

## **Studying Muhammad Iqbal's Works in Azerbaijan**

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### **Abstract**

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was Pakistan's prominent poet, philosopher and Islamic scholar. His works are characterized by a number of essential features. Islam, love philosophy, perfect humans were expressed in unity, in Iqbal's worldview. Iqbal performed as an advocate of humanism, global peace and cordial relations between East and West based on peaceful and tolerant values. He awakened the Muslims' material-spiritual development in the 20th century. Having a special propensity for Sufism, the writer was enriched and inspired by the work of the great Turkic Sufi thinker and poet Mevlana Jalāl Ad Dīn Rūmī. Muhammad Iqbal acted as a poet, philosopher, lawyer and teacher. Illuminator and reformer M. Iqbal, who was politically active, also gave concept for the establishment of the state of Indian Muslims in north-western India. The human factor is the main subject of M. Iqbal's thinking. The poet-thinker perceived Islamic society, as well as human pride as the centrifugal force of the whole world, and considered creative and moral relations as an important factor in solving the problems of human society. The questions that Iqbal adopted on the social and philosophical thinking of the East and the West were also directed to this important problem. M. Iqbal spoke from the position of the Islamic religion and at the same time correctly assessed the role of Islam in the modern world, and also invited the Islamic world to develop science and education. This article highlights number of research studies accomplished in Azerbaijan on poetry and philosophical works of Muhammad Iqbal.

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## Keywords

Muhammad Iqbal, Azerbaijan, Havvahanim Gurbanova, Javidname, Ramiz Asker, Husein Javid

## 1. Introduction

Literary and philosophical works of Muhammad Iqbal, an eminent poet of Indo-Pak subcontinent, who has deep knowledge of Qur'ān, is welcomed in Azerbaijan and his literary heritage is still being studied by Azerbaijanian researchers. He gives utterance to his sincere thoughts, claims his adherence to his own ideology in his famous work *Bang-e-Dara* (The Call of the Marching Bell), "My fellows, I am Muslim and having a strong faith on the Unity (Tawhid) of God, I did believe this truth from the very beginning" (Īkbal, 1988). As a renowned philosopher, his globally valued ideology was highly appreciated all around the Muslim world as well as in the academic circles in Azerbaijan; in the world of philosophy and literature.

Notably, the relations between Azerbaijani and Urdu literature dates back to middle ages as in the 17th century *Sahib Tabrīzī*, Azerbaijani poet, travelled to Indo-Pak subcontinent and settled there for a while.

When it comes to sound studies on the works of M. Iqbal, the Azerbaijani researcher G. Aliyev made a significant breakthrough in the 20th century inside the Soviet Union borders. He attached a particular importance to M. Iqbal's personality and works written in Persian in his book "Literature written in the Persian language in India" published in Moscow. One chapter in the book "Indian literature written in Persian before and after English occupation" was dedicated to M. Iqbal. According to the researcher, M. Iqbal's works go beyond Indian literature written in Persian implying that Iqbal's poetry roots in historical traditions of Indian literature (Алиев, 1968).

G. Aliyev focused on a number of essential aspects of Iqbal's literary works and views showing that his philosophical thoughts on man, his sublime essence, the relationship between man and society and humanism are the main features of the philosopher-poet's works. Having mentioned his name together with outstanding figures of Pakistan and India, the researcher underscored the fact that M. Iqbal played a

considerably crucial role for Indian people helping them have a deeper understanding of the national identity. Muhammad Iqbal stands out in the same severity, admittedly, is considered as important as other poets of Pakistan and India such as Amīr Khusrow Dahlavi, Fayzi, Urfi, Naziri, Kalim, Gani, Bedil, Talib and so on. Similarly, Iqbal has contributed a lot to the development of Indian and Pakistani literature (Алиев, 1968).

In A. Sarovlow's book "Treasure of Pearl" published in 1977, along with translations from Persian-Tajik literature, nine poems of M. Iqbal were also included.

