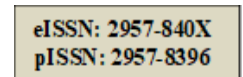


# Converging Visions, Diverging Paths: A Comparative Study of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Syed Abul A‘la Maududi in Modern Islamic Thought

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intellectual trajectories of Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) and Syed Abul A‘la Maududi (1903–1979) under the theme “Converging Visions, Diverging Paths in Islamic Thought.” Both thinkers were pivotal in shaping the modern Islamic intellectual renaissance in South Asia. They shared a common concern over the decline of Muslim identity and the disintegration of Islamic spiritual vitality under colonial, secular, and materialist influences. Yet, their methods and emphases diverged significantly. Iqbal, a philosopher-poet, emphasized the spiritual and intellectual reconstruction of the Muslim self through his concept of khudi (selfhood) and his dynamic reinterpretation of Islamic metaphysics. He envisioned Islam not as a closed legal structure but as a living, evolving spiritual ideal rooted in the principle of tawḥīd (Divine Unity). Maududi, in contrast, formulated a systematic socio-political philosophy centered on ḥākimiyyat-e-ilāhiyyah (Divine Sovereignty) and the reestablishment of an Islamic order as the practical embodiment of faith.

This paper argues that Iqbal provided the philosophical and spiritual foundations for Muslim revival in the modern age, whereas Maududi operationalized these ideals into a structured program for societal reform. By examining their convergences and divergences, the study demonstrates how both thinkers contributed uniquely to the ongoing project of Islamic intellectual renewal, offering complementary paths toward reasserting the spiritual and moral autonomy of the Muslim world. Their legacies continue to resonate in contemporary Islamic movements and discourses seeking harmony between faith, reason, and modernity.

## KEYWORDS

Converging Visions, Diverging Paths, Comparative Study , Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Syed Abul A‘la Maududi , Islamic Thought

## **INTRODUCTION**

The twentieth century marked a profound moment of intellectual and spiritual crisis for the Muslim world. Under the dual pressures of Western colonial domination and the rise of modern secular ideologies, Muslim thinkers faced the daunting challenge of redefining Islam's role in an age of political subjugation and moral uncertainty. The collapse of traditional authority structures, coupled with the encounter with modern rationalism, compelled Muslim scholars to revisit foundational questions: What does it mean to live authentically as a Muslim in the modern world? How can Islamic civilization recover its creative energy and moral leadership without abandoning its spiritual core?

Among the responses to these questions, few have been as influential or enduring as those offered by Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Syed Abul A'la Maududi. Though separated by a generation, both thinkers shared a passionate concern for the revival of Islam as a complete way of life — not merely a set of rituals or political ideals, but a comprehensive spiritual vision. Yet, their intellectual orientations and methodologies differed sharply. Iqbal, educated in philosophy and steeped in Sufi and Western thought, sought to revive the spiritual and philosophical vitality of Islam through a creative reinterpretation of its metaphysical foundations. Maududi, trained in journalism and religious scholarship, approached the same challenge from a systematic and institutional perspective, aiming to reconstruct the Islamic community (ummah) through moral discipline and political organization.

### **Iqbal's Vision of Spiritual Reconstruction**

To grasp Allama Muhammad Iqbal's contribution to modern Islamic thought, one must first recognize the philosophical magnitude of his project. Iqbal was not merely a poet or national figure; he was a profound metaphysician who sought to reawaken the spiritual energies of the Muslim self through a radical reinterpretation of Islam's intellectual tradition. His central concern was the reconstruction of religious thought to meet the moral and intellectual challenges of modernity without compromising the essential spiritual principles of Islam.

### **The Concept of Khudi (Selfhood)**

Iqbal's concept of khudi (selfhood) occupies a central place in his philosophical system...

