

## **Iqbal and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

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**Abstract:** This article delves into the profound influence of German literary figure Johann Wolfgang von Goethe on the philosophical and poetical perspectives of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Despite existing in distinct temporal and geographic contexts, the duo initiated a cross-cultural intellectual discourse that significantly shaped their respective literary landscapes. This cross-cultural exchange epitomizes the transformative power of intellectual openness and curiosity, underlining the significance of transcending societal and cultural confines to deepen our understanding of human existence.

**Keyword:** Iqbal, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

### **Introduction**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), a universal genius of his era, is celebrated as a central figure in the German literary movement, Sturm und Drang. His comprehensive and diverse body of work extends beyond the conventional borders of his home country, influencing global literary discourse. Meanwhile, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), a philosopher, poet, and politician from British India, esteemed as the "Spiritual Father of Pakistan", absorbed inspiration from Goethe's opus. This intellectual interaction, although conducted posthumously, provides an extraordinary narrative that transcends traditional confines of time and space.

### **The Bond of Poetry: Goethe's Influence on Iqbal**

Goethe's West-East Divan, a collection of lyrical poems heavily influenced by Persian poetry, sparked a flame in Iqbal's intellectual sphere. Not merely an anthology of poems, the Divan also embodied Goethe's in-depth engagement with the Eastern ethos, resonating profoundly with Iqbal's exploration of his own cultural heritage and intellectual tradition. The mutual admiration for Eastern culture and philosophy formed the foundation for the intellectual connection between Iqbal and Goethe. This admiration is evident in Iqbal's "Bang-e-Dra" (The Call of the Marching Bell), wherein the poetic style and thematic exploration reflect Goethe's influence. Iqbal, much like Goethe, amalgamated the rich cultural legacy of his homeland with contemporary philosophical thought, echoing a convergence of Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.

### **The Intellectual Exchange**

The intellectual discourse between Iqbal and Goethe transcends a shared admiration for Eastern thought. Both poets delved into profound existential queries surrounding identity, freedom, and the purpose of existence. They used poetry as a vehicle to convey their respective ideologies, emphasizing the need for intellectual evolution and spiritual transcendence.

Goethe's philosophical exploration resonated profoundly with Iqbal, inspiring the latter to delve deeper into Western intellectual traditions. Consequently, Iqbal's work emerged as a unique synthesis of Eastern and

Western philosophies, contributing to a broader, more nuanced understanding of the human condition.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: A Global Dialogue**

Goethe and Iqbal's intellectual exchange extends beyond their individual contributions to literature. Their discourse, a fusion of Eastern and Western philosophies, symbolizes a global dialogue transcending geographic and temporal boundaries. This intellectual exchange holds significant relevance in the contemporary era, illustrating the potential for literature to foster mutual understanding and respect amidst diverse cultural contexts.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Proponents of Cultural Synthesis**

The shared love for the East and its philosophies, and the mutual aspiration to bridge the cultural divide between East and West, propelled Goethe and Iqbal to champion the idea of cultural synthesis in their respective societies. This endeavor was more than a mere intellectual curiosity; it was a conscious effort to promote understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect among disparate cultures.

Through their creative expressions, Goethe and Iqbal brought the beauty and wisdom of the Eastern world to the Western mind and vice versa. Goethe's West-East Divan and Iqbal's Bang-e-Dra are symbolic bridges connecting two distinct cultures and ideologies, inviting readers to appreciate the depth and diversity of human thought and culture.

### **Goethe and Iqbal's Legacy: Beyond Literature**

Goethe and Iqbal's intellectual discourse extends beyond literature and philosophy. Their shared vision of global intellectual solidarity continues to inspire cross-cultural dialogues in other fields of knowledge, including science, politics, and art. Their legacy urges us to transcend our cultural biases and seek the unifying thread of humanity.

Goethe and Iqbal's philosophy, deeply rooted in the idea of embracing the 'other', provides a template for addressing contemporary global challenges. They remind us of the need for dialogue, respect, and empathy, values that are crucial for fostering global peace and solidarity.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Voices for the Future**

Goethe and Iqbal's enduring legacy continues to resonate in contemporary times. Their work inspires us to foster dialogue and understanding among

diverse cultures, reminding us of the common human values that bind us together. Their vision for a world where East and West interact and learn from each other is more relevant today than ever before.

