

Re-Envisioning Muslim Identity: Unity and Diversity in Muhammad Iqbal's Political Thought

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Abstract

This paper analyses modern divisions in Muslim societies, especially those based on ethnicity, language, and sectarian affiliations. It critically examines the political philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal on Muslim unity and diversity based on his key concept of *millat* (community) and *khudī* (selfhood). The study employs a qualitative research method using content analysis and critical hermeneutics to analyze the key works of Iqbal, such as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and *The Message of the East*, as well as the corresponding academic interpretation. The discussion shows that the idea of Muslim unity advanced by Iqbal is based on the equilibrium between communal unity and individual spiritual growth in the morally oriented social structure. Rather than supporting western form of nationalism or sectarian politics, Iqbal suggests *tawhīd* (divine unity) as a more spiritual and ethical basis, which can cut across race, language, and region. He also claims that the true unity of people can only be created in the acknowledgement of diversity when placed on a common moral basis and the reinterpretation of Islamic tradition through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). The research concludes that Iqbal offers a valuable intellectual framework to address the recent discussions on Muslim identity, pluralism, and political identification. His focus on unity through diversity, ethical leadership, and intellectual renewal is also very applicable in the contemporary debate surrounding Muslim societies and political thinking.

Keywords: Muhammad Iqbal, Muslim identity, unity in diversity, khudī, ijtihad, spiritual democracy.

The early twentieth century marked a period of profound transformation in South Asia history, when the phenomenon of Muslim identity was closely connected with the power of colonialism, new nationalism, and religious reform movements (Jalal, 1998). All of these

developments transformed the political and intellectual life of Muslim societies, which began to raise urgent issues concerning cultural survival, political representation, and the future of Muslim people in a colonial society. Traditional Muslim institutions weakened considerably, and Hindu nationalism became more influential under the Indian National Congress, and thus, many Muslims started to feel insecure about their culture and political affiliation (Belmekki, 2007).

To address these problems, some Muslim thinkers sought to reconcile Islamic tradition with contemporary political realities. Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) was one of the most prominent thinkers of that time among them (Hardy, 1968). His philosophical works and poetry led Muslims to seek intellectual renewal and spiritual renewal as a way to deal with political and cultural crises of the modern age. The principal works of his, such as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and *The Message of the East*, are the statements of a vision of Muslim unity, which does not depend on ethnic, linguistic, and regional boundaries (Iqbal, 2013).

The political philosophy of Iqbal was formed in a number of intellectual stages. During his earlier works prior to 1905, he showed support for Indian territorial nationalism. From 1905 to 1908, his thoughts went through a transitional period due to his contact with European philosophy. His focus on Muslim political unity grew between 1908 and the mid-1920s, whereas his subsequent thinking (1926–1938) drifted towards a supranational understanding of the Muslim ummah with political boundaries as administrative rather than civilizational separations (Sevea, 2012).

The influence of the colonial rule caused the breaks of Muslim societies in South Asia essentially. The communal tensions were further enhanced by the British policy of divide and rule that institutionalized the religious divisions through separate electorates and other systems. As Hindu elites continued to align themselves with secular nationalist politics, Muslims found themselves in the dilemma of how to remain true to their religious identities in a new political system that was modern and pluralistic. The first wave of reformists such as *Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*, under the *Aligarh Movement*, encouraged Western education and alliance to the British Empire as a survival measure (Dubey, 2021). But the *Bengal* partition and subsequent reunion in 1905 and 1911 made clear how weak Muslim political influence was and how far colonial conciliation could go (Bandyopadhyay, 2004). In the interim, *Pan-Islamic* campaigns like the *Khilafat* agitation

(1919-1924) put greater emphasis on Muslim solidarity, but they also revealed how hard it was to reconcile competing religious loyalties and political realities in various nations (Nanda, 2001).

Iqbal also stressed the role of *ijtihād* (in-depth thinking), which he thought had been oppressed by centuries of intellectual backwardness. He stated that the strength of Islam was in that it could pursue *ijtihād*, which had been suppressed by dogmatism for centuries (Malook, 2024). The tawhid in the thinking of Iqbal was not only a theological doctrine but also a broad principle that governed social and political life. Instead, he interpreted it as an ethical pillar that could bring together other Muslims and incorporate a plurality of religious and cultural affiliations. In this regard, Iqbal imagined a Muslim identity that would be unified yet preserve diversity, visualizing a pluralistic community with a common set of spiritual and moral values.

