

The Role of Afghan Diplomats in Promoting Iqbal's thoughts: A Historical and Scholarly Review

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Abstract

"Many distinguished scholars of Iqbal who have significantly contributed to the study and dissemination of his philosophy worldwide were Afghan diplomats affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. These ambassadors, through both poetry and prose in various languages, played an essential role in promoting Iqbal's ideology. The intellectual depth and scholarly dedication exhibited by these ambassadors reflect a direct and profound connection with Iqbal's philosophy. This intellectual legacy remains a valuable resource in contemporary times, offering insights for strengthening diplomatic and cultural relations between Islamic nations" Although my Ph.D. research focuses on "An Evolutionary Review of Iqbal Studies in Afghanistan," I found that Afghan ambassadors have played a continuous and influential role in the dissemination of Iqbal's thought. There is a compelling need for further research on the contributions of these Afghan diplomats, as their efforts provide an invaluable intellectual resource for fostering diplomatic ties and promoting scholarly exchange among Islamic

nations. Wherever these ambassadors were posted around the world, they continued to promote understanding and knowledge of Iqbal in their own languages. Below is a concise review of the global contributions of notable Afghan diplomats in the field of Iqbal studies.

Keywords: Afghan Diplomats, Iqbal's thoughts, Scholarly Review

I. His Excellency Nadir Shah Durrani

A close associate of Allama Iqbal, Nadir Shah Durrani (1) (April 9th 1883- November 8th 1933) is frequently referenced in Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poetry as well as prose.

صدابہشت سے آئی کہ منتظر ہے ترا ہرات و کابل و غزنی کا سبزہ نورس
سرسنک دید نادر پہ داغ لالہ فشاں چٹاں کہ آتش اوراد گر فرہ نشان (2)
نادر، ابدالی، سلطان شہید
خسروان مشرق اندر انجمن سطوت ایران و افغان و دکن
نادر آں دانائے رمز اتحاد با مسلمان داد پیغام و داد (3)

Before ascending to the throne of Afghanistan, Nadir Khan served as the Afghan ambassador in Paris. His mother was originally from Ludhiana, which enabled him to easily understand Iqbal's Urdu poetry. In 1929, when King Amanullah Khan was deposed by the British-backed rebellion, General Nadir Khan returned to Afghanistan via Lahore to replace Habibullah Kalakani. During his stay in Lahore, Nadir Khan met with Allama Iqbal, who generously donated funds to support the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. After successfully restoring political stability and becoming king, Nadir Khan wrote a letter of thanks to Iqbal, expressing his gratitude for Iqbal's efforts in strengthening the Afghan nation. Iqbal's correspondence with Nadir Khan includes a Persian letter dated Khurdad 9, 1309 (May 30, 1930), which is preserved in its original form in the archives of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore. In 1933 King Nadir Khan invited Iqbal to contribute his expertise in

curriculum of Kabul University. This intellectual relationship of Nadir Khan significantly influenced Iqbal's renowned Masnavi, *Musafir*.

2. His Excellency Abdul Hadi Dawi (Pareshan) (4)

Abdul Hadi Dawi (1895 -1982), also known by his pen name Pareshan, belonged to the Pashtun Dawi tribe. Maulvi Muhammad Zafar and Maulvi Muhammad Hussain Khan nurtured his political and general tastes and introduced him to the Urdu language. *"In 1911, upon the invitation of Allama Mahmud Tarzi, he was appointed editor of the Afghan newspaper "Siraj-ul-Akhbar". Here he learned Turkish from Ali Effendi, who was serving as director at the Military department in Kabul. He had studied Arabic grammar and syntax as a student, but he became acquainted with the modern Arabic of Syria and Egypt through Mr. Mahmud Tarzi, who himself was an Arabic scholar."*(5)

Mr. Dawi served globally as diplomat of Afghanistan.