## **Maududi's Vision of Socio-Political Reconstruction**

If Iqbal represents the philosopher of inner renewal, Syed Abul A'la Maududi stands as the architect of Islamic social reconstruction. Where Iqbal sought to reform the mind of the Muslim, Maududi sought to reform the system within which that mind must live. He transformed the spiritual impulses of revival into a coherent political and social ideology, providing a practical blueprint for establishing Islam as a comprehensive order of life.

## **Convergences, Divergences, and Synthesis**

### **Shared Foundations: The Revivalist Impulse**

Despite their methodological and stylistic differences, Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Syed Abul A'la Maududi share a profound common ground. Both were animated by an urgent revivalist impulse — a conviction that Islam is not a relic of the past but a living, dynamic faith capable of guiding humanity in the modern age. Their intellectual projects sought to awaken Muslims from both spiritual lethargy and cultural dependency, reasserting Islam's centrality in shaping individual and collective life.

Both thinkers responded to the same historical crisis: the decline of Muslim civilization under colonial domination and the rise of Western modernity. Iqbal diagnosed this decline as a crisis of selfhood — a moral and metaphysical disintegration — while Maududi saw it as the consequence of abandoning Islam's social and political order. Yet, both located the remedy in returning to the Qur'an as the living source of renewal.

For Iqbal, the Qur'an inspired a philosophy of action and creativity; for Maududi, it provided the legal and moral framework for a just society. In essence, both thinkers envisioned Islam as complete — not confined to ritual or theology, but encompassing every domain of human life.

### **Diverging Emphases:**

#### **Spirit versus Structure**

The divergence between Iqbal and Maududi arises from their different conceptions of how revival should be achieved. Iqbal's reform was philosophical and inward, while Maududi's was organizational and outward.

Iqbal's focus was the self — the individual as a moral and spiritual center of transformation. His concept of *khudi* represents a metaphysical anthropology: the human being as a free, creative, and responsible agent before God. Society changes only when individuals rediscover their divine potential.

Maududi, conversely, emphasized systemic reconstruction. His theory of *hakmiyyat-e-ilahiyyah* sought to rebuild the institutional and political foundations of Muslim life. The crisis of the *ummah*, in his view, lay in the secularization of social order — thus the solution must be the re-Islamization of structures: law, education, governance, and economics.

In short, Iqbal was a philosopher of becoming, and Maududi a theorist of order. Iqbal's revolution begins within the heart; Maududi's unfolds through disciplined organization.

### **Their Attitudes toward Modernity**

Both Iqbal and Maududi engaged critically with Western thought, yet their responses differed in tone and method. Iqbal sought dialogue; Maududi sought delimitation.

Iqbal absorbed insights from Western philosophy — Nietzsche's affirmation of life, Bergson's creative evolution, and Kant's moral autonomy — reinterpreting them through Qur'anic categories. He admired the intellectual vigor of the West but deplored its materialism and spiritual emptiness. His goal was not to reject modernity but to spiritualize it.

Maududi, by contrast, approached Western modernity as an ideological challenge to be resisted. He recognized its technological and scientific contributions but viewed its philosophical foundations — secularism, humanism, and individualism — as antithetical to *tawhid*. His project was to construct an alternative civilization based on divine sovereignty rather than human autonomy. Thus, Iqbal's engagement with modernity was transformative, while Maududi's was confrontational. Both aimed to protect the integrity of Islamic values, yet through contrasting strategies — intellectual synthesis versus ideological demarcation.

### **The Role of Reason and Revelation**

Iqbal and Maududi also differ in their treatment of *aql* (reason) and *wahy* (revelation). Iqbal viewed reason as a creative ally of faith, capable of exploring the universe as a manifestation of God's signs. He advocated the revival of *ijtihad* as a means to renew Islamic law and theology in light of modern knowledge.

Maududi, while affirming the importance of reason, emphasized its subordination to revelation. Human intellect, he argued, cannot grasp ultimate truth without divine guidance. Hence, *ijtihad* must operate strictly within the boundaries of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

This distinction reflects their differing intellectual temperaments: Iqbal the philosopher-poet, seeking unity of spirit and intellect; Maududi the jurist-activist, seeking unity of law and morality.

