

THE CRISIS OF *KHUDI* IN THE MUSLIM UMMAH AND IQBAL'S VISION FOR THE RESTORATION OF MUSLIM DYNAMISM

Ammara Maqsood

(Minhaj University Lahore)

amqadri.eng@mul.edu.pk

M. Ashiq Malik

(Nest High School)

Gulzeeb Yousaf

(Dar e Arqam School)

Abstract

The modern Muslim Ummah is facing a complex crisis, which is intellectual sluggishness, spiritual disorientation, and socio-political stagnation. According to Allama Muhammad Iqbal the erosion of Khudi- the dynamic principle of selfhood is the major cause of this decline. This study explores the crisis of Khudi in the Muslim Ummah and reevaluates the philosophical thoughts of Iqbal as a resource of restoring the dynamism of Muslims. The study also identifies the way in which the death of desire (ishq), action (amal), creative thought and educational purpose have undermined Muslim selfhood using qualitative textual analysis of Iqbal poetry and prose. Using Islamic philosophical doctrines like khilafat, ijihad, and moral agency, the research claims that the synthesis of spirituality and material activities by Iqbal is a good roadmap that can be used by Muslims in the contemporary world.

Keywords: *Khudi, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Muslim Ummah, Islamic philosophy, Muslim revival, education, Ijtihad*

Introduction

The emergence of the forms of political, economic, and sociological analysis of the demise of the Muslim Ummah in the modern world has further debated the stagnation of the Muslims in the sphere of colonial rule, ineffective leadership, and unequal distribution of power globally. Although these external influences are important, Allama Muhammad Iqbal sees this deterioration as a much more fundamental spiritual and intellectual crisis, which lies in destruction of *Khudi*, inner being who gives meaning, purpose and moral agency to human existence. Iqbal says that civilizations are not collapsing under the influence of outsiders; they are created by their own creativity, consciousness and energy of the human self working inside the civilization, which defines the rise and fall of the civilization (Rehan, Saifee and Zakki, 2022). Once *Khudi* becomes weak nations lose the ability to control their destiny and become controlled and degraded.

The philosophical intervention by Iqbal occurred through historical time of colonial subjugation, intellectual dependency and cultural disintegration of the Muslim world. He noted that Muslims who at one time were the leaders of knowledge and innovation had over time, lost their own self-confidence, originality and historical consciousness. This defeat led to apathy and submission and blind emulation (taqlid) of both traditions of religion and Western modernity (Abbasi, 2021). To Iqbal, imitation without knowledge kills creativity and stifles development of thought, hence making the individuals to be passive receivers of inherited thoughts but not the active generators of knowledge. The main assumption that Iqbal made in his critique is that *Khudi* loss is turning people into observers of history as opposed to its actors. A weaker self is a one that has no courage, no desire (ishq), no will to act and these are the crucial elements of personal and group change (Parray, 2013). Under this state, the Muslim societies are ensnared into the nostalgic past greatness or scared of change, and they are unable to act creatively to meet the challenges of the present.

This study returns to the concept of *Khudi* by Iqbal in an attempt to examine the crisis of the Muslim Ummah as well as the ways in which his views on the role of education, desire, action, and the re-writing of Islamic thought (*ijtihad*) may help to re-energize the Muslim dynamism in the present times. The research by proposing *Khudi* as a dynamic principle of selfhood, contends that Iqbal presents more than a vision of poetry but rather a practical intellectual approach to Muslim revival based on self-consciousness, moral responsibility and creative interaction with the contemporary world.

***Khudi* and Islamic Philosophy**

The idea of *Khudi* that Iqbal has is very deep in the Islamic anthropology, that regards the human being as a morally responsible agent and one to whom God places the trust of *Amanah*. In contrast to Western concept of egoism, *Khudi* focuses on self-knowledge, self-control and moral accountability with divine direction (Zeb and Qasim, 2015). The Quranic statement in Surah an-Najm, "And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for" confirms the view by Iqbal that effort and struggle is the key to self-realization (Qur'an 53:39, as cited in Qadri, 2011). Iqbal (1920) states that Muslim decadence has been caused by the rejection of struggle to embrace ritualized faith without action.