"In 1921, he was appointed as the Director of the Indian and European Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During this time, a delegation led by Allama Mahmood Tarzi was sent to Britain to secure permanent independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan, and Abdul Hadi Dawi was also included in this delegation. In 1922, he was appointed as the second advisor on foreign affairs. In 1923, he was appointed ambassador to Bukhara by the Afghan government, and in 1923, Abdul Hadi Dawi was appointed as the first Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in London." (6)

"After the restoration of Nadir Shah's rule in 1308 AH, he was called to Kabul and appointed as the afghan minister-at-Large in Germany. In 1332 AH, he went to Egypt as the ambassador of Afghanistan. In 1334 AH, he was transferred to Indonesia as the Afghan ambassador. After staying there for four years, he returned home due to poor health". (7)

"He died in Kabul on 1991. He was buried with full honors in the cemetery of the righteous martyrs the next day" (8) A prominent figure among Afghan

ambassadors dedicated to Iqbal's philosophy, he was instrumental in the promotion of Iqbal's thought through his literary and diplomatic efforts. As the editor of *Siraj-ul-Akhbar* and later the Afghan ambassador to London, he translated Iqbal's Urdu poetry into Persian, making it accessible to a broader audience. His notable works include:

When in 1923 *Payam e Mashreq* was published for the first time from Lahore Mr. Davi wrote a comprehensive Review on this poetical collection of Iqbal & published in a series of Articles in *Aman Afghan*, a Kabul-based weekly newspaper, as early as 1924. His pioneering scholarship laid the foundation for Iqbal studies in Afghanistan. Major Contributions of Mr. Davi is the translation of Urdu poetry of Iqbal into Persian in verse named *Lali Rekhta*. Mr. Davi published another important work on Iqbal in two volumes titled *Aasar-e-urdu-e- Iqbal*, on the occasion of the centenary of Iqbal's birth in 1977. This authenticated work marked a milestone in Iqbal studies in Afghanistan.

3. His Excellency Salahuddin Seljuqi⁽⁹⁾

Another prominent figure among Afghan diplomats who admired Iqbal is Salahuddin Saljuqi (1896- June 6th 1970). Throughout his diplomatic career, he served as Afghanistan's ambassador in Bombay, Delhi, Pakistan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Greece. A multilingual scholar proficient in Persian, Arabic, and English, he translated several classical philosophical works, including Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Naqd-e-Badel*, *Tajal-e- Khuda aor Anafs wa Afaaq*, and Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. Saljuqi shared a deep intellectual bond with Iqbal. Their friendship is documented in various letters, particularly during Iqbal's travels to India. Saljuqi's insistence on hosting Iqbal at the Afghan consulate in Delhi highlights their close association " *Maulana Muhammad Ali Kasuri was a famous contemporary of Iqbal, who was doing business in Cantab Bombay in those days. There are references to several gatherings of Iqbal and Seljuqi in the Afghan Consulate*

there. Initially, Muhammad Ali Kasuri also acted as a translator during the meetings of Seljuqi and Iqbal” (10) A study of Iqbal's writings reveals several such writings of Iqbal which are either in the name of Salahuddin Seljuqi or which include the mention of Seljuqi. The details of these writings are given in detail in this short article Iqbal and Seljuqi. There are references in these letters to the effect that Iqbal continued to receive invitations from Mr. Seljuqi during his internal travels in India. Iqbal wrote this letter to Munshi Tahiruddin on September 21, 1931, while crossing the Mediterranean Sea before reaching the coast of France on the ship Maloja:

“بمبئی پہنچتے ہی سردار صلاح الدین سلجوقی کو نسلر افغانستان مقیم بمبئی نے دعوت دی ان کے ہاں پر لطف صحبت رہی اسی شام عطیہ بیگم صاحبہ کے ہاں سماع کی صحبت رہی۔ ۲۱ ستمبر کو ایک بجے کے قریب بمبئی سے روانہ ہوئے۔ ۱۶ کی شام کو عدن پہنچے”

“Upon reaching Bombay, Sardar Salahuddin Seljuqi, the Afghan consul residing in Bombay, invited me to his place. I had pleasant company with him. That evening, I had a wonderful conversation with Atiya Begum Sahiba. I left Bombay at around 1 pm on September 21. I reached Aden on the evening of the 16th.” (11)

