

## Iqbal's Concept of Modernization and the Current Status of the Muslim World

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### Abstract

The concept of modernity can be smelled in the work of Iqbal. to it. In one of his poems in *Zarb-e-Kaleem* he incorporated modernity and its precautions;

’عشق ناپید و خرد میگذردش صورتِ مار‘  
عقل کو تابعِ فرمانِ نظر کر نہ سکا  
ڈھونڈنے والا ستاروں کی گزرگاہوں کا  
اپنے افکار کی دُنیا میں سفر کر نہ سکا  
اپنی حکمت کے خم و پیچ میں الجھا ایسا  
آج تک فیصلہٴ نفع و ضرر کر نہ سکا  
جس نے سورج کی شعاعوں کو گرفتار کیا  
زندگی کی شبِ تاریک سحر کر نہ سکا!

“Modern Man’s love fled; Mind stung him like a snake”;  
he could not Force it to vision's will.  
He tracked the orbits of the stars,

yet could not Travel his own thoughts' world;  
Entangled in the labyrinth of his science  
Lost count of good and ill;  
Took captive the sun's rays, and yet no sunrise  
On life's thick night unfurled (Ahmad, 2019).

The goal of this study project is to reexamine Muhammad Iqbal's views on modernism, look into how he specifically created an "Islamic modernity," and understand what implications this has for Muslim culture. The research gap for this paper is, that as various researchers worked on the philosophy of Iqbal and numerous shed light on Iqbal's concept of Modernity, however, none of them categorically worked on analyzing the current status of the Muslim world in the light of Iqbal's modernity, which this research work will cover. Furthermore, the current situation of the Muslim world, barriers to modernism in the Muslim world, and misinterpretation of Iqbal's modernity and the so-called modernity of the west have to be brought to light. For this research, the researchers have used textual analysis as a theoretical framework.

*Keywords:* Modernity, conservatism, secularism, Islamic modernity, *Zarb-e-Kaleem*, Iqbal

The quality or state of being modern; or the application of modern methods and styles in character, ideas, and actions; or the period of history, particularly European history, that started around 1800 and continues today. It is claimed that under modernity, religion's perspective on thought and way of life is excluded (Mayor et. al., 2002). John F. Wilson claims that because the term modernity has been used in so many different settings and is commonly used interchangeably with terms like modernism, modernization, secularism, and secularisation, it is challenging to describe in a single word. The secular idea of modernity seems to put the Muslim worldview to the test. (Wilson, 1977).

Numerous Muslim intellectuals and thinkers, including Muhammad Iqbal, Fazlur Rahman, Ismael Raj al-Farqi, Maryam Jameelah, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Sir Syed, Abu Kalam Azad, Syed Maududi, Syed Abu ul Hasan Nadvi, Justice Karam Shah, Gulam Gilani Barq, and Dr. Ansari

Iqbal makes the case in his book *Asrar-e-Khudi* that the Muslim ummah should steer clear of modernity because it prioritizes individualism over community cohesion. To put it another way, modernism stresses personal fulfillment in society while excluding people from their social circles, families, communities, and religion for a variety of reasons (Iqbal. 1953). Furthermore, according to Fazlur Rahman in his book *Islam and Modernity*, modernity poses several problems for the Muslim community, including those related to abstraction, the future, individuation, liberation, and secularisation (Rahman 1984). Al-Faroqi also claimed that the intellectual crisis brought on by the secularisation and modernization of knowledge is the basic issue that the Muslim Ummah is currently confronting in Islamization of Knowledge: General Principle and Work Plan (Faroqi, 1989). The worldview of modernism, which is based on secular reason, hypothesis, and assumption as its guiding principles in life, is also rejected by Maryam Jameelah in *Islam and Modernism*. Islam's worldview, which is based on revelation and Prophetic traditions, is rejected to some extent by modernists (Jameela, 1977). Since one of modernity's worldviews is the freedom of mankind from God and religion, al- Attas believes that modernity and secularism have some similarities (Al Attas, 1978). Seyyed Hossein Nasr added that young Muslims may face significant problems in their thinking and way of life as a result of modernity. Young Muslims in the modern world should therefore construct a theological defense to combat modernity. The responses of these Muslim theorists sought to shield the Muslim Ummah from the drawbacks of modernity. (Nasar, 1999).