In the face of growing global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and political unrest, their philosophy underscores the importance of global intellectual solidarity. They remind us that we are all interconnected, and that our strength lies in our diversity and shared humanity.

### **The Universal Language of Poetry: Goethe and Iqbal**

An intriguing aspect of Goethe and Iqbal's intellectual discourse lies in their use of poetry as a universal language to express complex philosophical and existential concepts. Both poets firmly believed in the ability of poetry to capture the depths of human experience, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers.

Goethe's poetry, brimming with vibrant metaphors and profound insights, served as an exploration of the human psyche and a quest for universal truth. Iqbal, on the other hand, adopted poetry as a tool for societal reform, stimulating a collective awakening through his evocative verses. Despite their different objectives, both poets used poetry as a bridge to connect diverse intellectual traditions and cultures.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: The Philosophy of Selfhood**

A key theme in Goethe and Iqbal's work is the exploration of the 'self.' Both poets pursued the intricate and nuanced concept of identity, albeit from different perspectives. Goethe's exploration of the 'self' revolved around the notion of 'self-actualization,' where the individual strives for personal growth and fulfillment.

In contrast, Iqbal's philosophy of 'selfhood' (Khudi) was grounded in Islamic principles. Iqbal stressed the development of the 'self' through spiritual elevation, urging individuals to recognize their potential and strive for higher moral and spiritual values. This exploration of 'selfhood' forms a significant part of the intellectual discourse between Goethe and Iqbal, providing a unique insight into their philosophical ideologies.

### **A Timeless Legacy**

The profound intellectual exchange between Goethe and Iqbal illuminates the transformative power of cross-cultural discourse. Their shared

fascination with Eastern culture, the exploration of existential questions, and their relentless pursuit of intellectual and spiritual growth has left a timeless legacy. Their work continues to inspire, resonating with readers across different cultures and times, demonstrating the universality of their philosophical exploration.

Goethe and Iqbal's literary and philosophical discourse serves as a beacon of intellectual curiosity and openness. Their work underscores the significance of understanding and appreciating diverse intellectual traditions, emphasizing the essence of unity in diversity.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Striving for Spiritual Growth**

Both Goethe and Iqbal were deeply interested in spiritual development and introspection. They viewed the journey towards spiritual enlightenment as a fundamental human endeavor. For Goethe, this took the form of an exploration of different cultural and intellectual traditions, while Iqbal sought spiritual elevation within the framework of his Islamic faith.

Their work, brimming with spiritual introspection and a relentless pursuit of higher consciousness, served as an invitation to their readers to embark on their own spiritual journeys. They exemplified the transformative power of spirituality, urging individuals to transcend their mundane existence and strive for spiritual fulfillment.

### **Intellectual Curiosity: The Driving Force Behind Goethe and Iqbal's Work**

A striking characteristic of both Goethe and Iqbal was their insatiable intellectual curiosity. They were relentless in their pursuit of knowledge, never confining themselves to a single domain. Their intellectual repertoire extended beyond literature and poetry to include philosophy, history, sociology, and religious studies.

This intellectual curiosity fueled their creative expression, lending depth and richness to their work. It also served as a catalyst for their cross-cultural discourse, prompting them to explore and appreciate different intellectual traditions.

### **Towards a Shared Vision: Goethe and Iqbal's Quest for Unity**

At the heart of Goethe and Iqbal's intellectual discourse lies a shared vision of unity. They believed in the unifying power of shared human

experiences and the common quest for understanding and meaning. They envisioned a world where diverse cultures, religions, and intellectual traditions could coexist and enrich each other.

Goethe and Iqbal's work, reflecting this vision of unity, serves as a poignant reminder of the shared human journey. Their quest for unity, transcending geographic, cultural, and temporal boundaries, holds profound relevance in today's interconnected world.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Beacon of Hope**

In a world marked by increasing fragmentation and discord, the intellectual discourse between Goethe and Iqbal serves as a beacon of hope. Their work, characterized by a deep respect for diversity and a profound understanding of the human condition, invites us to transcend our differences and unite towards common objectives. Their vision of unity and harmony resonates powerfully in our contemporary world, reminding us of the potential for intellectual discourse to bridge divides and foster understanding.

