

## Iqbal and the Malay World

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**Abstract:** ‘Allāmah Dr. Muhammad Iqbal has attracted the attention of the Malay World as well as the Muslims in Southeast Asia. His prose works like *The Reconstruction* and his poetic compositions like *Asrar-i-Khudi*, *Shikwah wa Jawab-i-Shikwah* and others have been read and translated into Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia. Most Indonesian and Malay front ranking leaders were influenced by his ideal of serving the cause of the Ummah. They used Iqbal’s arguments to mobilize the Muslims for reforms of their respective societies in particular in Malaysia and Indonesia.

‘Allāmah Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of Islam, contributed immensely to the political and religious awakening of Muslims. He argued that the Muslims must exercise *ijtihad* in accordance with the spirit of Islam to confront the problems created by modernity. Though his immediate audience was the Muslims of South Asia, his message was universal. It is due to his universal vision that Iqbal has attracted the attention of the Malay World. This study attempts to take note of certain aspects of his intellectual and artistic heritage as they are found in the writings of Malay intellectuals, and to see their relevance in relation to the reassertion of Islam in this region.

### Iqbal and Mohd. Natsir

Interests in the poetic and prose writings of the poet-philosopher Iqbal in the Malay World began in the fifties. Among others, the esteemed Indonesian Muslim thinker and statesman, Mohd Natsir, was very much interested in the works of Iqbal which is evident in the collection of his speeches.<sup>1</sup> Because of his poor access to Urdu and Persian languages, Mohd Natsir relied upon translations for his understanding of the works of Iqbal.

Mohd. Natsir notes that Iqbal was one of the luminaries who contributed immensely to Islamic re-awakening in India, Pakistan, and the Muslim World in general. Writing in the 1950s, he observed:

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It is especially due to the thoughts of Iqbal contained in the strings of pearls of his captivating verses that the light of Islam spread in the hearts of his followers and has created in them the feeling of *'izzat al-nafs* (or self-esteem) and a strong conviction in the capability of the human soul. The ideas of Iqbal have led to the emergence of new and fresh forces that led to the victory of the Islamic movement, which is now standing clearly as an edifice: Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

He states that Iqbal reminded the believers of their glorious past and kindled in them the spirit for the future by dwelling on the theme of "*khudi*" (the self or ego). He quotes approvingly: "You build up your ego to such an extent that before God decides your fate for you He will turn to you asking, what is it that you want?"

Mohd Natsir observes that Iqbal elaborated this theme in *Shikwah wa Jawab-i-Shikwah* (The Complaint and the Answer). *Shikwah* gives an impression that God favours those who disbelieve more than those who believe in Him. The second part, *Jawab-i-Shikwah*, contains the message giving balm to the hearts of the believers. Mohd. Natsir, however, explains that in the *Shikwah*, Iqbal was not complaining against God, rather he was portraying the sentiment of his contemporaries who refused to perform self-introspection and undertake the arduous task of self-correction. Muslims blame others for their miseries, and abandon the virtue of justice. In the *Shikwah*, Iqbal described the habit of the believers wailing about the various ills and weaknesses which as it was has become a part of their legacy.

In the *Jawab*, Iqbal puts his fingers on the correct ailing spots of the Muslim Community. He says that it is not God Who is unjust to them, but that they are unjust to themselves; their spirit of fatalism is self-deception, becoming a veil obscuring their own weaknesses from themselves. They are advised that their heritage which has led to their past glory is the Qur'ān, the light which forever shines, that is the reality which will determine the destiny of the community.

To Mohd Natsir, *Shikwah wa Jawab-i-Shikwah* not only portray the past and the present situation of Muslims, but they also function as a guide in the realization of the teachings of the Qur'ān and the fundamentals of the religion of Islam. He cites verses from both poems extensively and for this he relies upon the translation of *Shikwah* in Arabic by al-Adzamī.