Some pieces as well as "Homeland" by M. Iqbal were translated into Azerbaijani even in the mid of 20th century (İqbal, 1958). Additionally, Alakbar Ziyatay translated "Kashmir" and published it in the journal "Azerbaijan" (İqbal, 1959). Certainly, from the 20th century on, his poems and philosophical pieces are being translated into Azerbaijani.

## **2. Studies and Translations on Muhammad Iqbal's works in the 21st century**

In the 21st century, studies on Muhammad Iqbal's works involve 3 main aspects:

- 1) Translation of M. Iqbal's works into Azerbaijani;
- 2) Further studies of M. Iqbals's literary works, particularly his poems;
- 3) Studies on M. Iqbal's philosophical and religious views.

The mentioned attitudes towards studying Iqbal cover a number of paperwork, book, dissertations and other kind of publications.

The first study about M. Iqbal was conducted by Havvahanim Gurbanova, published in 2008 "Muhammad Iqbal: His Life and Ideology." In the study, his life, religious and political views, philosophical thoughts and activities were well elaborated.

Moreover, "Influence of the 19th Century Indian Environment on Muhammad Iqbal's Works" (2013) and "Muhammad Iqbal as a Philosopher and Poet of the 19th Century" by Aygun Taghiyeva can be a vivid example for the range of critical studies done in Azerbaijan.

Another example for the diverse array of the studies on Iqbal was conducted by Hasan Dildar Govhardai, a dedicated researcher of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Institution of Orientalism named after Z. Bunyadov. In his research paper “Muhammad Iqbal’s Works in the Persian Language,” he thoroughly studied Iqbal’s works in Persian.

M. Iqbal is a thinker and a renowned man of letters. An eminent Pakistani scholar Miyan Muhammad Sharif describes Muhammad Iqbal’s literary and philosophical works in his paper “Iqbal as a thinker” published in Lahore, in 1952, in these words,

It is very difficult to distinguish – Is Iqbal a poet or a thinker? His philosophical works are compiled in 2 books, one has historical and another has a scholastic nature. This fact makes it a bit uncertain to understand his real personality as a poet and a thinker. At first, it seems that Iqbal is a poet, and then he is a thinker. But it would not exactly describe him. Like his works, no other thinkers have ever had this kind of creative pattern, nor even has Dante. (Şərif, 2012)

And the article was translated into the Azerbaijani language by professor, orientalist Masiaga Muhammedi, published in the journal “Jahan” (1997).

However, M. Iqbal considers poetry of special importance as in *Javidname* (Book of Javed), but as for the thinker and poet, poetry is a better and stronger way to understand the truth rather than philosophy (İkbal, 1999). Azerbaijani literary scholars also highly valued M. Iqbal as a poet, philosopher, and a socio-political thinker.

#### a) **Ramiz Asker’s translations**

Ramiz Asker entitles him as “A moral founder of Pakistan” in his paper “Scholar Muhammad Iqbal – the moral founder of Pakistan.” Muhammad Iqbal, one of the most prominent persons in the 20th century in the Islamic world, is the moral founder of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He gained popularity expressing feelings and thrill of his nation as a thinker, scholar and political figure, a Joe public of Pakistan (Asker).

Ramiz Asker translated some pieces from M. Iqbal’s literary collection such as Love and Death, Essence of Beauty. In the poem, he

depicts the victory of love over death - which is the only thing that love might be afraid:

Və lakin aləmdə var elə qüvvə,  
 Onun adı eşqdir — ən uca zirvə.  
 Eşq gəldi, ölümü tarü mar etdi,  
 Həyatı, sevgini bərqərar etdi.  
 Such power in the universe,  
 Is the love – the highest peak.  
 When love showed up,  
 Blowed the death away.  
 Established life and love,  
 Right after existing in the world (Asker).

M. Iqbal believes love is more important than anything else. He considers love as a way of perfectness in *Bal-e-Jibril* (Wings of Gabriel) – Having passed mind corridors of Iqbal, love is the sole way for this wise man (İkbal, 1983). Iqbal thinks beauty is not eternal in his work *Essence of Beauty*.

