

## Iqbal's Message to Youth

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### Abstract

Allama Muhammad Iqbal is the one of the most intellectual, outstanding poet and jurist of the twentieth century. His thoughts and poetry continue to influence the people of twenty first century as well. His poetry and philosophy inspired millions of Muslims across the world. Muslims of the Sub-continent also woke up realizing their true identity. Iqbal was deeply concerned with Muslim youth. He was clear in his mind that youngsters have the power and capability to bring Muslims out of vulnerable condition through which Muslims of the world in general and Muslims of the Sub-continent in particular were passing through. After having a look at the characteristics of youth prescribed by Iqbal, it is unfortunate that we find ourselves detracted. Even our youth is not aware about the message of Iqbal given to them, whereas several scholars have given the title of "Mujaddid" to Iqbal. Therefore, we as a nation can rebuild our values by following his teachings and if we remained reluctant to follow the teachings of Iqbal and remained ignorant, then our future would be ruined. This paper highlights the importance of Iqbal's message to youth and describes the main features which Iqbal wanted to be adopted by youth. Paper uses analytical research methodology aiming to make analysis of the current practice of youth with the teachings of Iqbal focusing on the deviation from those teachings. At the end, appropriate course would be suggested for youth on the basis of Iqbal's message as their prosperity and success lies in following the same.

*Keywords:* Iqbal, message, youth, Muslim, *Khudi*

Iqbal's work in prose and verse is said to be an ocean. Scholars all over the world are working on the writings of Iqbal and they are discovering new meanings in his writings (Mughal, 2016, p. i). Iqbal was not only a poet, rather a great scholar and philosopher and an advocate of orthodox Islam. Annemarie Schimmel, a famous scholar in this regard says:

Muhammad Iqbal has been regarded as the unsurpassable master of every virtue and art; he has been made a forerunner of socialism or an advocate of Marxism; he was anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist; he was the poet of the elite and of the masses, the true interpreter of orthodox Islam and the advocate of a dynamic and free interpretation of Islam, the enemy of Sufism and a Sufi himself; he was indebted to Western thought and criticized everything Western mercilessly. One can call him a political poet, because his aim was to awaken the self-consciousness of Muslims, primarily in the Indian Subcontinent but also in general, and his poetry was indeed instrumental in bringing forth decisive changes in the history of the Subcontinent. One can also style him a religious poet, because the firm belief in the unending possibilities of the Koran and the deep and sincere love of the Prophet (in both his

quality as nation-builder and as eternal model for man) are the bases of his poetry and philosophy. (Razaq, 2012, p.1).

Iqbal was born and grew up at the time when Muslims were facing political, social and spiritual decline. Fall of Tipu in 1799 followed by battle of Navarncio in Turkey in the same year and later on, fall of caliphate greatly affected Iqbal. In such like situation, every nation and society need a reformist, revolutionist and a man of courage to pull the entire nation through crises. At that particular time, a reformist of deep vision and insight, having an insight in the true spiritual aspects of Islam and having thorough experience and understanding of Western Civilization was needed. Iqbal proactively played this role to a remarkable degree. Iqbal encouraged Muslims to get rid of their apathy and follow the path of liberty and Islamic glory and for the said purpose, he specifically addressed to Muslim youth (Kuzmova & Joyce, 2015). Iqbal was immensely concerned with Muslim youth. He believed that if Muslim youth had a vision, they could lead the Muslim world to a destination which is awaited since centuries (Iqbal, 1999). Iqbal was cognizant that only Muslim youth could lead the Muslims towards a bright future. For the same purpose he focused on Muslim youth in his poetry and made it its centre point.

### **Iqbal's Message to Muslim Youth**

Although, it has been reported that since the time of Iqbal, Muslim youth is facing opportunity deficit (Iqbal, 2011), but on the other hand, primary responsibility is also on their shoulders for rebuilding their nation. Generally, youth are progressive and revolutionary (Iqbal, 2011), but it also depends on the circumstances to transform them and to make them active participants into a revolutionary process. Having seen the capabilities and revolutionary zeal in the Muslim youth, Iqbal has focused on their transformation.

Iqbal idealized a youngster as a true Muslim, *Mard-e-Momin*, *Mojahid*, *Shaheen*, Man of *Khudi* and a person of a will power who can pull down the stars. Iqbal in this regard says:

مجت مجھے اُن جوانوں سے ہے  
ستاروں پہ جو ڈالتے ہیں کمند

“I have love for those youngsters who pull the stars down”. (Mughal, 2016, p.3).

