

## MUSLIM IDENTITY IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

Allama Iqbal (d. 1938) lamented the backwardness of his own contemporary Muslim society. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) had also seen the need for Muslims of his time to become aware of their culture and identity as Muslims. Both Iqbal and Ahmad Khan were aware of the positive as well as the negative influence of the British and the Hindu cultures on their own Muslim cultural identity. They realised that Muslims needed to become aware of their cultural legacy so as to recover an awareness of their own Muslim cultural values. Furthermore, both of these Muslim leaders saw education as the key to maintaining and transmitting the values of Islam to subsequent generations. Without education, the next generation would lose this sacred legacy. This article presents the basic elements of Allama Iqbal's philosophy of education. The author explains the notion of *khudi*, which was Iqbal's term for one's own self-identity. Iqbal's philosophy of education gives Muslims a framework by which to transmit their culture and identity to subsequent generations.

Keywords: Culture, identity, legacy, Muslim youth, self (*khudi*), education

### INTRODUCTION

The first step of education starts in infancy informally at the time when a child is taught to how to behave according to accepted norms of society. This process includes learning the common components of the culture which is the source of one's identity. Secondly, there is systematic and formal education. The aim of the latter process is to inculcate such attributes which are helpful in strengthening cultural identity. Thus a system of education has the following functions: sustaining one's identity or the *self*, preserving the cultural values and upholding one's physical existence. Muhammad Iqbal regarded education as the process of preserving culture as the identity of the *self*. In short, education is the channel for the transmission of the culture as one's identity.

## CULTURE AS IDENTITY

‘Culture’ designates the learned and symbolic aspects of a human society. These aspects include human customs, behaviours, languages, conventions, which distinguish one people from another (The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, 1997). This description provides the insight that the culture of any people is the totality of all the customs and identity of those people. Every participant of that group is supposed to follow and to exhibit those behaviours if the one wants to live in accordance with that identity. Thus *culture* is an approach of living which includes patterns of thought and modes of living. The sum of all these is the heritage of the new generation. This heritage of culture is to be transmitted to the new generations as identity by way of learning (Kuper, 1989). Each new-born child has the right to have an identity. So, each baby is heir to this heritage of culture, which is not composed of physical things but consists of sentiments, thoughts, feelings, contemplations, beliefs, convictions, understandings, comprehensions, scholarly ventures, ceremonies, customs, art etc (Michael, 1989). This inheritance is to be learnt by education and this learning provides one with one’s identity. Iqbal considered education as a system for the transmission of cultural identity.

The simple instance of culture as the ‘*Frame of Identity*’ can be seen in the Sub-Continent before Partition. Before partition various distinct cultures were present in Sub Continent i.e. the British culture, the Hindu culture and the Muslim culture. The sense of superiority as lords of the Indian people as well as their style of life with its own religion and traditions were the basic elements of the British culture. The Hindu culture reflected the caste system, polytheism, abhorrence for Muslims as *malich* (impure/unholy). The Muslim culture ruled by the idea of the oneness of God and the permissibility of certain foods and the practice of certain customs and values that were contrary to the Hindu or the British cultures. So there were plenty of controversies about cultures and many conflicts of identity.

Because ‘*culture permeates all human activities*’ (Hylland, 2017) such as beliefs, knowledge, morals, arts, customs, habits, skills, capabilities, values, rites, thoughts and language etc, the British, Hindu and Muslim cultures experienced a certain envy towards one another. Since culture as identity was transmitted by means of education, the system of education was the main focus not only for the Hindus but also for the British. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal were well aware of the significance of education in the sub-continent. Michael Oakeshott in England appreciated the importance of *culture as identity* and emphasised the transmission of

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culture as the identity of the human beings by means of education, which is the most basic medium for the communication of learning and comprehension.