#### **b) The book Muhammad Iqbal. His life and Views by Havvahanim Gurbanova**

The book “Muhammad Iqbal. His life and views” by Havvahanim Gurbanova, is devoted to life, works, philosophical and social-political views of Muhammad Iqbal. In this work, the researcher studies M. Iqbal as a Muslim thinker, a poet and his views on the East-West problems.

M. Iqbal has written many poems on a wide variety of topics since the early 20th century. However, some of these poems were written by the influence of English literature or dedicated to Indian poets; still he was acclaimed as a true Muslim poet. H. Gurbanova notes, “If it is in the same order as in *Bang-e Dara*, the first poem written by the philosopher after 1908 is *Bilad-i Islamia*.” This poem, as well as *Khitab Ba Jawanan-e-Islam*, Muslim or *Teraan-yi Muslim* is strong evidence that Iqbal is a Muslim poet (Gurbanova, 2008). The researcher suggests that since

1911, he has developed a new tendency in Islamic thought and opposes all neoplatonic mystical trends in his famous work *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self) by his peculiar theory on unity of existence.

M. Iqbal was well aware of the culture and philosophy of the East and the West, therefore, common aspects of both cultures and comparative attitudes in his works can apparently be seen. The mentioned aspect interested Azerbaijanian researchers, too. H. Gurbanova mentions some facts when studied *Payam-e-Mashriq* (The Message from the East), written in Persian in 1923,

Unlike all the works of the poet, particularly this *divan* makes the West interested in. As he has responded for the first time to many pieces such as The East-West *divan* by Hote, written in 1818, poetry translations from different Eastern languages, Eastern etudes published in Europe, poetry books written under the influence of oriental literature (Qurbanova, 2008).

Furthermore, the East-West problem was in the spotlight of the East in the early 20th century. Namely, Eastern and Western problems seemed clearer when the Eastern countries were socially and politically influenced by the European states. While the East loomed the Western technological achievements largely, on the other hand, the Western world aspired to adopt the spiritual trends in the Eastern culture. However, the Eastern writers and thinkers did not welcome to imitate the Western world blindly; rather they made serious commitments to call them on to appreciate the progressive tendency of the modern world backing Eastern values. M. Iqbal comparing the East and the West writes:

Glitter of Western knowledge never enamoured me,

Soil of Medina and Najaf is the eyeliner of my eyes (Kılıç, 1994).

The similar aspects in the 20th century Azerbaijan literature are quite obvious as Husein Javid reacts to the Eastern artist who imitates the Western fine art in his work Cliff:

If I were an artist as such, would I visited Hejaz,

Striving for a long time, I'd have ended up with depicting the Great Muhammad (Cavid, 2005).

In his turn, M. Iqbal writes:

The East – understands the right, but not the world,

The West – stayed in the world and hasn't left the right (İkbal, 1999).

M. Iqbal explains that the breakthrough in the Western science is the milestone in its fate in his work *Javidname*.

The West takes the power from knowledge and education, That is why their Sun always shines (İkbal, 1999).

H. Javid points the same idea out in his work *Cliff*:

The Europe owns both light and darkness,

Wealth and Excellence.

But ought to be alert and strong

Heading off to the Light,

And reach the Right (Cavid, 2005).

M. Iqbal, however, studies Western thinkers; his own philosophy mainly feeds from Islam. H. Gurbanova writes,

As Iqbal's philosophy is based on The Qur'ān, Sunnah and religion, thus, these sources underlay all his thoughts on creation and existence. To explain his own philosophy, he refers to Western thinkers but eventually he considers Islamic philosophy as a main source. (Gurbanova, 2008)

As for M. Iqbal, Jalāl Ad Dīn Rūmī is a spiritual mentor and this fact is included in the studies of some Azerbaijanian researchers. Several facts are there proving the similarities between Jalāl Ad Dīn Rūmī and M. Iqbal:

J. Rūmī: When you see my coffin going into my grave, do not understand that I lament for leaving the world. Do not cry saying ferak (split) when you see my corpse. Right then I will be meeting my lover (Genc, 1994).