He discussed the ideal Muslim community in his book *Asrar-i-khudī* (Secrets of the Self) (Iqbal, 1955), and likened it to a garden where various types of flowers bloom harmoniously with each other and each one contributes towards the beauty of the whole. This metaphor proposed a model that was founded on Islamic ethics known as unity in diversity instead of nationalism and sectarianism that attempted to homogenize everyone.

The thoughts of Iqbal regarding the unity and diversity conflict are comparable to bigger arguments in the Muslim politics of the early 20th century. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani* and *Muhammad Abduh* had advocated (e.g., Kurzman or others) *Pan-Islamic* unity in opposition to colonialism, whereas in South Asia, regional movements were laying increasing stress on local autonomy. Iqbal managed to find a way out of this conflict by establishing Muslim identity in an ever-changing understanding of Islam. He did not believe in fixed law (*taqlid*) and was also a proponent of *ijtihad*. He did so in order to give Muslims power to reinterpret tradition, taking into account contemporary issues. This approach was not popular with traditionalists or even secularists. The traditionalists considered it an assault on orthodoxy, and secularists believed that it was a utopian one.

Primary sources reveal the extent to which Iqbal was concerned with these issues. He said that "the essence of *tawhīd* is equality, solidarity, and freedom" in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Iqbal, 2013, pp. 7-8); he saw Islamic unity as a response to colonial hierarchies. But he also knew it would be challenging to make this vision come true. In a letter from 1930, he says, "*the Muslim of today is a mere shadow of what he ought to be*" (Sevea, 2012). He stressed

that *tawhid* (oneness of God), *risalah* (prophethood), and *akhuwah* (brotherhood) helped unite Muslims. But the *Ummah* is still being weakened and losing its purpose from quarrels among its members.

This study investigates how Iqbal's ideas bring together unity and diversity in Muslim identity, especially amid the communal fragmentation and cultural plurality characteristic of South Asia and the global Muslim community today. It analyses his theories of *millat* (Muslim community) and *khudi* (selfhood), as he has explained this in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and *The Message of the East*. This study aims to contend that Iqbal has developed political ideas which conceptualize the conflict of unity through diversity in Muslim identity, in particular, the communal fragmentation of cultures in South Asia and the global Muslim world.

To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does Muhammad Iqbal conceptualize the relationship between unity and diversity within the Muslim community (*millat*)?
2. What role do the concepts of *khudī* and *ijtihād* play in shaping Iqbal's vision of Muslim identity and political organization?
3. How can Iqbal's political philosophy contribute to contemporary debates on Muslim identity, pluralism, and political belonging?

Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative research design to examine the political philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal as regards the unity and diversity of Muslim identity. The study uses content analysis and critical hermeneutics to examine the writings and poetry of Iqbal with regard to philosophy. These approaches are especially appropriate to the study of intellectual history and political thought in that it is possible to systematically interpret the text in its historical and conceptual contexts. The research is mainly based on the primary sources, i.e., the major works by Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*; *Asrar-i-Khudi*; and *Bang-i-Dara* and *Payam-i-Mashriq* (The Message of the East). The materials presented in these texts serve as the

basis for one to examine the ideas held by Iqbal on the subject of *millat*, *khudī*, *ijtihad*, and the understanding of a spiritual democracy.

Besides the primary sources, the study is also based on secondary academic sources such as academic books and journal articles by leading scholars of Iqbal and Islamic political thinking. These sources allow placing the ideas of Iqbal in a bigger intellectual context of discussions on nationalism, colonialism, and Islamic reform. This analysis shows that Iqbal used several key thematic concepts in his works, especially *tawhīd*, *khudī*, *millat*, and *ijtihad*, and explains how these themes apply to the issues of Muslim unity, diversity, and political identity. The paper addresses the issue of how Iqbal balance's themes of spiritual unity (*tawhīd*) with cultural and social plurality in Muslim societies through thematic interpretation. This analysis is aimed at determining common conceptual themes in the work of Iqbal and explaining them in historical and intellectual contexts.

