

IQBAL AND RADHAKRISHNAN

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ABSTRACT: Iqbal and Radhakrishnan were the most renowned Hindustani philosophers of the last century. Iqbal was born in Punjab, and his literary works are mainly in Urdu and Persian. Radhakrishnan was a South Indian who wrote mainly in the English language. Both were celebrated philosophers and thinkers. Both were philosophers of the highest order and simultaneously expressed their thoughts in different ways, languages, and diction in the sub-continent. Both were spiritualists and profoundly influenced by Persian Gurus. While Iqbal was influenced by Rumi and used to call him his spiritual master, in a similar way, Radhakrishnan, too, used references to Attar and Rumi in his writings. However, he mainly benefitted from Shankaracharya's

philosophy. In this very short article, we have discussed some common aspects and philosophies of Iqbal and Radhakrishnan. This discussion shall be purely academic and not an amalgamation of political hegemony.

Introduction:Dr. Iqbal and Dr. Radhakrishnan hailed from the same country, which was once known as British India, and famously known as a golden bird in the world; they were contemporaries. Iqbal was born on 9 November 1877, and Radhakrishnan on 5 September 1888. Iqbal breathed his last on April 21, 1938, while Radhakrishnan passed away on April 17, 1975. Radhakrishnan lived 37 years longer than Iqbal. He adorned the office of vice president and later president of independent India. Iqbal might have done the same or more with equal success and dignity if he had lived till the establishment of Pakistan. Iqbal was one of the greatest poets and philosophers of not only the twentieth century but all times; in the same way, Radhakrishnan was one of the greatest philosophers and masters of English, known mainly as a thinker and philosopher. Both of them rose to the statues of world figures in their times. Broadly speaking, they were as much respected in the East as they were recognized in the West. Both were born in religious-oriented families; they inherited a deep love of their respective religions. They obtained the best education of their religions, forming the basis of their philosophy of life and the poetry of Iqbal. Both of them were acclaimed as the most authentic exponents of their religion. Their exposition of their religions was more philosophical than theological. They were well versed in both Eastern

and Western philosophy, men of vast erudition and personal vision, and both were the best flavour of Eastern religion and Western thoughts. Iqbal has not mentioned Radhakrishnan in his writings, though he kept his masterpiece "A Contemporary Indian Philosophy" in his library. Nevertheless, Radhakrishnan spoke about Iqbal in one of his addresses, which he recalled in 1937. Iqbal and he were recipients of honorary degrees at the Golden Jubilee celebration of Allahabad University. On another occasion, while inaugurating an Iqbal day Mushaira in 1956, Radhakrishnan, then vice President of India, pointed out another common point between him and Iqbal. He said, "both of them felt the mood of a rational and spiritual religion when superstition and obscurantism was rampant".

Philosophy of Radhakrishnan

India has had a rich philosophical heritage for thousands of years. Although Western philosophy represses a particular thought, it places itself above all. Eastern philosophy and particularly Indian philosophy have a union of several thoughts - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam & many others; which makes it more rich, acceptable and strong. Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was one of the renowned Indian philosophers who demonstrated Indian philosophy before the world on the so-called Western standard and created a bridge of understanding between Eastern wisdom & western materialism.

In 1909, he was appointed as a lecturer of philosophy at Madras Presidency College. Thereafter, he served as a professor of Philosophy at Mysore University in 1918 and then at Kolkata University in 1921. In 1929, he was invited to take the post of principal at Harness

Manchester College, during which he got the opportunity to present his views on comparative religion & philosophy to the students of Oxford University. Due to his precious service in the field of education, he was knighted by King George-V in his 1931 Birthday Honours. In April 1932 he was awarded the title "Earl of Willingdon" by the Governor-General and afterwards the title "Sir" was provided to him. When India gained independence, he ceased the use of all titles except the academic one "Doctor" (KV Network,2022). Between 1933 and 1937, he was nominated for Nobel Prize in Literature for five consecutive years but was not awarded.