M. Iqbal: I will tell you the characteristic features of a true believer. When death comes to him, he smiles. (İqbal, 1999)

H. Gurbanova notes that Iqbal, admitting Rūmī as his spiritual and moral mentor, addresses his name in the beginning of all his works written in the Persian language (Qurbanova, 2008).

### c) Mehriban Gasimova's Studies

Mehriban Gasimova interprets M. Iqbal's "Self" concept in her research paper "Human and self" concept in Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy based on Iqbal's works *Javidname*, *Musafir* (Traveller) and *Asrar-i-Rumuz* (Hinting Secrets). As for the researcher, Muhammad Iqbal explained his ideology on human psychology, "Self" concept, and "Self-concept in Islam" mainly in his work "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam." Like other Muslim thinkers, Iqbal also believed that the only solution is to eliminate the distance barrier between ourselves and the Qur'ān. In this respect, he strongly supported the idea of turning to the Qur'ān (Qasimova, 2011).

Gasimova reckons that, however, Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy is mainly based on the Qur'ān and classical Islamic sources; his philosophy of concept "Self" is formed on modern philosophical streams and real scientific facts which can be seen as a milestone in Islamic philosophy. Researching the socio-political problems of Muslim world, Iqbal was well aware of all the problems they encounter. So, in his own philosophy he mostly tended to address the personality problem (Qasimova, 2011).

According to Iqbal, all the problems and crises in Muslim society arise from one fact – their "Self" concept goes through a failure (Qasimova, 2011). Muhammad Iqbal's philosophical views encompass three stages:

- 1) Understanding the Self
- 2) Revealing the Self
- 3) Disappearing in the God's presence having revealed the real Self.

Havvahanim Gurbanova also mentioned M. Iqbal's moral philosophy, "I" concept. The researcher writes,



The thinker claims that God should be imagined as 'I' since it is one of the principles denoting mankind who establishes the unity. Another thing proving God as I is that God accepts our prayers and turns us at times of invoke. God is not simply an 'I', it is Absolute I. The absoluteness is to be understood in God's body which is capacious and far-reaching enough, nothing exists beyond its borders (Qurbanova, 2008).

#### **d) Muhammad Iqbal's works in Persian by Hasan Dildar Govhardani**

M. Iqbal's works in the Persian language have been studied and compiled in the book *Muhammad Iqbal's works in Persian* (2014) by Hasan Dildar Govhardani, a researcher in Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, Department of Oriental Studies, named after Z. Bunyadov. The researcher highlighted the facts that, however, the thinker and poet Muhammad Iqbal's native language is the Urdu language, but the number of his works written in Persian are quite a lot (Gövhərdani, 2014). Close ties of M. Iqbal's works, his style and idea principles with Iranian literature, have carefully been researched through the works such as *The Secrets of the Self*, *Hinting Secrets*, *Zabur-e-Ajam* (Persian Psalms), *Payam-i-Mashriq* (Message from the East), *Javidname*, *Pas Cheh Bayed Kard ai Aqwam-e-Sharq* (What are we to do, O Nations of the East?) and *Armughan-e-Hejaz* (The Gift of Hejaz).

For Hasan Dildar Govherdani, M. Iqbal is a Muslim poet and in his researches he often emphasises this fact. In analysing the work "The Secrets of the Self," the researcher writes, "In Iqbal's opinion, Muhammad (PBUH) is the pinnacle of Muslims' unity; whether Sunni or Shia, all sects should unite around it. For he is our protector in this world, and in the Hereafter he will succour us" (Gövhərdani, 2014). In the poem "Hinting Secrets," M. Iqbal supports that the Qur'an is a Divine book, the constitution of Islam, and the path to happiness and prosperity (Gövhərdani, 2014).

To note, the translations of M. Iqbal's Persian-language works into Azerbaijani are also attributed to the author. The influence of prominent representatives of Turkish literature, who wrote in Persian, can obviously

be seen in M. Iqbal's works. The researcher highlights many facts which reveal the common aspects of Iqbal's works with other Turkish poets.