Literature Review

Muhammad Iqbal has attracted the intellectual interest of many scholars in diverse disciplines that include philosophy, Islamic studies, and political philosophy. Researchers have addressed his works on the matter of Muslim identity, colonial modernity, and the relationship between religion and politics. The broader picture of the colonialism in which Muslim thinkers were operating has been studied by historians such as *Barbara Metcalf* and *David Lelyveld* and in more detail by other scholars in the context of Iqbal as a philosopher and a politician. The concepts raised by Iqbal in this scholarship on unity, spiritual revitalization, and reconstruction of Islamic thought have been interpreted to resolve the crisis of Muslim identity in colonial South Asia.

Historians and scholars such as *Barbara Metcalf* (Metcalf, 1982) and *David Lelyveld* (Lelyveld, 1978) have discussed how the British policies, such as separate electorates, formalized the differences in religion. At the same time, the failure of *Pan-Islamic* movements like the *Khilafat Movement* (Ansari 1986) revealed the difficulties of sustaining Muslim political unity under colonial political conditions. In this situation, the ideas of Iqbal can be interpreted as a reflection of contemporary political reality and as a normative effort to define a new model of Muslim identity.

Iqbal was concerned with the political disintegration and spiritual decline of Muslim communities; poems like *Shikwa* and *Tulu-e-Islam*, which he includes in his poetic collection *Bang-e-Dara*, illustrate this. This theme of intellectual and spiritual unity comes up repeatedly in his writing, and that's what makes him criticize both ritualistic orthodoxy and Westernization without question. According to *Schimmel* (1963), the *Qur'ānic* notion of *tawhīd* (divine oneness) is one of the key themes in the poetry of Iqbal, as *tawhīd* is not only used as a theological principle but also as a moral and social basis of unity among people.

The most important philosophical idea in Iqbal's mind is best explained in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930–1934), a set of lectures in which he carefully considers the intellectual history of both Islamic and Western philosophy. Using the ideas of *khudī* (selfhood) and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), Iqbal says that the strength of the Muslim community (*millat*) depends on its ability to balance the rights of each person with the needs of the community. Iqbal says, "*Equality, solidarity, and freedom are at the heart of tawhīd as an idea*" (Iqbal, 2013). In this passage, Iqbal argues that Islamic unity is the best way to fight the hierarchical and exploitative structures of colonial modernity. But he also fights against the ways that nationalism and sectarianism try to make everyone the same. Instead, he supports a model of "*unity in diversity*" that comes from Islamic ethics. Iqbal's vision is changing and evolving; as *Schimmel* (Schimmel, 1963) and *K. G. Saiyidain* (Saiyidain, 1938) have pointed out, he stresses the need to keep reinterpreting tradition considering new situations.

The Message of the East (Payam-i-Mashriq) adds to Iqbal's criticism of materialism in the West and his call for Muslims to have a spiritual awakening. *Goethe's West-östlicher Divan* influenced the work, which simultaneously celebrates Eastern wisdom and engages in a dialogue between Eastern and Western concepts. (Mir, 2006) "*The Muslim is free from every chain and bond; his heart is connected to the heart of the whole world,*" Iqbal wrote in a poem that sounds both worldly and religious. This universalism does not imply there is no diversity, however. Iqbal views the *Muslim Ummah* rather as a garden with numerous types of flowers, where unity is attained not by concealing differences but by bringing them to cooperate in an identical moral and spiritual system. This metaphor has attracted the attention of scholars like *Mustansir Mir*, who have revealed the pluralism that Iqbal was committed to but within the context of Islamic unity (Mir, 2006).

Iqbal delivered his famous *Allahabad Address*, in which he addressed current political issues in India and demanded that a separate Muslim state be established in the northwest of the country. This was the seed of the *Pakistan Movement* based on this demand, but Iqbal had more than land in his mind. According to *Ayesha Jalal* (Jalal, 1994) and *Akbar S. Ahmed* (Ahmed, 2012), Iqbal did not view the state as the end but as the means of implementing Islamic principles of morality. His concept of spiritual democracy is instrumental in this instance. Iqbal opposes both liberal democracy and the authoritarianism of the West. Rather, he espouses an order in which there is moral leadership and service to the community. This concept also affected subsequent philosophers such as *Fazlur Rahman* (Rahman, 2017), and this concept has also influenced *Charles Kurzman* (Kurzman, 2002). They consider Iqbal a pre-modernist who argues about Islamic governance and pluralism.

