

BRIDGING EAST AND WEST: THE LIFE,
PHILOSOPHY, AND POETIC LEGACY OF
MOHAMMAD IQBAL

Aygun Hamidulla Tagiyeva

ABSTRACT

Mohammad Iqbal, renowned as one of the world's most influential poets and a political leader, made profound contributions to literature, philosophy, and the socio-political fabric of his time. His work synthesized Eastern and Western philosophies, creating a unique value system to bridge diverse cultural perspectives. While Iqbal's influence is well recognized in many regions, he remains underexplored in Azerbaijan, particularly his Urdu works. This research fills a crucial gap, providing a detailed investigation into Iqbal's life, creative evolution, and contributions to philosophy and poetry. The innovative aspect of this research lies in the examination and analysis of Iqbal's Urdu works within the context of Azerbaijani scholarship. Utilizing an array of scientific, general publications, and online resources, the study delves into Iqbal's legacy as a leading figure in 19th-20th century Indo-Pakistani Islamic culture. His philosophy, deeply rooted in Islamic and European intellectual traditions, responds to the socio-political challenges of his era with a universal message of self-empowerment and cultural revival for the Muslim world. Iqbal's poetic corpus illustrates his critique of Western imperialism, advocacy for spiritual awakening, and emphasis on moral self-development. His works reflect a blend of Eastern and Western influences, drawing from prominent Islamic thinkers like Rumi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, as well as Western philosophers such as Nietzsche, Goethe, and Hegel. Through his poetry, Iqbal sought to awaken individual self-awareness, strengthen collective identity, and inspire political, social, and cultural revival among Muslims, ultimately contributing to the creation of Pakistan. His notable works, such as "Asrar-i Khudi" (The Secrets of the Self) and "Rumuz-i Bekhudi" (The Secrets of Selflessness), provide profound philosophical explorations of the self and community, while his Urdu collections like "Bang-i Dara" (The Call of the Caravan Bell) and "Zarb-i Kalim" (The Rod of Moses) present socio-political critique and moral guidance. This research highlights the depth of Iqbal's engagement with themes of self-identity, empowerment, and cultural cohesion, emphasizing his enduring relevance in modern philosophical and cultural discourse.

Mohammad Iqbal is one of the world's most famous thoughtful poets. Apart from his poetic and prosaic works in Urdu and Persian, he was also known for being a political leader. Knowing both Eastern and Western history, and especially, philosophy, he tried to synthesize Eastern and Western philosophy and points of view and create a medium value universe.

Despite all that he wasn't very well-known and researched in Azerbaijan. Research of this topic is relevant because there is no detailed investigation in this regard. Therefore, it is very important to study Mohammad Iqbal's life and works, including those works that were written in Urdu.

Scientific innovation of the research. Scientific innovation of this research is in lack of study and analysis of Mohammad Iqbal's works written in Urdu in Azerbaijan. Analysis and research of Mohammad Iqbal's epoch and life, and his formation as a creative person can be considered as a scientific innovation.

Sources of the research. Scientific and general publications, libraries, and websites were used during this research.

Allama Mohammad Iqbal was one of the prominent people who provided valuable insights into humanity in the 19th-20th century in Indo-Pakistani Islamic culture in the contemporary world, great poet, word master, a genius personality worth of "the greatest" title.

Having received all his scientific-philosophical and aesthetic power and energy from the Islamic and European thinkers and teachers receive, preaching a different approach but still in accordance with the requirements of his era, his thoughts are very important for the whole Muslim world. Mohammad Iqbal's poetic creativity is very rich, he had great moral and esthetic power to show the inner face of Western imperialism, the insidious nature of its policy.

Mohammad Iqbal wipes away Eastern Islamic point of view in his poems, shows the way to Sufi perspective from sacredness of "Koran" to the human body and states that the highest goal is to get the true knowledge. Iqbal sees the secret power and mystery in understanding of the truth.