Mohd.Natsir is also impressed by the political ideas of Iqbal, especially his concept of the relationship between "Church" and "State." He quotes Iqbal:

In Islam the spiritual and the temporal (here he adds "the eternal and the transient") are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act,

however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character. An act is temporal or profane if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity. In Islam, it is the same reality which appears as the Church looked from one point of view and the State from another. It is not true to say that Church and the State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies.<sup>3</sup>

Mohd. Natsir agrees with Iqbal that in Islam politics and religion are intertwined such that the Church and State constitute one indivisible unity. Going back to history, Natsir observes that the separation of State and religion began with the separation between the realms of the Pope and of the Emperor which finally led to the absolute separation between spiritual and material values. This Church-State controversy eventually resulted in the total sway of rationalism without the effective and balancing discipline of the spiritual values. This, in turn, opened the floodgates to racism, narrow chauvinism, and class enmity generating hatred, rancour, and war after war.<sup>4</sup>

Natsir laments with Iqbal that the golden age of spirituality is of the past (*Zaman Kentjana Ruhani telah silam*) and the age of materialism (*Zaman kebendaan*) has emerged. Ethical considerations have been substituted with utilitarianism (*faham-serba-guna*) in its naked form; the rules of commerce (*serba dagang atau komersialisme*) are obeyed indiscriminately. Intellect and religion is being enslaved by innovation, and love is being defeated by commercialism. Man becomes associated with matter, and he loves the elements and not the Divine presence.<sup>5</sup> Mohd Natsir advocates the idea that: "Religion should become the leading principle and directive for man to achieve the highest development possible in terms of the spiritual, ethical, intellectual and physical." And further, the function of religion is "to establish, preserve and to put into equilibrium the relationship between God and man, and also between man and man."<sup>6</sup>

Religion, unlike politics, functions to preserve (*memelihara*) the relationship between man and man in all aspects of their life. Therefore, religion which encompasses all aspects of life can not be separated from politics which covers one of these manifold aspects? To Mohd Natsir, the concept of religion as separate from politics is not Islamic (*bukan konsepsi Islam*). And here he quotes Iqbal: "The essence of tawhīd as a working idea (*tjita yang fa'al*) is equality, solidarity, and freedom"

(*kesamaan, irtibath, dan kemerdekaan*).<sup>7</sup> The State, he quotes Iqbal, is “an endeavour to transform these ideal principles (of equality, solidarity and freedom) into space-time forces.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, these principles can be realised in a certain human organization. This human organization is a state based upon Qur’ān and Sunnah. Such a state will not be a theocracy because there is no priesthood in Islam. To him Islam provides for man a number of fundamentals: democracy, freedom of opinion, religion, equality, tolerance, and social justice, together with several obligations so as to guarantee the welfare of all in the society.<sup>9</sup>

As to the question of how humanity can avoid the coming calamity caused by materialism, he quotes Iqbal to the effect that humanity needs three things today- 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 spiritual basis.<sup>10</sup> Then, he reminds the Muslims of what is to be done by quoting Iqbal: “Let the Muslim of to-day appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.”<sup>11</sup> To Mohd Natsir:

This should be the clarion call for all Muslims of today. They should show to the world that the virtues of Islam are not the monopoly of Muslims only, but meant for all mankind. And the best way of manifesting all these is by putting them into practice and living in accordance with those virtues, beginning with one’s family-life. And enough for us the example from the past, that is, the actions of the Messenger of Allah and his caliphs.<sup>12</sup>

The virtues Islam teaches, according to Natsir, are to be found, among others, in the agreement signed by Prophet Muhammad (SAS) with the monks of St Catherine as recorded in Syed Amir Ali’s *The History of Saracens*. In that charter, the Prophet (SAS) guarantees the Christians their rights to life, property and religion and obligates Muslims to protect the Christians, their churches, and monasteries. The Christians were not overburdened with unjust taxes. Christian women married to Muslims were allowed to continue with their Christian faith.

This charter has been honoured and its provisions faithfully implemented by Muslims in all lands through the centuries. Mohd Natsir mentions that the real virtue of Muslims is their spirit of tolerance towards other faiths. This spirit of tolerance, in his view, does not emanate from fear or diffidence, but from firm conviction of the truth in the heart of the person. To him this is not just passive tolerance, but the readiness to struggle and sacrifice to guarantee the safety of life, sacredness of religion and the freedom of faith of others. The example

of such spirit is found abundantly in Islamic history and in the life histories of Muslim heroes. Natsir reminds Muslims, by quoting Iqbal:

*Sabak phir parh shujaat ka, sadaqat ka, adalat ka,  
Liya ja-ay ga tujh se kam duniya ki imamat ka*

(You imbibe once again the lessons of courage, truth, and justice  
Because you are again going to be called upon to lead the nations  
of the world).

