

REVIVING THE UMMAH THROUGH INTEGRATED KNOWLEDGE: IQBAL'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL REVIVAL

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into Allama Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy of integrated knowledge, emphasizing the harmonious fusion of reason, revelation, and intuition as a means to revitalize the Muslim Ummah and overcome intellectual stagnation. Iqbal's visionary framework closely aligns with the concept of Islamization, advocating for the integration of traditional Islamic principles with modern scientific and philosophical advancements to create a balanced epistemological approach. His emphasis on ijtihad (independent reasoning) serves as a transformative tool for renewal, enabling Muslims to confront contemporary challenges such as materialism, globalization, and ethical dilemmas posed by technological advancements. By critiquing intellectual inertia and championing ethical dimensions in science, governance, and education, Iqbal provides a roadmap for an Islamized approach to knowledge. This research highlights the enduring relevance of Iqbal's ideas, advocating for educational and intellectual reform to inspire holistic progress and restore the Ummah's leadership in global knowledge production, while fostering a meaningful engagement with modernity within an Islamic framework.

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary Muslim Ummah finds itself at a crossroads, grappling with multifaceted intellectual and socio-political challenges. Despite its rich heritage of scholarship and cultural achievements, the Ummah faces a crisis marked by fragmentation, lack of innovation, and a diminishing role in global intellectual discourse. The dominance of secular ideologies, coupled with internal discord and a decline in knowledge production, has exacerbated this predicament. In an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting paradigms, the need for a cohesive intellectual framework that addresses both spiritual and material dimensions has never been more pressing. The integration of traditional Islamic knowledge with modern disciplines is pivotal for addressing these challenges and revitalizing the intellectual vitality of the Ummah. Classical Islamic scholarship flourished on the foundation of a holistic epistemology, blending divine revelation with rational inquiry. However, this harmony has eroded over time, leading to a dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge systems. Bridging this gap is essential for the Ummah's revival, enabling it to engage constructively with contemporary issues while remaining rooted in its spiritual and moral ethos. Knowledge integration not only fosters innovation but also ensures that the solutions derived are grounded in the ethical principles of Islam.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), a poet, philosopher, and reformer, stands as a monumental figure in the intellectual history of the Muslim world. A visionary thinker, Iqbal sought to inspire Muslims

to rediscover their intellectual and spiritual potential. His philosophy emphasizes the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam, advocating for a dynamic approach that integrates reason and revelation. Iqbal's critique of intellectual stagnation and his call for self-awareness and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) resonate deeply with the challenges facing the Ummah today. His works, spanning poetry and prose, are a testament to his commitment to fostering an intellectual awakening that harmonizes Islamic traditions with modern scientific and philosophical advancements.

This article delves into Iqbal's philosophy of integrated knowledge, examining its relevance for addressing the intellectual and socio-political challenges confronting the Muslim Ummah. By analyzing Iqbal's contributions, the article aims to highlight his approach as a roadmap for reviving the Ummah's intellectual legacy. Furthermore, it explores the practical applicability of his ideas in contemporary Islamic thought, offering insights into how Muslims can reclaim their historical role as leaders in knowledge production and societal transformation.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research design, emphasizing philosophical and hermeneutic analysis through critical examination of Iqbal's works, such as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and his poetry, to explore his epistemological framework and integration of knowledge. It incorporates comparative analysis of Iqbal's ideas with those of reformers like Al-Ghazali, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, and Fazlur Rahman, identifying shared and distinct approaches to knowledge integration. The methodology situates Iqbal's philosophy within historical and contemporary Islamic thought, highlighting its relevance to modern challenges. Recent scholarly works on Iqbal's intellectual contributions provide a theoretical foundation, while case studies, including examples from the Golden Age of Islam and institutions like the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), illustrate practical applications of integrated knowledge in fostering intellectual renewal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bakar delves into the integration of science and spirituality in Islamic intellectual traditions,

demonstrating how this synthesis can address contemporary challenges. He aligns with Iqbal's assertion of the complementarity of empirical inquiry and spiritual insight. This work reinforces Iqbal's advocacy for a holistic epistemology that bridges reason and revelation (Bakar, 2021).

