

Iqbal, the Muslims, and Transcending Imperialism

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Introduction

The first objective of this research paper is to focus on and elaborate Iqbal's fundamental approach to representing Islam, the Muslim identity, and the Muslim community in his Urdu poetry collections: Bang-e-Dara, Baal-e-Jibreel, Zarb-e-Kaleem, and Armaghan-e-Hijaz. In other words we would be figuring out Allama Muhammad Iqbal's "strategic location" and "strategic formation" in his Urdu poetry so that we know from what vantage point he criticizes western imperialism, and also what kind of ideological and cultural future he is trying to lead his readers to. All four of his poetry collections represent Islam and the Muslim identity, and so they align with the topic of this paper. In doing so, the paper will also achieve its second objective, which is that it can thereafter be used to critically evaluate the way in which Muslims and Islam are represented in literature or in media. It must be acknowledged before we start though that Iqbal's first poetry collection represents the initial phase of Iqbal's life, during which he probably considered himself, or at least, in which he comes across as an Indian nationalist Muslim. Nevertheless, Iqbal's representation of Islam and the Muslims does not involve exoticization. As for the rest of the three Urdu poetry collections, they exhibit how Iqbal recreates a new and an exceptionally more independent personality for the Muslims. References from his Urdu poetry will be utilized to demonstrate how Iqbal creates an intellectual, yet poetic pathway for Muslims to tread on, so that they properly achieve independence and ensure decolonization around the world, too. Moreover, through the discussion it shall also become apparent that Iqbal's poetry explicitly and implicitly suggests that independence is necessary to lead a healthy life.

The importance of highlighting misrepresentation

It has been the goal of colonial and imperial discourses to propagate

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distorted and exotic representations of non-western nations and societies that they have desired to control and rule over. It is wrong to assume that European mentality changed after the 20th century. Misleading representations of eastern people in Orientalist texts have compelled nations, who were and are losing their sense of identity and purpose in life, to surrender to the whims and hegemony of colonial and imperial powers, adopting structures that have facilitated colonial and imperial projects. In order to undo the negative impacts of former, current and potential hegemonic endeavors, not only must nations (eastern in particular) learn ways of reestablishing and preserving their authenticity, but they must also learn how to invalidate any past, current or future kinds of misrepresentations. In so doing, they would play a major role in bringing about justice and peace to this world.

This task is crucial, particularly in the case of Muslims, who have been (for more than two decades) the main object of imperial attention, (or rather the “imperial gaze”) and imperial persecution from both inside and outside western countries ever since the 9/11 attacks more than two decades ago. Once colonization came to an end around the world during the 20th century, various nations apparently achieved their independence from western control in the sense that colonial officers went back to their countries, and the resources of the native-countries were once again at the disposal of their natives. However, in postcolonial discourse for instance, we know by consensus that the western powers’ process of exerting control over the formerly colonized people did not end after the end of colonization. It perpetuated systematically. America and Europe have continued to exert control on the economies and policies of “third world countries” through trade agreements, economic aid, and multinational enterprises. During colonization, languages, cultural practices and even the religion of Europe were being imposed on the native populations. The problem is that their impact remains, although all formerly colonized countries have gained independence. The beliefs and customs of the former colonial powers are frequently reflected in legislative frameworks, educational programs, and cultural practices of the “third world countries”. In a world of confused identities and uncertainty regarding a positive future for all, the first step we can take towards true independence is by determining who we are in order to truly connect with others who are different from us. One needs the moon to discern it from the darkness of the night and the same is true of Islam and the Muslim identity. One thing

is certain though in this case: neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism cannot be allowed to define the Muslim community and Islam anymore.

We must ensure that our distinctions from other communities, particularly in the case of the Western world, are not presented from the Orientalist's exotic lens, for Orientalism is a discourse designed to subjugate non-western nations and communities. In a world dominated by imperial western capitalism, we have to be cautious when dealing with any representation, especially those produced by westerners, and westernized sources.

