



Rumi's Spiritual Legacy in Iqbal's Philosophy and Poetics

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the profound intellectual and spiritual relationship between Jalaluddin Rumi and Muhammad Iqbal. Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, considered Rumi his guide and teacher, or Pir-i-Rumi. However, their relationship goes beyond inspiration. Iqbal reinterprets Rumi as source of active revival of Islam in the modern world. Through themes like Khudi (selfhood), Ishq (divine love), time, movement, and the dialectic of spirit, Iqbal channels Rumi's legacy into a distinctly modern metaphysical and political framework.

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1. Introduction

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan had a great admiration for the 13th-century mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi. Iqbal consistently regarded Rumi as a central spiritual guide in shaping his metaphysical worldview. We find many instances where Iqbal in his poetry and prose mentions Rumi as someone who enlightened his thoughts. Iqbal consistently took Rumi as an ideal interpreter of Islam. Rizvi highlights Rumi's role as a guiding force who revives Iqbal's sense of metaphysical responsibility and action (Rizvi, 2012). He was greatly impressed by Rumi's devotion to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his knowledge of the Quran. This influenced Iqbal's interpretation of Quran which aligns with Rumi's thoughts. Though he was educated in philosophy, if he could be called disciple of any man in spirituality, it would be Rumi (Hakim, 1966). There was no other poet or thinker who received the same level of respect in Iqbal's writing as Rumi did since he found that spiritual energy in Rumi's Sufism which was the key to revitalizing Muslim thought. As Majeed writes that Iqbal saw Rumi not just as a poet but as an intellectual architect of Muslim revival (Majeed, 1986). Many studies have tried to relate Iqbal's intellectual growth with Rumi we find dearth of knowledge which has explored their convergence of ideas and common grounds which ignited their thought process which motivated Iqbal to Rumi as a spiritual guide. Through this study we will try to analyzed those common grounds which united them both. We will refer to scholarship in Islamic studies, comparative philosophy, and literary studies to achieve our goal. (Nasr, 1981) identifies Rumi as a bridge between classical Sufism and Iqbal's modernist reinterpretation of Islam. Thus the key objectives of the study are firstly to explore the spiritual and philosophical influence of Rumi on Iqbal's thought. Secondly to examine how Iqbal reinterprets Rumi's ideas for modern Islamic revival and finally to present Iqbal's philosophy as a bridge between tradition and modernity. This study adopts an interpretive approach, drawing on textual analysis and comparative hermeneutics. Primary texts by Muhammad Iqbal, Jalaluddin Rumi, and others are analyzed to uncover thematic convergences in their conceptions of khushi, ishq and time.

2. The divine relationship

In his famous lines Iqbal says

پیر رومی خاک را اکسیر کرد

از غبارم جلوه با تعمیر کرد

– “

The master of Rumi transmuted my dust into gold” (Iqbal, 1935) – which clearly indicates Iqbal’s admiration for Rumi. At another place Iqbal calls Rumi Pir Rumi (spiritual mentor) which symbolizes divine and spiritual connection. Iqbal explicitly refers to Rumi as his “Pir-i-Rumi”, acknowledging him as both a poetic and spiritual mentor. Iqbal took this inspiration and applied on Muslims of 20th century to awaken them. This inspiration can be seen at many places in his poetry like

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں، مشرق کا ستارہ ہوں میں

میرے دن کی صبح، رومی کے سحر سے ہے روشن۔

–

Did you not see? I am the star of the East. The morning of my day is lit by the dawn of Rumi (Iqbal, 1924).

3. Impact on Iqbal’s Philosophy

Moulana Rumi discusses that soul is destined to leave material world to reach its terminal end. This is possible by treating our stay in this world by doing everything as per Allah’s will (fana) and that is possible only through true love (ishq). Iqbal took inspiration from this concept and applied this in philosophy. This inspired Iqbal, when he discusses the concept of Khudi (Vahid, 1976). Practically Iqbal gives more attention strengthening the self (Khudi) and accordingly bringing a meaningful change in the world. Thus he sees the concept of fana a way to change the world while battling with evil through Khudi. (Malik, 2001) shows that Iqbal’s concept of “Khudi” mirrors Rumi’s call to self-realization through divine love. In his famous book, *Asrar-i-Khudi*, Iqbal insists on strengthening Khudi in form of a dialogue

- Rumi: The moth perishes in the flame of divine love.
- Iqbal: The self becomes the flame that illuminates and reshapes the world.