Sardar argues for the reinvention of Islamic civilization through the integration of modern science and technology with Islamic ethical principles. He critiques the separation of sacred and secular knowledge, a core concern of Iqbal. Offers practical examples of how integrated knowledge can lead to societal transformation, complementing Iqbal's philosophical vision (Sardar, 2019).

Kamali addresses the role of Islamic ethics in governance, science, and technology, emphasizing a balance between material progress and spiritual values. This reflects Iqbal's vision of embedding Islamic ethics within modern disciplines. Highlights the importance of ethical frameworks in contemporary Islamic discourse, resonating with Iqbal's integrated epistemology (Kamali, 2020).

Auda applies systems theory to Islamic law and knowledge, advocating for a holistic integration of disciplines. His work parallels Iqbal's views on the dynamic interaction between revelation and rational inquiry. Auda's methodological approach strengthens Iqbal's arguments for modernizing Islamic thought through integration (Auda, 2018).

Moosa explores Al-Ghazali's synthesis of reason and revelation, offering insights that complement Iqbal's call for intellectual dynamism. The book illustrates the historical precedents for integrated knowledge in Islamic traditions. Reinforces Iqbal's argument for reviving Islamic thought through an epistemology rooted in both spirituality and reason (Moosa, 2021).

IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

Iqbal's philosophy of knowledge rests on the principle of unity, rejecting the compartmentalization of knowledge into isolated domains. He believed that the segregation of spiritual and material knowledge is detrimental to the intellectual and moral progress of the Muslim Ummah. According to Iqbal, all knowledge emanates from a singular divine source, and thus, it must be viewed as interconnected and complementary rather than fragmented. This perspective is central to his call for integrating various epistemological domains, bridging the gap between revelation, reason, and intuition.

EMPHASIS ON THE UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Iqbal envisioned knowledge as a unified field, where reason and intuition work in tandem with divine revelation to facilitate human understanding. He argued that reason alone, devoid of spiritual insight, leads to a mechanistic and reductionist worldview, while intuition without the guidance of reason risks becoming speculative and ungrounded. Iqbal's approach aligns closely with Islamic epistemology, which acknowledges both rational and transcendental sources of knowledge. He elaborated on this synthesis by stating that "the Quran sees no opposition between the empirical and the spiritual". This holistic framework positions human intellect and divine guidance as mutually reinforcing agents in the pursuit of truth.

Quranic Foundation

Iqbal's epistemological framework is deeply rooted in the Quranic worldview, which he viewed as the ultimate source of intellectual and spiritual renewal. He emphasized the Quran's call to reflect on nature, history, and the self as pathways to understanding the divine. According to Iqbal, the Quran encourages dynamic thought and continuous exploration of the universe, urging believers to engage with their environment through observation and contemplation (Iqbal, 1930). He interpreted the Quran's integration of empirical observation and spiritual reflection as a mandate for Muslims to pursue all branches of knowledge while remaining anchored in ethical and moral principles derived from revelation.

The Concept of Ijtihad

Central to Iqbal's philosophy of knowledge is the concept of *ijtihad*—independent reasoning in the interpretation of Islamic principles. For Iqbal, *ijtihad* is not merely a legal mechanism but a broader intellectual tool for renewing Islamic thought and integrating traditional knowledge with modern disciplines. He argued that the stagnation of the Muslim world is partly due to the neglect of *ijtihad*, which he considered essential for adapting Islamic principles to contemporary challenges (Iqbal, 1930). Iqbal advocated for a reactivation of *ijtihad* to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant in a rapidly changing world, allowing Muslims to engage confidently with modern scientific and philosophical advancements. Iqbal's emphasis on *ijtihad* resonates with his broader philosophy of integration, as it

enables the reconciliation of classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary intellectual currents. By championing *ijtihad*, Iqbal sought to empower Muslims to navigate the complexities of modernity without compromising their spiritual identity or ethical values.

