thou mayst be the foundation of the wall of the garden!
Build thy clay into a Man,
Build thy Man into a World!
(Iqbal 1915, 89)

Although he eventually rejected much of Western philosophy and attributed the best of it to Medieval Muslim scholars, he utilized that philosophy to develop a coherent apology for his Muslim faith in both poetry and prose. A good deal of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, a series of lectures he delivered beginning in 1928, involves a continuing dialogue between Eastern and Western thinkers. Many commentators comment that Iqbal’s Perfect Man bears a striking similarity to Nietzsche’s Superman.

Iqbal became involved in politics soon after his return from England in 1908. Having been trained in the West, he was aware of its cultural strengths as well as its weaknesses. He was especially sensitive to the evils of Colonialism.

This knowledge, this wisdom, this statesmanship, this governance
They suck blood and teach the tenets of equality.
Unemployment and promiscuity and inebriation and destitution
Are these not victories enough for the civilization of the West?
(Iqbal 1935, 435)

Iqbal was aware of the political intrigues of the British who sought to maintain their power and influence in India by preventing a political union between Muslims and Hindus (Iqbal 1932, 78). To address the evils of British colonial rule and represent his community, he stood for election and was elected to the Lahore Legislative Council as representative of the Muslim community in 1926, and served as the President of the All India Muslim League and Conference in 1930. He also represented Muslim interests at the second and third Round Table Conferences in London in 1931 and 1932, which attempted to forge a solution to the Indian communal problem and discussed the future of a post-colonial India (Iqbal 1932, 35-39).

The valuable advice that Iqbal gave to the British statesmen, Mr. Gandhi and his friends at the Round Table Conference will always be remembered with gratitude by Muslims. Iqbal's work at the Conference will ever adorn the pages of Indian history because of his grasp of the intricate problems of the various races in India, their civilization and culture. (Iqbal 1932, 35-39)

Iqbal consistently opposed colonial rule of India, but his views on Indian self-rule evolved over time. In his early poetry and thought, Iqbal advocated a bi-cultural, post-colonial India, although he was opposed to nationalism and the nation-state as inimical to Islam. Later, he came to believe that the rights of India's Muslims would be protected only through the establishment of a semi-independent or independent Muslim homeland. His political demand for an independent Muslim homeland and the poetic expression of the hopes and dreams of India's Muslims earned him the title, "The Spiritual father of Pakistan." Although he opposed western nationalism and its imposition on the Muslim east, he believed the existence of a Muslim nation was a necessary stage on the path to a world-wide Muslim *Ummah* (Iqbal 1974, 159). Although he would not live to see the creation of Pakistan, he strongly influenced a generation of Indian Muslims and the future

leaders of that nation, chief among them Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the *Quaid-I Azam* (great leader), Pakistan's first political leader.

Above all, Iqbal was a deeply religious Muslim. The effects of World War I and colonialism caused him to question the impact of Western culture and influence in his country and convinced him of the need for a different approach to the world's problems. Iqbal found human dignity and meaning in Islam. Consistent with an Islamic belief that God judges Muslims through their historical and political situation (Armstrong 2002, 152), he felt that his countrymen's status as colonial subjects to the British Empire was a result of their neglect and disobedience of true Islam. In his poetry, Iqbal was often as critical of his fellow Muslims as he was of the West.

We, who keep the citadel of Islam
Have become infidels by neglecting the watchword of Islam.
The ancient Saki's¹ bowl is shattered,
The wine party of the Hijaz² is broken up.
The Ka'ba is filled with idols,
Infidelity mocks at our Islam.
(Iqbal 1915, 132)

He therefore pursued a personal struggle to revitalize the dignity of Indian Muslims through a renaissance of their faith. He belongs to an august line of Islamic reformers who attempted to arouse Muslims to their responsibilities to the historic and traditional faith of the Prophet Muhammad. These reformers are responsible for the development of political and radical strains in contemporary Islam. Such Islamic luminaries as the eighteenth century Saudi Arabian prophet Abdul Wahhab, the nineteenth century Jamal al-din Afghani (d. 1897) and the twentieth century Abdul Ala Maudoodi (b. 1903) called for a rejection of modernism, a return to the practices of the prophet, and even a war

¹ The Saki is the server of the wine, a common metaphor in Persian poetry.

² Muslim Arabia.

between the civilizations of the West and Islam (Schimmel 1963, 29-30). During the 1950's, Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian Muslim dissident, would include the United States among the enemies of Islam. Iqbal utilized his poetry and his published articles to voice his opposition to the West and to advise his co-religionists of their role in the conflict he envisioned.

Against Europe I protest,
And the attraction of the West:
Woe to Europe and her charm,
Swift to capture and disarm!
Europe's hordes, with flame and fire
Desolate the world entire,
Architect of sanctuaries,
Earth awaits rebuilding; rise!
 Out of leaden sleep
 Out of slumber deep
 Arise!
 Out of slumber deep,
 Arise!