We can see the synthesis of the genius traditions of the prominent Eastern and Western poets and philosophers in Mohammad Iqbal's poetic creativity, including great Islamic thinkers and poets, such as Rumi Mevlana, Sheikh Nizami, Al-Ghazali, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushdi, Beyazid Bestami, Hallaji Mansur, Sohraverdi, Molla Sadra and others, and Western poets and philosophers, like Aristotle and Platon, Nietzsche, Hegel and Bergson, Goethe, Dante and Shopenhauer and others. Thus, Allama Mohammad Iqbal was a reformist poet and philosopher, owner of high intellect, who was capable of bringing together the East and the West, trying to master the most philosophical currents and explain Islamic values in his works.

As one of the Turkish researchers and translators of Mohammad Iqbal's works, R. Ihsan Eliachik writes,¹ Iqbal's works expressed the following: "to recognize own existence, self-confidence and the ability to stand, feel self-respect and value, use one's skills to the best of their possibility; all of those things are extremely important for one's life."²

Iqbal's poetry and philosophy has inherently international meaning in connecting similar, and sometimes the same political, social and cultural issues, and difficulties that other Islamic countries are facing and provides the key to the future-oriented culture.

Facing the socio-political and social requirements of the period he lives in, Iqbal is trying to establish healthy ground for the future of Muslim Indian people. His main objective is to wake people up and make them act with all their strength and power.

On one hand, Iqbal is showing the path to unite his fellow countrymen to fight for their political, social and cultural ideas, and on the other hand is leading them in embracing their power to acquire their independence. Iqbal believes in the mighty power of the man who is the "Caliph of Allah on earth" and wants to instill this belief into every Muslim individual. The formation of self identity, the "I" of the person is tightly closed to the notion of this objective and this desire. After the formation of an individual "I" Iqbal transitions to the formation of the collective self identity and pursues this goal. Thus, the main goal of Iqbal is to gradually wake up the individual by awakening every link in the chain of transformation of personality, extend, expand social-political awakening, self-awareness and the awareness of the society.³

The Muslim must be a master of his self-esteem and self-identity. Only then he or she can become the holistic, real person. Iqbal pays a lot of attention to this issue of self-esteem, self-identity and personality in Islam. This problem in Iqbal's works takes philosophical and aesthetic character and is explained in poetic way. This problem is repeatedly explained in details in his work "Asrar and Rumuz" ("Mysteries and allegories"). Self-esteem is the source of all kind of power and strength. (Allah exalts those people which create their own destiny!). The nation is the nation which has its own self-esteem.

Iqbal prefers spirit to the form. According to Iqbal, this world consists of the pictures drawn by Allah. Allah gave the part of his power to those created by him and gave the spirit to the people, unlike all his other creations.

In his early school years Iqbal learned Arabian and Farsi languages from his teacher Movlana Seid Mir Hasan, and was developing his style by writing and receiving critique and recommendations from famous Urdu poet Dagh Dahlavi.

Later, Iqbal was developing his talent more and more, and got his poems published in "Mahzen" journal, his poems were spreading around, he started participating in poetry evenings, especially, in Defending Islam groups and Kashmir Muslims groups. Such poems as the "Weeping orphan" ("Cry of the Orphan", "India's march", "Himalaya", "New temple," which were read at these gatherings, on one hand, showed his deep commitment to the country, and on the other hand, represented his love for the nations made him very popular, and in 1923 the British governor of Punjab awarded him with the "Poet" title as the winner of the contest. Since then, Mohammad Iqbal started to be considered the spiritual leader of Muslims in India...⁴

Generally, during this period Allama Mohammad Iqbal describes the deplorable state of Indian Muslims, their heavy, disastrous situation and sheds tears over the peace, freedom, and independence. These poems helped Indian Muslim Mujaheds in their struggle against the British conquerors, encouraged and inspired them, and served the goal of establishing the Pakistani state. Due to such power, Turkish scientists compared him with Mehmet Akif Ersoy, great Turkish poet.⁵

"Tasvir-i Derd" (Description of the grievance), "Feryad-i Ummet" ("Ummah cry"), "Cry of the Orphan" ("Weeping

orphan”), and other poems are brilliant examples of poetic expression of his care for national trouble.