## **Individual and Community**

The contrast between Iqbal's khudi and Maududi's ummah also symbolizes their broader outlooks. Iqbal's vision begins with the individual who perfects the self to become God's vicegerent; Maududi's begins with the community that embodies divine law to manifest God's sovereignty.

For Iqbal, the ideal human — mard-e-mu'min — is the nucleus of civilization: through moral strength and creative will, he radiates spiritual energy into society. For Maududi, individual virtue must culminate in collective discipline: Islam cannot flourish unless the community institutionalizes faith through law and governance.

Their paradigms thus form two halves of a holistic vision — the inner and outer dimensions of Islamic life. Without Iqbal's moral awakening, Maududi's social system risks rigidity; without Maududi's institutionalization, Iqbal's spirituality risks abstraction.

## **Points of Complementarity**

Although often contrasted, Iqbal and Maududi can be seen as complementary rather than contradictory. Both converge on the central principle of tawhid — the unity of God as the foundation of both personal ethics and social order.

Iqbal spiritualizes tawhid: it is the unity of being that integrates the self and the cosmos. Maududi politicizes tawhid: it is the unity of authority that integrates society under divine law. Together, they illustrate Islam's dual dimension — inward faith and outward order.

Moreover, both reject fatalism and passivity. For Iqbal, passivity is spiritual death; for Maududi, it is social disintegration. Both call for moral action, responsibility, and struggle (jihad in its holistic sense) as means to restore the dignity of the Muslim world.

Their synthesis, therefore, represents a two-tiered program for renewal:

1. Iqbal's Reconstruction of the Self — intellectual and spiritual empowerment of the individual;
2. Maududi's Reconstruction of Society — moral and institutional reordering of the community.

## **Contemporary Relevance**

In the twenty-first century, the thought of Iqbal and Maududi remains deeply relevant. The Muslim world continues to wrestle with the challenges of modernity, identity, and governance — the very dilemmas they addressed a century ago.

Iqbal offers a model for integrating spirituality with modern intellectual life — a call to reclaim faith as a source of creativity and freedom. His ideas inspire Muslim intellectuals, educators, and artists who seek to harmonize faith with reason and science.

Maududi, on the other hand, provides a framework for socio-political ethics in an age of globalization and moral relativism. His insistence on divine sovereignty challenges both secular authoritarianism and moral chaos, reminding Muslims that justice and governance cannot be divorced from divine guidance.

Together, they invite a rethinking of Islamic modernity — not as imitation of the West, nor as regression into literalism, but as a balanced, evolving civilization rooted in revelation and animated by reason.

## **CONCLUSION**

The comparative study of Iqbal and Maududi reveals not a clash but a continuum in the evolution of modern Islamic thought. Both emerged from the same crucible of colonial crisis and spiritual decay; both sought to restore Islam's vitality as a living force. Yet, they operated on different planes: Iqbal the philosopher of faith, Maududi the strategist of faith.

Iqbal reconstructed the inner world of Islam — its metaphysics, psychology, and spiritual foundations. Maududi reconstructed the outer world — its institutions, laws, and social order. Their visions converge in purpose — the reawakening of Islamic civilization — but diverge in method: Iqbal begins with the soul; Maududi begins with society.

Ultimately, both paths are necessary. Without spiritual depth, social reform becomes hollow; without social embodiment, spirituality remains inert. The challenge for contemporary Muslims is not to choose between Iqbal and Maududi, but to integrate their insights — to build a civilization that is both spiritually alive and socially just, both philosophically profound and politically authentic.

Their legacies, though distinct, converge in a single prophetic call: to rediscover the unity of life under the sovereignty of God — where knowledge serves faith, power serves justice, and the human self fulfills its destiny as *khalifat Allah fi al-ardh* — the vicegerent of God on earth.