### TARGETTING CULTURE MEANS TARGETTING IDENTITY

Though the Hindus and the Muslims lived together for a thousand years, they were on contrary poles in their culture and identity. There had divergent identities which had *permeated into the activities* and behaviours of the followers (ibid). This permeation and formation of behaviour took centuries to become the identity of Hindus and Muslims. Consequently, any attack on cultural components e.g. the beliefs, the products of thought, the arts, the institutions, the traits, the expressions of a particular community or what we might call *the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns' of a community* (Soukhanov, Kaethe, & Marion, The American heritage dictionary of the English language, 1992), means an attack on the identity of that community. Evidence of such attacks to diminish the cultural values of the rival community are, for example, the Hindu allegiance to the British, Lord Macaulay's Minutes Report (1835) on Education of India, rejection of Persian and Arabic, promotion of the English language, the Urdu-Hindu Controversy, the 1867 Riots etc. All these were attacks on the components of culture and resulted in the distortion of the identity of different groups by means of the education system. For this reason, education can be regarded as the transmission of cultural identity.

### SAVIORS OF MUSLIM CULTURAL IDENTITY

#### a. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan on education

It was the great insight of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to realize the nature of all those politically engineered events as lethal attacks on Muslim culture and identity. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan understood that in those circumstances, it was only education that could save Muslim culture and revive the threatened Muslim identity. It was only through education that the cultural identity could be transmitted to new generations. The identity of the young had been brought under suspicion by these English and the Hindu manoeuvres.

#### b. Iqbal's recognition of Muslim cultural identity

Iqbal went Europe in 1905 and stayed there till 1908. He observed and analysed Western culture and recognized the causes of its rise, progress and development. He felt that there was a big difference between the Eastern and the Western cultures. Moreover, he identified the problems that Muslims were facing as: issues of language, cultural conflicts, the attitude of Congress, the decision about the Partition of Bengal,

the impact of Western culture, the deterioration of Muslim cultural values, the decline of moral values as well as economic problems. He concluded that: '*Asia was another name for Inertia*' (Beg, 1961) and attempted to awaken and educate the Muslims through his poetry. Between 1895 -1905 his poetry promoted Indian Nationalism (Iqbal J. , 1988) but the awakening of the Muslim *Ummah* and Muslim *culture as identit* (Iqbal M. , 1986) were the dominant aspects of his later poetry and writings.

#### THE OBJECTIVES OF IQBAL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

- a. Critical analysis of Western culture
- b. Recognition of the need for a separate Muslim nation
- c. Clarification of the elements of Muslim culture
- d. Reawakening pride in past Muslim civilization
- e. God as the source of knowledge and education
- f. Criticism of the nature of educational institutions
- g. The philosophy of *khudi*
- h. The importance of *khudi* for education
- i. Education as transmission of identity

#### a. Critical analysis of the Western culture

Iqbal understood the core of Western culture and realized its influence on the minds of contemporary youth. The focus of his educational policy was to make the youth aware of the reality of Western culture. He wrote: *Have you not seen the Western democratic system: Face is glittering but latently dark as the nature of Chingez* (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا جمہوری نظام  
چہرہ روش، اندروں چنگیز سے تاریک تر

He criticized Western civilization as corrupting the *Qalb o Nazer* (Iqbal A. M., 1938).

فسادِ قلب و نظر بے فرنگ کی تہذیب

He noticed the condition of the Muslims as well as the influence of Western culture on the Muslims of the Sub-Continent. Iqbal identified two groups of people. Firstly, the group which rejected Western culture because these people preferred their own traditions and were not ready for any change according to the need of the times. The second group of people was very impressed by Western culture and thought that the adoption of Western values was the way to progress. Iqbal realized that fact and expressed as (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995):

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حرارت ہے بلا کی بادۂ تہذیبِ حاضر میں  
بھڑک اٹھا بھوکا بن کے مسلم کا تنِ خاکی  
حیاتِ تازہ اپنے ساتھ لائی لذتیں کیا کیا  
رقابت، خود فروشی، ناشکیبائی، بوسناکی

### b. Recognition of the need for a separate Muslim nation

Another aspect of Iqbal's philosophy of education was to inculcate a sense of pride among the youth based on their awareness of being part of a universal Muslim community (*Ummah*). Iqbal himself was proud of being a member of the Muslim *Ummah* and felt that he was blessed to be a follower of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. He expressed his feelings as follows: *Muslims should not compare themselves to the Western nations because they are especial in their identity, the Western had the source of identity on the basis of nationality or genealogy but the identity of the Muslims is the integrity of religion as binding force* (ibid).

