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Iqbal's Urdu Political Poems: The Writer Against Colonialism

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Sir Allama Mohammad Iqbal's poetry and prose, despite their philosophical content and tone, are overtly political. This can be attributed to the political environment of British India in the late nineteenth and in the first half of the twentieth century; any intellectual of that period, whether Hindu or Muslim, could not help but join the struggle for freedom in their respective capacities. Iqbal's oeuvre has always been treated as the sacred document of the Muslims' demand for independence on both national and international levels. The field of Iqbal Studies is marked by unjustified political nuances imposed on his writings; each writer approaches Iqbal from his personal political agenda, and, as a result, we have Iqbal the sole originator of the Pakistan Plan, Iqbal the conservative, Iqbal the socialist, and Iqbal the liberal. I have found that this approach halts its search for meaning halfway through the hermeneutic circle. Scholars of Iqbal mostly make forays into his texts with political prejudices. This dissertation is an attempt to read Iqbal's Urdu political poems closely to question the above-mentioned prejudices of most other Iqbal commentators. By completing the hermeneutic circle, I will be able to read Iqbal's poems with fresh insight and prove that he was an outspoken critic of colonialism, whether Western or Asian. His poems served no other agenda except his own vision of a free society comprised of morally and intellectually strong individuals. The theoretical basis for this study comes from multiple sources

such as colonial and postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, Orientalism, and revisionist historicism, to name a few. The combined use of these theoretical tools is most pertinent to the case of Iqbal, whose entire literary and political output is a significant example of eclecticism. This approach will enable me to engage in a genuine conversation with his poems, which successfully challenged the hegemony of the oppressor and furnished his people with a distinct identity. The dissertation begins with the examination of Iqbal's challenge to commonly acclaimed authorities on both divine and human levels in his "Complaint" and "Answer." The discussion moves on to the challenger himself, now 'Mard-i-Khuda,' who is the architect of the "Mosque of Cordoba." Fashioned with Mard-i-Khuda's identity, Iqbal's man dismantles all prevailing political and social systems in "Satan's Parliament," the topic of my third chapter. The dissertation concludes with the socio-political will of Iqbal read in "Mehrab Gul Afghan's Thoughts" to a youth who will inherit the wisdom of the speaker and will take control of his affairs in a free society after the departure of the British. To sum up, the poems and the eclectic approach adopted for this analysis will enable me to demonstrate that Iqbal made his cultural and religious identity as a site of resistance against the colonizers' imperialistic plan.

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