Iqbal had known Urdu, Pushtu, Arabic, Persian, English and German and wrote 14 works in those languages, and additionally there are available books consisting of his letters, articles, reports and speeches. For more detailed information and understanding, we submit the brief summary of Mohammad Iqbal’s poetic works which were written in Persian and Urdu:

Works:

Being fluent in Urdu, Persian, English, German and Punjabi, his mother tongue to the extent that he could easily write in these languages, Mohammad Iqbal used Urdu and Persian for writing poems, and English and Urdu languages for writing prose. The facts about poems were taken from this source.⁶

I. Poems:

1. “Esrar-i Hodi”.

The first edition of this work written in Persian was first published in Lahore in 1915, and later has been published many times more again. Allama Muhammad Iqbal known as “Real face of Islamic Benlig” wrote “Esrar-i Hodi” (also written as “Asrar-i Hudi”) being inspired by the great genius of the East, Mevlana Jalaleddin Rumi (1184-1273) and his world-famous “Masnavi” (“Couplet”) work. As they say, “the poem was written in the form of couplet and was first published in 1915...”.⁷

This poem written in the same style with Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi’s “Masnavi”, is the poetic and philosophical interpretation, explanation of the relationships and connections between the self identity and God, the self identity and the Universe... In 1902 “Esrar-i Hodi” was translated into English by R. A. Nicholson under the name of “The Secret of the Self”. Later, the poem was translated into other various languages and together with the translation of “Rumuz-i bi-hodi” by Prof. Dr. Ali Nihat Tarlan was published in 1964 in the book “Esrar and Rumuz” and was numerously re-published.

2.”Rumuz-i Bi-hodi”.

This poem is the continuation of “Esrar-i Hodi” and was also written in Persian. First was published in Lahore in 1918 as a separate edition, later was published together with “Esrar-i Hodi”.

Main topic of this work is the relationship between the individual and the nation.

3. “Peyam-i Mashrik”.

This poem was written in response to Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* (West-eastern divan). Goethe was world famous German poet, educator, public and political figure, scientist and naturalist, progressive thinker who had great sympathy for Islamism and called “Koran” a book of the books. This poem written in Persian was devoted to Afghanistan’s King Amanullah Khan, and was dedicated to the topic moral apathy of the materialistic West.

“Peyam-i Maşrik” was translated into Turkish by Prof. Dr. Ali Nihat Tarlan and was published in 1956 in Istanbul under the name of “Sharktān Haber” (News from the East”).

4. “Bang-i Dera” (“Movement Bell”-1924).

It was Iqbal’s first poetry collection and was first published in Lahore in 1924. The poems included into that book represent first poetic works written by Iqbal. It combines in itself the poems connected with Turkey and Turkish people, his student years in Europe, Indian nationalistic thoughts together with romantic feelings. Some of the selected works were translated into Turkish by Ahmat Asrar (Ahmad Asrar).⁸

5. “Zebur-i Acem”.

This work written in Persian consists of gazelles and represents two psalms under the name of “Gulshen-i Raz-i Cedid” and “Bendegi-name”. First published in 1927 in Lahore, it was then translated into different languages, and translated into Turkish in 1959 by Prof. Dr. Ali Nihat Tarlan and was disseminated in Istanbul under the name of “Gulshen-i Raz-i Cedid. In 1964, it was printed once again under the name of the “Selected works from Zebur-u Ajem”.

6. “Javidname”.