“In 1932, when Allama traveled to England to deliberate on the political future of India at the Third Round Table Conference, Syed Amjad Ali Shah was his companion on this journey. He started his journey from Lahore. When he reached Bombay, he was received by the head of the Afghan consulate, Mr. Seljuqi.” (12)

These letters also contain references to Hazrat Allama staying with Mr. Seljuqi and staying there regularly. In a letter written to Syed Nazir Niazi on January 30, 1935, Hazrat Allama writes:

“بھوپال کے متعلق مفصل اطلاع دوں گا مگر ایک دو روز میں لیکچر کی صدارت ممکن ہوئی تو اس سے بھی انکار نہیں۔ دہلی ٹھہر سکا تو افغان کونسل خانے میں ہی ٹھہروں گا”

“ I will give detailed information about Bhopal, but if it is possible to preside over the lecture in a day or two, I will not refuse it either. If I can stay in Delhi, I will stay at the Afghan Consulate.” (13)

Iqbal's stay at the Afghan consulate was possible only because of Salahuddin Seljuq's devotion to the Afghans and his great love for Iqbal. Seljuq's insistence on Iqbal's honesty is a testament to his sincerity. See Iqbal's letter addressed to Syed Nazir Niazi, dated February 19, 1936, from Lahore.

“۲۸ فروری یا یک مارچ کو بھوپال کا قصد رکھتا ہوں جاتی دفعہ دہلی نہ ٹھہروں گا۔ انشاء اللہ واپسی پر کونسل خانے میں ایک آدھ روز قیام رہے گا کہ سردار صلاح الدین سلجوقی آصرار کرتے ہیں”

“ I intend to go to Bhopal on February 28 or March 1. I will not stay in Delhi. God willing, I will stay at the consulate for a day and a half on my return, Sardar Salahuddin Seljuqi insists.” (14)

I have not found any writings by Sardar Salahuddin Seljuqi regarding the thought and art of Hazrat Allama However, Syed Abdul Wahid, while mentioning the relationship between Allama Saljuqi and Allama Iqbal, makes a new revelation that Sardar Salahuddin Saljuqi had written several articles on Allama Iqbal's poetry and message and had given them a book form.

“Sardar Salahuddin, who served as the Consul General of Afghanistan for many years, first in Delhi and later in Karachi, was a close friend of Allama Iqbal. Whenever the Allama visited Delhi, he would stay at Sardar Seljuqi's house. Salahuddin penned several explanatory articles on the Allama's poetry and message, which have now taken the form of a book.” (15)

4. His Excellency Khalilullah Khalili (16)

Mr. Khalilullah Khalili (November 1907-May 4th 1987) is one of the few renowned Iqbal scholars in Afghanistan who have rendered valuable academic, literary, and diplomatic services to Afghanistan in particular and to the world of humanity in general. He served as Afghanistan's ambassador to

Hejaz, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi. Mr. Khalili was a follower of Iqbal. He read and understood Iqbal. He benefited greatly from the Iqbal's company. For this reason, he was greatly influenced by the Iqbal's philosophy and ideology. He believed in Iqbal's philosophy of self and recognized his valuable services for the revival of the Islamic nation. Therefore, he found satisfaction in his heart by paying tribute to him in verses. Mr. Khalili is the first Persian poet of Afghanistan who has highly paid the greatest tribute to Iqbal. The ceremony held in 1966 at the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul on the occasion of Iqbal's twenty-seventh death anniversary was presided over by Khalili. The selection of Mr. Khalili by the Pakistani Embassy for this ceremony is a clear proof of his deep devotion to Iqbal.

Regarding Iqbal's study, Mr. Khalili published a permanent work on Iqbal titled "Yar Ashna". This book was first published in 1982 by the Jamiat-e-Islami of Afghanistan. This research of Mr. Khalili, was published for the second time in June 2010, with a foreword and footnotes by Dr. Arif Noshahi, by Institute of Oriental Studies and Calligraphy Heritage, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe.