اپنی ملت پر قیاس اقوامِ مغرب سے نہ کر  
خاص ہے ترکیب میں قومِ رسولِ ہاشمی  
ان کی جمعیت کا ہے ملک و نسب پر انحصار  
قوتِ مذہب سے مستحکم ہے جمعیت تری

Iqbal used poetry to create a sense of being a particular and a special nation. The goal of his poetry was to educate Muslims about the values which they had forgotten. This was the reason that they were losing their own identity and their own cultural inheritance and were so impressed with Western culture.

### c. Clarification of the elements of Muslim culture

Another aim of Iqbal's philosophy of education was to re-awaken pride in the minds of the Muslim youth. That was necessary because Muslim youth were regarding European culture as a culture of progress and freedom and they regarded it as the criterion of true culture. As a result, the Muslim languages (Persian, Arabic and Urdu) were considered obsolete and Muslim cultural dress (*Sherwani pajama*) was ridiculed. An educated person wore western dress and spoke English. In fact, Muslim identity and its cultural legacy was under threat.

Since human culture, in the eyes of Iqbal, refers to customs, behaviour and conventions which differentiate one person from another, it includes the totality of learned and socially transmitted behaviour of any group of people (M, 1962). Iqbal understood that the basic elements of Islamic culture were under threat and that a

general reaction against Muslim culture had developed in the society of that time. In response to this reality, Iqbal wrote: if any nation is unable to affirm the values of its cultural legacy, that nation is deemed to perish (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).

جس قوم نے اس زندہ حقیقت کو نہ پایا  
اس قوم کا خورشید بہت جلد ہوا زرد

On the one hand, Iqbal appreciated the positive aspects of the Western culture and civilization but he struggled to liberate the minds of the youth from their blindness and their being totally captivated by western culture. Iqbal wrote: *ours was the voice which echoed in the west and none could stop us. Despite various attempts, we could not be stopped* (Bang-e-Dra, 1924).

مغرب کی وادیوں میں گونجی اداں ہماری  
تہما نہ تھا کسی سے سیلِ رواں ہمارا  
باطل سے دینے والے اے آسمان نہیں ہم  
سو بار کر چکا ہے تو امتحان ہمارا

#### d. Reawakening pride in past Muslim civilization

A genuine philosophy of education should not contain traces of pessimism and nostalgia because these can create lethargy, exhaustion and useless behaviour, which can dull the intellectual abilities of students. In Iqbal's poetry, however, there is an element of nostalgia but this nostalgia is not pessimistic. He endeavours to stimulate the youth by reminding them of their splendid past history so that they will strive for the former heights of knowledge and development. With great sorrow he recalled the forgotten status of Muslim culture and the values of Muslim civilization (The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, 1984). He lamented that '*we have lost the legacy of our forefathers thus we were thrown from the sky to the ground*' (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).

گنوا دی ہم نے جو اسلاف سے میراث پائی تھی  
ثریا سے زمیں پر آسمان نے ہم کو دے مارا

Iqbal remembered the old grandeur of Islamic culture with words such as the following: '*the heart is still craving for whatever had been lost, yet the memories are still alive* (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).'

دل کو تڑپاتی ہے اب تک گرمیِ محفل کی یاد

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جل چکا حاصل مگر محفوظ ہے حاصل کی یاد

In Iqbal's philosophy of education, the expression of nostalgia has a good reason. Due to his grief and sorrow regarding the achievements of the past, he wanted to awaken and to provoke the slumbering strength and intellectual abilities of the Muslim youth with the spark of *khudi*. He tried to foster intellectual curiosity in the youth and to stimulate awareness of the former glory of Muslim culture (ibid).

کبھی اے نوجوان مسلم، تدبیر بھی کیا تو نے  
وہ کیا گردوں تھا تو جس کا ہے اک ٹوٹا ہوا تارا

e. God as the source of knowledge and education

The concept of God occupies the central place in Islam and in other revealed religions. The life of the universe and the activity of human beings are all focused on the reality of God. Hence, the concept of God was the central theme in the educational philosophy of Iqbal. In his book *Reconstruction*, which was his *magnum opus*, Iqbal devoted a complete chapter to the absolute quality of God and the relation of human beings to God. The chapter is entitled: *The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer*. In the Quran, a human being is the vicegerent of Allah on the earth (Al-Baqarah).

