Iqbal and Persia  
(An Iqbalian Perspective)

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Abstract  
Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal is known as a renowned personality of the whole Muslim world. Although he belongs to Pakistan but he is as popular in all Muslim lands as he is in Pakistan and Sub-Continent. His works have been translated in all live and rich languages of the world along with major oriental languages. In his both poetic and prose work he appreciated to all personalities and nations who contributed in the advancement of humanity. Persian language, literature, metaphysics, theology, philosophy, poetry, intellectual traditions and wisdom were the special fields of interest for him. In this article we have tried to elaborate his views in respect of Persia and Persian people.

Key Words: Iqbal, Wisdom Poetry, Reconstruction, Persia, Renaissance, Vital Role, Muslim world.
Introduction
Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) is known as a celebrated theologian, philosopher, mystic, wisdom poet, reformer, educationist, and political activist of the modern Muslim world. He was born in Sialkot in 1877 (then Sialkot was a city of United India. In 1947 a new state emerged in the world under the name Pakistan and it was included in newly emerged state.) He was a scholar of seven oriental and occidental languages i.e. English, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Punjabi, German, and Sanskrit. His creative work is in three languages i.e. English, Urdu, and Persian. He used both the mediums i.e. prose and poetry to express his views. He enriched his thought from all the treasuries of knowledge. Specifically, Eastern and Western sources of knowledge contributed to blossom his thought. He quoted two eighty five personalities of the East and the West in his Persian poetry while he adorned his Urdu poetry approximately with the thoughts of one eight five well-known figures. Similarly in his first philosophical work, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, he referred more than one fifty personalities and in his last and matured philosophical magnum opus, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, he discussed the ideas and thoughts of round about one fifty celebrated personalities of all the fields of life from all over the world. The major objective of his life was revival of Islam and renaissance of the Muslim world. He tried to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy as he said in the preface of his master work in philosophy i.e. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam:

“I have tried to meet, even though partially, this urgent demand by attempting to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge.”(Iqbal A. M., 1989: Preface)

He expressed his views on number of topics and issues. We may present a gist of his thought briefly in these words.

- God, human being, and universe relationship
- Problem of Knowledge
- Link between revelation, reason, and sense perception
- Relation between spiritual and material
- Nature of the origin of this universe
- Goal of creation
- Role of religion in human life
- Superiority of revelation and intuition above all other sources of knowledge
To expound the answers of these questions Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal discussed about all prominent religions of the world. He studied the ideas of Ancient and modern thinkers. He evaluated the dialectics of theologians. He experienced the mystical experiences of the mystics. He discussed about individual and society and about their appropriate role. He tried to search out the causes of rise and fall of different nations. He also tried to determine the limits and role of different branches of knowledge in the development of a being and society. He condemned every stagnated approach and promoted to dynamism. (Qadir, 1994: 1050)

He held that future of humanity is in spiritual based concept of life and universe. For him abstract materialism is the negation of humanity. Every kind of materialism divides human beings in different classes and groups on the basis of color, creed, race, culture, blood, and land. Future of universe is on spirituality.

“Humanity needs three things to-day—-a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.” (Iqbal A. M., 1989:142)

He emphasized that the fundamentals of Islam helped to develop human values in its followers. For him Islam is not only beneficial for human beings but it is helpful for all creatures also.

Rise of Islam, development of its culture, interaction of Arabs or early Muslims with other nations, the acceptance of Islam by other nations and their contributions in the promotion of mission, development of knowledge, and establishment of culture was a topic of special interest for Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal.

**Iqbal and Persian Thought**

Although Dr. Iqbal showed keen interest in various areas but Persia and his interaction with Islam, Persian art and literature, Persian metaphysics, philosophy, mysticism, theology, wisdom poetry, and culture and civilization were the topics of his special interest. In this regard he delivered his opinions almost in all his poetic and prose work.

Let us start this discussion from different articles of Iqbal written by him from 1902 to 1938 (till his death) which were published in renowned journals of that time. These articles were compiled by Syed Abdul Wahid Moeini and published by Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf in 1963.

In these articles Iqbal referred different Persian mystics, philosophers, theologians, and mystic poets (at different places in different contexts) like, Ghazali, Saadi, Suhrawardi, IbnSina and Umar Khayyam etc.

In 1910, Iqbal wrote an article under the topic *Millat e Baiza Parr Aik Nazr*. In this article he discussed about the role of Persia in the development of Muslim thought and civilization in past. He also pointed out the importance of Persia for Muslim world in future. The gist of his findings is as under:
Islam emerged in Arabia. Arabs played a pivotal role in political advancement of Islam but the intellectual and civilizational development of newly emerged religion accomplished by (Ajams) Persians. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:120)

Iran played a major role in the establishment of intellectual and cultural trends in Muslim world. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:125)

For Iqbal, the most important incident of history of Islam is the conquest of Iran (Persia) by Muslims. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:125)

The conquest of Iran is as significant for Muslims as the conquest of Greek was important for Romans. Both got the most valuable treasuries at their own ends. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:126)