In his lifetime, Dr Radhakrishnan wrote several books, mostly based on Indian Religion, culture and Philosophy. Some of his renowned literature and publications are - Essentials of Psychology (1912), The Philosophy of Ravindra Nath Tagore (1918), The Reign of Religion in contemporary Philosophy (1920), Indian Philosophy Vol.-1 (1923), Indian Philosophy Vol-2 (1927), The Hindu View of Life (1926), The Religion We Need (1928), Kalki (1929), An Idealist View of Life (1929), East & West in Religion (1933), The Heart of Hindustan (1936), Freedom & Culture (1936), Contemporary Indian Philosophy (1936), Religion in Transition (1937), Gautam The Buddha (1938), Eastern Religions & Western Thoughts (1939), Mahatma Gandhi (1939), India & China (1944), The Bhagwat-Gita (1948), Great Indians (1949), The Dhamampad (1950), History of Philosophy in Eastern & Western (1952), The Principal Upanishads (1953), Recovery of Faith (1956), A Source Book in Indian Philosophy (1957), The Brahma Sutra: The Philosophy of Spiritual Life (1959), Religion in a Changing World

(1967), Religion, Science and Culture (1968).

The challenge of Western Christian critics impelled him to critically analyse the Indian philosophy and religion and find out what is living and what is in it. He saw Hinduism as a scientific religion based on facts apprehended via intuition or religious experiences; besides this, Hinduism is philosophically coherent and ethically viable (WholeDude, 2023). He explained that intuition is of Savatassiddha (self-certifying character), Svasamvedya (self-evidencing) and Swayam Prakash (self-luminous). He was a prominent spokesman of Vedanta and reinterpreted Advaita Vedanta for a contemporary understanding. His philosophy is based on idealism. An idealist view of life, his main interest was in life and its problems, not so much in logical and cosmological questions of judgement, causation, space and time (Inge, 1951).

Radhakrishnan emphasizes that education must be based on the twin principles of Truth and love. Education will be complete if it includes training of the intellect refinement of the heart, and discipline of the spirit. The aim of education must be character-building, man-making, development of spiritual values and secular attitudes, vocational development and national integration.

Dr Radhakrishnan was a true nationalist personality of Indian soil and a lifelong defender of Hinduism, Indian culture and civilization against uninformed Western critics. However, ignoring all critics, he continued his nationalist writings and kept burning the light of Indian Philosophy on the world map. He took his last breath on 17th April 1975, but his lamp of understanding of intuition and interpretation of experiences will light our path from age to age.

Radhakrishnan located his metaphysics within the Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta tradition (sampradaya) (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://iep.utm.edu/radhakri/>) and like other Vedantins before him. Radhakrishnan also wrote commentaries on the Prasthanatraya (that is, the main primary texts of Vedanta): The Upanisads (1953), Brahma Sutra (1959), and the Bhagavad-Gita (1948).

Radhakrishnan's idealist view of life emphasizes the significance of the inner world and consciousness in shaping human existence. The reality is deeply interconnected with the realm of ideas and spiritual principles rather than merely material phenomena (Radhakrishnan, 1932). According to Radhakrishnan, life gains its true meaning and purpose through the pursuit of higher ideals, such as truth, beauty, and goodness. He believes in the inherent dignity and potential of every individual to realize these ideals through self-discovery and spiritual growth. For Radhakrishnan, the ultimate aim of life lies in the harmonization of the individual self with the universal consciousness, leading to a state of inner fulfilment and transcendence

As an Advaitin, Radhakrishnan embraced a metaphysical idealism. But Radhakrishnan's idealism was such that it recognized the reality and diversity of the world of experience (prakṛti) while at the same time preserving the notion of a wholly transcendent Absolute (Brahman), an Absolute that is identical to the self (Atman) (Dehury, 2010). While the world of experience and everyday things is certainly not the ultimate reality as it is subject to change and is characterized by finitude and multiplicity, it nonetheless has its origin and support in the Absolute (Brahman), which is free from

all limits, diversity, and distinctions (nirguna). Brahman is the source of the world and its manifestations, but these modes do not affect its integrity.