(Iqbal 1948, 76).

Iqbal believed the only hope for the world lay in the "Perfect Man," exemplifying *khudi* (empowered personhood) on the part of faithful Muslim men and women, the global victory of Islam, and the peace that would result with the institution of an Islamic state. In light of the shortcomings of Western technology, culture and colonialism, he believed that only Islam could restore human dignity to the world (Iqbal 1936, 163).

While Iqbal was opposed to the Western culture, he was not opposed to its technology. He understood the benefits of science and technology and encouraged the world's Muslims to work hard to acquire its power. To make it palatable to his co-religionists, he taught that the West's technology was a result of Islam's cultural history. Throughout his poetry and writings, he points out that the West's scientific and philosophical advancement has built upon the discoveries and thought of Eastern Islamic

sages. He therefore taught that Muslims should study hard and learn the best of science, economics, and philosophy in order to create a new world of peace, a world ruled by Islam.

For the Westerners, intelligence is the stuff of life
For the Easterners, love is the mystery of all being.
Only through love intelligence gets to know God,
Love's labors find firm grounding in intelligence.
It has the power to design another world
Then rise, and draw the design of a new world
Go, mingle together love and intelligence.
(Iqbal 1932, 58)

Researchable Question

Salve Regina's doctoral program asks the question, "What does it mean to be human in an age of advanced technology?" Muhammad Iqbal confronted this challenge in early Twentieth Century India as he experienced modernism mediated through British colonialism and developed a response that has far reaching consequences. In this dissertation, I will answer the question: "What is Muhammad Iqbal's concept of the Perfect Man and how does it address the issue of the restoration of Muslim dignity in the face of Western technology and colonialism?" I will examine this question through the multiple lenses that Iqbal utilized to address the cultural situation in his native India: philosophy, poetry, and politics as mediated through his conservative and religious perspective.

Research Rationale

Modernism and the response to Modernism in the West took many forms during the early years of the twentieth century. Much of the contemporary research examining the relationship between technology and the human condition has been firmly couched in

Western thought. In light of current history, it is imperative that Westerners understand how the Muslim world has been influenced by Western technology, how Muslims respond to that influence, and how those responses are playing out on the contemporary world stage. I believe Muhammad Iqbal represents a highly educated Muslim who had a good understanding of the West, including its strengths and weaknesses. As noted earlier, he deeply imbibed Western education and philosophy yet rejected it. The study of his concept of the Perfect Man contained in his poetry, philosophy, political activities, and religious viewpoint may provide insight into the thought processes that led to rejection of the West. It may also promote understanding and dialogue between the two cultures with the discovery of dialogue stimulating similarities, shared values, frustrations with the contemporary technological world, and insight on Professor Huntington's widely debated theory of a "Clash of Civilizations."

The Humanities and Technology Relating to Iqbal

Iqbal worked within the Humanities. Philosophy, literature, politics, and religion are all foundational elements of that curriculum. Because of his study and work in these fields, Iqbal was finely tuned to the human condition. The experience of World War I and the dehumanizing effect of the colonial "Mega-Machine" on his Muslim community in India caused him to question the efficacy of the West's technology and its benefit to humanity. While Great Britain attempted to preserve its position and influence in India through various political means, Iqbal seized the opportunity to awaken the Muslim masses to their historical legacy. Serving as an early twentieth century "lone prophet," Iqbal acted to awaken Muslims and Indians to their diminished human dignity. He encouraged them to take action and to powerfully assume their rightful place in the world

through the establishment of a contemporary Muslim political entity in India. His life and work serve as an example of how the humanities can help us understand the effect of technology on people, society and the environment.

Originality of Topic

There is not a great deal of literature in the West on Iqbal. Most of his works are out of print, although some are currently being republished as a result of the surge of interest in the Muslim world created by the events in New York City at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and the resulting Global War on Terrorism. The Iqbal Academy in Pakistan has commissioned extensive research on Iqbal and published numerous articles and books relating to various aspects of his thought. These articles are not readily available in the West. Members of the academy have published works that demonstrate the relationship of Iqbal's thought to Bergson, Eliot, Martin Buber, and other luminaries. There have been a half dozen research theses in the U.S. since 1954. Most address his views on nationalism and his contribution to the establishment of the state of Pakistan. Only one addresses his concept of the Perfect Man. Titled, "The concept of the Perfect Man in the Thought of Ibn 'Arabi and Muhammad Iqbal: A Comparative Study," Iskandar Arnel's M.A. thesis compared the two philosopher's Perfect Man concept. He concluded that, "...Iqbal was influenced in a number of important ways by Ibn 'Arabi" (OCLC FirstSearch, Dissertation Abstract Online).