”کعبه و اقبال“

شوکت پارینه راعهد شباب آموختی	وی مجمع دوستان اقبال
بودیم به آرزو که اماں	آسیم به آستان اقبال
صد بومه زینم از سر شوق	بر خاک سپهرشان اقبال
اسرار خودی ز سر بخوانیم	در نامه جاوداں اقبال
جوینم رموز بیخودی را	باردگر از زبان اقبال
رازدل درد مند گویم	بامردم رازدان اقبال
بینم که باز شهر لاهور	گردید مدیحه خوان اقبال
بینم که باز آن کهن شهر	نازده دل جوان اقبال
گویم پیام از سنای	هر روز به گوش جان اقبال
خوانیم ز مولوی سخن ها	تامست شود روان اقبال
بودیم بدین امید شادان	کامد خبری ز کشور جان

گفتند حرم درش گشاده	بر خلق صلاى عام داده
ليلاى سياه پوش كعبه	از چهره نقاب برگشاده
آنجا كه هنر ارمه و خورشيد	سر بردر هنرش نهاده
آنجا كه امين وحى جبريل	دربان صفت از ادب ستاده
آنجا كه كلاه فخر شاهان	بر خاک نياز او فتاده
بر گردن سر كشان گيتى	بهنصاده شكوه وى تملاده
بر پايه آستانه آل	كرده فلک از ادب وساده
آن مہد مہين كه خاك پائيش	ریشك مه و آفتاب زاده
يعنى كه جمال نور احمد	زين طور جلال جلوہ داده
زين قله هاى فخر و اقبال	بگرفته جهان جان ته باده (17)

5. His Excellency Abdul Rahman Pazhwok (18)

A distinguished scholar, poet, and diplomat, Abdul Rahman Pazhwok (1919 - June 8th 1999) was appointed as Second Secretary at the Afghan Embassy in London and later assumed the post of Attaché there. "In 1954 he was then appointed as Afghanistan's representative to the United Nations. He served as Afghanistan's ambassador to India for some time. He authored *Gulhai-e-Andisha*, a Persian poetry collection deeply inspired by Iqbal's philosophy. His academic contributions to Iqbal studies have been analyzed in *Irfan magazine* by Afghan scholars." (19)

Mr. Pazhwok was a poet and writer familiar with new ideas in Pashto and Persian. Especially with regard to Persian poetry, it can be said that he is counted among the first-rate poets of Persian. Mr. Pazhwok is counted among the Iqbal scholars of Afghanistan. His poetry has been deeply influenced by Iqbal's thought and art, and its reflection is evident in his collection of Persian poetry, *Gulhai-e-Andisha*.

“اس کتاب کے دیباچے میں ڈاکٹر روان فرہادی نے پڑواک کی غزلیات، قصائد اور مثنویوں میں اساتذہ فارسی شعراء کے یاد کو پایا ہے۔ ان اساتذہ کی قطار میں حضرت علامہ اقبال بھی نمایاں ہیں”

“In the preface to this book, Dr. Rawan Farhadi has found the memory of the Persian poets who taught him in the ghazals,

qasais and masnavis of Pajhwok. Hazrat Allama Iqbal is also prominent among these teachers.” (20)

6. His Excellency Muhammad Qasim Rashtia (21)

A notable historian, diplomat, and politician, Muhammad Qasim Rashtia (held various key positions in Afghanistan’s foreign services. As a member of the *Anjuman-e-Adabi Kabul* (Kabul Literary Society), he played an integral role in organizing a reception for Iqbal during his 1933 visit to Afghanistan. In 1935, Rashtia met Iqbal in Lahore and documented this interaction in a rare article published in *Weekly Wafa*. His reflections on Iqbal’s philosophical and intellectual depth remain an important source for Iqbal studies in Afghanistan. *“Muhammad Qasim Rashtia is among the Afghan diplomats who have played an important role in the study of Iqbal. Syed Muhammad Qasim Rashtia held many important positions in Afghanistan. He shone on the political and academic horizon of Afghanistan. His services, especially in the diplomatic and political history of Afghanistan, are unforgettable.” (22)*

The Allama asked Rashtiya about his most read books in Afghanistan. Finally, he autographed the following Rubaiyat in Rashtiya's notebook.