### The Works of Bahrum Rangkuti

A major effort at understanding Iqbal in the Malay World and perhaps the most serious effort at understanding his art and thought is the work of the late Mr Bahrum Rangkuti and Ariff Husain.<sup>13</sup> Theirs is a translation of *Asrar-e-Khudi* (The Secrets of the Self). It deals with the theme of how to strengthen the human self or ego and how to set up the Muslim society. Bahrum Rangkuti not only translates but explains a number of important matters relating to Iqbal's message in the poem. In dealing with Persian texts, Bahrum was assisted by the linguist from the Pakistani Embassy, Ariff Hussein. Baharom Rangkuti discussed the influence of the sufi poets of Islam like Djalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Abdul Karīm al-Djilī on the ideas of Iqbal. He has also compared Iqbal with some of the ideas of the classical Indonesian poet, Hamzah Fansuri, who lived in Aceh in the sixteenth century.

In the short introduction to the book, Mohd Natsir praises the work as an "excellent reading for those who have interests in the literary art in Islam." He also observed that only when the contents of *Asrar-i-Khudi* are practiced by Indonesian Muslims then the society characterised as *baldatun tayyibatun wa rabbun ghafūr* (the good country while the Lord is Most Merciful) will emerge.<sup>14</sup>

Bahrum Rangkuti states that he has undertaken the translation because the poem is unique and does not fall into the type usually found in the Malay World. It is a poem "which wants to invite mankind to human values and character as enshrined in the Qur'ān and calls on the Muslims to listen once again to the Qur'ānic voice."<sup>15</sup> It is a work that at once brings tranquility to the heart of the reader and makes him agitate to realize the vision inherent in it. Additionally, Iqbal's literary composition influences any person in whatever station he is in, first making him experience the beauties in it, and then making the reader desirous of realizing the beautiful qualities mentioned within the soul. This type of literary composition is rare in the literary history of the

world. This category of composition should be approached with the purified spirit (*al-rūh al-muṭahharah*), a spirit purified from the “dross” of the fallen soul. Bahrum Rangkuti talks of Iqbal’s *Mard-i-Khuda* (literally a man of God) meaning the man who moulds his qualities by taking lessons from the meanings enshrined in the Divine Names. This is based upon the tradition of the Prophet as stated by Iqbal meaning “Imbue in yourselves with the (attributes which are moulded by getting lessons from) attributes of Allah.” It is not that man imbibes the qualities of God within him, for that would be unthinkable spiritually and theologically, but that man struggles to build his character based on lessons which he gets from contemplating on the meanings of the Names of God. This is in accordance with the famous remarks from spiritual masters: “The Lord remains the Lord even though He descends (in self-manifestation) and the servant remains a servant howsoever high he ascends.”

Coming to the subject of poems and poets, Bahrum Rangkuti observes that Iqbal makes use of history to fortify human personality or ego mentioning the qualities which are positive and which are negative, including therein the advise given by past masters of spirituality. Bahrum observes that only a poet with the gift from God will have the capacity to treat such wide and complex issues in poems beautifully without sinking to the low level of propaganda. And such poems as Iqbal’s can come only from personalities who are filled with sterling qualities of sincerity, purity of emotion, and profound sense of symbolism. To him all these are a rarity in Islamic Indonesian poetry.<sup>16</sup>

Concerning the central message in the *Asrar-i-khudi* and its scope, Bahrum observes that it deals with the Muslim person as an individual, who should be aware of his responsibility in this world. Iqbal portrays the individual Muslim as the noblest in the whole cosmic order. To Iqbal, Hindu intellectualism and Islamic pantheism have destroyed human will-power and desires, and has robbed the Muslims of their capacity to “act” to succeed as it was done by Muslims during the golden period of Islamic culture and civilization. Hence, Iqbal bases his philosophy on the tradition of the Prophet (SAS) saying, “Imbue yourselves with (the virtues found in the) Divine Attributes.” This theme emerges intensely in the persian word *khudi* meaning personality. *Khudi*, in Urdu and Persian, is the diminutive form of “*khuda*” meaning God.

Hence, Iqbal was opposed to the idealist philosophers and the mystic poets who, according to him, have caused the downfall of Muslim culture and civilization. Therefore, Iqbal thinks, by reasserting the self, and strengthening the ego to such an intense degree and bringing the

progress of the self to such a stage that Muslims will become once again a strong and independent community in the family of nations.<sup>17</sup> Conditions for a strong Community are set forth in another work, the *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* (the Mysteries of Selflessness) published after *Asrar-i-Khudi* and these were effective in influencing the Muslims in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

In the *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi*, Iqbal portrays that the selfless person in the society mirrors within himself the past and the future, and he as it were overcomes the problem of destiny, and enters into that circle of Islamic life which is limitless and eternal. Among the most important themes in this work are: the origin of society, divine leadership in mankind through the intermediary of the Prophets, the formation of centres for collective life, and the value of history as an important factor, as a "mark" in a nation.