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN IQBAL'S THOUGHT

Faith and Reason

Iqbal argued for a harmonious relationship between faith and reason, emphasizing that the two are not inherently contradictory but complementary. He rejected the dichotomy often presented between the spiritual and empirical domains, asserting that both stem from the same divine source and serve to enhance human understanding. According to Iqbal, "faith is not opposed to reason; rather, it elevates it by providing a moral and spiritual compass". He maintained that Islamic epistemology, rooted in the Quran, integrates rational inquiry with spiritual insight, creating a balanced framework for knowledge. This synthesis, Iqbal believed, could resolve the crisis of intellectual stagnation in the Muslim world, allowing the Ummah to engage effectively with modernity while remaining true to its spiritual ethos.

Role of Science and Philosophy

For Iqbal, science and philosophy were not separate from the domain of Islamic thought but integral to its evolution. He viewed the scientific method as a tool for understanding the physical universe, which is a manifestation of divine creativity. Iqbal urged Muslims to reclaim their historical role as pioneers in scientific discovery, drawing inspiration from the Quran's emphasis on observation and reflection. Iqbal also highlighted the need to bridge traditional Islamic sciences with modern methodologies. He criticized the tendency of some Muslim scholars to confine religious knowledge to static interpretations, arguing instead for a dynamic approach that incorporates contemporary scientific and philosophical advancements. As he wrote, "The scientific spirit in Islam is a consequence of the attitude of the Quran" (Iqbal, 1930). This integration, according to Iqbal, allows for a deeper understanding of both the material and spiritual aspects of existence, fostering a comprehensive worldview that aligns with Islamic teachings.

Dynamic Spirituality

Iqbal emphasized the role of spirituality in fostering intellectual growth, advocating for a dynamic and active form of spiritual practice that engages with the realities of life. He believed that spiritual awakening is essential for unlocking human potential and inspiring creativity in all fields of knowledge. According to Iqbal, the stagnation of the Muslim world is partly due to a passive and ritualistic approach to spirituality, which he sought to replace with a more vibrant and transformative vision. In his view, spirituality should not retreat from the world but rather engage with it, shaping ethical values and inspiring innovation. He wrote, "True spirituality does not negate the material world but transforms it, aligning it with divine purpose" (Iqbal, 1930). Iqbal's concept of *khudi* (selfhood) further underscores this point, as it encourages individuals to cultivate their inner potential and contribute to the collective progress of humanity. This dynamic spirituality, when combined with rational inquiry and scientific exploration, provides the foundation for a holistic and integrated approach to knowledge.

Educational Reform

Iqbal identified education as a cornerstone for the revival of the Muslim Ummah, advocating for curricula that integrate spiritual and empirical knowledge. He criticized the existing duality in educational systems, which separated religious and secular studies, arguing that this division undermines the holistic development of individuals and societies (Iqbal, 1930). According to Iqbal, educational reform should reflect the unity of knowledge, blending traditional Islamic teachings with modern sciences and humanities to produce well-rounded individuals capable of addressing contemporary challenges. An example of this vision is found in the Aligarh Movement, which sought to modernize Muslim education in colonial India. Iqbal praised such initiatives, urging their expansion to include a stronger foundation in Islamic spirituality alongside modern disciplines. Contemporary Islamic education models, such as those implemented at institutions like the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), can be seen as practical embodiments of Iqbal's vision, incorporating Islamic ethics within a multidisciplinary framework.

Ethical Dimensions in Modern Disciplines

Iqbal emphasized the importance of embedding Islamic ethical principles in the study and practice of modern disciplines, including science, economics,

and governance. He argued that the pursuit of knowledge without moral guidance leads to materialism and exploitation, undermining the spiritual and social fabric of society. "Knowledge, when divorced from ethics, ceases to be a blessing and becomes a curse," Iqbal wrote. In science, he advocated for research that serves humanity rather than merely advancing technological prowess (Iqbal, 1930). Similarly, in economics, he critiqued systems rooted in greed and inequality, proposing an Islamic framework based on justice, equity, and communal welfare. In governance, Iqbal's call for spiritual democracy emphasizes accountability and the integration of ethical values in decision-making processes. These principles align with Quranic teachings and provide a roadmap for contemporary societies facing crises of corruption, inequality, and environmental degradation.