According to Iqbal, youngsters have the best capabilities to lead the nation towards the heights. Iqbal also urges youngsters to have the best knowledge and according to him, the best book of knowledge to guide youngsters towards the right path is the “Holy Quran”. He criticised the syllabus of knowledge being imparted to youngsters and teachers as well. He says (Mughal, 2016, p. 5):

شکایت ہے مجھے یا رب! خداوندانِ مکتب سے  
سبق شاہیں بچوں کو دے رہے ہیں خاکبازی کا

Iqbal warns Muslims in general and youngsters in particular to remain beware of western culture and to uphold Islamic traditions wherever they may be. Iqbal also emphasizes to remain in one's "*Khudi*". He also encourages youngsters to remain steadfast and honest even in poverty and discourages pride and glitters of richness. Instead, he emphasises that youth must concentrate on *fikr*, truthiness, and creativity. He also warns that if youth of a nation is lazy and dull, then nobody can save that nation from ruining. According to Iqbal, youth are true representatives of a nation, and the future of every nation is dependent on its Youth. (Ozturk, 2018, p. 54-56).

The first and foremost message of Iqbal to Muslim youth is to seek education. He was very conscious about the prevailing educational system in the Sub-Continent. He not only emphasised on learning Islam and related disciplines, rather called for the study and focus on modern education. In a letter written to Fazil Karim, Iqbal says:

The knowledge of Arabic language is gradually dying out and the Muslim educational institutions are not paying any special heed to it. Personally, I would like our young scholars to devote themselves to the study of mathematics, physics, chemistry, history and jurisprudence.

In the best interest of Islam, it is the study of these branches of knowledge, which is needed today. This alone will bring Modern Muslims in touch with the roots of modern knowledge, and we will make them appreciate the meaning of modern problems (Farook, 2018. p.2).

A careful analysis of Iqbal's works, during and after his stay in Europe, indicates that his thoughts were changed. The primary reason for this change was alleged Muslim decline. Said decline, according to Iqbal, was primarily of two kinds, which included spiritual and material. Spiritual decline included moral and intellectual aspects, whereas material decline included economic, moral and political problems. According to Iqbal, it was the spiritual decline, which is the main reason of decline of Muslims. This decline resulted into the beginning of 'Islamic modernism' or 'modernity' in the culture of Islam, which can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In this era, economic gap between Muslim societies/countries and the West gave an impression of 'backwardness' which though Muslim scholars avoided using the same. Iqbal though discouraged blind following the West, but on the other hand, encouraged adoption of principles leading to success, because according to Iqbal, these principles which have brought Islam and Muslims to pinnacle were lost by Muslims, but were discovered and adopted by the West. Iqbal in this regard says:

There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is *only* a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam (Farook, 2018, p. 3).

In order to cope with spiritual decline, Iqbal wanted to reconstruct Islamic thought and, in this regard, he wrote his famous book titled, "Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in

Islam”, wherein he instead of adopting conventional radical approach of other Muslim scholars, coined the idea to reconstruct Islamic thought afresh. His book is the major contribution of his spiritual and philosophical approaches about Islam, which if implemented, can revolutionize Islamic thoughts. However, Iqbal’s philosophy and thinking does not recommend clinging on these ideas, rather he encourages to further explore these ideas and approach the heights of knowledge. Iqbal while encouraging this aspect says, “There is no such thing as finality in philosophical thinking. As knowledge advances and fresh avenues of thought are opened, other views, and probably sounder views than those set forth in these lectures, are possible” (Khaliq, 2016, p. 26).

This message is a road map for youngsters of today, as Iqbal openly admits that everything cannot be narrated in a given time, rather with the passage of time, new avenues are opened and sounder views than stated in his series of lectures can also be brought even if these contradict the views expressed by Iqbal (Khaliq, 2016).

Another advice of Iqbal is to recognize oneself and according to him, it can be done with being simple, fundamental and profound. He stresses for flash of intuitive insight to discover oneself (Khamenai, 1989). Iqbal always discouraged status quo, inactivity and fatalism in any manner and always encouraged formation of fresh ideas and goals. He was of the opinion that the secret of success lies in the constant state of tension, persistent hard work and ‘ego’ which help everyone in achieving every goal of life (Abbas, 1990).