In relation to the idea of the self, or *khudi*, in the *Asrar*, Iqbal teaches the doctrine about how to tighten the knot of the ego, and how to make it strong. He says that once the ego is developed and made strong, then time itself becomes the dynamism of the ego; and the ego is manifested in action, in overcoming the various obstacles in pursuing the goals of life. And both time as action is life, and life is the ego. To Iqbal, the theophany of divine qualities in the world of matter is not perfect, but the development of the qualities of the developed ego based on the teachings from the divine qualities made the ego attain nearness to Him. Hence, drawing nearer to God means perfecting the self and making the will stronger. Bahrum says that the emphasis of Iqbal on this philosophy of strong personality and developing the ego coincides with the period in which the East was culturally and politically weak.

To Iqbal, the Muslim World became weak because of Plato's philosophy understood in terms of Neo-Platonism which regards the world as unreal, and hence its development is something which is not necessary to be pursued. To him, this is also in line with the philosophy of the Vedanta which believes God is immanent in the cosmos, considering the world as emanation from God.<sup>18</sup> Hence, Iqbal attacks the philosophy of Plato calling it the philosophy of the shepherd. In so doing, Iqbal also attacked certain aspects of the thoughts of Muhyid-Din Ibn al-'Arabī, the great sufi of Andalusia. Iqbal says in his notes to Nicholson:

The Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all observations in its way. It is partly free, partly determined, and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the Individual Who is Most Free-God.<sup>19</sup>

Bahrum comments that human personality has specific responsibility to fulfill on earth. First, man has to struggle and in that struggle for the development of the personality he attains freedom. The nearer is he to God, the more freedom has he as an individual. By becoming free and attaining eternal life he overcomes time and space. And then man should make efforts in helping to pave the way for the emergence of the perfect man which is the aim of life. Hence his philosophy of the self has a number of fundamental elements: the freedom of the individual, the attainment of eternal life of the individual, and the effort at making possible the emergence of perfect men.<sup>20</sup>

According to Iqbal, the factors which strengthen the human personality are:

- (1) *'ishq wa muhabbat* or love
- (2) *faqr* in the sense of being undisturbed by the difficulties of this life because of high aspirations
- (3) courage
- (4) the spirit of tolerance
- (5) *kasb-I-halal* or seeking for livelihood in the permissible way
- (6) doing creative and original work.

*Ishq wa muhabbat* or love in his philosophy means manifesting beautiful conditions and thoughts in life. It also means the assimilation of virtues and being absorbed in them. Bahrum explains that from the human point of view love means integration between faith, lofty aspiration and good action to manifest *mard-i-khuda* meaning man living for the sake of God, whose qualities make him to be "near" the presence of God. Then if love is seen from the side of God, then it is "the utterance of God," or the love of God towards the servant, infinite in its nature, whether the love towards man when he is not doing any good deeds, and then the love manifested towards him when he does good deeds.<sup>21</sup>

With such a self-fortifying concept of love, Iqbal wants the believer to know himself, and to effect self-realization to the highest degree possible, and the Muslim community again to reassert the spirit and enthusiasm of the true believers, becoming as it were the tongue and hand of God.

Bahrum ably explains the qualities of *faqr*, courage, and tolerance as virtues which fortify the human ego;<sup>22</sup> the virtue of *kasb-i-halal* or looking for livelihood from permissible sources, and doing work which is creative and original in nature.<sup>23</sup> Bahrum also deals with the negative qualities which weaken the ego and personality, namely, fear, begging, conceit and slavery.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Bahrum deals with intricate metaphysical

problems related to the *wahdat al-wujūd* of Ibn ‘Arabī and *wahdat al-shuhūd* of Sirhindī, comparing the two, and situates the discussion in the context of the Malay World. It can be said that this is so far the most perceptive discussion of the philosophy of Iqbal in the Malay World.