My research to date has included all the works by Iqbal that I could locate. Much of his work is out of print, and the ones I did find have come from India and Pakistan, often by "ocean mail." While this has been slow and often frustrating, patience has been rewarded with some excellent works by the author and his commentators.

The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Iqbal's doctoral dissertation written at Cambridge University and delivered at the University of Munich, has recently come back into print. In this work, Iqbal traces the development of philosophical thought in Persia, tracing it from the ancient Persians (Zoroaster, Mani and Mazdak) to the Islamic Medieval philosophers and their interaction with Greek philosophy. He blames the Sufi mystics with responsibility for the destruction of the Islamic empire due to their adoption of Platonic thought and a quietism that, Iqbal believed, resulted in political weakness.

They taught,

Paradise is for the weak alone,
Strength is but a means to perdition
It is wicked to seek greatness and glory.
Penury is sweeter than princedom...

With the result,

The tiger tribe was exhausted by hard struggles.
They had set their hearts on enjoyment of luxury.
This soporific advice pleased them,
In their stupidity they swallowed the charm of the sheep...
Plato, the prime ascetic and sage
Was one of that ancient flock of sheep...

(Iqbal 1915, 54-56)

Although his father's Muslim religion exhibited a "sufistic tinge" (Ali 1988, 2) and "mystic trend of thought" (Beg 2004, 4) with a lasting influence on his son, Iqbal rejected the passivity and quietism of the Sufis while appreciating their absolute commitment, love and focus on the beloved, God. He was especially attached to the well-known Sufi mystic, Jalal al-din Rumi, who he adopted as his spiritual guide in his poetic work, the *Javid Namah*.

Three important poetic works form the core of Iqbal's philosophical and literary corpus. *The Secrets of the Self* (1915), *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (1918), and *The*

Javid Namah (1932) explicate Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi*, that self-possessed and energetic ego that exists as a vice-regent of *Allah* within the Muslim community, always seeking to re-establish the ancient glory of Islam. In these poems, Iqbal is very critical of the people of the East, accusing them of abdicating their birthright through laziness and the adoption of Western philosophy.

The pith of life is contained in action,
The delight in creation is the law of life,
Arise and create a new world!
Wrap thyself in flames, be an Abraham...
If one cannot live in a world as beseems a man,
Then it is better to die like the brave.
He that hath a sound heart
Will prove his strength by great enterprises.
'Tis sweet to use love in hard tasks.
And, like Abraham, to gather roses from flames....
(Iqbal 1915, 90-91)

Iqbal produced numerous other poetical works, including *Bang-i-Dara*, *Rumuz-I-Baikhudi*, *Piyam-I-Mashriq*, *Zabur-I-Ajam*, *Bal-I-Jibril*, *Zarb-I-Kalim*, *Pas Chih Bayad Kard*, and *Armughan-I-Hedjaz*. They range from beautiful nature poetry (primarily his pre-England period) to works that engage and emulate the poetry of Western authors. In *Javid Namah*, for instance, Iqbal writes in the style of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with the Persian poet and mystic Rumi serving as his guide on a journey to heaven even as Dante was guided by Virgil in his journey through hell and purgatory on his way to paradise. In this important work, Iqbal returns to the theme of the rejection of the West, and to the need for an Islamic renaissance.

For Westerners intelligence is the stuff of life,
For Easterners love is the mystery of all being...
The flame of the Europeans is damped down,
Their eyes are perceptive, but their hearts are dead;
They have been sore smitten by their own swords,
Hunted down and slaughtered, themselves the hunters.

Look not for fire and intoxication in their vine;
Not into their heavens shall rise a new age.
It is from your fire that the glow of life comes,
And it is your task to create the new world.

(Iqbal 1932, 57-58)

Possibly Iqbal's most important work is *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Published in book form, it consists of a series of seven lectures he delivered at Madras, Hyderabad and Aligarh, beginning in 1928. In these closely reasoned presentations, the author discusses the possibility of religion existing in a scientific world, touches on his philosophy, presents his perceptions of Islam, and discusses the possibility and necessity of bringing it into the modern era.

...The demand for a scientific form of religious knowledge is only natural... I have tried to meet...this urgent demand by attempting to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical tradition of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge. (Iqbal 1974, v – vi)

Throughout the pages of this work, Iqbal engages the great philosophical minds of East and West and concludes with the philosophical question: "Is Religion Possible?" His answer is a resounding yes! In fact, he believes that religion is necessary in light of the contemporary world situation.

There are a number of resources that supplement an understanding of Iqbal. The German scholar Annemarie Schimmel made Iqbal a focus of her life's work and has published a number of Iqbal studies, most notably *Gabriel's Wing*, a survey of his religious thought. The Iqbal Academy in Lahore, Pakistan, has published a number of works written in the East. *The Poet of the East*, by A. Anwar Beg, and *Iqbal: His Poetry and Message*, by Sheikh Akbar Ali, are written by Iqbal's contemporaries. In addition, I