In this way, Radhakrishnan attempted to reinterpret Advaita for modern purposes rather than just restating the metaphysics of Śankara (8th century C.E.), Advaita was undoubtedly the most well-known and influential individual in Advaita Vedanta (WholeDude,2023).

Radhakrishnan offered a fresh interpretation of Sankara's concept of Maya, seeing it primarily as an illusion. Contrary to a rigidly objective idealism where the world is fundamentally separate from Brahman, Radhakrishnan suggested that Maya might signify a subjective misunderstanding, portraying the world as genuinely real (Braue,1986). Specifically, Radhakrishnan reconstrued Sankara's concept of Maya purely as an illusion. According to Radhakrishnan, Maya is a subjective mistaken belief that the world is fundamentally real. It should not be interpreted as advocating a rigid, objective idealism where the world is considered to be intrinsically separated from Brahman. However, it may indicate, among other things, a subjective misperception of the world as ultimately real. Radhakrishnan associates a vast constellation of terms with intuition. At its best, intuition is an "integral experience". Radhakrishnan uses the term "integral" in at least three ways. First, intuition is integral because it coordinates and synthesizes all other experiences. It integrates all other experiences into a more unified whole. Second, intuition is integral as it forms the basis of all other experiences. In other words, Radhakrishnan holds that all experiences are at the bottom intuitional. Third, intuition is integral in that the results of the experience are integrated into the individual's life. For

Radhakrishnan, intuition finds expression in action and social relations.

Iqbal stands alone in the post-classical period of Islamic philosophy as a reviver of the discipline within the Muslim world. He is the only Islamic philosopher to seriously attempt to grapple with the problems of modern Western philosophy within an Islamic context. His thought has been extremely influential throughout the Islamic world. today.

Iqbal introduces his notion of Khudi, or self. Arising from a desire to awaken the Muslim Ummah and drawing upon inspiration from Western existentialists like Nietzsche, and Muslim spiritual teachers he empowers the Muslim individual. Beyond its superficial, and important, role as a motivator for Muslims Khudi embodies a deep philosophical concept prevalent throughout his philosophical writings.

Muhammad Iqbal was an outstanding poet-philosopher, perhaps the most influential Muslim thinker of the twentieth century. His philosophy, though eclectic and showing the influence of Muslims thinkers such as al-Ghazali and Rumi as well as Western thinkers such as Nietzsche and Bergson, was rooted fundamentally in the Qur'an, which Iqbal read with the sensitivity of a poet and the insight of a mystic. Iqbal's philosophy is known as the philosophy of khudi or Selfhood. Rejecting the idea of a 'Fall' from Eden or original sin, Iqbal regards the advent of human beings on earth as a glorious event since God designated Adam to be God's vicegerent on earth. Human beings are not mere accidents in the process of evolution. The cosmos exists to make possible the emergence and perfection of the Self. The purpose of life is the development of the Self, which occurs as human beings gain greater

knowledge of what lies within them and the external world. Iqbal's philosophy is essentially a philosophy of action, and it is concerned primarily with motivating human beings to strive to actualize their God-given potential to the fullest degree.

His philosophical position was articulated in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1934), a volume based on six lectures delivered at Madras (now Chennai), Hyderabad, and Aligarh in 1928-29. He argued that a rightly focused man should unceasingly generate vitality through interaction with the purposes of the living God. The Prophet Muhammad had returned from his unitary experience of God to let loose on the earth a new type of manhood and a cultural world characterized by the abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship and an emphasis on studying history and nature. The Muslim community in the present age ought to devise new social and political institutions through the exercise of *ijtihad*—the principle of legal and political advancement. He also advocated a theory of *ijma*-consensus. Iqbal tended to be progressive in adumbrating general principles of change but conservative in initiating actual change.

Iqbal's dynamism is best reflected in his religious thoughts. Deeply imbued with the teachings of Islam, Iqbal was greatly concerned with the impact of modern Western thought on Islam. However, he was not unappreciative of the contribution made by the West. He said, "The task before the modern Muslim is immense. He is to re-think the whole system of Islam without completely breaking with the past. The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and appreciate the teachings of Islam in the light of that

knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us."