### The Work of the Late Osman Raliby

Another work meriting some attention is the translation of the *Reconstruction* of Iqbal by the late Osman Raliby entitled *Pembangunan Kembali Alam Pemikiran Islam*. The author obtained permission for this translation from Javid Iqbal, the son of the late poet. It was published by *Bulan Bintang* of Jakarta in 1966 and then published in Malaysia by Thinker’s Library in 1987. The third edition in Indonesia was out in 1983, and the first edition in Malaysia was published in 1987.

According to Osman Raliby, the translation of the *Reconstruction* into Indonesian language was a part of the effort to realize one aspect of the cultural agreement signed on 10 December 1960 by President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Ayub Khan of Pakistan establishing cultural cooperation between the two countries.<sup>25</sup> Preceding the text of the translation, Osman Raliby, in 15 pages, introduces Iqbal to the readers with a concise life history, educational achievements, and political and cultural life in which he lived. He proves the “greatness of Iqbal” in poetry and philosophy citing the views of scholars like M. M. Sharif, Rabindranath Tagore, and Taj Bahadur. He argues that Iqbal was a pan-Islamist and quotes Iqbal himself:

I confess to be a pan-Islamist. The mission for which Islam comes into this world will ultimately be fulfilled, the world will be purged of infidelity and the worship of false gods, and the true soul of Islam will be triumphant. I convey the same message to the Muslims through my poems. I want to see the same spirit in my co-religionists as once pervaded the early followers of Islam, who in spite of their wealth, never hankered after this mortal world. This is the religious spirit which was manifest among the Muslims when they were kings and emperors, and believed in the principle that the whole earth belongs to God and none else.<sup>26</sup>

Osman Raliby has made a successful attempt to capture the thought of Iqbal in Malay-Indonesian language, and the attempt is a commendable one.

### Works on Iqbal in Malaysia

In Malaysia, interest in the works of Iqbal began in the 1960s with the publication of the magazine *al-Nūr* by al-Rahmāniyah, the Islamic

Propagation and Welfare Organization of Malaysia. The magazine carried series of articles on Iqbal and his philosophy by Muhammad 'Uthman El-Muhammady. These articles dealt with various aspects of Iqbal's thought based on translated works and the contributions of various scholars in English. 'Uthman El-Muhammady's interest in Iqbal, his philosophy, art and thought, was kindled by the works of Bahrum Rangkuti. He also referred to Annemarie Schimmel's important work *Gabriel's Wing*. 'Uthman El-Muhammady also contributed a number of articles to the Malay daily paper *Berita Harian* on various aspects of Iqbal's poems and philosophy.

In the 1970s the *Asrar-i-Khudi* was translated into Malay by Abdul Majid Haji Khatib, published by the Pustaka Aman Press. This translation, as admitted by the translator, was based on the English translation of *Asrar* by R.A. Nicholson. Nevertheless, it is a reasonably commendable effort in the Malay language.

In 1976, Ishrat Hasan Enver's *The Metaphysics of Iqbal* was translated by Abdul Majid Haji Khatib and was published in Kota Bharu by the Pustaka Aman Press. The work deals with four topics in Iqbal's metaphysics: intuition, human self, the world, and God. The translation seems to be a faithful rendering of the original work.

In 1997, the Institut Kajian Desar (IKD) Malaysia held an international conference on Iqbal in which several prominent scholars presented their views on Iqbal. The President of Pakistan sent a message that was read by Javid Iqbal. The President stated that Iqbal was a revolutionary who inspired the slave nations to rise up and steer their ship towards the shores of liberty and freedom from the yoke of Western imperialism. The President observed that the essence of Iqbal's message was "Faith in God and unceasing and untiring action .... And in this he emerges not only truly Islamic but also truly human and universal." The President hoped that

...Iqbal's ideas will continue to be debated and he will continue to inspire us as we enter the new millennium and actively participate in reconstructing our civilization. This we may do only by synthesizing the various expressions of man's quest for perfection.<sup>27</sup>

As stated, there were a number of papers presented by scholars from the Malay World including those described in the following paragraphs.