This poem started to be written in 1929 in Persian after “Esrar-i Hodi”, was completed in 1932 and devoted to Iqbal’s son, Javid. The poem was written as an imitation of the famous Italian poet Dante’s (1265-1321), “*Divina Commedia*” (“Divine Comedy”). However, according to experts, it is quite different and complex work.⁹

Prof. Dr. Anne-Marie Schimmel had made first translation of this poem into Turkish with extensive disclosures and explanations, which was published by the Ministry of Culture in 1958. Later, Ahmet Metin Sahin Bursa's poetic translation was printed in Bursa in 1997. Poetic translation made by Prof. Dr. Halil Toker was published in 2008 by Cactus publishing agency.

7. "Guest"

This psalm written in Persian was created after the trip to Afghanistan by the invitation of Afghan King Muhammad Nadir Shah. This work, along with observations of Iqbal in Afghanistan, includes poems directed to support the development and the power of Islam undertaken by the King of Afghanistan.

The "Guest" was first published in Lahore in 1934. Was translated into Turkish under the name of "Wayfarer" by Prof. Dr. Ali Nihat Tarlan, and was later published in 1976 together with "Pes Chi Bayed Kerd Ey Akvam-i Shark" and "Bendegi-name".

8. "Bal-i Cibril"-(*"Gabriel's wing"*)-1935.

It is Iqbal's second work in Urdu. Was disseminated in Lahore in 1935. Due to some statements, "Bal-i Jibril" has reached the highest point in Iqbal's poetry written in Urdu. Poetic translation made by Yusuf Salih Karaja was published in 1983. There is also a more thorough translation of this work made by Ahmad Gizilgaya in 2000. In addition to those, this famous poem was translated by Dr. Prof. Jalal Soydan, Urdu literature expert of Ankara University in 2013 and published by Heje Yayin publishing agency.¹⁰

"Gabriel's wing" mostly consists of ghazals, then rubais, poems and verses. The lyricism and thickness of thought in these ghazals draw attention by their depth of philosophical thought. These works in Urdu, "Kurtaba Mosque", "Love and passion", "Saqiname", "Mentor and Disciple" remind lyric-epical poem and carry deep sense. Jalal Soydan writes in the "Foreword": "Overall, this work is a collection of Iqbal's thoughts arisen so far. This is the collection of poems expressing Iqbal's most powerful ideas in his philosophy of art."¹¹

9. "Pes Chi Bayed Kerd Ey Akvam-i Shark"

In this poem which was written in 1936 in Persian in addition to the "Guest" poem, there is described the debate between the truth and falsehood, and the course of modern politics.

10. “Zarb-i Kelim”- (“Moses’s fight”)- 1936.

It is Iqbal’s third book written in Urdu, which was published in 1936. Consisting of six sections, this poem has the following titles, listed in the presented order: “Islam and Muslims,” “Practice-Education”, “Women”, “Literature and Arts”, “Eastern and Western Policy”, “Mehrab Gul. Afghani’s thoughts”. In the “Moses’s fight” work Iqbal presents his thoughts which were previously written in Persian languages by deepening, extending, and generalizing them and presenting this time in Urdu. However, the style of this work is quite sharp and concrete. He fights in this poem, starts debate, invites to debate which in its turn expands his style of expression”¹²

This work is not just another piece of poetry. It is one of the magnificent works carrying social, political, philosophical and ideological meaning. This poem was indeed the reason of Islamic awakening and progress, it was the poetic monument serving in opening the eyes of the Muslim people and providing deeper understanding of the Universe. According to the researchers, there is no other poem of this scale which provides the same insight into Islamic values nor in Persian, neither in Urdu.¹³

Persian translation of this work was made by Haje Abdulhamid-Irfani. Translation into Turkish was made from Persian by Prof. Dr. Ali Nihat Tarlan and was published in Istanbul in 1968. The last and the more thorough translation was made by Jalal Soydan in 2013.

11. “Armagan-i Hijaz” - 1938.