Scholars have been deeply divided regarding Iqbal's opinions on the conflict between unity and diversity. Two of the earliest authors, *S. M. Ikram* (Ikram, 1965) and *Tauseef Ahmad Parray* (Parray, 2011), described Iqbal as a reformist who attempted to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. In contemporary studies such as those of *Shabbir Akhtar* (Akhtar, 1991) or *Khurram Shafique* (Shafique, 2010), the philosophical concept behind the notion of *khudī* and its implications in individual and collective identity have been subject to modern research. The concepts of selfhood expressed by Iqbal are, as *Akhtar* stated, existential and moral and require self-transcendence to be made through unending efforts in the context of Islamic values. *Shafique*, on the contrary, dwells upon the political side of Iqbal and, in particular, the opposition of nationalism he was against and the *Pan-Islamic* consciousness he advocated.

The Iqbal poetry also has a literary and symbolic side to it, which has received much scholarly attention. Such historians as *Annemarie Schimmel* and *Mustansir Mir* have noted the manner in which Iqbal adopted classical styles of *Persian* and *Urdu* poetry to introduce new philosophical problems. In his poetry, Iqbal tries to promote the moral as well as intellectual rejuvenation of the Muslim societies by using the repetitive metaphorical images of flight, awakening, and spiritual confrontation and addressing more general philosophical questions of human agency and collective identity.

Scholars have now attempted to place the ideas of Iqbal within bigger debates on identity, multiculturalism, and the role of religion in the life of the public. *Charles Kurzman* and *Ebrahim*

Moosa (Moosa, 2015) have examined the relevance of Iqbal to today's arguments on Islamic reform and pluralism. *Kurzman*, for example, sees Iqbal as a "bridge figure" who connects modernity and Islamic tradition (Kurzman, 2002). *Moosa*, on the other hand, focuses on Iqbal's project's moral and interpretive aspects. Both scholars talk about how important Iqbal's call for *ijtihad* and his belief in the creative power of both individuals and groups are still today. Iqbal's works often inspire today's academic and political discussions about Muslim identity and statehood.

New writing has the advantage of applying Iqbal's ideas to real-life situations. There are scholars, for example, *Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr* and *Faisal Devji*, who have examined the impact of Iqbal's beliefs on political groups and talk about the nature of Islam in several places. Taking Iqbal as his case, *Nasr* observes the role his teachings had on the development of Islamic politics in Pakistan (Nasr, 2001). In contrast to others, *Devji* explores how Muslim identity is lived in various places globally since the end of colonialism (Shaikh, 2022). They argue that his message concerns how people can change and adjust to new situations over the years.

At the same time, several critics have noted issues with what Iqbal tried to achieve. According to *Faisal Fatehali Devji*, Iqbal's view is very appealing, but it may be difficult to apply since there are so many linguistic, religious, and racial differences among people in the Muslim community.

Even though there are disagreements, most scholars agree that Iqbal's ideas are original and will always be important. His synthesis of Islamic and Western traditions of thought and his commitment to intellectual and spiritual revitalization and support of a diverse yet cohesive Muslim identity continues to resonate with people today. They encourage Muslims to move past their differences with each other and discover creative ways to address the problems of modern life.

There are studies that analyze his political thought in the historical context of the colonial South Asia and the struggles the Muslim communities went through. Some are concerned with the philosophical and theological aspects of his work, especially his redefinition of central concepts, *khudī* and *ijtihad*, as the principles of intellectual and spiritual renewal. Another body of research frames his thought in the context of the debates on Islamic modernism and reform in general. Although these contributions have enhanced the study of the intellectual legacy of Iqbal, there is

a relative lack of consideration on the way his thought responds to the question of unity and diversity as it applies to Muslim identity.