First of all, studying the "Hinting Secrets," it is apparent that along with Persian poet Fariduddin Attar, Mevlana's Masnavi was also a source of motivation for M. Iqbal (Gövhærdani, 2014). Secondly, in *Zabur-e-Ajam* (Persian Psalms in 1927) by M. Iqbal, it is understood clearly that there is a similar meaning and expression style reminiscent of Rûmî, Hâfîdîh and Sadi's works (Gövhærdani, 2014). Moreover, the researcher notes the influence of Rûmî again in Javidnama, which can be considered as the pinnacle of M. Iqbal's literary thoughts, satirical talent, perfection and understanding of Divinity (Gövhærdani, 2014). In this Divine verse, the spirit of Rûmî emerges as an assistant of Iqbal, reveals the mysteries of the Creator to him and dominates over the spirit of the poet (Gövhærdani, 2014). In the work, "What are We to Do, O Nations of the East?" M. Iqbal tries to come up with a solution inspired by Rûmî:

The old Rûmî is the spiritual mentor of all the intelligent,  
 The paths he walks are the ways of love and who drunk with love.  
 The position he stands is bright and higher than the Sun,  
 He keeps the light of the Qur'ân in his heart,  
 Once he recited, all the souls were remedied  
 The East awakened at once (Gövhærdani, 2014).

When we have a deeper look at the ins and outs of *Zabur-e-Ajam* (Persian Psalms), a striking fact draws the attention: M. Iqbal was figuratively in touch with the literary works of Azerbaijanian men of letters who wrote in Persian. Hasan Dildar Govherdani writes,

At the end of Iqbal's verses, we realize that *Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadeed* (Garden of New Secrets) was written in the same style and prosody with Khusrow and Shirin, by Nizami and Fakhruddin As'ad Gurgani's Vis and Ramin. In this part, the poet explains the factors that contributed to his understanding of the man of the East, self, power, love, mind, freedom and charity. This work is actually a response to Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari's *Gulshan-i Raz*. (Gövhærdani, 2014)

M. Iqbal shed light on nine questions in the style of Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari in some of his works. It should be noted that M. Iqbal's poem *The Gift of Hejaz* was written under the influence of Afzaladdin Khaqani's *Tohfah-ul Iraquein* (A Gift from the Two Iraqs). The outcomes of studies in Azerbaijan also support these facts (Gövhərdani, 2014). It appears that M. Iqbal was well aware of the works of famous Azerbaijani writers including A. Khaqani, N. Ganjavi and M. Shabestari who wrote in the Persian language.

Hasan Dildar Govherdani focuses on the East and West problem in Muhammad Iqbal's works. As for him, M. Iqbal made some comparisons between the two poles and confessed the spiritual excellence of the East in his work *Message from the East* (Gövhərdani, 2014). Iqbal places high value on love saying, "The only remedy is to praise love more than anything, to worship and beg from it."

The author of the study considers that Muhammad Iqbal's works and their ideas' bases were nurtured on the roots of Eastern and Western cultures, emerged from the synthesis of both cultures (Gövhərdani, 2014).

Not limited to a small number of studies, in recent years a wide range of researches have been carried out in religious, political and social aspects of Muhammad Iqbal's contributions to literature and philosophy as follow:

Muhammad Iqbal and his religious views, I. Shakili, 1991

Man, Ego and Society in the Philosophy of Iqbal

Social and religious reformations in Eastern world in Muhammad Iqbal's views,

Social-Cultural and religious reformations in Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy

Ph.D, Mehriban Gasimova, 2011-2012.

### 3. Conclusion

Why especially M. Iqbal is studied in Azerbaijan stands on serious reasons certainly due to some solid grounds.

M. Iqbal is known as a versatile person, an all-rounder man in the Eastern and Western world. There are plenty of studies dedicated to his works and some research centers are established to carry out further studies about his life and activities.

M. Iqbal's works in Islamic views and literature of Muslim world's context have a lot of common aspects with literature of Azerbaijan, as well. Studying M. Iqbal's literary works, philosophical, socio-political views are of great importance in the Islamic world, literature and philosophy.

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