Rahman defined modernity in terms of specific factors that were both responsible for and generated by the intellectual and economic advancement of the modern West. While there is no disputing the West's influence, he argued that Islamic modernism must be understood in the context of the reform movements of the eighteenth century. According to Rahman, Islamic modernism only serves to bolster religion's hold over all facets of life. Secular modernists observe a separation of the secular and religious spheres of life in Muslim-majority nations. Rahman claims that this split is unintended since Islam is not yet the entire foundation of the state and has only been applied to a small area. (Rahman, 1969).

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this research would be, to understand the real essence and meaning of Iqbal's modernization, and the general concept of modernity, and to relate the current status of Muslim Ummah to Iqbal's concept of Modernity and analyze it.

## **Research Gap**

The research gap for this paper is, that as various researchers worked on the philosophy of Iqbal and numerous shed light on Iqbal's concept of Modernity, however, none of them categorically worked on analyzing the current status of the Muslim world in the light of Iqbal's modernity, which this research work will cover.

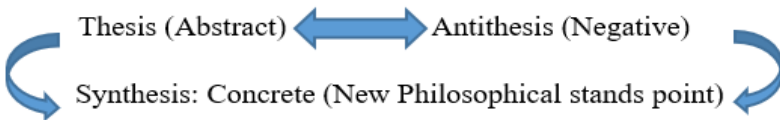
## **Theoretical Framework**

The Dialectical method, proposed by Hegel will be used in this study as a lens for the analysis of the texts of Iqbal's poetry and prose. This model suggests that there are flaws or perhaps incompleteness, in any initial thesis-it is too abstract and lacks the negative of trial, error, and experience. For Hegel, the concrete, the synthesis, is absolute, and must always pass through

the phase of the negative, in the journey to completion. This is the essence of what is popularly known as Hegelian Dialectics (Bright Shiny Objects, 2012, para 2).

### Figure 1

#### *Hegelian Dialectical Method*



### Organization

This research paper will be comprised of three parts. Firstly, it will address the general concept of modernity from an Islamic perspective, secondly, it will bring into light the concept of Iqbal about modernity and thirdly it will analyze the challenges posed by the modern world to the Muslim Ummah and the role of Modernity in tackling down the challenges and issues.

#### 1. Islamic Modernism: A Catalog

In discourses of Islamic thought and practice from the last two centuries, modernity is seen as a viable notion to be dealt with and relied upon, rather than being abandoned or used as a foil against which to distinguish oneself. In other words, those who support Islamic modernism are Muslims who believe that some (but not all) aspects of modernity are crucial to their worldview and way of life.

Islamic encounters with modernity have not been static or consistent, like those of other intellectual and religious traditions. Islamic modernism encompasses a wide range of traditions, including revivalism from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, early twentieth century rationalizing and Salaf

tendencies, as well as liberation movements and the progressive Muslim movement. The line separating some Salaf intellectuals from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from Islamic modernists has occasionally been hazy.

After 1857, modernity's effects started to be felt. Muslim societies as a result objectified modernity in various ways, with the emphasis of this objectification changing through time. The conditions of modernity were colonialism, nationalism, nation-states, the cold war, and globalism. Islamist theologies changed to become theologies of power.

Islamic theology of modernity was also contested by Islamist movements that asserted to be founded on Ibn Taymiyya's reform and revivalist beliefs, particularly as expressed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. They resemble Iqbal more in terms of their emphasis on Islamic law and government, but they disagree with Iqbal's views on democracy, parliament, and *ijtihad*.

