



## RECONSTRUCTION OF MUHAMMAD IQBAL'S ISLAMIC THOUGHT: A PILLAR OF MODERN ISLAMIC THINKING

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### Abstract

Muhammad Iqbal emerged amidst the stagnation of Islamic thought in the early 20th century with a fresh and visionary idea of reconstructing religious thought. Through his monumental work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal offered a solution to intellectual stagnation by re-examining the treasures of Islamic thought while engaging critically with modernity. This study aims to explore the key concepts of Iqbal's reconstruction of Islamic thought, including his critique of Greek philosophy, the dynamization of *ijtihad*, the theory of *Khudi*, the concept of a dynamic divinity, and spiritual democracy. Using a qualitative approach and philosophical-hermeneutic analysis, the study concludes that although Iqbal's ideas are widely appreciated as a breath of fresh air for the revival of Islamic intellectualism, they also face criticism regarding their implementation and philosophical consistency. Nevertheless, Iqbal's thought remains relevant today, particularly in addressing the challenges of modernity without losing Islamic identity.

**Keywords:** Muhammad Iqbal, reconstruction of Islamic thought, *ijtihad*, *Khudi*, spiritual democracy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Islamic world in the 19th and early 20th centuries faced complex challenges. Western colonialism not only dominated political territories but also created a deep crisis of identity and intellect. At that time, Muslims seemed trapped between two extreme poles: on one side, the modernists who tended to adopt Western thought uncritically, and on the other, the traditionalists who closed themselves off from any form of renewal. It was in this situation that Muhammad Iqbal emerged with his brilliant idea of reconstructing religious thought in Islam.



Iqbal was not merely a critic; he was a visionary reformer who offered concrete solutions. His work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, became a kind of manifesto calling upon Muslims to rise from intellectual stagnation. What makes Iqbal's thought fascinating is his ability to revive the classical Islamic heritage while engaging constructively with modern Western philosophy. He demonstrated that Islam is not anti-change but rather possesses rich internal resources to respond to the challenges of the times.

In the Indonesian context, which continues to wrestle with issues of modernity and Islamic identity, Iqbal's thought deserves serious attention. How can Iqbal's concept of reconstructing Islamic thought inspire intellectual movements in Indonesia? What are the strengths and limitations of his ideas? These are the key questions this study seeks to answer.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using an in-depth literature review method. Primary sources are drawn directly from Iqbal's works, particularly *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, while secondary sources include books, journals, and recent scholarly articles (2020–2024) that discuss Iqbal's ideas from various perspectives.

Data analysis follows a philosophical-hermeneutic approach, aiming not only to interpret the text literally but also to grasp the spirit and context behind Iqbal's thought. The analysis involves three stages: first, comprehending the key concepts in Iqbal's philosophy; second, identifying pro and contra perspectives from various scholars; and third, reflecting on the relevance of Iqbal's thought in contemporary contexts.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Muhammad Iqbal's Intellectual Biography

Born in Sialkot, Pakistan, in 1877, Iqbal inherited a strong Islamic intellectual tradition from an early age. What distinguished him from many Muslim intellectuals of his time was his openness to Western thought. After completing his master's degree in philosophy in Lahore, he pursued further studies in Europe, earning a doctorate from the University of Munich. His experience in Europe strengthened his conviction in the greatness of Islamic intellectual heritage. He realized that many modern problems could be addressed by exploring Islamic thought itself—through a fresh and contextual approach.

### Key Concepts in the Reconstruction of Islamic Thought

#### Critique of Greek Philosophy and Traditionalism

Iqbal believed that one of the roots of Islamic intellectual stagnation was the rigid acceptance of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle's static worldview. The Aristotelian concept of God as an unmoved mover, according to Iqbal, stripped divinity of its dynamism. He also criticized traditionalist scholars who restricted *ijtihad* and resisted intellectual renewal.

#### The Dynamization of Ijtihad



For Iqbal, *ijtihad* is not merely permissible—it is essential. *Ijtihad* represents the “principle of movement” in Islam, allowing Islamic law to remain relevant through time. He advocated for creative yet faithful *ijtihad* grounded in the spirit of the Qur’an and Sunnah.

### **The Theory of Khudi (Ego/Selfhood)**

Perhaps Iqbal’s most original contribution, the *Khudi* theory, differs from traditional Sufism, which emphasizes self-annihilation (*fana*). Iqbal instead highlights self-affirmation. Humanity, he argued, must become God’s partner (*Khalifatullah*) on earth—something achievable only through a strong and healthy self.

### **The Dynamic Concept of God and the Universe**

In Iqbal’s philosophy, God is not passive but active and creative. The universe is not a completed creation but an ongoing process of becoming. This contrasts sharply with the static worldview of Aristotelian metaphysics.

### **Spiritual Democracy**

Iqbal envisioned a form of democracy rooted in spiritual values rather than mere individual freedom. This concept influenced his ideas on the modern Muslim state and later inspired the founding philosophy of Pakistan.

### **Scholarly Perspectives**

#### **Pro Perspectives**

Abdul Karim Soroush (2021) praised Iqbal’s ability to bridge Islamic tradition and modernity. Saeed Sheikh (2020) regarded *Khudi* as a brilliant response to the Muslim identity crisis. Ahmed Khan (2023) viewed Iqbal’s spiritual democracy as a visionary alternative to Western liberal democracy.

#### **Contra Perspectives**

Conversely, Muhammad Al-Mahfuz (2022) criticized Iqbal for being inconsistent and overly influenced by Western philosophy. Fatimah Zahra (2021) argued that Iqbal’s thought neglects gender issues. Other critics considered his concepts too idealistic and difficult to implement in practice.

### **Relevance in the Contemporary Context**

Iqbal’s ideas remain highly relevant in addressing modern challenges. His concept of *ijtihad* can inspire contextual reform in Islamic law. His theory of *Khudi* can foster confident and empowered Muslim identities. Meanwhile, his idea of spiritual democracy provides an alternative political framework integrating religious and modern values.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Muhammad Iqbal laid a solid foundation for the revival of modern Islamic thought. Through his reconstruction project, he successfully revitalized the intellectual dynamism of



Islam after a long period of stagnation. Despite criticisms, his ideas remain relevant and inspiring for contemporary discourse.

### Recommendations

First, Iqbal's ideas should be integrated into Islamic education curricula. Second, further research is needed to operationalize his concepts in today's context. Third, dialogues between Iqbal's thought and Indonesian intellectual traditions should be encouraged to create a creative and contextual synthesis.

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