Iqbal's shift of perspective: from hybrid to unified self

Regarding his Urdu poetry, there is one major thing that needs to be clarified: Iqbal undergoes a journey in his Urdu poetry, in the sense that one can notice a shift in his perspective, and a shift in terms of emphasis in his views, with Bang-e-Dara being on one side and his following three Urdu poetry collections Baal-e-Jibreel, Zarb-e-Kaleem, and Armaghan-e-Hijaz on the other. In his first poetry collection Bang-e-Dara, Iqbal appears to be a Muslim, an Indian nationalist, and a nature lover simultaneously. In his first poetry collection, his emphasis upon, and praise of nature, and innocence reflects a phase of his life when he was highly impressed and influenced by the Romantic Movement in western academics. For instance, in his diary which was published as "Stray Reflections", he admits that the poetry of William Wordsworth helped him to stay true to his faith in God during a very difficult time of his life. Moreover, he praises the land of India, and its beautiful spots of nature in the style of a nationalist, for he praises Indian land as having an essential worth. William Wordsworth for instance ascribes an essentialist worth to nature when he says in The Prelude:

What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me.

However, Wordsworth does not ascribe worth to nature only in Britain, but Iqbal on the other hand seems to praise the land of India, giving the impression that he identified as an Indian nationalist, too. Along with that,

Iqbal also comes across as an artist with a deep understanding of and love for Islam and Islamic history. His poems *Himala* (Himalaya), *Gul-e-Rangeen* (The Colorful Rose), *Ehd-e-Tifli* (The Age of Infancy), *Bacha aur Shama* (The Child and the Light), *Abr-e-Kohsaar* (The Cloud on the Mountain), *Subh ka Sitara* (Morning Star), *Bilal*, *Tarana-e-Milli* (The Anthem of the Community), *Shikwa* (The Complaint), *Jawab-e-Shikwa* (The Answer to the Complaint), *Kufr-o-Islam* (Infidelity and Islam), *Jang-e-Yarmouk Ka Ek Waqiya* (An Incident from the Battle of Yarmouk), *Tulu-e-Islam* (The Rise of Islam), *Swami Ram Tirath*, *Tarana-e-Hindi* (The Indian Anthem), *Hindustani Bachon ka Qaumi Geet* (National Anthem for the Indian Children), and others are proof of his hybrid personality during the first phase of his intellectual and artistic life. Hybridity is basically a condition of existence that merges the cultures and identity markers of different groups of people, creating a transcultural existence. It may seem harmless on the surface, but hybridity basically tries to mix oppositional ideologies and values and then expects that mixture to be incorporated within the lifestyle and mindset of an individual and a community. Hybridity thus creates an individual or community that is unsure of his or her purpose in life. This sort of confused or mixed personality is therefore incapable of challenging hegemonic forces from a strong standpoint. That is an issue we see in Iqbal's first poetry collection *Bang-e-Dara*. Hybridity is often praised in postcolonial discourse, but if we look at hybridity as a mode of existence from the point of view of critiquing the dominance of imperialism, then we realize that it only creates a westernized life for eastern people, much to the detriment of their own values and ideologies, and a lifestyle that had helped perpetuate colonialism, and helps perpetuate imperialism and capitalism. Hybridity, promoted through transculturation, is fostered as a condition of life by the global capitalist world order, because it serves the interests of the western capitalist world order. In a hybrid human existence, it is the westernized part of one's self that is dominant, just like the dominance of the western world and its ideologies in the outside world. This ensures that any idea of rebellion against western capitalism and imperialism is pacified, and at best eradicated with time, because the idea it implicitly and explicitly suggests through transculturation is that you get to be yourself, too, but for the most part you have to be like us, the West. Ashcroft says regarding this matter:

“The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and post-colonial process in expressions of syncreticity, cultural synergy and transculturation. The criticism of the term referred to above stems from the perception that theories that stress mutuality necessarily downplay oppositionality, and increase continuing post-colonial dependence.” (Ashcroft 109)

And so, in Bang-e-Dara Iqbal has a hybridized mindset and identity that does not deeply question the degradation of life that imperial and colonial forces cause while they are in authority. In Bang-e-Dara, Iqbal's strategic positioning is that of an Indian nationalist Muslim. His “Shikwa” and “Jawab-e-Shikwa”, in that poetry collection do raise some serious questions regarding the western imperialism and colonialism and the miserable purpose of life that they created for the humans of India, yet in the rest of the poetry collection, Iqbal remains removed from really questioning western colonization. For instance, in “Shikwa”, he asserts:

Rehmatain hain tiri aghyaar kay kashanon par
Barq girti hai tou beycharay musalmanon par
(Your bounties rain upon the homes of disbelieving clans
And Your thunder-bolt always strikes the needful Muslims)

And in Jawab-e-Shikwa he responds to such questions with verses such as:

Thay tou aaba woh tumharay he par tum kya ho?
Haath par haath dharay muntazir-e-farda ho
(These were your great progenitors; You lack their brain and
brawn;
You sit and wait in slothful ease for every morrow's dawn)

The lines above question God, asking him why He continues to give prosperity to the non-believing (western) people, and continues to add suffering into the lives of the Muslims who believe in Him. Yet, because of his hybrid identity, Bang-e-Dara consists of, for the most part, a rendition of his admiration for Islam, India and Indian culture, and nature. However, in the last three poetry collections, he rearranges his strategic location as a poet. He is no longer an Indian nationalist Muslim writing poetry about India's greatness, some Muslim issues and topics, and arranging verses on his love for nature. Instead, in those he speaks like a

Muslim against western colonialism and imperialism, without the restrictions of any national identity. In other words, Iqbal rearranges his "strategic location" that leads to a new "strategic formation". Therefore it is the Iqbal that we see thereafter, the Islamic Iqbal, who can see the oppression inherent in western colonialism and imperialism. A hybrid identity or a hybridized self cannot achieve this completion of perspective as discussed previously, and Iqbal's Urdu poetry is proof of that.

Iqbal's perspective vs. postcolonial theory

This paper, however, does not aim to present a postcolonial critic's take on representation in literature. Postcolonial theory oftentimes ends up creating a victim mentality in the people of the third world, rather than offering solutions to the ideological and sociopolitical problems created by colonialism and imperialism. One of the drawbacks of the postcolonial theory is that it remains far too theoretical. As pointed out by Bruce Gilley in his article "The Case for Colonialism", the emphasis of the postcolonial theory seems to be to simply create in its followers a victim mentality, as it fails to offer practical solutions to their problems. Postcolonial theory's impact over social groups under its influence is comparable to that of the Romantics during the 19th century. Inspired by the French Revolution, the Romantic Movement in literature, in part was an effort to highlight the drawbacks of the lifestyle created by The Enlightenment in western cultures and societies. Their emphasis upon nature, and beauty in general, was also an endeavor to question the spread of industrialization.

"The Industrial Revolution led to an increasing regimentation of the individual. Small towns and villages, where everyone knew their neighbors, began to disappear. They were replaced by a more impersonal, mechanized society, fed and clothed by mass production. In this new world individuals lost their identity. The writers of this time wanted to correct this imbalance by giving greater value to the individual sensibility and to the individual consciousness. Their poetic revolution aimed at greater individual freedoms." (Routledge,1998)

And though it changed the aesthetic approach of many a people, it brought forth no practical changes in societies. For instance, industrialization kept gaining ground. Correspondingly, the postcolonial theory really has engaged so many university grads and common people around the world to question colonization and imperialism and their impact on the lives of

the formerly colonized, and the currently imperialized, however, it has not brought any significant practical changes in societies. Therefore, since Iqbal's poetry includes theory and the practical aspect of that theory as well, that has been utilized for the sake of pointing out the impact of imperialism inherent in contemporary Pakistani English novels. Relying too much upon the postcolonial theory to suggest ways of ending imperialism would be to expect too much from it. In fact, unfortunately, the incident of Alan Sokal, who submitted a hoax article to a postmodern cultural studies journal, proves the absence of serious intellectual engagement in certain fields of postcolonial and cultural studies. So, unlike postcolonial theory, this research work employs Iqbal's manner of representation as a benchmark for future representations. It is a common sight to this day to see an Asian or African character as an amusing or exotic side character in western movies or drama series. As a matter of fact, another major drawback of postcolonial writing and literary theory is that they are under the influence of European movements like postmodernism, poststructuralism, and feminism. (Ashcroft, 153, *Empire*) Postcolonialism is steeped in western ideologies which cannot be utilized by any one educated enough to know how education has been used strategically like a weapon by colonialism and imperialism to widen their control. Moreover, nations around the world sought to achieve independence from European colonialism during the 20th century because they wanted to achieve independence of thought and practice. It does not make sense to achieve independence, but then resort to western ideologies to achieve solutions for ones issues, when we know we cannot trust western ideologies due to their inherent "will to power". This is not to say that postcolonial theory is irrelevant, as people around the world have to daily deal with issues pertaining to Islamophobia, racism and imperialism, and the mindsets and attitudes shaped the representation of that reality. However, since it does not try to change the world, we will just have to move beyond postcolonial theory. In its place, utilizing Iqbal's perspective would be constructive as it would be good to ascertain if Iqbal is one of those intellectuals whose discourse can be used to critique imperialism and the effects of colonization. And in all honesty, Iqbal's representation deserves this kind of status due to the fact that Iqbal's representation of Islam and the Muslim community in his Urdu poetry collections was pivotal to the point that in its own way it greatly inspired and catalyzed the Pakistan Movement. Let us begin to see how Iqbal represents Islam and the Muslim community, and also what it means to be a Muslim and to