*And when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily, I am going to place generations after generations on the earth' Surah Al-Baqarah (2), 30*

Adam, the first man was taught the names of things on earth. Thus Adam became the first one to acquire knowledge and the first one to transmit knowledge to coming generations. Due to his knowledge, Adam was regarded as superior to the angels (Al-Baqarah).

*And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said 'Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful. Surah Al-Baqarah (2), 31*

After the creation of the Adam, God ordained that human beings should acquire knowledge in the name of God and proclaimed that God is the creator of everything.

*Read, In the Name of Your Lord Who has created. Surah Al-Alaq (96), 31*

Consequently, in Iqbal's philosophy of education, the concept of God is central. God, as has been described in the Quran, (Al-Akhlās) is a perfect and ultimate 'Ego'. According to Iqbal, only from this 'Ultimate Ego' can other 'egos' proceed (Iqbal, The voice of liberal learning: Michael Oakeshott, 1986). The progeny of Adam as well as the successors to the legacy of knowledge are human beings. Iqbal stated that, among all the creation of God, only human beings are capable of 'conscious participation in the creative life of their Maker' (ibid). Similarly, Oakeshott claimed that only human beings were capable of learning, which is an activity that is made possible by the use of intelligence and by those who are capable of making choices (Michael, 1989).

Iqbal's philosophy of education is a legacy from the creation of Adam, who transmitted this legacy to other human beings. This is why Iqbal regarded the *knowledge of nature as the knowledge of God's behaviour*' (Iqbal, 1986). Iqbal regarded God as Supreme or Ultimate Ego while all other creatures could be called: Egos. Human beings have a relationship of "I and Thou" with the Supreme Ego. Hence, Iqbal's philosophy of education consists of elements such as: the Oneness of God, God as Supreme Ego, human beings as Egos in relationship with God. This is Iqbal's philosophy of the self (*khudi*).

f. Criticism of the nature of educational institutions

For Iqbal, the concept of *khudi* and the philosophy of education are two sides of one coin. He was critical of Muslim youth as well as of the quality of education that was available in the *Madrasas* and schools of his time. Iqbal said that: *youth often indulged in reading books but they had no insight into their real meaning* (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).

تجھے کتاب سے ممکن نہیں فراغ کہ تو  
کتاب خواں ہے مگر صاحب کتاب نہیں

Iqbal rejected the education and the curriculum, which was given in '*Madrasas*' or the schools in that period of history. He criticized both as follows (Bal-e-Jibraeel, 1935):

گلا تو گھونٹ دیا اہل مدرسہ نے ترا  
کہاں سے آئے صدا لا الہ الا اللہ  
اُٹھا میں مدرسہ و خانقاہ سے غم ناک  
نہ ذندگی، نہ محبت، نہ معرفت، نہ نگاہ



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He was angry about the kind of Western education that was provided in the sub-continent because he said that it amounted to nothing more than sitting in college and making gossip (Bang-e-Dra, 1924).

تعلیم مغربی ہے بہت جرات آفریں  
پہلا سبق ہے، بیٹھ کے کالج میں مار ڈینگ

Moreover, he said that the nature of English education was like acid, which could destroy the Ego (*khudi*) of the Muslim youth. If they lost their Ego, which was their identity, then they could be subject to any external influence and begin to lose their Muslim identity by moving in new directions. Indeed, their own culture would become alien to them (Zarb-e-Kaleem, 2012).

تعلیم کے تیزاب میں ڈال اس کی خودی کو  
ہو جائے ملائم تو جدھر چاہے، اسے پھیر

Thus his philosophy of education is an exposition of the Self, which is the same as the identity of a person that is expressed in his or her culture and education.

### g. The philosophy of *khudi*

The concept of Ego or *khudi* was the central theme of Iqbal's philosophy of education. But what precisely is this concept of Ego or *khudi*? Iqbal defined *khudi* it as *simple, indivisible and immutable soul substance* (Iqbal, 1986).

The circumstances of the Sub-Continent were threatening for the Muslim identity. The British rulers and their Allies, the Hindus, were showing animosity towards Muslim culture and they were trying to destroy Muslim identity. This resulted in the need to rescue Muslim culture and identity. This was why all Iqbal's activities, which included his political philosophy, the themes of his poetry and his philosophy of education were focused on protecting and sustaining Muslim culture and Muslim identity.