In those days political independence and solidarity of Iran was in danger by Russia. In this respect Iqbal showed his serious concern in these words. He described:

- Iran is a great center of Islamic civilization. For the royal family of Persia its fall would be only a rundown of a piece of land but for Islamic civilization it would be as horrible as the attack of Tatars was in thirteenth century. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:126)
- For Islamic civilization a live and active role of Persia is inevitable. (Iqbal A. M., Mqalat e Iqbal, 1963:126)

Dr. Iqbal’s views on independent topics have been published under the title “Stray Reflections”. In this book he says,

- The conquest of Iran gifted to Arabs a beautiful land along with an ancient civilization. (Iqbal A. D., Shuzrat e Fikr e Iqbal, 1983: 101)
- An image of Muslim civilization without Persia would be one-sided. (Iqbal A. M., Discourses Of Iqbal, 2003:55)
- Persia played a central role in outward and inward history of Muslim world. (Iqbal A. D., Harf e Iqbal, 1984:114)

*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is a master piece of Iqbal’s philosophical thought. It is consisted of seven lectures. First six lectures were delivered by Iqbal in 1929 in different prestigious universities and renowned institutions of sub-continent. While the last and seventh lecture was delivered by
him in 1932 or 1933 in London on the invitation of Aristotelian society London. (In those days he was in London on the Invitation of Great Britain in respect of second round table conference).

In sixth lecture under the title, *The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam*, he quoted the opinion of Professor Horton about Persia,

“Reviewing the work of Muslim thinkers in the sphere of purely religious thought he points out that the history of Islam may aptly be described as a gradual interaction, harmony, and mutual deepening of two distinct forces, i.e. the element of Aryan culture and knowledge on the one hand, and a Semitic religion on the other.” (Iqbal A. M., 1989:130)

About Persia and Metaphysics of Persia Iqbal discussed in his doctoral thesis written by him during his stay in Europe. Because that is a detailed and comprehensive work so we will discuss it in the end. Now we precede our discussion from his poetic work.

His Urdu poetry has been published under the topic *Kulliyat e Iqbal Urdu*. He referred to many theologians, philosophers, mystics, and Persian poets in his Urdu poetry. The first book of Iqbal in Urdu poetry is under the title *Bang e Dra*. Preface of book was written by Sheikh Abdul Qadir. In 1907/8 Iqbal returned to his homeland. He started poetry in Persian language. Sheikh Abdul Qadir strived to reason out Iqbal’s interest in Iran and Persian language. His views in this respect are valuable. For him

- Persian language is rich than Urdu
- Although he had a great interest in Persian literature, philosophy and metaphysics from his early days but it was enhanced during his doctoral research work. In days of his stay in Europe he studied Persian literature in detail and realized that Persian is much better to express mystic and philosophical ideas rather than Urdu
- Persian language provided him a comprehensive and wider perspective as compare to Urdu language

These signs show the importance of Iran and Persian language for Iqbal. This attitude of Iqbal continued throughout his life. In his Urdu poetry he discussed Iran and Iranian civilization in different ways. Following is the sum of his views

- He mentioned Iran as the homeland of Rumi (Iqbal A. D., *Kuliyaat-e Iqbal* (Urdu), 1991:303)
- He stated Iran as an ancient and great civilization (Iqbal A. D., *Kuliyaat-e Iqbal* (Urdu), 1991:315)
He referred Iran as a beautiful and an imaginary piece of land (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Urdu), 1991:678)

Major poetic work of Iqbal is in Persian language. His Persian poetry has been published under the title Kuliyat e Iqbal (Farsi). In Persian work he cited Iran twenty four times. Now we state here an essence of his views in respect of Iran.

- He described the beauty of Iran with special reference of the cities of Khunsar and Isfahan (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:11)
- Need of unity and in this regard role of Iran (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:20,106)
- He discussed about some sages of Iran ((Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:33)
- Cohesion-a prominent feature of Iranian nation (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:240)
- The secret of Ana al Haq (I am truth) and Iran (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:561)
- He held Kashmir a smaller Iran because it was resembled with Iran in beauty
- Goutie and Oriental movement of Germany were inspired from Persian poets, specifically from Khwaja Hafiz, Saadi, Sheikh Attar, Ferdosi, Rumi, Ameer Khusro, and Jami (Iqbal A. D., Kuliyat-e Iqbal (Farsi), 1985:177,183)