Although there is a significant amount of research on the thought of Muhammad Iqbal, especially on his philosophy, poetry, and political thinking, little has focused on how his thought is concerned with the issue of unity and diversity in Muslim identity. Existing literature tends to read Iqbal as a philosopher of *khudī* or as a critic of contemporary nationalism, and not as much emphasis has been given to the way these concepts all form his worldview of a spiritually unified but plural Muslim community. This paper thus aims to fill this gap by looking at how the concept of unity in diversity is outlined in the political philosophy of Iqbal and how this approach can help in analyzing contemporary Muslim societies.

Discussion

Historical and Intellectual Context

The background, in which Muhammad Iqbal developed his political and philosophical ideas, was the intellectual and political crises the Muslim societies were passing through in colonial South Asia. To address these issues, Iqbal tried to formulate a vision of the Muslim identity that would be able to balance out spiritual unity and cultural diversity (Rehman, 2022). Initially, *Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* led the *Aligarh Movement*, advocating for Western education and practical cooperation with colonial authorities. But by the 1920s, this approach was criticized for what was seen as giving in to Hindu nationalism. It was clear that *Pan-Islamic* unity was weak in the face of colonial realpolitik when the *Khilafat Movement* failed from 1919 to 1924 (Qureshi, 2021). Muhammad Iqbal emerged prominently in this scenario, being the one who fused Islamic spirituality and the Western philosophical school to develop a view of Muslim identity that transcended geographical and religious boundaries.

Iqbal was significantly influenced by *Rumi*, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, and *Henri Bergson* during his schooling in Lahore, Cambridge, and Munich. Due to his broad basis of experiences, he was in a position to condemn the stagnation of traditional Islamic thinking as well as the absence of morality in Western secularism. He wrote in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* that the best thing about Islam was its *ijtihad*, or independent thinking. This was the kind of thought that had been suppressed by centuries of dogmatism. Iqbal

reconsidered Muslim identity as spiritually integrated and dynamically pluralistic within a historical situation of colonialism, community disintegration, and intellectual upheaval.

Iqbal's Conceptualization of Unity and Diversity

Iqbal's political philosophy is grounded in the concept of "*millat*," meaning a transnational community of Muslims, united by spiritual and moral commitments but not territorial. He claimed that the contemporary nation-state was exclusive and divisive; yet, the *millat* transcends artificial boundaries and was founded on the *Qur'ānic tawhīd*.

This universalism did not, however, imply that there was no diversity. The concept of *khudī* (selfhood) introduced by Iqbal emphasized the need to create personal and collective autonomy by studying both intellectually and spiritually. With the help of the Sufi concepts, he likened the ideal Muslim society to a garden in which various flowers are planted, and they bloom harmoniously without any conflict to the overall beautifying of the entire entity.

Unity in diversity was not to Iqbal a compromise but rather a pillar to the well-being of the Muslim community. Iqbal's vision, then, was against both nationalism that tries to make everyone the same and traditionalism that sticks to small groups. Instead, it pushed for a dynamic balance between group solidarity and individual expression (Khan, 2010).

Iqbal's Political Philosophy & Mechanisms for Unity

A big part of Iqbal's political thought was his criticism of Western nationalism and secularism. He thought that the nation-state came from European materialism and was inherently exclusive, not being able to fit with Islam's idea of oneness (Muhar, 1957). Iqbal's support for "*spiritual democracy*" set his ideas apart from both theocratic and secular ones (Malook, 2024). He said that in an Islamic society, leadership should come from serving the *millat*, not from winning elections or having a family legacy. As an international group, the *millat* would be able to get along with people of different religions and races because they would all believe in the *Qur'ān's* principles of justice (*'adl*) and community welfare (*maslahā*).

Specifically, in the lecture titled "*The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam*" for example, he argues: "The essence of *tawhīd* as a working idea is equality, solidarity, and freedom. The State, from the Islamic standpoint, is an endeavor to transform these ideal principles into

space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization..” (Iqbal, 1989, p. 122)

At the same time, Iqbal faced difficulties in implementing his suggestions in practice. Despite supporting *ijtihad* to spark new ideas. However, the practical implementation of these ideas remains challenging because of the existence of sectarian institutions and the established religious orthodoxies. Although his idea of unity in diversity was a strong philosophical one, it was difficult to apply to the material and political situations of Muslim societies that were broken up by colonialism and different nationalist goals.