### h. The importance of *khudi* for education

We have seen that the concept of *khudi* was the focus of Iqbal's thought because it expressed Muslim values, culture and identity. For Iqbal, the only acceptable system of education was that which could safeguard all these aspects of Muslim life (Akhtar, 1977). The first pillar of Islam is faith in the unity of God. For Iqbal, the reality of the self is expressed by the unity of God (Kul'yat-e-Iqbal Urdu, 1995).

خودی کا سر نہاں لا الہ الا اللہ  
خودی ہے تیغ، فساں لا الہ الا اللہ

In Iqbal's philosophy of education, the concept of *khudi* should engage the complete attention of a student and would enable Muslims to maintain their culture (The secrete of the Self, 2015). Elements of *khudi* are belief in God, obedience, self-respect, self-reliance, self-control, hope, struggle etc.

Examples of elements that can weaken *khudi* are: infidelity, disobedience, lack in self-respect, lack of self-control, dependence, dishonesty, adultery, begging, pessimism etc (The secrete of ego, 2015). The concept of *khudi* is like the soil, which contains the seeds of all human activities such as religion, ethics, cultural values, manners and customs and activities. '*Ego consists of the feelings of personal life and is, as such, a part of the system of thought*' (Iqbal, 1986).

Due to the importance of this concept of *khudi*, writers such as K. G. Saiyadain have written on the individuality of *khudi*. This author discussed the growth of individuality, its relation to community, the material and the spiritual world as well as its link with moral character (G., 1971).

Discussing Iqbal's thought on education, Saiyadain defined education as the totality of *cultural forces* affecting individuals as well as the community (ibid). He explained that education not only transmits a person's cultural heritage but also critically evaluates it. This transmission of legacy through education, from community to the subsequent generations safeguards cultural inheritance and collective communal-life (ibid). Iqbal considered education as the *self-perpetuation of an accepted culture* (ibid).

#### i. Education as transmission of identity

On account of the fact that a human being is the vicegerent of Allah on earth, the religious practices of a Muslim cannot be separated from daily life and activity. According to Islam, the transmission of knowledge through education is the basis of human life. According to the Qur'an (Al-Baqarah):

*And He taught Adam all the names, Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful."* Surah Al-Baqarah (2), 31

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Moreover, since it is related to all aspects of life, Islam not only provides guidance but also leads to a virtuous life in the form of ‘*Uswah e Hasanah*’ PBUH.

*‘Indeed in the messenger of Allah, you have a good example to follow.’*  
Surah *Al-Ahzab* (33), 21

Indeed, the first revelation of Islam begins with the word ‘*Read*’ and ‘*Who has taught by pen*’ and ‘*he has taught man that which he knew not*’ (Al-Alaq). Hence, education, the transmission of culture and identity, is an integral part of Islam.

Iqbal did not miss this foundation of knowledge in his philosophy of education. The first chapter of his renowned book ‘*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*’ (Iqbal, 1986) has the title *Knowledge and Religious Experience*, which is about sources of knowledge. Again the fifth chapter *The Spirit of Muslim Culture* starts with the example about the attitude of a mystic and the Prophet about knowledge. The Prophet’s return is creative (ibid). He has to return for the guidance of humanity.

In short, the aim of Iqbal’s philosophy of education protests against stagnation of a static curriculum and syllabus. Iqbal strives for the perpetual upward movement of the Self (*khudi*) towards the God, the Ultimate Self. The objectives of his philosophy of education are the preservation of religious fidelity, the Muslim cultural legacy, ethical values and social ideals.

## CONCLUSION

Today there is an urgent need to revive and inculcate Iqbal’s philosophy of education. If we want to preserve our Muslim identity and transmit it to the next generation, we have to revitalize our cultural legacy. At the present time, the media is presenting artificial philosophies of education, which are destroying the identity of our Muslim *Ummah*. It seems that we are just doing experiments with various educational systems and busy devising new educational policies. These so-called educational systems cannot do justice to our Muslim culture as our identity. Iqbal realized this danger in his day and wrote the following words.

جس قوم نے اس زندہ حقیقت کو نہ پایا  
اس قوم کا خورشید بہت جلد ہوا زرد

*The people who have not realized their vital reality,  
The Sun (of glory) of the people is destined to fade soon. ■*

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