Balance Between Spirituality and Materialism

Iqbal opposes the ascetic mysticism and western materialism. He criticizes passive Sufism as advocating withdrawal of social realities and also opposes secular materialism as a form of cutting progress off morality (Iqbal, 1920). The world does not reject *Khudi* but instead helps him to grow. This moderate stance is also in line with the Islamic philosophy which places much emphasis on the reconciliation of *din* (faith) and *dunya* (worldly life). This balance has been eroded which has led to the lack of creativity and leadership in the Ummah (Nasr, 1987).

Objectives

1. To examine Allama Muhammad Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* and its relevance to the contemporary crisis of the Muslim Ummah
2. To analyze Iqbal's proposed intellectual and educational strategies for restoring Muslim dynamism

Significance/Rationale

This study is an addition to the current body of Iqbal research in that it places *Khudi* in the context of modern realities of Muslims instead of addressing it as a mere poetic or metaphysical abstraction. The study shows the relevance of the thought of Iqbal today by connecting his philosophy to the modern issues of ideological confusion, extremism, and intellectual stagnation (Mir and Salierno, 2006). It also highlights the value of education as a transformative activity in order to foster moral courage, creativity, and self-confidence among Muslim youth.

Research Questions

1. How does the erosion of *Khudi* contribute to the intellectual and spiritual decline of the Muslim Ummah?
2. In what ways can Iqbal's philosophy of education, *ijtihad*, and moral action restore Muslim dynamism?

Review of Literature

The academic interest in the thought of Allama Muhammad Iqbal has always given prominence to the central role of *Khudi* as the key element of the intellectual vision. Early scholarship on Iqbal gave great emphasis on his work as a nationalist poet and also political thinker, where he contributed to the making of Muslim identity in the colonial era (Mir and Salierno, 2006). Such publications put Iqbal into the historical fight of Muslims against

imperial rule, but frequently view *Khudi* as an ideological or symbolic notion as opposed to a framework of intellectual revitalization.

Later studies has discussed *Khudi* as a philosophical synthesis that is based on Islamic metaphysics, Islamic anthropology and Western tradition in philosophy. According to scholars, Iqbalian concept of selfhood is antithetical to the egoistic individualism of the West because it stresses on moral responsibility, religious discipline and creative action in divine direction (Nasr, 1987).

Islam (1982) also argues that Iqbal's philosophy is the effort to restore the spirit of rationalism and interpretiveness that existed in early Islam by *ijtihad* and places intellectual stagnation as one of the main causes of Muslim decay. In the literary field, Iqbal has been studied in terms of his poetry in literary works as a type of philosophical literature, which fuses symbolism, metaphor and moral questioning.

Iqbal also uses poetic imagery, as observed by literary critics, to play up the conflict between life and death in Muslim societies, using poetic images of fire, flight, and light (Barry, 2017). A lot of this literary writing, however, is still mere stylistic or thematic appreciation in which the poetic form is not wholly connected with modern socio-intellectual crises. Late interdisciplinary research has started to analyze the applicability of Iqbal to contemporary issues like globalization, materialism and cultural alienation.

These researchers pinpoint the criticism of secularism in the West presented by Iqbal and his demand to combine spirituality and material development (Eagleton, 2011; Nasr, 1987). However, there is still a conspicuous absence in literature that unifies the concept of *Khudi* as advanced by Iqbal in a systematic way with the English literary theories of selfhood, subjectivity, and agency.

It is precisely in this gap that this study poses its contribution by placing the Iqbal philosophy in the methodological and theoretical components in the context of English literature. By focusing on *Khudi* within the concept of identity and creative selfhood, this study builds on the current body of knowledge and adds to the more complex vision of Iqbal as a philosopher and a literary thinker, whose work can provide sustainable explanations regarding the crisis of the Muslim Ummah.