Iqbal's Engagement with Modernity

Western democracy was viewed by Iqbal as a capitalist exploitation pretense (Yasir et al., 2021). His vision involved a kind of spiritual democracy in which leaders would derive their moral power by serving the *millat* rather than by electoral means (Razak, 2012). He demanded an independent Muslim state in northwestern India. It was in the form of a demand that came to be known as the *Pakistan Movement*, and his initiative was to defend the freedom of Muslims in a broader Pakistani cosmopolitanism.

A dialectical synthesis of Islamic and Western thought shaped Iqbal's relationship with modernity. He admired historical European philosophical traditions like *Goethe's* humanism, *Nietzsche's* will to power, and *Bergson's élan* vitality, but according to Qur'ānic principles (Qaiser, 2011). Still, Iqbal was just as critical of Muslim societies that didn't move forward. According to him, they were disintegrating since they had surrendered on *ijtihad* and allowed religious concepts to grow stale. He called for a return to the vibrant nature of early Islam.

His reform idea was to revive moral leadership in schools and mix Islamic morals and scientific investigation. This seemed to him as a requirement to face the demands of living in the contemporary world without compromise of spirituality.

Contemporary Relevance and Critical Evaluation

Muslim unity, identity, and statehood are still debated by people, and the teachings of Iqbal remain extremely relevant. Nationalism should be criticized, particularly as racial tensions grow more common in Muslim-majority countries and *Pan-Islamic* movements continue to gain

momentum (Asaf, 2022). *Millat* allows us to envision Muslim unity not based on nations but in other ways, which is applicable in the case of diaspora communities where the Muslims deal with multicultural identity.

However, the ideas of Iqbal are not easy to achieve. Even though unity is actively pursued, religious conflicts and ethnicity remain a significant problem. According to some people, Iqbal sometimes failed to consider the role of inequality and power in separating people. Additionally, his goal of establishing a Muslim state for Muslims failed to reconcile Islamic universalism with the concept of a pluralistic nation, although it ultimately resulted in the creation of Pakistan (Jalal, 1994).

However, examining *ijtihad* and the spiritual renewal of Iqbal's ideas can provide guidance for us today. He wishes for a society where religious democracy replaces secular democracy, and he encourages Muslim-majority states to behave in a moral way rather than just following the majority's demands. His idea of unity is not the same as the idea of extremists mixing religion with a single cultural background. Muslims around the globe are still in the process of adapting to globalization, maintaining their sense of identity, and navigating strong governance. He points out that we need to balance the past with the future, and this idea remains valid even after a hundred years.

Zafer Ishaq Ansari writes that Iqbal sensed that how nationalism had devastated the idea of universal brotherhood; how it had formed barriers between individual and individual and among nation and nation; how it had spread international discords. Moreover, he also becomes aware of the dangerous prospects of the idea of nationalism in the context of Muslim world. He further writes that "Iqbal's condemnation of nationalism is not a condemnation of love of the fatherland, it is a condemnation of the modern concept of nation and fatherland, the significance of which is not merely geographical. 'It is somewhat principal of human society' which claims to be the only proper basis of consistency and unity in human society and which outcasts region from playing an appropriate role in human society" (Ansari, 1961). Iqbal mentions in his poem *Wataniyat*, it is the nationalism which divides the creatures of God into nations, it is this which strikes the root of the nationality of Islam.

Iqbal believed that the principle of *tawhīd* (the oneness of God) was central to understanding what it means to be a Muslim. He saw this as both a spiritual and a political imperative. Iqbal

believed that unity does not mean uniformity; rather, it involves sharing a common moral and spiritual foundation that accommodates differences. Iqbal wrote in *Bang-i-Dara* that he saw the *millat* (Muslim community) as a "living body" whose soul is kept alive by "the unity of thought." Iqbal compares the *Muslim ummah* to a garden in which various flowers, representing different races, cultures, and religions, grow together to create a beautiful whole. Iqbal's way of thinking rejected both the rigid traditionalism that stifled free thought (*ijtihad*) and the tendency of nationalism to homogenize individuals.