Modern political theologies centered on God's sovereignty and the primacy of *Shari'a* were developed by Sayyid Abu'l A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) of Jama'at e Islami in Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to combat the notions of people's sovereignty and nation-state, but the demand for *Shari'a* eventually allowed the concept of nation-state to become rooted in this theology. In opposition to Islamic modernist views on jihad, polygamy, women's status, and *ijtihad*, they developed a political theology of power. Secularism, which Mawdudi translates as "*la diniyyat*," is used to objectify modernity (denial of religion). Mawdudi claims that the Islamic State is not a "*la dini jamhuriyyat*" but rather a "Theo-democracy" (*Ilahi Jamhuri hukumat*) (secular democracy). In Islam, people are not entirely free to create their own rules. The boundaries of freedom are divine (*hudud Allah*). Islamic economic theory establishes divine restrictions on taxes (*zakat*), usury (*riba*), and lottery in addition to private property

rights. Examples of divine law include the hijab, which separates men and women, the veil, rights, and obligations depending on social standing, regulations governing marriage, divorce, and a limited endorsement of polygamy. Additionally, it has control over civil life through laws governing crime and punishment. The fact that these laws are presented as Divine revelation means that they have no place in human legislation (Masud, 2007).

Islamic modernism appeared to have diminished as Islamization movements spread to nearly all Muslim nations in the latter decade of the twentieth century. Jihad, the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the Islamization of Pakistan, and ultimately the Taliban Islamic government in Afghanistan all advocated for total Islamization and the return to Shari'ah law. In addition to radicalizing Muslim political ideology and inspiring militancy and ferocious conflict with the West, these movements also gave rise to a key new theology of Islamization of science. It promoted the application of genuine Islamic ideas to education, particularly in the dissemination of the sciences, which stand for objectivity. Islamists were forced to either align with orthodoxy or randomly construct Islamic tradition as a result of their utter rejection of modernity and the historicity of Islamic tradition. Islamic modernism was rebuffed by Orientalism, which was seen as the West's assault on Islam. Critical studies of Orientalism, such as those by Edward Said, supported this idea. Movements against Islamization and authenticity failed to achieve their objectives. Globalization shifted the focus to human rights' global modernity in the twenty-first century. Discourses on gender equality, self-determination, and human rights have rekindled the emphasis on the self and its empowerment. This might be seen as a revival of Iqbal's theology of modernity (Masud, 2007).

## **2. Iqbal's Modernity**

Since it seems that he looked into the conflicts between Islamic tradition, secularism, and modernity at a deeper level than any other Muslim thinker of his day, Iqbal's philosophy is

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particularly essential to look at right now. Modernity was not only seen favorably by Iqbal; he also saw it as "a practical need" and a "moral imperative." Iqbal asserts that a civilization's "internal movement" in response to the "pressure of present ideas" is what Iqbal refers to as modernity. Thus, his conception of modernity reflects the goals of society. Instead of a complete rupture with older tradition or, on the other hand, devotion to Western principles, he saw modernism to entail the "enlargement of human freedom." Iqbal adhered to the idea of having a "modernity attitude", which he believed was necessary for "a reading of history that would reconstitute its objective" and for responding to "the realities and demands of the present while continuing to open the future by always further increasing the freedom of each and all." Iqbal defined modernity as accepting accountability for one's deeds, both individually and collectively (Iqbal, 1953).