Personality of Allama Muhammad Iqbal cannot be restricted to any single aspect. Apart from being a great poet, he is also a great philosopher and scholar. Iqbal’s work has affected not only the individual lives of Muslims, rather it has enabled the struggle for independence to gain its momentum for the Muslims and Hindus alike (Abbas, 1990). Apart from that, in a society full of dishonesty, hypocrisy and lowliness, Iqbal tried to build certain qualities of a perfect man particularly in young generations. His poetry was not mere a lyrical expression, rather it embodied in itself a great message and philosophical discussion containing guiding principles for character building. The principles laid down by him are guiding principles for the youth of present time as well (Abbas, 1990, p. 125).

Iqbal always stressed to retain individuality and to add more originality and uniqueness in it. He condemns the negation of self and conversion into eternal self, which is dangerous not only for an individual rather for the society as a whole (Abbas, 1990).

Iqbal also stresses on education again and again and it has been termed an essential condition for success of individuals and societies in his poetry. Another condition which is considered essential in Iqbal’s poetry is freedom (Abbas, 1990). According to him, all the powers, capabilities and talent cannot be expressed, and all the aspects of life cannot be unfolded and explored without freedom. According to him, enslaved life is like ‘a small rivulet’, whereas a free life is termed an ‘ocean’ in his poetry (Abbas, 1990).

Another important message of Iqbal to youth in particular is the determination for certain meaningful goals, purposes and objectives. According to him, without any zeal and determination of high goals, life is meaningless. It is the quest to achieve great objectives which adds meaning to life and manages the growing capabilities and activities of

individuals. According to him, determination to yearn unattainable is the true purpose of life (Hussain, 2018). His poetry gives a clear message that a meaningful life is a life, full of strenuous activity. A man can streamline his life according to his wishes with a life full of strenuous activity. He also emphasizes that life of a perfect person is a life full of active efforts and struggle. According to him, there is no room for withdrawal and stagnation. Moreover, Iqbal also says that efforts and struggle must not be on routine patterns, rather they must be for creativity and originality, which according to him, is the greatest gift of God (Hussain, 2018).

The level of struggle according to Iqbal, must be high and it should be firm belief of a person that through struggle, he can achieve every possible thing. Iqbal emphasizes on struggle of such a level which would be able to streamline the destiny of a man. He says that after achieving this status, God would ask the person what you wish your destiny to be (Ahmed, 2015).

More characteristics of a perfect person have been discussed in his “*Asraar-e-Khudi*” (secrets of self, individuality). According to EM Forster, ‘*Khudi*’ as described by Iqbal, is “profoundly modernist undertaking” which was aimed to eliminate backwardness and historical fall of Muslims (Ahmed, 2015).

All these characteristics and features of a perfect man are primarily intended for youth, because according to various scholars, Iqbal wrote his more than 90% poetry for youth (Siddique, 2005). The foremost lesson given, and characteristics described by Iqbal are ‘optimism and *khudi*’. The foremost emphasis of Iqbal was on enthusiasm, idealism, optimism, encouragement and ‘*khudi*’. Iqbal new that Muslim youth is very talented, and it is only youth, who can change the destiny of Muslims. However, at that time, and till today, youth is not delivering at full of their capabilities. There are various poems of Iqbal, which are directly addressed to youth, which include *Shikwa*, *Jawab-e-Shikwa*, *Talaba Ali Gharh kay Naam*, *Khitaab ba Nojawanaan-e-Islam Muslim*, *Kanhi Ay haqiqat-e-Muntazir*, *Laa phir ik Baar wohi*, *Mataee bay bahaa he dard etc* (Siddique, 2005).

Iqbal has though been given the title of ‘*Shaair-e-Mashriq*’ but is strange to know that he never considered himself a poet. This fact is evident from his correspondence with Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, where Iqbal says:

I have never considered myself a poet. Therefore, I am not a rival of anyone, and I do not consider anybody my rival. I have no interest in poetic artistry. But, yes, I have a special goal in mind for whose expression I use the medium of poetry considering the condition and the customs of this country (Hassan, 2019, p. 1).

Thus, it is a strange fact that we generally know Iqbal as a poet and nothing beyond that, but according to many scholars, he was a great philosopher, scholar of Islamic law and jurisprudence and a revolutionist (*mujaddid*) (Siddique, 2005). However, unfortunate aspect in this regard is that though poetry of Iqbal is loved by everyone, his philosophy, insight and vision are understood by few (Siddique, 2005).