follow Islam. Moreover, does Iqbal's often deemed traditionalist representation of Muslims and Islam create a discourse that would create a negative impression of them for anyone trying to understand Muslims and Islam?

Unified self vs hybrid self

It is Iqbal's unified self in the last three poetry collections that also enables him to see the difference between the Muslim self and identity, and the completely westernized, and hybridized self and identity. Therefore, he also dwells upon aspects of existence that highlight the difference between them in his poetry. Islam, it is apparent, is the primary force behind the transformation that created that unified self in Iqbal. As mentioned before, Iqbal's perception undergoes a major shift in his last three Urdu poetry collections *Baal-e-Jibreel*, *Zarb-e-Kaleem*, and *Armaghan-e-Hijaz*. By unified self, it is Saleem Ahmed's definition that is being referred to here. Saleem Ahmed, who was a prominent Karachi-based Urdu literary critic, brings to light the significance of a unified self in his famous literary article *Naeem Nazm aur Pura Aadmi*, pointing out that ever since the period of colonization started, people have lost their ability to develop a unified self. This means that human beings have lost their ability to actively utilize all the faculties inherent in the human self, and not just a couple of them. Faculties like the heart, the mind, consciousness, intellect, ego, and the spirit, all of them. Only a unified self can utilize all the faculties to perceive reality and help other individuals and groups of human beings to do so, too. A fragmented self, that cannot utilize them all, fails to see reality for what it really is, and what it ought to be for the sake of peace and justice in this world. This means that without a unified self, reality can only appear fragmented. Or in other words, due to our own underdevelopment, we would only prefer to see reality in fragments rather than seeing its various dimensions as parts of an interconnected unity. Ahmed's assessment synchronizes with Martin Ling's assessment of the Western world in *The Secret of Shakespeare* where he says that the western world lost its ability to be "intellectual" after the medieval time period. During the medieval time period, in the Islamic and Christian worlds, an artist understood and perceived reality in its totality. Lings says about the art of that time that:

"It considered this world above all as the shadow or symbol of the next, man as the shadow or symbol of God; and such an attitude, to be

operative, presupposes the presence of intellectuals, for earthly things can only be referred back to their spiritual archetypes through the faculty of intellectual perception, the insight which pierces through the symbol to the universal reality that lies beyond.” (Lings, 2005)