Iqbal thought that the Muslim community should be united by spiritual ideals and shared values, which would allow for a dynamic and varied expression of identity. In *Bang-i-Dara* "طلوع اسلام" (*The Rise of Islam*), he said, "The Muslim is not a slave to borders; his heart beats for the whole universe." This quote illustrates the universality of his ideas. Iqbal found a balance between unity and diversity by making sure that everyone in the *ummah* had a common moral and spiritual base (Junid, 2002). His methodology enabled various expressions to flourish in the *ummah*.

To address the issues of the Muslim community, Iqbal suggested a number of related political concepts, such as *ijtihad* (self-sufficiency in thought), *khudī* (selfhood), and the idea of spiritual democracy. Iqbal thought *ijtihad* was significant in keeping Islamic law and thought contemporary by enabling the adoption of ideas of Muslims in reinterpreting tradition, taking into account new issues. According to him, the process would assist the community in transforming and remaining united despite people having varied ideas on how to perform things. One more vital mechanism is "*khudī*," which translates to "selfhood." Iqbal had the belief that when people were strong and moral, the community would be able to resolve issues better and work together.

According to his poetry, "wake up, the world is seeking a perfect man again," where the relevance of moral-based leadership is highlighted. One of the other characteristics that differed between Iqbal and Western political philosophies was his idea of spiritual democracy. He imagined a political system whereby political leadership would be built on moral duty and serving the community instead of just the competition during elections. These systems collaborated in such a way that they could manage diversity based on moral rationality, leadership, and communal consensus, instead of using force and repression.

Indeed, the modern discourse on Muslim identity, multiculturalism, and the politics of statehood has a lot in common with what Iqbal advocated. His idea of a spiritually unified yet

diverse *ummah* is a powerful counter-narrative against supposed ideologies that aim to separate people and turn them to conflict as well today, as the ideas of nationalism, sectarianism and globalization rise. His criticism remains valid today, as he saw nationalism as a force that minimized Islamic unity, as nationalism still does today due to racial and religious divisions that still exist within Muslim societies.

The example of the garden can be applied to pluralism, particularly in a country where most people are Muslims in contemporary times and where various ethnic groups have been accepted under the common ethical umbrella. Moreover, he shows an interest in *ijtihad* like the modern reformist movements that aspire to use Islam to resolve rising moral, social, and technological problems. Iqbal provides a lesson to anyone who wants a different way besides authoritarianism or uncritical Westernization; he stresses moral leadership and spiritual democracy. Broadly, the writing of Iqbal remains a source of information and inspiration in the quest to establish just, spiritually orientated and hospitable Muslim societies in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The political philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal, based on the idea of *tawhīd*, *millat*, and *khudī*, offers deep insight into the process of paying proper respect to the cultural and sectarian diversity but developing unity among the Muslim community. Iqbal formulated his vision as a response to the contemporary challenges like colonialism, sectarianism, and nationalism, which should be replaced by the inclusive perspective of Islamic identity that does not deny the diversity of the cultures offered to us but does not give up spiritual unity as well. Iqbal proposes a dynamic model of leadership by concentrating on *ijtihad* and the ethical foundation of the rule in Muslim nations, which fosters intellectual renewal and ethical leadership. The present work can contribute to the overall discussion of Islamic political thought since it reveals how Iqbal integrates classical ideals of Islam with the existing philosophical practice and establishes a platform on which some of the most outstanding dilemmas of tradition and modernity in Muslim identity and politics can be resolved. The unending issues of sectarianism, nationalism, and political tension within nation-states point to the depth of Iqbal and the extent to which his ideas are substantive. These contributions of Muhammad Iqbal are, hence, intellectually important to the present-day arguments about Muslim identity, unity, and diversity in a rapidly globalized world. Future research should explore how the thinking of Iqbal is applied to contemporary Muslims and should

compare it with that of other reformers (e.g., *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, *Syed Abul A'la Maududi*) and examine the interrelations between religious concepts and politics. Such questions can enhance the comprehension of the impact of Iqbal's thought on Islamic political theory and how it can be instilled in Muslim societies across the world. The Iqbal thought remains relevant after all in trying to make sense of the emergence of Muslim unity and diversity in the new settings in the 21st century, which can be utilized in giving wisdom in providing more cohesive, more ethically oriented, and wider Muslim societies on a global scale.

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