Teachings of Iqbal and message in his poetry tell Muslim youth to follow the footsteps of Ismail (A.S.) and Hussain (R.A.) (Siddique, 2005). Example of Hazrat Ismail (A.S.) tells us to remain prepared at every time for every kind of sacrifice and that too at the prime of youth. On the other hand, example of Hazrat Hussain (R.A.) tells us that whenever there is conflict between subservience to the evils of times and their proponents who are adamant to tarnish the ideals of Islam, then it is not only recommended, rather duty of Muslim youth to fight these evil forces or in alternative embrace martyrdom (*Shahadah*) (Siddique, 2005). Iqbal says that in this way, a Muslim can become ideal of Islam and Muslims and can have the features of the vicegerent of God on earth (*Khalifa*). A Muslim (*Mu'min*) as described by Iqbal, is a true believer in God with endowment of highest powers which raise highest human potential in him. In this way, a true *Mu'min* reaches a destination when God writes for him what pleases him. Iqbal in this regard says, "O believer! Raise your Khudi (self, character, sense of self-respect, etc.) so high that God Himself, before making any decision, asks you what will please you" (Siddique, 2005, p. 2).

Iqbal has specifically used the word '*Shaheen*' (falcon or eagle) for youth, on the basis of its qualities. The first quality is continuous struggle and for young Muslims, it is meant to strive and struggle for Islamic cause and service to entire humanity. He contrasted *Shaheen* with other creatures like it, who use to survive on the left over by other birds and beasts without untiring self-effort which characteristic is exclusively attributed to *Shaheen*, which does not live on the prey which is hunted by other birds or animals. The main quality of a *shaheen* is that he lives in the peaks of the mountains and never builds a nest (Omer, 2004). He says that youth must strive constantly for independence, instead of comfortable and easy lifestyle and that includes constant travel and learning. According to him, "The falcon is a self-reliant member of the shifting world of birds; therefore, he does not build his nest on a fixed spot" (Omer, 2008, p. 53).

Another quality and message of Iqbal is that he was never impressed by Western culture and society, rather during last period of his stay in Europe, Iqbal identified the hidden evils of Western society and culture, and he also wrote a poem warning Muslims as well as Westerners for their downfall, on the basis of illnesses in their culture and society. According to him, without forgetting our past, it is our foremost duty to think over new dimensions in Islam (Dar, 1998). He at times, not only defended Islamic knowledge, culture and heritage, rather where needed, he refuted the theories of Western scholars in this regard (Siddique, 2005). During his address in Oriental Conference Lahore 1928, while refuting the theory of Springler about 'function', Iqbal contended that concept of 'function' is neither originated nor limited to western civilization, rather the same was coined by *Al-Bairooni*, centuries ago (Siddique, 2005). Iqbal was very much conscious about the pitfalls of Muslims; he warned them for following Western societies and cultures; and at the same time, he expressed his inner hope from Muslim youth. According to him, only Muslim youth have the capabilities to overthrow the shackles of external elements and only youth can come with a new shining 'Dawn' by enlightening the inner fire (Love for God). In this regard, while condemning sleeping state of Muslim youth and, on the other hand, indicating towards their forefathers, he says:

ترے صونے ہیں افروگی، ترے قالیں ہیں ایرانی  
لہو مجھ کو زلاتی ہے جوانوں کی تن آسانی

Your sofas are from Europe, your fine carpets from Iran,  
My eyes weep blood when I see such pampered ways among young men! (Erfan,  
1997, p. 16).

Iqbal was so much anxious about the Muslim youth that besides giving them advices,  
he used to pray for them. As in one of his poems, he prays:

جوانوں کو مری آہ سحر دے  
پھر ان شاہیں بچوں کو بال و پر دے  
خدایا! آرزو میری یہی ہے  
مرا نور بصیرت عام کر دے

Give the young, O Lord, my passionate love for you!  
And give them the Eagle's force to fly and see!  
O Lord, I pray that You vouchsafe to them  
The power of vision that You have given me (Erfan, 1997, p. 18).