### **Transcending the Self: Goethe and Iqbal's Philosophy of Selflessness**

A noteworthy element of Goethe and Iqbal's philosophy was the idea of transcending the self. Both poets urged their readers to move beyond a narrow, self-centered worldview and embrace a more expansive, universal perspective. This call for selflessness was more than an ethical prescription; it was a profound existential insight into the interconnectedness of all beings.

Goethe's poetry often touched upon the idea of the individual as an integral part of the larger cosmos, while Iqbal's concept of Khudi (selfhood) emphasized the spiritual evolution of the individual within the broader social and cosmic context. This shared philosophy of selflessness offers invaluable insights into the dynamics of personal and societal transformation.

### **The Power of Love: Goethe and Iqbal's Romantic Philosophy**

One of the recurring themes in the works of Goethe and Iqbal is the power of love. Both poets viewed love as a transformative force, capable of invoking profound changes in the individual and society. For Goethe, love was often explored as an aesthetic and emotional experience, while Iqbal

approached love from a more spiritual and metaphysical perspective, considering it a path to spiritual enlightenment.

Their exploration of love as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, encompassing the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms, highlights the universality of this fundamental human experience. Their poetic explorations of love invite us to delve into the depths of our hearts and recognize the transformative power of love.

### **Art as Liberation: The Role of Creativity in Goethe and Iqbal's Philosophy**

Both Goethe and Iqbal had a deep appreciation for the role of art and creativity in human life. They viewed art as a medium of expression and liberation, allowing individuals to transcend their immediate circumstances and reach for the profound depths of human experience.

Their belief in the liberating power of art is evident in their poetic work, which is characterized by rich imagery, symbolic language, and profound philosophical insights. Their creative genius inspires us to engage with our creative faculties, reminding us of the potential of art to illuminate, heal, and transform.

### **Goethe and Iqbal's Vision: A Guide for the Modern World**

The enduring legacy of Goethe and Iqbal continues to resonate powerfully in our contemporary world. Their intellectual discourse, characterized by a deep respect for diversity, a commitment to spiritual growth, and a vision of unity, offers invaluable guidance for our modern challenges.

The timeless wisdom of Goethe and Iqbal invites us to broaden our intellectual horizons, delve into the depths of our spiritual selves, and work towards a world marked by understanding, compassion, and unity. Their work reminds us of our shared humanity, urging us to transcend our differences and unite towards common objectives.

### **Echoes of Goethe and Iqbal in Contemporary Times**

The enduring legacy of Goethe and Iqbal continues to echo in contemporary times. Their intellectual discourse, characterized by a deep understanding of diverse intellectual traditions, a commitment to spiritual growth, and a vision of unity, offers timeless insights for the challenges of the modern world.

Goethe and Iqbal's work reminds us of the power of intellectual curiosity, the potential for cross-cultural discourse, and the significance of unity in diversity. They challenge us to broaden our intellectual horizons, embark on our spiritual journeys, and work towards a more inclusive and understanding world.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Advocates for Intellectual Freedom**

Intellectual freedom was a core value that both Goethe and Iqbal passionately advocated for. They viewed intellectual freedom as the cornerstone of human development and progress. Goethe, through his diverse literary endeavors, demonstrated a resistance to conforming to established paradigms. Similarly, Iqbal, in his exploration of Islamic thought, emphasized the importance of critical thinking and intellectual dynamism.

Their shared advocacy for intellectual freedom is a powerful testament to their belief in the human capacity for creativity, innovation, and progress. Their work continues to inspire us to value intellectual freedom and to question and critique established norms and beliefs.

### **Embracing the Divine: The Mystical Dimensions of Goethe and Iqbal's Work**

A fascinating dimension of Goethe and Iqbal's work is their exploration of the mystical and the divine. While their interpretations of the divine differed due to their unique cultural and philosophical backgrounds, both poets shared a deep fascination for the transcendental realm.

Goethe's exploration of the divine was influenced by various religious and philosophical traditions, while Iqbal's interpretation was rooted in Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Despite their different approaches, both poets aspired to bridge the divide between the human and the divine, encouraging their readers to explore their own spiritual potential.

### **Exploring the Human Condition: Goethe and Iqbal's Existential Insights**

Both Goethe and Iqbal delved into the human condition in their work, exploring themes such as love, loss, joy, despair, and the quest for meaning. They believed that literature and poetry, in their ability to capture the intricacies of the human experience, could offer profound insights into the nature of existence.