Therefore one of the main steps we need to take to ensure decolonization in our lives practically and also in terms of representation, and in order to bring an end to imperialism, is by creating and working upon a unified self, instead of a hybrid self. One of the theoretical issues of the postcolonial theory is that while it promotes anti-colonialism, so as to develop critical thinking in the minds of the formerly colonized, it simultaneously favors globalization, transculturation, and hybridity. We are living in a global capitalist world order, and it would be foolish to imagine that one’s life and one’s identity is not affected by that system. Therefore, in a hybrid or transcultural identity, it is the western influence that dominates. A hybrid self cannot fathom reality completely and cannot offer solutions that are all-inclusive. If it sets out to solve issues, it perceives only some of them, and therefore caters to only those that it can perceive, leaving all the other issues aside, and even ignoring many aspects, intricacies and nuances of the issues that are in its view. Aiming for a unified identity rather than a hybrid identity does not mean that one should only have acceptance for one’s own culture, like the European world, and not for the other diverse cultures around the world. Instead, this means that we need an ideology that helps people around the world to unite, but also allows them to express their cultural taste in different forms. An ideology that also is beneficial in every sense for everyone; morally, economically, spiritually, culturally, rather than just being beneficial for some companies and individuals, and some countries and continents. A hybrid identity cannot achieve this task because it is far too influenced by the western world, and therefore seeks to achieve the interests of the western world, which are essentially capitalist in nature. Hence, a hybrid identity and a transcultural identity promote capitalism, a system that determines the worth of life on the grounds of the amount of wealth and possessions accumulated. That creates a world fraught with competition on every level. On the other hand, a unified self can help us to utilize all of our faculties, and help us create a safe and harmonious world system. That unified self’s sensibility can be seen in the following verses:

Yaqeen muhkam, amal peham, muhabbat faatah-e-aalam

Jihad-e-zindigani main hain yeh mardon ki shamsheerain
(Firm certainty, eternal action, the love that conquers the world
Those are the swords of real men in the holy war of life)

With the beginning of the Enlightenment in the western world, the main focus of the West has been to accumulate more and more capital primarily through colonialism and imperialism. However, that approach only displays an arrested mentality. It seems as though the West cannot see any of the injustices that have resulted from this pathological desire for money. Their approach has not only harmed the human race outside of western lands, but even within their own lands, the issue of broken (or at best dysfunctional) families highlights the fact that the West's approach to life has drifted all the members of their societies away from each other. In other words, the Western life cannot even keep a family together, let alone the rest of the society. Iqbal, however, in the verses mentioned above, reminds his primary audience, the Muslims, that the world can only be won truly if we manifest complete faith in God, act according to the spiritual code of life sent to us by God, and love humanity like God expects us to. The verses above show that Muslims should seek to restore their initial role and place in the world through the principles taught by Islam. The emphasis is upon how to make the entire world prosperous, without obsessing about merely one aspect of life, money or power for instance, but to fulfill the obligations of all of the aspects of life. To love, to win, to conquer, to honor, basically to nurture life in its totality. This is one more way Iqbal saves the Muslims and Islam from being misunderstood or misrepresented.

Transcending ambivalence

Iqbal speaks to and also on behalf of the indigenous Muslims of India in his poetry. That can be said about many other leaders around the world, too, who were speaking on behalf of their communities. However, Iqbal talks about his people from the vantage point of a unified self, that enables his poetry to guide us from feeling stuck within the terminology of a colonial narrative or imperial narrative, towards an alternative narrative. His poetry particularly in *Zarb-e-Kaleem*, *Baal-e-Jibreel*, and *Armaghan-e-Hijaz* transcends the tangles of ambivalence. Ambivalence has been described by postcolonial theorists as a state of existence that hampers formerly colonized people from emancipating themselves from the grips of colonization and imperialism. Ashcroft describes ambivalence as a

psychological state of the colonized or imperialized where an individual is simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the colonizer. He says:

“The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. Rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are ‘complicit’ and some ‘resistant’, ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject.” (Ashcroft, 2007)

However, we do not come across this psychological and ideological confusion in Iqbal's poetry. In fact, Iqbal's poetry is not only theoretical like the postcolonial theory is, but it is also practical in nature. When he begins to describe the Muslim community, he does so by providing an ideological background for their opinions; that is, he brings to light the intellectual point of view of Islam to clarify the Muslim community's worldview. He does the same when he tries to compel them to create a world different from the one created by western colonialism. For instance, he says:

Jamhuriyat ek tarz-e-hakumat hai keh jis main
Bandon ko gina karte hain, tola nahin kartay!
(Democracy is a form of government in which
People are counted, but not weighed)