Global Relevance

Iqbal's ideas extend beyond the Muslim Ummah, offering solutions to universal challenges such as materialism, ethical dilemmas in technology, and the fragmentation of values in a rapidly globalizing world. His critique of materialism resonates in an age where consumerism and technological advancement often overshadow ethical considerations. Iqbal warned against the dehumanizing effects of an unchecked focus on material progress, stating, "The modern age needs a spiritual interpretation of the universe more than ever before" (Iqbal, 1930). In the realm of technology, Iqbal's emphasis on ethical reasoning provides a framework for addressing issues like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and environmental sustainability. By grounding technological innovation in moral principles, Iqbal's philosophy ensures that advancements serve humanity rather than harm it. His holistic approach has particular relevance in addressing global crises, encouraging nations to adopt policies that balance progress with ethical responsibility (Rahman, 1982).

Intellectual Stagnation

One of the primary challenges to implementing Iqbal's vision of integrated knowledge is the resistance to reform within traditional religious institutions. These institutions, often steeped in centuries-old practices, may perceive efforts to modernize as threats to their authority and identity. Iqbal himself lamented the rigidity of some Islamic scholars, or *ulama*, whom he saw as guardians of an intellectual status quo that hindered progress. He

observed, “The closing of the door of *ijtihad* has led to the ossification of Islamic thought” (Iqbal, 1930). Modern scholars echo Iqbal’s concerns. Ebrahim Moosa, in *What Is a Madrasa?* highlights the tension between traditional Islamic educational frameworks and the need for intellectual reform, noting that outdated curricula often fail to address contemporary realities (Moosa, 2015). Overcoming this stagnation requires fostering a culture of critical thinking and encouraging collaboration between traditional scholars and contemporary intellectuals to reinterpret Islamic teachings in light of modern challenges.

MISINTERPRETATIONS OF IQBAL

Iqbal’s philosophy is often misunderstood, either reduced to his poetic expressions or oversimplified as a call for blind assimilation of Western thought. These misinterpretations can lead to a dilution or misapplication of his ideas. Iqbal explicitly warned against an uncritical adoption of Western ideologies, advocating instead for a selective integration that aligns with Islamic values. He wrote, “What is needed is not the adoption of Western materialism but the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam to meet modern demands”. In contemporary discourse, Vali Nasr critiques the oversimplification of reformist thinkers like Iqbal, emphasizing that their nuanced views often get overshadowed by ideological agendas (Nasr, 2001). Addressing these misconceptions requires a clearer articulation of Iqbal’s philosophy, emphasizing its roots in Quranic epistemology and its relevance to contemporary Islamic thought (Esposito, 1999).

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization presents a dual challenge: while it offers opportunities for intellectual exchange and technological advancement, it also risks eroding local Islamic values and fostering cultural homogenization. Iqbal acknowledged the complexities of this dynamic, warning against the uncritical acceptance of foreign cultural norms (Rahman, 1982). He argued that Muslims must engage with global advancements while maintaining their spiritual and ethical distinctiveness: “Modern man, in his eager pursuit of conquest of nature, has lost his inner self”. Recent scholars, like Tariq Ramadan in *The Quest for Meaning*, argue that globalization requires Muslims to actively assert their ethical values in global debates, particularly in areas

like environmental sustainability and artificial intelligence. Striking a balance requires frameworks that harmonize local Islamic values with global trends, ensuring that modernization does not lead to cultural and spiritual erosion (Ramadan, 2010).