Research Gap

In spite of the fact that many studies have explored the philosophy of Iqbal, few studies have explicitly related the crisis of *Khudi* to contemporary educational and intellectual stagnation in the Muslim world. The available literature usually concentrates on historical or ideological interpretations, and they do not mention the application of them in contemporary times (Islam, 1982). This study completes this gap by introducing *Khudi* as an expedient restorative paradigm towards Muslim revival in the contemporary world.

Research Design and Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, employing interpretive research that is based on English literary studies and philosophical criticism research methodology. Instead of using the empirical or statistical methodology, the study takes an approach of a text which focuses on interpretation, meaning-making and conceptual analysis. This methodology is aligned with the literary studies, where knowledge is generated by working with literature and being in close contact with the ideological, philosophical, and historical aspects of it (Creswell, 2013).

The paper does not merely consider the works of Allama Muhammad Iqbal as historical documents but as intricate literary productions where philosophies of self, agency, and collective identity are put forward. The interpretative approach of the paper relies on hermeneutic and thematic approaches that are widely used in English literature studies. Hermeneutics is able to interpret texts as a dynamic site of meaning being influenced by

historical and cultural contexts, and thematic analysis can be used to identify common patterns of concepts in literary work (Gadamer, 2004).

Here, poetry and prose of Iqbal, especially *The Secrets of the Self* (Iqbal, 1920), *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (Iqbal, 1953) and *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Iqbal, 2013) are discussed as the literary form of philosophical exploration, being analogous to metaphysical and modernist writing in English literary traditions. The idea of *Khudi* is discussed in the critical perspective of selfhood and subjectivity which is one of the major issues in the literary discourse of Romantic, Modernist, and postcolonial. Similar to the Romantic poets who stressed individuality, imaginative power, and will, Iqbal creates *Khudi* as a dynamic and active self that does not allow passivity and determinism (Iqbal, 1920).

This strategy allows the study to place Iqbal in larger literary discussions on identity and agency and save the Islamic philosophical origins of his ideas. Close textual reading is the main analysis tool utilized in the presented study due to the possibility to focus on language, imagery, symbolism, and metaphor the help of which Iqbal expresses his vision of the philosophy. Close reading technique (Byron, 2021) makes possible a discussion of the construction of and interrelation of such themes as desire (*ishq*), action (*amal*), imitation (*taqlid*), education, and intellectual freedom (*ijtihad*) in texts. Such themes are analyzed in terms of the socio-historical context of colonial modernity and the intellectual decay of the Muslim Ummah and situate the meaning of the literature within historical lived realities.

The research is based on the sources of primary and secondary research. Primary data is the few poetic and philosophical selected texts of Iqbal, although secondary sources are the academic books, the peer-reviewed journal articles, and the studies of Iqbal, Islamic philosophy, and theories of selfhood as part of literary criticism. This is an interpretive and non-empirical research whose purpose is not to provide statistical generalization. Rather it tries to provide a subtle literary-philosophical insight into how the concept of *Khudi* by Iqbal responds to the spiritual and intellectual crisis of the Muslim Ummah, and helps formulate larger discourses of selfhood, agency, and cultural revitalization in English literary studies.

Discussion and Analysis

Textual Analysis

In the textual study of the poetry and prose work of Allama Muhammad Iqbal one can find out that the idea of *Khudi* serves the purpose of both a philosophical ideal and a literary device by which the crisis of the Muslim Ummah is expressed. In *Asrar-i-Khudi*, Iqbal (1920) reveals the self as dynamic and evolving which becomes powerful through struggle, discipline and meaningful action. The poetic voice keeps on reinforcing the idea that a self without desire (*ishq*) and without trying to get anything is stagnant and dead, which symbolizes the stagnation of the Muslim societies in general (Iqbal, 1920).

