

The Parallels in the Philosophies of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Allama Muhammad Iqbal Towards the Revival of the Muslim Ummah

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Received: 15 December 2023

Accepted: 1 December 2023

Citation: Kamran M, Abbas Z, Hashmi T M. (2023). The Parallels in the Philosophies of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Allama Muhammad Iqbal Towards the Revival of the Muslim Ummah. *History of Medicine* 9(2): 776–778. <https://doi.org/10.17720/2409-5834.v9.2.2023.102>

Abstract

Mehmet Akif and Allama Muhammad Iqbal were contemporaries. Allama Iqbal is Pakistan's national poet and Mehmet Akif is Turkey's national poet and creator of the country's national anthem. Poetry of Allama Iqbal and Mehmet Akif is like tower of light and hope for Muslim Ummah. Both Akif and Iqbal turned to poetry in search of an art form conducive for determining social and political awareness. Perhaps one of the most significant contributions was their commitment to create awareness about the revival of Muslims Ummah.

Keywords

Awareness, Identity, Revival, Muslim Ummah

The Holy Quran and Sunnah happen to be the source of poetic inspiration for Iqbal. The creative energy and inner light from this source gave light and eternity to Iqbal's Poetics.

Though Iqbal remains anchored in a specific time and space, but his poetics transcends national, religious and ethnic boundaries. In addition to presenting a workable theory, it also teaches the great lesson of making man's inner and outer life in the universe beautiful and meaningful.

The source of Iqbal's thought is the Holy Qur'an. Iqbal's idea of self finds its roots in the Quranic episteme. He declared self-awareness of the universe and tried to unravel the mystery of inner life. In Iqbal's view, love is the culmination of passion and the creation of high values and goals. It is love that gives man the taste of flight and makes the futility of the universe insignificant.

The concept of self is the key to Iqbal's philosophy. It opens the door to self-knowledge as well as divine knowledge. The self is the essence of the human personality that grows out of love. It is love that teaches self-awareness. It is this love that made Rumi Iqbal's

spiritual guide. It is love that mirrors Razi's thoughts on Iqbal. In Iqbal's philosophy, love is the essence of the universe and the journey from self-knowledge to theology. He declared this love as the conqueror of the world and the Holy Prophet was sent to understand this love. And this light of love is the essence of Islam.

For Iqbal, Islam addresses humanity and not a particular region or nation. He considered Islam to be an enlightened and progressive religion.

He advocated the Islamic concept of equality. He viewed the rich and the poor in the light of the universal standard of Islamic equality. In Islam, he found a theology which is not localized. A large of the Holy Quran is an address to Al Nas which means human beings. It is interesting to note that in the Makki Surah's, the Quran does not address Moumins. It only addresses Al Nas which means that it is not an address to any nation or tribe but an open invitation to humanity.

Allama Iqbal's developmental consciousness and creative vision makes him unique and distinguished from the thinkers of his time. Muzaffar Hassan Malik refers to the intellectual heights found in his poetry and prose:

“Allama had a very high position as a sociologist. His poetry has various aspects, but it can be said without fear that the amount of attention he paid to the propagation of the dynamic cultural values of Islam is unparalleled.”(1)

Iqbal's contemporary Turkish thinker, poet and intellectual Mehmet Akif was inspired by the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah found in Iqbal's thought, the universality of the self, the beauty of love, the preaching of human dignity, the abundance of brotherhood and equality, hope and optimism and the rebirth of the Muslim Ummah.

The main reason for this is the unshakable belief of both the Companions in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Like Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Akif's thought seems to be full of the light of monotheism and devoted to the love of the Holy Prophet.

The arrival of two great poets and thinkers in an era is an indication that Allah Almighty wants to take the ship of the Islamic nation to the shores success and glory. Allama Iqbal and Muhammad Akif were the sun and moon of the intellectual horizon of the Islamic nation.

According to Prof. Dr. SerefAtes:

“It is absolutely a grace from Allah that Turkey and Pakistan, two brother and friend countries, have the great genius poet's Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Mehmet Akif Ersoy. Both shined at the same time in the world of literature and proved themselves. Philosophy of the both great poets was based on solidarity, motivation, self-reliance and national commitment. Infact they felt the very same pain of Muslim Ummah and tried simultaneously to convince their nations for independence, and promoted determination with the spirit of dedication and sincerity with the commitment to achieve.” (2)

Like Allama Iqbal, Muhammad Akif also loved the homeland and considered the word Tawhid as the foundation of the Islamic nation. The essence of the intellectual heritage of two great poets is love and unity with the Nation of Islam:

“Akif was a great patriot. He devoted his entire life to the service of his country, his nation, Islam and humanity.”(3)

Muhammad Akif's whole life was full of ups and downs, but his perseverance never faltered.

He was brought up in an Islamic family, which is reflected in his life and poetic journey:

“Akif's father was a religious scholar, and all teachings of Islam were strictly observed in his home. Islamic ideas and practices were the basis of his life and when these Islamic ideas and practices became ingrained in his natural ability and his strong character, he led them in the direction in which common sense leads man. - His devotion to Islam was based on reason and consciousness.(4)

Dr. Halil Toker writes that Mohammad Akif Er Soye is the great thinker and architect of Turkey:

“Mohammad Akif is a great name in Turkey that has a

great place in the hearts of everyone in Turkey, big and small. He is dear to all, he is respected by all, because he is the national poet of Turkey and the creator of the Turkish national anthem "Istiqlal Marshi". He raised his voice for the rights of the oppressed and the salvation of the Islamic world in his words and writings in the twentieth century, in the dark age of the Islamic world and Turkey.”(5)