Iqbal fought for modernism that was Islamic in nature from the viewpoint of Islam. Iqbal foresaw a post-colonial Muslim population with a distinct "Islamicized identity" both globally and locally in South Asia (Singh, 1999). Iqbal claims that Islam is a social structure that is managed by a flexible legal system and is motivated by a clear "ethical ideal" that connects "scattered individuals and groups, transforming them into well-defined people with their moral consciousness" (Tariq, 1973) In this sociological idea of an Islamic community, the divisions between class, race, caste, tribe, and ethnicity were ignored. These categories, according to Iqbal, "counteract Islam's humanizing function," hence he tried to define Islam in opposition to them. Because it caused the stratification of the Muslim society, the Muslim *ashraaf* culture on the subcontinent was something Iqbal detested. Islam is a "social experiment," in Iqbal's words, that "provides a model for the final combination of humanity by collecting believers from a range of races, and then changes this atomic aggregate into a people owning their self-consciousness." (Javeed, N.d)



Iqbal's poetry has had a significant influence on the European idea of modernity. Iqbal was knowledgeable about western literature as evidenced by his work's allusions to Long Fellow, Emerson, William Copper, Tynison, and Browning. While Modernity was enjoying its heyday in Europe thanks to West Land and Ulysses, Iqbal published *Talo-e-Islam* and *Payam-e-Mashriq* as confronting narratives. (Diagne, n.d).

Iqbal had no direct connection to modernism and chose not to do so since he was conscious of a distinct perspective on the world and attitude, yet some of modernism's ideas and characteristics are fascinating in Iqbal's poetry (Iqbal, 1953). In no way. Empiricism, tradition-breaking, individualism, and historical and aesthetic contradictions of modernism do not present in Iqbal's Western environment. Iqbal has discovered that conventional pursuits are acceptable for him rather than looking for fresh hobbies. This has allowed it to keep its connections to tradition, which modernity both admires and enjoys breaking but also sees as important. According to modernism, every piece of art is composed of material and shape, but their connection is like that between flesh and nails. Presenting new content in its original form is what is meant by "harmonizing new content with tradition."

Modernism and Iqbal's originality are most distinguished by their different "Worldviews." A modern person's "worldview" is based on the denial of both tradition and metaphysics, but an Iqbal person's "worldview" is based on the affirmation of both. One's strength comes at the expense of the other's needs. One could say that the great tragedies of the 20th century have left the modern person with a feeling of helplessness and meaninglessness (global wars, economic troubles, etc.).Is Iqbal comparable to these catastrophes in any way? This issue demands a unique, in-depth analysis. There is no doubt that a person's "worldview" has a significant role in their ability to survive a calamity. A religious person responds to a disaster in a certain way, but a non-religious person responds to the same tragedy

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differently. Iqbal's thoughts are connected to modernity and modernization if his poetry is connected to modernism. It's important to note that Iqbal's concepts appear simultaneously in both prose and poetry. Saleem Ahmed has labeled Iqbal's poetry's distinctive quality as "thinking." The phrase "Iqbal's concept" has also been used to describe this idea. Although Saleem Ahmed has distinguished between mind and passion, imagination, and passion, he hasn't distinguished between different kinds of thought or different degrees of thought, and he hasn't specified where pure thought and poetic thought exist in his poetry (Dr. M.Niamat, et.al, 2016). Iqbal, for instance, has numerous poems in which he presents a straightforward concept. Take a look at the following two couplets:

عشق اب پیروی عقل خدا داد کرے  
آبرو کوچہ جاناں میں نہ برباد کرے  
کہنہ پیکر میں نئی رُوح کو آباد کرے  
یا کہن رُوح کو تقلید سے آزاد کرے

These couplets can be considered representative of Iqbal's intellectual position, and this is a sign of pure thought. While such poems are the pioneers of his poetic thought (Iqbal, Zarb e Kalim, Adbiat).

پریشاں ہو کے میری خاک آخر دل نہ بن جائے  
جو مشکل اب ہے یارب! پھر وہی مشکل نہ بن جائے

The aforementioned couplets, which are regarded as representative of Iqbal's intellectual viewpoint, convey his conception of modernity. The fundamental claim of modernity is intelligence, and Iqbal has suggested that love be acknowledged as intellect's superior (Kulyat-e-Iqbal, 2018, p. 250).