Islam's system of governance is often baselessly frowned upon within the current academic circles. That is because people oftentimes have no idea about the intellectual basis of the Islamic mode of government. The poetic verses above bring to light Iqbal's intellectualization of the Muslim way of electing a leader of a people, and he pits that against the democratic system constructed by the West. One achievement worth noticing here is that Iqbal's intellectualization of Islam helps him to intellectually question the western mode of governance, and he ends up making democracy a debatable system of governance, although the readers may already know that the West presents democracy as an uncontestable system. However, Iqbal has the intellectual vigor and courage to identify a major fault in democracy. Democratic elections rely primarily upon popularity. The principle of democracy yields results according to, or at least apparently according to whatever the majority wants. The Islamic system of governance is supposed to be founded upon merit of character and intellect

both, rather than popularity. Iqbal is intellectual in his dismissal of western ideologies, and we do not see that only in the verses above, but in several others. This is one way in which Iqbal's representation of Islam transcends exoticization. This is revolutionary in nature as exoticization seems like an inescapable situation for all the artists writing during and after colonization. People who were colonized, and people of the 21st century who are apparently independent, have a difficult time understanding who they are. They are unsure about what their identity is. Iqbal's representation of Islam and the Muslims, however, involves a deep understanding of an essential worth, and his representation is therefore not exoticized.

In other words we can say that maintaining a hybrid identity is destructive because it helps perpetuate ambivalence towards hegemonic powers, and that in turn prolongs the existence of imperial hegemony, and widespread inequalities of all sorts. Ambivalence makes people unsure or confused about what to do with the dominance and impact of an imperial or colonial force. That is why, what is commendable about Iqbal's poetry is that its representation helps Muslims come across as a community with its own well-defined values and a thirst to change the world, who can not only identify imperialism, and point out its injustices, but they can also provide an alternative narrative to replace the imperial narrative with. Moreover, they can change the imperial reality as well, if they return to their Islamic roots. For instance he says:

Mujhe tehzeeb-e-haazir ne ata ki hai who aazadi
Keh zaahir main tou aazadi hai, baatin main giriftaari
(The dominant civilization has bestowed me with a freedom
That appears free on the outside, but is actually slavery within)

In the verses above Iqbal clarifies that he completely understands how the colonial and imperial West wishes to subjugate different races of human beings under the guise of the White Man's Burden. In reality, the western ideology seeks to create a master slave bond between themselves and the other races of human beings, so that more and more capital can be obtained, which can then be used to uplift the living conditions of European empires and the improve the quality of life of the white race, back home in the empires, at the expense of the living conditions and quality of life of the people they had colonized.

Furthermore, it is evident that Iqbal's depiction of the Islamic ideology defies nationalist and ethnic criteria of a separate identity from the colonizers. We can consider the example of Indian Hindus in this regard for the sake of comparison. India is becoming more and more a nationalist community. The idea of a nationalist identity entails ascribing ontological significance to cultural patterns, rather than there being an ontological significance behind cultural patterns. It is like saying the saree sets the Indian women apart from the British, rather than the concept behind that dress code, that is the concept of modesty (which means covering oneself completely and without exhibitionism of one's physique), that sets them apart from the modern British women. Here is another set of verses to prove our point. Iqbal says:

Jalaal-e-paadshahi ho ya jamhoori tamaasha ho
Juda ho deen siyasat se tou reh jaati hai changaizi
(Whether it was the pomp of monarchy, or this circus of
democracy
If you separate politics from deen then you would only have
tyranny)

The verses above prove the same point, that Iqbal made sure the intellectual backdrop of the Muslim community's disapproval of colonialism was apparent in his representation.

Thus Iqbal's representation of Islam as an alternative discourse to colonial discourse involves scholarly arguments, and is therefore authentic in a remarkable way. The Indian definition of authenticity though is very different from that of Islam's, and therefore Iqbal's, for it invokes nationalist biases to substantiate the worth of an Indian's existence, life and opinions.

Creolization, or no creolization?

Some people are of the opinion that creolization may help combat imperialism or lingering colonial influences, but that is also not an option we should go for to emancipate ourselves, for it creates, as Edward Brathwaite explains, something which is completely a "new construct"; obviously a new construct that nevertheless favors and prioritizes the dominant western powers version of life over the rest. Indian leaders have basically used cultural contrasts with the colonizers as the foundation for

their anti-colonial resistance. So their identities are, also a new construct, or we can say that they have undergone the process of creolization, as they have combined western imperial and eastern ideals of life. So, they had aimed for cultural resistance against colonization, in the hopes of achieving political control and independence, by highlighting cultural differences between themselves and the colonizers. In fact, that is why their hybrid identities are also not a problem for them. Yet that is also why they are incapable of providing an alternative narrative. Every theory that innocently or not so innocently tries to blend the eastern and western mindsets ends up reestablishing western hegemony. Unlike them Iqbal says:

Waza main tum ho nisara, tou tamaddun main hunood
Yeh Musalman hain, jinhain dekh ke sharmain Yahood.
(In appearance you are like the Christians, and culturally like
Hindus
These are Muslims before us, who would make the Jews blush,
too)
Also
Yun tou Syed bhi ho, Mirza bhi ho, Afghan bhi ho
Tum sabhi kuch ho batao tou Musalman bhi ho?
(You are a Syed, a Mirza, and an Afghan, too
You are everything, however, are you Muslim, too?)

To Iqbal, it is clear that the replacement of the colonial narrative would involve replacing western culture imposed on Indians with the Islamic culture (and the eastern culture, too in the case of other Indians). Many postcolonial critics have pointed out for us that, for instance, without replacing the English language from our national lives, the process of decolonization cannot really catalyze. That goes for all other cultural symbols of colonization as well, of course. And Iqbal is absolutely clear on that front.

As far as the Muslim community is concerned, he always presents it as the manifestation of an abstract reality. One that has an ontology, and epistemology. By ontology what we mean is the concept of how human existence came to be. Were human beings created by God or did they come into existence themselves? Basically, every society has some ontological belief. It either believes that the human race was created by a

divine, all-powerful God, or they believe that it came into existence by chance and has evolved over the ages. Such beliefs have a subsequent impact on that society's personal and social life. In fact, ontology is impactful to the point that it even determines the nature of our relationship with other societies as well. Iqbal, in his last three Urdu poetry collections, comes across as an intellectual leader and artist from the Muslims of the subcontinent, who presents a Muslim identity that goes beyond nationalist tropes in his representation of the Muslim community. Nationalist tropes like attaching significance to the geographical presence of a nation in a particular place, the dress code, the flag of a nation, its food, its music, its dance, its languages. By having an epistemology what is implied is that Islam and the Muslims have their own distinct theory of knowledge which extends itself to the purpose of poetry as well. Iqbal's representation is therefore impeccable as it leaves no room for the employment of orientalist stereotypes. Therefore, instead of that recurring pattern of representation of the eastern people, by the eastern people, the Muslim community has been presented as a presence of ontological and epistemological significance by Iqbal that wishes for justice and harmony in this world. His poem "Khudi ka SIRR-e-Nihaan Lailahillallah" is entirely an example of that. Let us consider just some for now. He says:

Khudi ka SIRR-e-Nihaan Lailaahaillallah
Khudi hai taigh, fasaan laillaha illallah
(The hidden secret of the self is the affirmation that there is no god but Allah
The self is a sword, and its sharpening stone is the affirmation that there is no god but Allah)

Yeh maal-o-daulat-e-dunya yeh rishta-o-paiwand
Butaan-e-wehmo guman laillaha illallah
(All of this wealth of the world, and all these human relationships
They are nothing but the idols of the mind, and there is no god but Allah)

And for those who may contest why Islam is not the most popular, most followed ideology of life in the world if it is so positive in its scope, Iqbal says.

Huyi na aam jahan main kabhi hukoomat-e-ishq

Sabab yeh hai keh muhabbat zamana saaz nahin
(Never has love's rule prevailed in this lowly world
The reason is that love does not conform to the times)

As for the Muslims who are too uneducated or too lethargic to manifest the teachings of Islam, or are incapable of manifesting the ontological and epistemological aspects of Islam, he says:

Har gohar ne sadaf ko tor diya
Tu he aamaada-e-zahoor nahin
(Every pearl broke open from its shell
You are the only one who does not want to be seen)