Iqbal's major contribution to this field was a series of lectures at Madras, Hyderabad, and Aligarh. What is the theme of these lectures, called *The Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam*? In these lectures, Iqbal discussed the fundamental principles of Islam in the light of modern thought and scientific knowledge and searched for its basis. He reinterpreted Islam as a dynamic rather than a static religion and a liberal rather than a reactionary force. In Iqbal's view, Islam would cease to be Islam if its fundamentals were not living enough to allow a continuous process of fresh and new judgements to experiments change its Society.

According to Iqbal, the idealism that Europe claims to have was not among the self-generating and animating factors that had their impressions on its existence. On the contrary, Europe had produced strange and conflicting concepts that resulted in a lost self. Europe is still struggling in the quest it finds only in democracies, which in turn know no tolerance.

Iqbal's philosophy is centred on the idea that Prophet Muhammad was the essence of the spirit of Islamic culture. The Great Prophet unites the ancient with the modern world. From the ancient world came his message, and, in the present time, his spirit is still prevailing. According to the Prophet, life is to be led according to prevailing trends. Therefore, the revival of Islam should be based on intellect, logic, and reasoning. To Iqbal, religion is not partial thinking, abstract thinking, feeling or action; it is the expression of a man as a whole. Therefore, when philosophy studies religion, it must acknowledge its main position. There is no doubt that religion has an essential role to

play in resolving all other factors and elements through reason and thinking.

To Iqbal, the universe had not been created in vain. A mission is to be carried out in the universe, undertaken on earth. Man is destined to play his part in fulfilling the universe's mission, and he can determine his destiny and that of the universe. Iqbal believes that the highest the Self aspires to is not to see but to become something. Efforts made by the Self to become something provide good chances for the achievement of subjectivity and in creating the complete Self. The evidence of the reality of the Self is not in saying 'I think', as Descartes had maintained, but in Kant's 'I can' and before him in al-Ghazali's 'I will'.

Iqbal believes that any Muslim can define his position, rebuild his life, and reorient his social life in light of the ultimate principles. From the principles of his religion, a Muslim can discover spiritual values, which is Islam's last and final goal. This, then, is the essence of Iqbal's philosophy.

It is Khudi, or the Self, that is the root of all existence. The philosophy of self, selfhood or Falsafa-i-Khudi (Philosophy of Self), to be concise, is an emblem of Allama's message and a one-word substitute for his entire philosophical discourse.

The significance of the "Self" in an individual is the source through which we can bring ourselves closest to the Ultimate. Iqbal went into great depth to understand the concept of Self, which a common person cannot dive into to that extent of understanding.

Due to this concept of Iqbal, he faced immense criticism from religious people, but he did not stop himself from sharing his thoughts with the people of the Subcontinent. He presented his philosophy in a very

unique and creative way with the use of high poetic imagination. However, not everyone could understand his words because he was an ocean of knowledge.

To present his view more comprehensively, he wrote a book called *Asrar-i-Khudi*. Iqbal used Shaheen (Eagle) as a source to motivate the youth. He said that "Shaheen" possesses extraordinary attributes that no other bird has. Following are the qualities presented by Iqbal in the form of poetry;

Affinity between Iqbal and Radhakrishnan

Radhakrishnan was never tired of telling his nation the real meaning of religion, which, according to him, lay in service to mankind. In his world-acclaimed book "AN IDEALIST VIEW OF LIFE", he observes, "Religion is not a matter of mere, dogmatic conformity. It is not a question of ceremonial piety. It is not merely going through the ritual prescribed to us; it is the making of yourself and your nation's transformation." Iqbal, too, was impatient with the mechanical performance of the rituals of religion. Addressing his contemporary Muslims in the writing *Bal-e-jibreel*, Iqbal (1936) made the observation;

“Rago mein o lahu baaqi nahi he
O dil o arzu baaqi nahi he
Namaz-o-Roza-o-Qurbani-o-Haj
Ye sab baaqi he tu baaqi nahi he”

Radhakrishnan defines religion as “an insight into reality”. Iqbal comes to this definition when he says religion, essentially made of actual living, is the only senior way of handling reality. Iqbal claims religion seeks closer contact with reality, while Radhakrishnan

believes religion is the supreme's direct apprehension. Iqbal and Radhakrishnan are both convinced that the nature of reality is spiritual.