Chandra Muzaffar, then the Director of the Centre for Civilizational Dialogue, Kuala Lumpur, wrote on "Iqbal and the Reform in the Muslim World: Quest for Social Justice." He noted Iqbal's emphasis on making *tawhīd* "a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind." This should be done so that religion is lived in human life,

and universal human brotherhood transcending all cultural and sectarian barriers are realized. It is necessary to practice religion not only in terms of the external forms but also the universal values behind those forms, acquire and use science and technology for the welfare of humanity, and to make use of the state as a vehicle for the pursuit of universal moral ideals in which Muslims and non-Muslims live in harmony.<sup>28</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, in line with Iqbal, pleaded for the rethinking of "the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past." However, Chandra Muzaffar failed to caution the readers that such a re-thinking in the past has resulted in distorting the doctrine leading to chaos and confusion in the society. While re-thinking is necessary it must be done with extreme care. Likewise, Chandra Muzaffar's insistence on making new decisions in law, performing *ijtihad* for the realization of justice and equality should be approached with extreme care. In this connection, Iqbal cited Turkey as an example. Unfortunately, Turkey has secularized the society and has been trying to vitiate the identity of Turkish Muslims.

Another paper was by Djohan Efendi from Jakarta, Indonesia entitled "Iqbal's Quest for Social Justice." Effendi noted Iqbal's criticism of capitalism and imperialism for causing sufferings to millions, and of socialism and communism for seeking equality of stomachs rather than souls. Effendi argued that Iqbal wanted Muslims to practice *tawhid* and implement the principles of brotherhood, equality and freedom reflecting the true teachings of Islam. Iqbal pressed for a social situation in which people are not oppressed in any way but live in freedom and dignity.

The paper "Iqbal and the Renaissance in Asia" by Prof. Osman Bakar, then the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University Malaya, dealt with a number of issues including the judicious practice of *ijtihad* for the renaissance of Islam. Osman Bakar explained that he was advocating not the renaissance of Islam, the religion, but of society, culture and civilization along Islamic lines. He insisted that in the work of reform, the principle of permanence and change must be kept in view.

Azizan Baharuddin, then the visiting Fellow of the Institute of Policy Research, Malaysia, looked at "Iqbal's Relationship to Mysticism: His Reconciliation of Science and Religion." She explained that Iqbal made an attempt to reconcile religion and science and tried to harmonise the two. He wanted to naturalise what has hitherto been considered supernatural by arguing that sufism should be understood in terms of religious psychology accessible to all.<sup>29</sup> Iqbal also wanted to build a theology, a natural theology, for the increasingly Westernized and

scientifically-oriented Muslims. This natural theology shows similarities between Islam and rationalistic-humanistic perception of religion. Iqbal and Bergson both talked of higher religion, that is, mysticism, which is an element found in all religions. Such a mode of thinking can form the basis for a better “understanding” among diverse religious communities, especially in Asia. Possibly, it is time that this “higher” meaning of religion can combine efforts with philosophy and science which may lead to moral renaissance mentioned by John Naisbitt.<sup>30</sup>

### A Critique

It is undeniable that Iqbal has contributed immensely to the reawakening of Muslims in various fields. However, there are areas in the works of Iqbal, among others, in the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* which should be re-examined in the light of classical Sunni thought. Thus, for instance, one must question Iqbal’s praise for the secularizing work in Turkey calling it as “an event in which Turkey has shaken off its dogmatic slumber and attained to self-consciousness.”<sup>31</sup> Likewise, his equating the juristic classical principle of *ijmā’* with the functioning of the national legislative assembly in modern times;<sup>32</sup> his idea of transferring *ijtihād* from representatives of legal schools to Muslim legislative assembly needs to be re-examined.<sup>33</sup> Iqbal’s opinion that Ibn al-‘Arabī was a pantheist needs to be corrected.<sup>34</sup> In the *Futūhāt* Ibn al-‘Arabī asks readers to bear witness to the effect that he believes in the ‘*aqīdah* and the *shahādah* meaning that God is eternal and the creation is contingent. Ibn al-‘Arabī categorises knowledge into three: the intellectual, those which are the states of the soul, and third, the divine realities.

### Relevance of Iqbal’s Message to the Malay World

To re-examine some of Iqbal’s ideas does not in any way belittle his contribution to the development of humanity. Iqbal was a universal poet and philosopher and his message has relevance for all including the Malay world. There are several salient points in Iqbal’s message which are particularly relevant for the Malays in their quest for cultural and civilizational empowerment.

One, Iqbal’s philosophy concerning the human ego and its empowerment is the central theme and message relevant to the Malay world. Without the empowerment of the human self in the correct and effective way - not to be confused with unbridled individualism of Western thought - work of civilizational and cultural empowerment cannot be effectively realised. This is all the more necessary when the Malays are facing a new form of imperialism called globalization which

will erode their cultural and axiological identity unless steps are taken to ensure the effective fostering and maintenance of that identity.