For Iqbal this strengthens the self-esteem which is fundamental to awaken those who are in slumber. (Khan, 1994) describes how Iqbal used Rumi’s metaphors to reawaken Muslim individuality and purpose.

4. Rumi’s Concept of Space and Time and Iqbal’s Existential Framework

In 1930’s Heidegger’s book being and time gave a new life to existentialism thought. While Iqbal was greatly influence by German Philosophers, in this domain he linked time with metaphysics. For Heidegger, we live as human beings because we are conscious of time and our orientation generally is towards future. This provides a profound ontological lens through which the spiritual and existential journeys articulated by Rumi and Iqbal can be reinterpreted—not as abstract mysticism, but as an authentic mode of Being-in-the-world. Both Rumi and Iqbal have varying opinion about time. While Rumi takes it as something metaphysical, Iqbal sees it as an opportunity to express being, Iqbal calls it an opportunity to evolve and prove oneself to fullest in the realm of time. Its important to note the whirling dervish of Rumi indicates cosmic motion and using it to self-transformation. Iqbal takes inspiration from it but presents it in a different way. Dar emphasizes that Iqbal adopted Rumi’s idea of dynamic selfhood as central to his reconstruction of Islamic thought (1971).

“To exist in pure duration is to be a self, and to be a self is to be able to say: I am.”
— Iqbal, *Reconstruction*

5. Political Influence

Rumi was more inclined towards *ishq* rather than rationalism or idealism. This was quite different from major Western thinkers, but Rumi considered it the apex of human existence to be in real *ishq* which generally does not follow rationality. Iqbal who was inspired by philosophy of Nietzsche but in reality he used Rumi’s philosophy of *ishq* in his political thoughts. That’s why all poetry and writings of Iqbal tries to awaken Muslims not merely by adopting Western forms, but by rekindling inner vitality. So Rumi’s concept of *ishq* in fact becomes a source awakening of Muslims with dignity.

جب عشق سکھاتا ہے آداب خودی

کھلتے ہیں غلاموں پر اسرار شنشابی

"When love teaches the manners of selfhood, The secrets of kingship are revealed to the slaves." Javid Nama

In Javid nama, the famous book of Iqbal on the name of his son Javed Iqbal. In this book Iqbal narrates his spiritual journey under the guidance of Rumi (Iqbal, 1932). He travels to Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, and beyond. In this spiritual journey Iqbal meets with Buddha, Hallaj, and Nietzsche. Each planet teaches him a lesson about life, justice, love, freedom, and faith. Iqbal uses this journey to find out truth. This journey acts as a source of enlightenment for Iqbal where he learns about the Western thought and the reasons why Muslims are unable to cope with their weaknesses. Schimmel describes *Javid Nama* as a poetic union of Eastern mysticism and Islamic activism under Rumi's guidance (Schimmel, 1989). Rumi acts as a spiritual guide in this journey. He mentors Iqbal in friendly way awakens Iqbal's inner self. Throughout this journey, Rumi guides Iqbal like a teacher and spiritual friend. Rumi tells him the real meaning of freedom which Iqbal describes in his poetry. He understands that for the Muslim world to rise again, people must first wake up spiritually, develop strong character, and connect deeply with God. In the end, *Javid Nama* shows that the entire universe is like a stage where the soul learns, grows, and finds its true place — with Rumi helping Iqbal discover the power of selfhood and divine love.

رومی! ز من حدیث دروئے سخن میسر
زین شعله تابگیر، بدن با گداختند

"Rumi! Ask me not of the secrets burning within—These flames have already melted many bodies."

6. Conclusion

This study provides us new insights about profound intellectual and spiritual bond between Jalaluddin Rumi and Muhammad Iqbal. While Iqbal took inspiration from Rumi as his spiritual guide the bond extends far beyond poetic inspiration. Iqbal used Rumi's thought as they key source for awakening Muslims of sub continent. By engaging with themes such as *Khudi* (selfhood), *Ishq* (divine love), Iqbal was able to use the concepts in the modern times of twentieth century. Through this synthesis, Iqbal transformed Rumi's spiritual teachings into a powerful foundation for ethical action and self-realization in the contemporary Muslim world.

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