Muhammad Akif had excellent fluency in Arabic and Persian. When Allama Iqbal's Persian poetry reached Muhammad Akif, he was astonished. He felt that he and Allama Iqbal were on the same path of thought:

“Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Muhammad Akif Ersoy is the first in a chain of Iqbal's fans and admirers in Turkey, who have embraced the radiance of Iqbal's philosophy, poetry and ideas, not only in their own hearts and souls. He also tried his best to convey these rays to the people of Turkey. Muhammad Akif Ersoy first saw Iqbal's poetry in Ankara during the Turkish War of Independence and as he read, he realized that Iqbal used to say in his poetry what Akif himself wanted to say.” (6)

Iqbal's words fell on the heart of Muhammad Akif Ersoy at first sight. He wrote a letter to a dear friend of his, Hafiz Asim, dated March 8, 1925, in reference to his initial introduction and intellectual resemblance to the words of Allama Iqbal:

“Last week, I received two books (poetry collections) by the Indian poet Muhammad Iqbal. I saw a short collection of this poet in Ankara, and I felt how much the creator of this poetry bears a resemblance to me. After studying all the poetry of the Sufi poets who developed in the land of the East, Iqbal went to Germany and digested Western philosophy very well. Iqbal is indeed a great poet. Anyway, there will be no one among the Islamians of India who is not familiar with Iqbal's name and who does not remember his poems orally. It is natural for his words to be in Urdu but the poems I have read are in Persian. - He has studied Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi well and has a heartfelt devotion to him. He considers (Rumi) as his mentor. One of his two books of poetry (poetry collections) that I have is 'Message of the East'. The lyrics and passages are excellent. After reading some of them, I chanted the slogan Mastana War. Iqbal's Arabic is also very good. His knowledge and mystical and poetic power can be compared to my abilities, he is very high. But the power of his Persian knowledge is less than my mastery of Turkish. If his style had also been new, the Hour would have taken place in Persian literature. Inshallah, I will share some of the poems in the “Message of the East” to you.” (7)

Mohammad Akif's evolved with internalizing Iqbal. Wherever he went, he kept Iqbal's writings with him. He would shake his head and tell his friends. The main reason for this love was that, like Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Akif was a believer in the revival of Islamic values and was against Western imperialism:

"So, basically both Iqbal and Akif were resisting against the hegemony of western colonialism. Indeed, both were aspiring for an Islamic renaissance based upon the paradigm of knowledge. Therefore, both poets were aware of the hidden agendas behind western colonialism and in their poems exposed the western notions of freedom and secular pluralism as dangerous masquerades." (8)

Like Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Akif Ersoy also dreamed of an understanding of the greatness of the past, knowledge of the contemporary world and a bright future for the Muslim Ummah:

"Therefore, both poets in their contexts upheld nationalism based on identity crisis, however both poets also insisted the necessity of revisiting golden principles of socio-political Islam enriched in Quran..... Muhammad Akif the admirer of Ottoman glory witnessed its decline in the aftermaths of the WW1 and saw the necessity of returning to basic Islam marching along a modern technology." (9)

Analyzing the intellectual similarities between Muhammad Akif and Muhammad Iqbal, the dream of rebirth of the Muslim Ummah and the revival of Islamic values is their common intellectual essence. Both saw literature as an expression and reflection of life. Both conditioned equality, tolerance, love of high values, cognition, freedom of thought and the formation of a better human society with a better human future.

Both Iqbal and Akif share the concept of Muslim nationhood in the form of Ummah. But it is important to note here that the Quran considers the entire humanity as Ummah. And the 19th century arbitrary divisions of nationhood and national boundaries divide humanity that the Quran considers as shirk. For this purpose, the Quran uses the term of Ibrar (those who work for the unity of humanity) and Fujjar, those who divide humanity into nations and groups based on colour, ethnicity race and gender. Iqbal rejects nationalism and dreams of a universal spiritualism that forces humanity to imagine itself as members of one greater family. And the historical evidence comes though constantly redrawing world geography and history. If the thoughts of Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Akif are compared, the essence of their passion and unconditional commitment to the Nation of Islam seems to be a common heritage. Both poets, while denying Westernism and materialism, have dreamed of a bright and radiant future for the Islamic nation. The message that Iqbal gave to the Muslim Ummah from Bukhara and Samarkand and the message of unity to the Muslim Ummah from the shores of the Nile to Tabakhak Kashgar is the essence of Muhammad Akif's poetry.

Iqbal and Akif were poets of hope and optimism. This light of Iqbal's thoughts became the light of Muhammad Akif's poetry:

What a grief if a mountain of grief fell on the Ottomans

That blood comes from a hundred thousand anjum.
(10)

Footnotes

1. Dr. Muzaffar Hassan Malik Iqbal and Culture. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1986, P.15
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3. Prof. Dr. Ali Nihad Tarlan, Dr. Muhammad Sabir. محمد عاكف. Lahore: RCD, 1970, p.19.
4. Ibid. p.33.
5. Dr. Halil Toker, Dr. Muhammad Kamran. Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Akif: Two Promising Poets. P. 41-47.
6. Ibid. p. 49.
7. Ibid. p 49-50.
8. Khurshid Alam, Rizwan Akhtar, M. Kamran. "Revolution Through Revelation: A Comparative Study of Muhammad Iqbal's and Muhammad Akif's Poetics". in Iqbal Review 61:4, Oct-Dec 2020, P. 95.
9. Muhammad Iqbal. Complete works of Iqbal (Poetry). Lahore: Iqbal Academy of Pakistan, 2006, p. 298