### 3. Islamic Modernism: A study of Iqbal's Philosophy

Islam's "theology of modernity," often referred to as new theology, Islamic modernism, and *jadid ilmal kalam*, is a defense

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of the religion against contemporary Western criticism (Masud, 2007, p. 1). This is most likely because, at a time when Muslims were on the defensive after colonization, modernism spread throughout the Muslim world. For Western colonial governments, Islam was incompatible with modernity; as a result, it needed to be modernized if it wasn't to be marginalized. Because of this, Muslims perceived modernity, modernism, and modernization as hostile and terrifying, not just as Western and foreign but also as threatening. However, modern Islamic theology was not justification-free. In addition to providing a theological foundation to explain how modernity was relevant to and consistent with Islam, it also responded to specific criticisms leveled against Islam in this regard.

Muslims have reacted to modernity in the West in a variety of ways, including by calling for reform, advocating the revival of Islam, categorically rejecting both tradition and modernity, and reconstructing Islamic theological thinking. The first to see its necessity was Muslim Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), a founder of "*Jadid 'ilm al-kalam*," new Islamic theology of modernity. Khan's strategy was referred to as "Islamic modernity" (Goldziher, 1920)

Discussions on Iqbal's theology of modernity have been predominated by the question of its authenticity. This study examines the validity and permissibility of Iqbal's interpretation of a Quranic verse as well as the pantheistic nature of his idea of the human ego. Modernity is challenging to define since over time, people's perceptions of it have changed. There are several reasons behind this. Finding a universally accepted definition of modernity, which would qualify Islam as modern, was one of the key motivations.

So, the objectification of modernity changed from science to reason in the nineteenth century, then from progress to economic and social justice in the twentieth. Another factor was the desire for a shared Islamic vision or institution upon which

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modern Muslim society could be built. Those who intended to anchor modernity in Islamic tradition and those who did not make an objection to modernity differently from this standpoint. Iqbal developed a fascination for Sufism, and the second approach was reflected in his intellectual justification of his spiritual and Sufi experiences. As we've seen, detractors of this approach hold a variety of opinions. J. R. Smart claims that Iqbal opposed the Sufi idea of ego annihilation and advocated for the development of a strong and active Muslim self via submission to God's will (Smart, 1996).

Colonial modernity has altered Muslim identity in terms of traditional social ties and other particularistic traits. Muslims needed to be accepted within a sophisticated anti-colonial nationalism, according to Iqbal. His anti-colonialism was couched in the idea of a distinct identity that came from "faithfulness" (Bose, Ayesha Jalal, 1998).

The issue of Muslim identity became more important than ever in the aftermath of the industrial and economic processes of modernity. According to Natani Natarajan, Iqbal is critical of colonial and capitalist modernity. In search of alternative modernity and a critique of colonial modernity, he turned to Islamic tradition. Iqbal, like Hali and Shibli, attributed the collapse to an Islamic textual tradition. But he also recognised dynamism in this tradition. Iqbal contested the notion of Muslims as a nation or ethnic group in the traditional sense of nationalism. He developed the idea of dynamic selfhood, *khudi*, which simultaneously challenged and changed the totalizing ideas about modernity held by the fa. Iqbal logically connected a variety of elements. Iqbal showed his independence by disparaging the West and European philosophers. He rediscovers the Indo-Islamic people's spirituality. The issue of Muslim identity became more urgent than ever in the wake of modernity's industrial and capitalist processes. (Natarajan, 1996).

According to Natini Nataranjan, Iqbal is critical of colonial and capitalist modernity. In search of alternative modernity and a critique of colonial modernity, he turned to Islamic tradition. As Hali and Shibli did, Iqbal attributed the collapse to a literary legacy in Islamic tradition but he did recognize some vitality in its tradition. Iqbal questioned the notion of Muslims as a nation or people in the sense of traditional nationality. He created the idea of dynamic selfhood, or Khudi, which opposed and corrected the totalizing notions of modernity held by the fatalistic decadent past. He advocated for people to form moral communities of their own free will. Iqbal logically linked disjointed elements. Iqbal criticized the West and European intellectuals to declare his independence. His exposure to Indo-Islamic mysticism was resumed. (Nataranjan, 1996).