Their exploration of the human condition, characterized by a deep empathy for human suffering and a celebration of human resilience, provides a timeless reflection of our shared humanity. Their work, echoing the joys and sorrows of the human journey, continues to resonate with readers across different cultures and times.

### **The Enduring Relevance of Goethe and Iqbal**

The timeless wisdom of Goethe and Iqbal continues to resonate in our contemporary world. Their intellectual discourse, characterized by a deep respect for diversity, a commitment to spiritual growth, and a vision of unity, offers invaluable guidance for the challenges of our time.

In a world marked by increasing polarization and discord, the philosophy of Goethe and Iqbal serves as a beacon of hope. Their work, advocating for intellectual freedom, exploring the divine, and delving into the human condition, reminds us of the power of intellect

### **Cross-Cultural Exchange: The East Meets West in the Works of Goethe and Iqbal**

One of the defining characteristics of both Goethe and Iqbal's work is the remarkable blending of Eastern and Western philosophies. Goethe's fascination with the East, evident in his 'West-Eastern Divan,' was mirrored by Iqbal's interest in Western thought, as he endeavored to reconcile it with his Islamic principles.

This cross-cultural exchange allowed both poets to deepen their understanding of the human condition, enriching their work with diverse philosophical and cultural insights. Their work serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of cross-cultural dialogue in fostering mutual respect and understanding.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: The Role of Nature in their Work**

Nature plays a significant role in the poetry of both Goethe and Iqbal. They viewed nature as a source of inspiration, wisdom, and solace, often using vivid imagery and metaphors from the natural world to express their philosophical insights.

For Goethe, nature was a reflection of the divine order, while Iqbal viewed it as a manifestation of God's beauty and creativity. Their profound appreciation for nature and its spiritual symbolism is a testament to their belief in the interconnectedness of all existence.

### **Embodying Courage: Goethe and Iqbal's Call to Action**

A recurrent theme in the work of both Goethe and Iqbal is the call to embody courage and strive for positive change. They believed in the transformative power of individual action and viewed courage as a critical virtue in the face of adversity.

Goethe, in his 'Faust,' portrays the protagonist's relentless quest for knowledge and truth, highlighting the importance of perseverance and courage. Similarly, Iqbal, through his concept of 'Khudi' (selfhood), emphasized the need for courage to realize one's potential and contribute to societal progress.

### **The Legacy of Goethe and Iqbal: Illuminating the Path Forward**

The profound insights and timeless wisdom of Goethe and Iqbal continue to illuminate the path forward in our contemporary world. Their intellectual discourse, characterized by a commitment to spiritual growth, a deep respect for diversity, and a vision of unity, offers invaluable guidance for the challenges of our time.

The enduring relevance of Goethe and Iqbal's work serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of intellectual exploration and cross-cultural dialogue. Their work continues to inspire us to broaden our horizons, delve into the depths of our spiritual selves, and work towards a world marked by understanding, compassion, and unity.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Literary Style and Form**

A notable aspect of Goethe and Iqbal's work is their mastery of diverse literary styles and forms. Goethe was a versatile writer, skilled in various genres such as poetry, drama, and prose. His poetic style ranged from lyrical and contemplative to passionate and exuberant. He seamlessly blended classical elements with romantic sensibilities, resulting in works of enduring beauty and depth.

Similarly, Iqbal showcased his literary prowess through diverse forms, including ghazals, nazms, and philosophical treatises. His poetic language, infused with rich imagery and profound philosophical insights, captivated readers and established him as a preeminent poet of his time. Iqbal's use of Persian and Urdu languages added a unique musicality and cultural depth to his poetry.

### **Social and Political Engagement: Goethe and Iqbal as Thinkers**

Beyond their contributions to literature, Goethe and Iqbal were engaged intellectuals who actively grappled with social and political issues of their time.

Goethe, in addition to his literary pursuits, served as a government official and diplomat. He actively participated in political and cultural life, promoting reforms and advocating for social progress. His works often reflected his concerns about the societal challenges of his era, and he sought to inspire positive change through his writing.