Iqbal builds *Khudi* through symbolic imagery of fire, light, and movement as something which has to be constantly cultivated, which helps to support the notion that the source of decline lies not in the outer defeat but in the inner weakness. On conducting a close analysis of the metaphorical language used by Iqbal, it can be seen that by nature imagery, Iqbal dramatizes the theme of contrast between vitality and decay. The constant metaphors of fire and flying also connote motion, desire, and elevation and the appearance of dust and chains connote stagnation and slavery. This imagery conforms to the tradition of literature where metaphors serve as the carriers of philosophical content where Iqbal is able to translate abstract concepts to poetic expressions with emotional appeal.

Iqbal is quite more confrontational in his criticism of western materialism and blind aping (*taqlid*) of alien ideologies by Muslims. The writing adopts a sense of prophetic urgency and satire to reveal the consequences of intellectually enslaved moral emptying through material advancement without spirituality. The poetic voice of Iqbal places the

Muslim subject as a victim to the borrowed thinking, and further stresses the fact that imitation destroys the originality and the creative development of the self. This criticism appeals to the postcolonial literary issues about cultural imitation and identity loss, and, once again, places Iqbal in a larger literary context of self and resistance (Bhabha,2012).

These poetic intuitions are further enhanced in Iqbal prose work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, which gives a philosophical appeal of intellectual rejuvenation through the use of *ijtihad*. In this case, the textual analysis demonstrates that reason and revelation are intentionally combined because Iqbal believes that stagnation is caused by inflexible dogmatism and the termination of the interpretive inquiry. The clarity and argumentative rigor of the prose style are the complements of the emotional appeal of poetry, both creating a collective literary-philosophical text. The textual analysis shows that *Khudi* is the centre around which the Muslim revival revolves as Iqbal writes about it. Using a mix of the symbolism of poetry and the logic of philosophy, Iqbal turns literature into the source of mental awakening. His writings are not only works of art but cultural interventions, targeting to rebuild moral courage, creativity and agency to the Muslim Ummah (Mir and Salierno, 2006).

Discussion

The results of the textual analysis outline that Allama Muhammad Iqbal views the deterioration of the Muslim Ummah mainly as a collapse of *Khudi* internally, and not merely a factor of external and political or economic forces. In his literary and philosophical writing, Iqbal is repeatedly anticipating the erosion of selfhood as the primary reason behind Muslim stagnation, which implies that the disappearance of inner vitality is the foregoing of social and historical degradation. This view falls in line with larger literary theories of subjectivity, according to which, identity and agency are created by consciousness and action, but not by inherited status.

The focus of Iqbal on desire (*ishq*) and action (*amal*) shows how he dismissed fatalism and passive religiosity. In his poetic criticism, Iqbal criticizes the existence of ritualistic faith that lacks an ethical involvement in the world stating that this state of spirituality creates inertia instead of transformation. This is echoed in English literary traditions, especially Romanticism, where active imagination and moral will play the pivotal role in human achievement. Similarly to Romantic poets who did not adhere to the mechanistic worldviews, Iqbal develops *Khudi* as an imaginative entity that is able to remake reality instead of being a slave to it. Moreover, one can note that Iqbal is concerned with the dependency on intellectualism and cultural imitation through his criticism of *taqlid*. His acute poetic voice reveals the risks of blindly following the ideologies of Western materialism which he feels is sucking all the spiritual essence out of the Muslim societies.

This criticism is similar to postcolonial literary discussions regarding mimicry and hybridity in which imitation is viewed as a survival mechanism, as well as, a source of identity loss (Bhabha, 2012). The emphasis on originality and self-confidence places the thought of Iqbal in a discourse of resistance to cultural domination in the world literary domain. The importance of education in the restoration of *Khudi* is also pointed out in the discussion. Iqbal advocacy of both the integration of reason, revelation and creativity is a literary-humanistic view of education as a way of developing reflective and moral responsible individuals (Iqbal, 1920).