#### **4. Challenges Posed by Modernity to Muslim World: A situational Analysis**

The difficulties posed by contemporary ideals have been faced by cultures and nations with a majority of Muslims for more than a century; the current rise in violence shows how frightened traditionalists and fundamentalists feel, as well as how far Muslims have accepted modernization come. This progress has been made despite significant setbacks, such as the failure of liberalism and nationalism in the creation of important states and the emergence of mafia-like regimes that, despite occasionally speaking the language of modernization, are more interested in turning their nations into private fiefdoms than in true modernization or secrecy.

The strong connection between contemporary values and Western culture creates another difficulty. The process of modernization does require a significant amount of Westernization given the geographic and cultural circumstances surrounding the birth of modernity and liberalism; this fact, predictably, instills feelings of resentment and inferiority in many Muslims, regardless of their educational backgrounds. This

circumstance has resulted in the unceremonious defeat of liberal forces at the hands of leftist and Islamist adversaries, who both reject contemporary liberal principles in different ways.

Although adopting modern liberal values is the necessary step for Muslim societies to empower their people and promote their own national and regional development, how these values are implemented—namely, under the patronage of a privileged, Westernized elite and some pressure from Western governments—makes this development a difficult task for the foreseeable future. Because there is no such thing as a total failure in reality. The majority of the Muslim world underwent modernization, which includes Westernization, during the 20th century. Internalization of contemporary ideals has been going on ever since the Muslim world first made contact with the modern West. And in certain locations, it has been successful. For instance, tremendous progress has been made by Tunisia and Indonesia. It's simple to lose sight of such progress in the face of startling failures like Egypt, Libya, and, most horrifyingly, my own country, Syria. However, this does not lessen the reality of the achievements (Ali, 2009).

## **Conclusions**

Iqbal was the father of Islamic Modernism, to put it briefly. He wants to refute the idea that Islam is a primitive religion. Iqbal's modernity reflects the notion that, in terms of methodology and narratives, Islam is the most modern religion, as opposed to so-called modernism in Europe at the time, when they were savoring their "Dark Age." Iqbal also seeks to update Islamic fundamentalism to meet the needs of contemporary society. Iqbal gave his extraordinary book the title "the reconstruction in Religious Thoughts" for this reason. One of the most important philosophers of his day was Iqbal. Instead of just being a positive thing, he saw modernity as "a moral imperative" and "a practical necessity." Iqbal asserts that Islam is a social structure managed by a flexible legal system and motivated by a

unique "ethical ideal." This sociological notion of an Islamic society disregarded the concepts of class, race, caste, tribe, and ethnicity. Islam uses the theology of modernity as an apologetic tactic to counter Western criticism of the religion. After colonization, when Muslims were on the defensive, modernity became known in the Muslim world. Creating an Islamic framework to understand and address the problems modernity presented to the Muslim cultural worldview was the main goal of this effort. The first Muslim to identify the need for "*jadid 'ilm al-kalam*," new Islamic theology of modernity, was Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898). The goal of this study is to determine whether Iqbal's interpretation of a text from the Quran is correct and legal. Muslim identity has been altered by colonial modernity in terms of customary social ties and other particularistic traits. Iqbal rediscovers the Indo-Islamic people's spirituality. His anti-colonialism was couched in a distinct identity that he described as arising from "faithfulness," which gave autonomy to the identity.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended for the new budding researchers that Iqbal's modernity may be re-approached for the establishment of a prosperous society, secondly, there is a need for the marginalization of negative propaganda against Iqbal's concept of modernity, and last but not the least, the future researcher must compare Iqbal's modernity with the western concept of modernity.

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