The strongest similarity between Iqbal and Radhakrishnan lies in their intuitive approach to reality. Both believe in intuition, which, according to them, is not non-rational. In his lecture on Knowledge and religious experience, Iqbal (1930) says:

"Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other, they spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps reality piecemeal, the other grasps in its wholeness... in fact intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellectual."

While according to Radhakrishnan, intuition is ineffable, It escapes the limits of language and logic, and there is "no conception by which we can define it" (Radhakrishnan, 1929). Both Iqbal and Radhakrishnan attach more importance to intuitions than to the intellect; in doing so, they underline the limitation of the intellect or the rational faculty. Iqbal says in *Bal-e-jibreel* (1936):

“Guzar ja aql se aage ke ye noor
Chiragh-e-raah he manzil nahi he”

Another similarity of thought between Iqbal and Radhakrishnan, which lies in their faith in the greatness of man. There are several aspects of this greatness. In the first instance, it is indicated by the relation in which man stands with God, and of the main contribution Iqbal has made to the age long idea of man's greatness is that is he is co-creator with God. While god is the supreme creator of the Universe, man is no less than a deputy creator in the creation process. This idea of Iqbal has been expressed in his several poems but

most beautifully in his poem "Dialogue between God and Man" where a man says:

“Tu shab afreedi chiragh afreedam
Sifal afreedi ayaagh afreedam
Bayaban-o-kohsar-o-raagh afreedi
Khayaban-o-gulzar-o-baagh afreedam
Man anam ke az sang-e-aaina sazam

Man anam ke az zahr-e-nausheena sazam”

Radhakrishnan has also placed man almost in the same relation with God when he said in his address on the occasion of the Acharya Jagdish Bose birth centenary he observed "Man is made in the image of God and so has to participate in creation". Another aspect of man's greatness, according to Radhakrishnan, is reflected in the fact that man is higher than the forces which threaten to destroy him. Man can hold his own in the face of the greatest catastrophes.

In Iqbal's poetry, man's greatness has also been expressed in terms of the belief that man is the architect of his destiny; he does whatever he wants. His fate is not subject to the movement of stars, or for that matter, to the operation of any external factors. Radhakrishnan also observed this view when, in one of his addresses, he said, "Man is the architect of his own future."

Conclusion

Iqbal emphasised the unity of humanity and the oneness of the nations. Iqbal's emphasis on the Unity of mankind can easily be attributed to his Islamic-oriented thinking. However, despite his divorce from the Islamic mode of thinking, Radhakrishnan was also an advocate of the unity of humanity and the intrinsic oneness of all nations. He believed the human

race is one and all mankind belongs to one fraternity. These were some common affinities of Iqbal and Radhakrishnan. There were other issues like the concept of nation and patriotism, in which both expressed the same views, which can be discussed broadly. We can say that both believe in the concept of evaluation: life consists of a creative aim, the will of God, God is self-existent, and the universe is accessible. They also agreed that religion is not merely a dogma. It is an innermost experience of human beings, meaning religious experience should be based on religion, not dogma or rituals. The concept of God is not merely logical, but it is true and eternal. Both fiercely opposed materialism and socialism because both were disciples of the same school, which means they were idealistic. After the First World War, different countries tried to form a League of Nations to establish peace. However, Radhakrishnan and Iqbal were against this idea because they thought such an organization was a hallucination. They presented ancient scholastic philosophy from a modern point of view. Iqbal's poetry references Attar, Rumi, Jaami, Sinai etc. It indicates that these poets and philosophers deeply impacted Iqbal's art and thought; similarly, Radhakrishnan also references Attar and Rumi in his writing, though he mainly benefited from the philosophy of Shankaracharya.

In the end, we can say that both were from religious philosopher's categories.

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