This perspective is congruent with English literary criticism which regards education as an educative process that determines the ethical imagination and cultural awareness as opposed to the vocational schooling. Lack of this educational ethos, according to Iqbal has been a contributor to the intellectual paralysis of the Muslim Ummah. The writings of Iqbal are regarded as a literary intervention that would help to wake up Muslim consciousness. His

writings compel the reader to redefine the meaning of self, history and responsibility and place literature as a repurposed site where philosophy is organized to work cultural renewal.

Conclusion

The paper has discussed the Muslim Ummah crisis in terms of what Allama Muhammad Iqbal refers to as *Khudi*, and in the process revealed that Muslim decline, according to Iqbal, is essentially a crisis of selfhood. By closely analysing his poetry and prose, the research discovered that Iqbal formulates *Khudi* as a dynamic, ethical and creative power that is both individual and collective and that is the key to revival. The corruption of desire, action, and intellectual courage is proven to be one of the recurring themes of Muslim stagnation. The findings of this paper do not only have relevance to the literary criticism, but also to the modern discussion of the Muslim identity, education, and cultural agency.

Imposing Iqbal on the traditions of English literature that deal with theme of selfhood, subjectivity and resistance, the paper elucidates his significance as a universal philosopher whose opinions are not limited to geographical or disciplinary perspectives. The synthesis of philosophy and poetry by Iqbal shows the strength of literature as an intellectual awakening agent and as a tool of social criticism. Educationally, the study recommends that pedagogical approaches which foster originality, moral courage and critical questioning instead of rote learning and imitations are needed to revitalize Muslim societies. In the case of literary studies, the study supports the significance of interdisciplinary methodology that combines philosophy, history, and textual analysis. In the end, re-calibrating with the idea of *Khudi* fronted by Iqbal can be used to revive Muslim dynamism through the process of regaining self-awareness, ethical accountability, and creative action in an ever-baffling modern world.

References

- Abbasi, M. U. R. (2021). Allama Dr Muhammad Iqbal's Philosophy of Islamic Culture and Moral Values and Contemporary Muslim World: An Analytical and Critical Study. *Iqbal Review/Iqbaliyat*, 62(1), 113–136.
- Barry, P. (2017). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Byron, M. (2021). Close Reading. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*.
- Cresswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*.
- Eagleton, T. (2011). *Literary theory: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and Method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum.
- Iqbal, M. (1920). *Secrets of the self (Asrar-i khudi): A philosophical poem* (R. A. Nicholson, Trans.). Macmillan and Co.
- Iqbal, M. (1920). *The Secrets of the Self: (Asrār-i Khudī) a Philosophical Poem*. London: Macmillan.
- Iqbal, M. (2013). *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*. Stanford University Press.
- Iqbal, S. M. (1953). *The mysteries of selflessness*. Dar al-Islamiyya.
- Islam, R. F. (1982). *Modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition*.
- Mir, M., & Salierno, V. (2006). *Iqbal*. London: IB Tauris.
- Nasr, S. H. (1987). *Islamic art and spirituality*. SUNY Press.
- Parray, F. A. (2013). *Socio-Political Thought of Iqbal: With special reference to Zarb-i-Kaleem*. Iqbal Institute of Culture & Philosophy: University of Kashmir, Srinagar.
- Qadri, M. T. (2011). *The glorious Quran: English translation of Irfan-ul-Quran* (2nd ed.). Minhaj-ul-Quran International.
- Rehan, M., Saifee, A. U. R., & Zakki, G. N. (2022). THE EVALUATION OF TWO CONFLICTING CIVILIZATIONS: In The Light of Futuristic Vision of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal. *Al-Azhaar Research Journal*, 8 (2).
- Zeb, A., & Qasim, K. (2015). The Concept of Khudi (The Self) in Iqbal's "The Secrets of the Self". *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(3), 202–209.