This poem consisting of four-line quatrains, such as “The Devil’s Speaking Gathering”, “Old Baluj’s admonition to his son”, “Spirits World” and cover religious, philosophical, social, diverse colorful topics. This is Iqbal’s latest work, written in 1938. It is the lute of his wisdom. The two volumes, written in the last years of his life, contain the works written in Urdu and Persian. It was published 6 months after the death of Iqbal in November 1938. This work has been translated into Turkish by Ali Nihat Tarlan and Jalal Soydan.

Iqbal’s researcher Abdusselam Nedvi (1914-1999), pointing out that this work was written in several days, said: “Iqbal was going to go on a pilgrimage in 1937, and he was living hard feelings during those days. They were filled with worry about his heart problems which resulted in a sense of inspiration when the verses would just

fall from his mouth. In a few days the manuscript was completed.”¹⁴

First section of his Urdu part of the poem provides details into Iqbal’s long verses. The “Devil’s Speaking Gathering” is considered to be one of his best poems. According to another researcher of Iqbal’s works, Rafiuddin Hashimi, rapidly developing thoughts were depicted in this poem which he started to write in 1894, reaching the comprehensive, fundamental stage.”¹⁵

The other researcher Yusuf Salim Chishti said that the poem attracts attention by plentiful mystic elements. Even in some place he states that it resembles the sufi religious-philosophical current of Arabi and Rumi. However, Iqbal manages to provide unique perspective on the thoughts of Sufi beliefs.¹⁶

Notes and References

-
- ¹ Mohammad Iqbal. Love and Passion. 10 long verses. Ankara, Akchag Publishers, 2000, p. 17. Adapted from Turkish to Azerbaijani.
 - ² R.Ihsan Eliachik. Leaders leaving traces. – Mohammad Iqbal. Istanbul, Principle Publishing, I. Basi-2004; II Basi- 2014, p. 17.
 - ³ Mohammad Iqbal. Zebur-u Ajem. Translated by A.Nihat Tarlan. p. IX
 - ⁴ Tunj Ramazan. Mohammad Iqbal. Istanbul, Zafer Publishing House, 1984, p.33.
 - ⁵ Dr. Ali Sherati. We and Iqbal. Translated by Ergin Kilichtutan. Istanbul, 1985, p.9.
 - ⁶ Mohammad Iqbal. You are a hawk. Translated by Halil Toker. Demavend Publishing, 2014, p. 9-12.
 - ⁷ Real face of Islamic Self-identity. – Mohammad Iqbal | Kitapyurdu, retrieved on: 9th December, 2024: <http://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/islami-benligin-icyuzu/103603.html>
 - ⁸ Mohammad Iqbal. Javidname. (translated into Turkish by and the author of the foreword - Halil Toker), Istanbul, Kaktus Publishing, 2 issue, 2008, pp. 15-16.
 - ⁹ Ibid., p. 16.
 - ¹⁰ Mohammad Iqbal. “Gabriel’s wing”, translated into Turkish by Jalal Soydan, Ankara, Heje Publishing, 2013, p. 203.
 - ¹¹ Ibid., p. 9-11.
 - ¹² Mohammad Iqbal. “Moses’s fight”, “Armagan-i Hijaz” (Urdu section), translated by Jalal Soydan, Ankara, Heje Publishing, 2013, p.13.
 - ¹³ Ibid.
 - ¹⁴ Ebul Hasen Ali En-Nedvi. Great Islamic poet Dr. Mohammad Iqbal. (translated by Ali Ulvi Kurucu), Marifet Publishing, 2014, p.9.
 - ¹⁵ Rafiuddin A. Hashimi. Iqbal, Islamic awakening and Islamic world. urvetulvaska.net/ikbal-islami-dirilis-ve-islam-d...7 September 2014.
 - ¹⁶ Mohammad Iqbal. Moses’s fight – Armagan-i Hijaz. (translated by Jalal Soydan). Heje Publishing, Istanbul, 2013, p. 245