Iqbal also considers the primary reason of all ills in youth and society and puts heavy  
reliance on the competence of reason. According to him, a civilization founded on  
'rationalism' and devoid of spiritual depth, cannot achieve the heights and is vulnerable to  
downfall (Makil, 2017). Though, he has stressed to always utilize intellect, but sometimes he  
recommends exclusive reliance on spirituality instead of intellect and reason, because  
according to him, mere reliance on intellect, devoid of 'intuition' does not constitute intellect.  
On one occasion he says:

عقل گو آستاں سے دُور نہیں  
اس کی تقدیر میں حضور نہیں

"Though intellect too takes us to the threshold of reality,  
yet it is not capable for affording us any intimate view of it" (Azeema, 2016, p. 3).

Iqbal's Javed Nama is the key to convey his message to Muslim youth and  
especially its last poem, *Khitaab ba Javed* is the most important message to Muslim youth.  
The poem has been written in Persian language but has been translated into other  
languages as well. One of the passages translated by Iqbal himself says:

The 'I am' which he seeketh,  
Lieth beyond philosophy, beyond knowledge.  
The plant which groweth only from the invisible soil of the heart of man,  
Groweth not from a mere heap of clay (Iqbal, 2009, p. 233).

At another point, Iqbal has given the message to Muslim youth in the following manner:

Art thou in the stage of ‘Life’, ‘death’, or ‘death- in- life’?  
 Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify thy ‘Station’.  
 The first witness is thine own consciousness-  
 See thyself, then, with thine own light (Iqbal, 2009, p. 233).

### **Iqbal’s Message for Pakistani Youth**

It is an interesting fact that Pakistan is second largest country in the Muslim World and its more than half population, and according to some reports 63% of its total population, consists of people below 25 years of age. Pakistan is also fifth youngest country in the World (Jarmaouni, 2016). Pakistani youth seem to be mostly affected by the internet, use of 3G and 4G, coupled with other technological advancements, which have also affected their culture and other values (Makil, 2017). Change in the lives and social values of youth is said to be result of mainly two reasons. First view is that their lives are affected due to Western blow on Islamic World which is also called the ‘conspiracy theory’. Whereas, the second view is that this is because of the changes in the norms of society and due to advancement in technology which is also called ‘objective factor’ (Basit, 2013). Whatever the reason be, we can see that Muslim youth and youth of Pakistan have deviated from teachings of Iqbal. Our youth not only failed to fulfil the basic characteristics of *Shaheen* of Iqbal rather have chosen the path which is contradictory to the one described by Iqbal. Our youth have become narrow sighted instead of being far sighted, as Iqbal describes to be the fundamental characteristic of his *Shaheen* (Makil, 2017). It is also unfortunate that many young Muslims in Pakistan and the remaining world do not know about Iqbal and his philosophical thoughts (Basit, 2013). Therefore, it is the requirement of the time to educate our youth regarding the teachings of Iqbal, so that by following the same they could achieve the highest goals in their lives and could acquire the status where God gives a status to his servant to opt for what he wants his destiny to be. This can be achieved when youth concentrate on education and remain far sighted. They should remain conscious not to be exploited or misled by the conspiracies of their real enemies. They should not be impressed by the temporary arrangements and should not forget their true identity, culture and social values. To understand the conspiracies leading to exploitation, youth in Pakistan must understand the lessons of Iqbal expressed both in his prose and poetry. Only in this way, youth of the Muslim world in general and youth of Pakistan in particular can reconstruct their own lives as well as future of Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

Allama Muhammad Iqbal was in true sense poet of the East (*Shair-e-Mashriq*) but the misconception prevailed that he was only a poet. Instead, he was a great, rather the greatest philosopher and scholar of his times. He primarily advocated the orthodox version of Islam, recognising that modern trends of Muslims have been changed and considered it imperative to realize their original identity. This is the main theme of his prose and poetry. Iqbal seems pessimistic over the general condition of Muslims which is apparent from his *Jawab-e-Shikwa* and other poems, but he always seemed optimistic regarding the role of youth in reshaping the identity of all Muslims. He not only expressed inner hope, rather was



determined that the destiny of the Nation can be changed only through youth. For the said purpose, major portion of his poetry is addressed to youth. He has set all the major principles; by following the same every young Muslim can achieve the heights. He has also warned them from the acts leading to exploitation and idle life. Unfortunately, the true message of Iqbal has not been understood by our youth and even if understood, that is not followed by them in its true sense which is major reason of decline not only of youth, rather of entire Muslim nation. So, the reconstruction of thoughts of youth is imperative, because our youth comprises of the major portion of the total population and without their success, success of the Muslims all over the world in general and in Pakistan in particular is not possible.

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