Iqbal, a passionate advocate for the rights and upliftment of Muslims in British India, utilized his poetic and intellectual talents to address pressing social and political issues. His work served as a call to action, urging his fellow countrymen to strive for self-reform, unity, and independence. Iqbal's political engagement and contributions to the All India Muslim League played a significant role in the eventual creation of Pakistan.

### **Goethe's Influence on Iqbal's Educational Thought**

Goethe's influence extended beyond the literary realm, leaving an indelible mark on Iqbal's educational thought. Inspired by Goethe's emphasis on holistic education and the development of the individual, Iqbal envisioned a comprehensive educational system that would foster intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth.

Iqbal's concept of "Khudi" (selfhood) drew heavily from Goethe's idea of self-actualization and personal development. Iqbal believed that education should go beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge and should aim at nurturing the individual's character, self-awareness, and creative potential.

### **Reception and Legacy**

The works of Goethe and Iqbal have enjoyed enduring popularity and have left a profound impact on subsequent generations of writers, thinkers, and scholars.

Goethe's influence on European literature and thought cannot be overstated. His works continue to be studied and admired, with his ideas and literary techniques influencing countless writers across different cultures and time periods.

Similarly, Iqbal's contributions have had a lasting impact, particularly in the context of South Asian literature, philosophy, and political thought.

His poetry and philosophical works continue to be celebrated, inspiring subsequent generations of writers and thinkers.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Philosophical Influences**

Both Goethe and Iqbal were deeply influenced by philosophical ideas that shaped their worldview and literary works. Goethe drew inspiration from the philosophical traditions of German Idealism and Enlightenment thought. The ideas of philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller resonated with Goethe, informing his exploration of the human condition, the nature of art, and the pursuit of truth.

Iqbal, on the other hand, drew from a wide range of philosophical sources, including Islamic philosophy, Western philosophical traditions, and mystical Sufi thought. The ideas of philosophers such as Ibn Arabi, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henri Bergson played a significant role in shaping Iqbal's philosophical outlook, which centered on the concepts of selfhood, spirituality, and the synthesis of diverse intellectual traditions.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Contemplation of Time and Transience**

A recurring theme in the works of both Goethe and Iqbal is the contemplation of time and the fleeting nature of human existence. They acknowledged the impermanence of life and grappled with the existential questions that arise in the face of mortality.

Goethe's "West-Eastern Divan" and Iqbal's "Zarb-i Kalim" (The Reed Pen's Strike) reflect their contemplation of transience and the passing of time. Through their poetry, they explore the paradoxical nature of time, its capacity to bring both joy and sorrow, and the quest for meaning in the face of its relentless flow.

### **Goethe's Faust and Iqbal's Struggle for Selfhood**

One of the most renowned works of Goethe, "Faust," resonates with Iqbal's exploration of the struggle for selfhood and the pursuit of knowledge. Both Goethe's Faust and Iqbal's philosophical writings highlight the transformative power of knowledge and the quest for self-realization.

In "Faust," Goethe presents the titular character's insatiable desire for knowledge and experience, ultimately leading to a Faustian pact with the devil. This quest for knowledge, self-discovery, and redemption echoes

Iqbal's concept of Khudi and his call for the development of the self through introspection and self-actualization.

### **Goethe and Iqbal: Influence on Postcolonial Thought**

The works of Goethe and Iqbal have had a significant impact on postcolonial thought and discourse. Their writings provided inspiration and insight to scholars and thinkers grappling with issues of identity, cultural decolonization, and the reclaiming of indigenous knowledge.

Goethe's engagement with Eastern cultures and Iqbal's exploration of the relationship between Islam and the West resonated with postcolonial thinkers, who sought to challenge the hegemony of Western knowledge systems and engage in a dialogue that values diverse cultural perspectives.

### **The Enduring Relevance of Goethe and Iqbal**

The enduring relevance of Goethe and Iqbal lies in their ability to transcend time and cultural boundaries, offering profound insights into the human condition and the complexities of existence. Their works continue to inspire and provoke thought, inviting readers to engage in introspection, intellectual exploration, and a deeper understanding of the world.

Goethe and Iqbal, with their unique blend of literary genius, philosophical depth, and cultural exchange, stand as towering figures in the realms of literature and thought. Their legacy serves as a reminder of the transformative power of art, philosophy, and cross-cultural dialogue in fostering a more inclusive, enlightened, and harmonious world.

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