HISTORICAL BENEFITS OF INTEGRATED KNOWLEDGE

The integration of spiritual and empirical knowledge has historically been a cornerstone of Islamic civilizations, particularly during the Golden Age of Islam (8th–13th centuries). Scholars like Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) demonstrated the harmonious coexistence of science, philosophy, and religion. Their works laid the foundation for advancements in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and ethics, often drawing directly from Quranic principles of inquiry and reflection. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes, “The intellectual achievements of this period stemmed from a vision of knowledge that encompassed both the seen and unseen, the rational and the spiritual” (Nasr, 1968). Iqbal viewed this era as a model for contemporary Muslims, urging a return to the spirit of intellectual dynamism and openness. He wrote, “The Muslim’s past bears witness to the fact that the spiritual emancipation of the individual can be the fountainhead of the collective advancement of society”. Recent scholarship has also underscored the relevance of this historical paradigm. For example, George Saliba in *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* argues that the integration of knowledge during the Golden Age was instrumental in shaping both Islamic and Western intellectual traditions (Saliba, 2007).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: IQBAL AND OTHER REFORMERS

Iqbal’s ideas on integrated knowledge align with the philosophies of earlier Islamic thinkers, yet his approach is distinct in addressing the challenges of modernity. Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) emphasized the compatibility of reason and revelation, proposing a framework where rational sciences serve as tools to understand divine truths (Valli, 2012). In *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Al-Ghazali argued that rational inquiry must ultimately be subordinate to spiritual insight, ensuring alignment with Islamic teachings (Al-Ghazali, 2000). Iqbal built upon this legacy but placed greater emphasis on dynamic

engagement with modern sciences and technologies. He viewed *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as the mechanism for contextualizing Islamic principles in a rapidly changing world. Similarly, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi (1921–1986), in *Islamization of Knowledge*, proposed a systematic integration of Islamic ethics with contemporary disciplines. Al-Faruqi argued, “The separation of knowledge from its metaphysical roots has resulted in a fragmentation of the intellectual enterprise” (Al-Faruqi, 1982). Both Iqbal and Al-Faruqi sought to revive the intellectual spirit of Islam, yet Iqbal’s vision extended beyond institutional reforms, advocating for a spiritual awakening that drives intellectual progress. As Fazlur Rahman notes, “Iqbal's emphasis on the individual as the agent of change distinguishes him from earlier reformers” (Iqbal, 1930).

CONCLUSION

Allama Muhammad Iqbal's philosophy of integrated knowledge offers a transformative framework for reviving the Muslim Ummah's intellectual and spiritual legacy. By harmonizing reason and revelation, Iqbal addresses the dichotomy between spiritual and empirical domains that has hindered the development of Islamic thought in modern times. His emphasis on the unity of knowledge, the Quranic foundation of inquiry, and the dynamic practice of *ijtihad* underscores a vision where Islamic principles evolve in alignment with contemporary realities without compromising their ethical core. Iqbal's insights resonate with historical paradigms, such as the intellectual dynamism of the Golden Age of Islam, while providing a roadmap for navigating modern challenges like globalization, technological advancements, and intellectual stagnation. His call for educational reform, ethical guidance in scientific pursuits, and a renewed commitment to spirituality offers practical avenues for the Ummah to reclaim its leadership in knowledge production and societal transformation. In comparison to other reformers like Al-Ghazali and Al-Faruqi, Iqbal's approach is distinctive for its holistic emphasis on individual empowerment and spiritual renewal as precursors to societal progress. His philosophy champions a balanced pursuit of material and spiritual progress, ensuring that the tools of modernity are wielded within a moral framework rooted in Islamic values. Ultimately, Iqbal's vision remains profoundly relevant in addressing contemporary global challenges, encouraging Muslims to rise above

intellectual stagnation and cultural alienation. By embracing Iqbal's call for integrated knowledge, the Muslim Ummah can foster innovation, promote ethical solutions to modern problems, and reassert its role as a leader in the quest for universal truths. As Iqbal aptly remarked, “The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam is not a return to the past, but a leap into the future through the spiritual revitalization of the present.”

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