The comprehensive work of Iqbal in respect of Iran is his doctoral thesis. Metaphysics of Persia was a specific field of interest for Iqbal from the early days of his life. In 1905 to 1907, Iqbal went to Europe for higher studies. During his stay in Europe he wrote a dissertation under the topic The Development of Metaphysics in Persia and got the degree of Ph.D. from Munich University Germany. Although it was written in the beginning and with the passage of time and due to advancement in research, a change occurred in the thought of Iqbal in this respect, (Iqbal A. D., Falsfa e Ajam, 1969:176) nevertheless this work of Iqbal is of specific importance. In this article our aim is only to describe Iqbal’s views in respect of Iran and Persian thought. Here a critical analysis of the views of Iqbal in regard of Persia is out of our scope. I have dealt with this book of Iqbal in detail in my doctoral thesis titled, Iqbal and Persian Philosophy-A Critical Study of The Development of Metaphysics in Persia. In this respect I have also written an article in Urdu language in 2006 titled, Falsfa e Ajam parr Aik Nazar. Therefore we precede our discussion within the scope of this article.
This research work is consisted of a preface, six chapters, and a conclusion. In general he divided his thesis in two parts i.e. Pre-Islamic Persian thought and Persian thought after the emergence of Islam. In pre-Islamic Persian thought he discussed about the thought of ancient Persian sages Zoroaster, Mani, and Mazdak. The second part is about Muslim thought. This section is consisted of three intellectual movements i.e. Theology, Philosophy, Mysticism. In this section Iqbal expounded the contributions of Persian theologians, philosophers, and mystics in the development of these movements. In theology he determined the role of Persian theologians. In philosophy he particularly discussed the thought of Ibn Maskawaih and Avicenna (Ibn Sina). While in mysticism (Sufism) Iqbal discussed about the role of Abdul Karim Al-Jili, Shaikh al Ishraq Shahab al Din Suhrawardi and some other celebrated Mystics and sages of Persia. In concluding remarks he tried to search a logical continuity between the whole metaphysical traditions of Persia.

All renowned thinkers from all over the world admitted and expounded the importance of the study of Persian metaphysics for Iqbal’s thought. On the other hand they also acknowledged the worth of Iqbal’s views in respect of Iran and metaphysics of Persia.

Iqbal stayed in Europe for three years (1905-1907). This period revolutionized to Iqbal’s thought. Iqbal personally admitted the importance of this age in the development of his thought. (B.A.Dar, 1987:176) All researchers of Iqbal studies acknowledged an extreme importance of these three years in the development of Iqbal’s thought. Now we present a sum of their opinions. The stay of Europe played a pivotal role in Iqbal’s spiritual development. (Din, 1985:13-14) For his research work (Metaphysics of Persia) Iqbal visited the libraries of England and Germany. It opened the new avenues of understanding for him in respect of Muslim thought and civilization. (Siddiqi, 1986: 341) During his stay in Europe, Iqbal wrote a thesis titled, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, for a higher degree. Although it was written by him in the beginning of his research carrier but it played a very important role in his intellectual development. (Khan, 1977:36) This research work has a vital significance in the history of religion. We may say it the starting point of Iqbal’s intellectual pursuits. (Schimmel, 1985:59)

Iqbal’s above said research work as a valuable contribution to Persian metaphysics. We may conclude to their views in these words:

- This work is unique due to approach, reasoning, argumentation, and interpretation
- This research work is a transitional period and a turning point for him.
- He studied comprehensively different philosophical, theological, mystical, political, social, and religious movements of Persia (Pre-Islam to that day). He critically analyzed them.
- During this research he realized the richness of Persian language and literature. Consequently, he decided to use Persian language to express his views.
- Through this intellectual pursuit he made a comparison between the dynamism of the West and stagnant approach of the East.
- He realized that to revolutionize Muslim society reconstruction of religious thought was necessary.
- He comprehended that for a better and bright future of humanity we should develop a live link between the East and the West. Therefore he tried to bridge over this gulf in this thesis and further continued it throughout his life in all his work.

Although in the preface of his research Iqbal introduces us about the goals as: A search for logical continuity of Persian thought and struggle to interpret it in the frame work of modern philosophy and secondly the nature, origin, scope, subject matter and an intellectual interpretation and justification of phenomenon of Sufism. Mir Hassan ul Din had translated it in to Urdu language in 1928. In the preface of his translation he viewed, every nation has its specific soul, nature and characteristics like an individual. In his doctoral thesis, titled The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Allama Iqbal has tried to discover the special soul and particular attributes of Iranian nation. (Iqbal A. D., Falsfa e Ajam, 1969: Preface) In the preface of his doctoral thesis Iqbal observed:

“The most remarkable feature of the character of Persian people is their love of Metaphysical speculation…But the history of Persian thought presents a phenomenon peculiar to itself. In Persia, due perhaps to Semitic influences, philosophic stimulation has indissolubly associated itself with religion.” (Iqbal A. M., The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, 1964: Preface)

In the whole book, Iqbal has scholarly dealt with the prominent features of Iranian thought from pre-Islam to advent of Islam, and in this regard he continued his research till first decay of the 20th century.
Conclusion

In the light of above discussion we conclude our discussion as follows. Iqbal was a multidimensional personality and his thought was universal in its connotation. In his both poetic and prose work he appreciated to every being and nation who served for human beings and cherished to every scholar from all religions and from all lands who contributed in the development of human race. In his writings he tried to determine the role of Persian theologians, philosophers, mystics, poets, and scholars in the development of Muslim intellectual traditions. Similarly, he made an attempt to engulf the distance between the East and the West. For a safe and secure future of humanity we should follow Iqbal and adopt a balanced and justified attitude i.e. appreciation of good and condemnation of evil without any discrimination.
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