Two, Iqbal's philosophy of constructing a society based on human and spiritual values, with harmonious relationship between the society and the individual, as found in his *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* is of great significance. This will help establish civil society, as decided upon in the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

Three, his attitude towards science and technology (Iqbal definitely would have included information technology) must be taken seriously by the Malays. This science and technology must be used for strengthening the community and the nation.

Four, his emphasis on motherhood and its proper functioning as one of the pillars for building up the society must be fully adhered to.

Five, his emphasis on the virtue of tolerance is also of great relevance to the Malay world which is the meeting place of various cultures and values.

Six, his philosophy of spiritual interpretation of the universe, the spiritual freedom of the individual and principles of universal import directing the evolution of the world along spiritual lines must also be emphasised. This is the intellectually proper and accurate attitude especially when we are facing the dangerous intellectual and spiritual onslaught of post-modern thinking.

Finally, his idea of bringing together men of letters and culture in the struggle to create a strong and humane culture and civilization must be pursued with full vigour to create a just and humane civilization.

## Conclusion

Iqbal was a great thinker and a poet of the highest caliber. His works deal with various aspects of Islamic life and thought: about God and the human ego, about thought and love, about society and the human individual, about the common man and the state, about religion and science, about Islam and the West, about matter and spirit, about nature and human life and creativity. His message about the necessity for developing the human personality to the highest possible level - in the philosophy of *khudi* - inspired by love in the widest and most profound sense is most needed in the Muslim World, including the Malay World, as an ideal to be lived and struggled for its effective realization. His God with infinite Compassion with all the infinite perfection ready to embrace man in His Mercy inspires love and faith and obedience. His

message about thought operating in the light of Divine guidance and prophecy, together with vision and love in its perspective, gives an integrated understanding of knowledge, information and wisdom so much needed in this period of information overload and psychological testing ground of the new human situation. His message about the "symbiotic" relationship between the individual, the society and the state is very much needed in contemporary times especially when the the state, because of its acquisition of new technology, has grown stronger keeping the individual under constant surveillance. Iqbal has made a laudable attempt to integrate science and religion making both modes of knowing as valid, complementary and synergistic. This will have positive effects in making the community strong and knowledgeable. His message about matter and spirit, it is hoped, will lead to proper understanding of both entities for fostering active Islamic life and thought in facing globalization.

### Notes

1. D. P. Sati Alimin ed., *Capita Selecta* (Djakarta: Pustaka Pendis-Djakarta, 1957), 98-110
2. *Ibid.*, 98
3. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989), 154.
4. D. P. Sati Alimin ed., *Capita Selecta*, vol. 2, 104-105.
5. *Ibid.*, 105.
6. *Ibid.*, 106.
7. *Ibid.*, 107; Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 154.
8. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 154.
9. D. P. Sati Alimin ed., *Capita Selecta*, vol. 2, 107.
10. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 179.
11. *Ibid.*, 180.
12. D. P. Sati Alimin ed., *Capita Selecta*, vol. 2, 109.
13. Bahrum Rangkuti and Ariff Husain, *Asrar-i-Khudi Raḥasia<sup>2</sup> Peribadi* (Djakarta: Pustaka Islam, 1953).
14. *Ibid.*, 7.
15. *Ibid.*, 13-14.
16. *Ibid.*, 14.

17. Ibid., 17.
18. Ibid., 20.
19. Ibid., 20-21.
20. Ibid., 22.
21. Ibid., 24.
22. Ibid., 26-29.
23. Ibid., 30-31.
24. Ibid., 31-43.
25. Osman Raliby, *Pembuganan Kembali Alam Pemikiran Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 1987), 7-9.
26. Ibid., 21.
27. [http://ikdasar.tripod.com/sa\\_2000/renaissance/Iqbal/pakistan.htm](http://ikdasar.tripod.com/sa_2000/renaissance/Iqbal/pakistan.htm).
28. Citing Riffat Hassan, "The Development of Political Philosophy" in *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: Columbia university Press, 1971), 149.
29. Azizan Baharuddin, "Iqbal's Relationship to Mysticism: His Reconciliation of Science and Religion" (Unpublished manuscript), 3-4.
30. Ibid., 40.
31. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 61.
32. Ibid., 174.
33. Ibid.
34. Syed Abdul Wahid, *Studies in Iqbal* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1976), 44, 107.