Intellectualization in representation: defeating exoticization

The West's insistence that the world accept western norms and concepts, modernity and postmodernity, involves a Manicheanism, and that too is an attempt to imperialize the world. Manicheanism means that the colonizer creates a binary between the colonizers and the colonized, where the colonized segment is the perpetually uncivilized group, and the colonizer is the perpetually civilized group. Due to that, anyone who has been brainwashed to adopt the colonial or imperial mindset does not attempt to understand the colonized. The West's mode of representation, due to its political and economic dominance and hegemony over the world, entails Manicheanism, as imperialists, and also western people in general who have been indoctrinated to utilize Manicheanism, do not care to understand non-western people. They would much rather continue to use the same stereotypes they have been using since the past 10 centuries. One very interesting aspect we can observe in Iqbal's poetry is that he portrays Islam and Muslims as having essential and thus authentic value, and so transcends Manicheanism through his narrative. A person reading Iqbal would be able to see the intellectual argument behind the Muslim way of life. He does not present Islam as an exotic ideology of life, far too distant and strange to be properly understood by anyone. Nor does he present the Muslims as having an element of strangeness to them. Therefore, Iqbal's transparency and directness in representing Islam (the agreed upon understanding of it) and the Muslims in his poetry, and also his confidence in his Islamic and Muslim identity, leaves no room for exoticization.

Exoticization as the readers may already know is a web that formerly colonized people still find themselves stuck in. Edward Said highlights this very feature of colonial discourse in “Orientalism”, that it exoticizes eastern traditions and people. Exoticization means that a hegemonic power, due to its overzealous conviction that it is superior to others, convinces itself that other groups are inferior, for they are strange. Strange because they are not like the hegemonic group. However, in order to rule over those groups, it needs to have some set of similar traits which justify its rule over them. Its presentation of the others as strange, or weird though kind of similar is exoticization. That presentation or representation is not only shallow, but it is also misleading, for it is committed to disproving the validity of the modes of living of other groups. For example, E. M. Foster’s “A Passage to India” depicts the Muslim and Hindu communities as incomprehensible for the elite British class. They have been portrayed as groups beyond reason and rationality and therefore rather ghostly, though they have a few traits that keep them interesting for the colonial gaze. But that they are not fit for the tangible real world. Dr. Aziz’s character in the novel for instance is a good example of exoticization. Dr. Aziz behaves according to the values of the colonizers in some ways, and is therefore a somewhat relatable character. Nevertheless, he is shown to be fanatical and uncivilized in other instances, solidifying his exoticness.

The attempt to imitate the colonizer leads to exoticization, as one becomes an airy figure for the hegemonic power. Maintaining your own, and intellectually substantiating it, is the only way out of the web of exoticization. This is yet another reason that justifies Iqbal’s poetic and intellectual depiction of an essential and authentic Muslim identity. This is why Iqbal says:

Hazaar khof ho lekin zubaan ho dil ki rafeeq
Yehi raha hai azl se qalandaron ka tareeq
(Though there be thousands of fears, the tongue should be the
heart's friend
That has been the tradition of the wisest and bravest since
antiquity)

Dil-e-bedaar Farooqi, dil-e-bedaar Karrari
Misay aadam ke haq main keemiya hai dil ki bedaari
(A heart awake like a Farooqi, a heart awake like a Karrari)

Awakening the heart is the remedy for the welfare of humankind)

Iqbal is thus an intellectual poet that helped the Muslims of the subcontinent to identify their own worth, the worth of their ideology, and their place in global affairs. Moreover, he created a tradition of representing Muslims in literary narratives that shall ever remain relevant, and continue to serve as a beacon for all future representations.

Note:

The translations of Iqbal verses have been completed by the author herself.

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Abstract

This research paper emphasizes how crucial it is to refute the false narratives that colonial and imperial narratives create, particularly in the case of the Muslims, post 9/11 attacks. It does so by delving into the famous Urdu poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal's portrayal of Islam, the Muslim identity and the Muslim community in his Urdu poetry. It explores Iqbal's strategic critique of western imperialism, and his vision of Muslim autonomy. Moreover, the research paper traces Iqbal's ideological development from a hybrid self to a unified self that eventually made him a supporter of Muslim independence and decolonization which everyone can take inspiration from. The paper attempts to provide a sharp contrast to the kind of representation done by any colonial or postcolonial writer of literature, whose opinions on global matters are mainly influenced by western colonialism or western imperialism. Countering western imperialism's false narratives is necessary to establish peace and equality in a world flaring with racism, and injustices of all sorts.

Keyword: hybridity, unified self, strategic location, strategic formation, ambivalence, creolization, exoticization