“ز انجم تا به انجم صد جهان بود خرد هر جا که هر زد آسمان بود
و لیکن چو به خود نگر یستم من کران بیکران در من نهان بود” (23)

7. His Excellency Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil

An eminent scholar and diplomat, Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil (1896 -?) served in various capacities, including as the Consul General of Afghanistan in India and the Secretary of the Afghan Embassy in England. A prolific writer, his literary contributions include *Shrines of Kabul*, *The Life of Sultan Ibrahim Adham*, and *The Biography of Amir Khusro Dehlvi*.

His poetry reflects a deep connection with Iqbal’s thought, and his tribute poem *In Memory of Allama Iqbal* stands as a testament to his admiration for Iqbal’s philosophy.

“به یاد علامه اقبال

بنام روز جہاں احتشام اقبال است	بیار بادہ کہ محفل بنام اقبال است
کہ وصف آن ہمہ جادو کلام اقبال است	چہ بادہ بادہ پر زور عشق آزادی
بہ قفل لب مینا و جام اقبال است	پیالہ گیر کہ تبلیغ دین و حریت
رہین نشہ جام مدام اقبال است	بیا کہ ملت اسلام و کافہ مشرق
بہر نکات و حروف پیام اقبال است	بیا کہ دوستی قوم و ملت کہسار
بسک نظم حقیقت نظام اقبال است	بیا کہ خطہ ما قلب آسیا موسوم
ز فکر صائب و عقل تمام اقبال است (24)	خطاب ملت پشتون عقاب روئین چنگ

8. His Excellency Fazlur Rahman Fazil (25)

A key figure in Afghanistan's diplomatic circles, Fazlur Rahman Fazil served as an ambassador to Turkey, India, and Egypt. A scholar of Iqbal and Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, he has authored over 100 books in Persian, Pashto, and Arabic, many of which discuss Iqbal's philosophy. His notable work *Afghan, Afghanistan, and Iqbal* provides a detailed analysis of Iqbal's influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. His research continues to play a pivotal role in Iqbal studies across the region. "Al-Khattab al-Masriya" in Arabic are the speeches delivered by Mr. Fazlur Rehman Fazil at various events during his appointment as the Ambassador of Afghanistan to Egypt. These speeches include the keynote address of Mr. Fazlur Rehman Fazil at a ceremony held on November 9, 2013, at the Pakistani Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, to mark the 136th birth anniversary of Hazrat Allama Iqbal. In this sermon, Mr. Fazil has quoted verses from the Javed Nama about the dialogue of Allama with Syed Jamaluddin Afghani on the celestial sphere of Mercury. A brief mention of Iqbal's studies in Arabic has been made in the light of the contributions of Abdul Wahab Azzam and Dr. Hussain Mujeeb Al-Masri. In a sermon he delivered in Egypt in November 2014 at a cultural gathering called "In Memory of Allama Muhammad Iqbal", Fazil Sahib reviewed the works of Hazrat Allama Muhammad Iqbal in both verse and prose.

“مصر میں تعیناتی کے دوران آپ نے ایک اور افغان اقبال شناس ڈاکٹر محمد امان صافی کا ایک اور عربی کتاب "تاثیر فکر الافغانی فی فلسفہ اقبال" فلسفہ اقبال پر فکر افغانی کے اثرات) کو بار دوم مصر ہی سے شائع کرایا۔ اس کتاب پر بھی فاضل صاحب نے عربی زبان میں ایک عمدہ تقریظ لکھی ہے”

“During his posting in Egypt, he got another Arabic book by another Afghan scholar of Iqbal, Dr. Muhammad Aman Safi, "Taseer Fikr al-Afghani fi Falsafah Iqbal" (The Impact of Afghan Thought on Iqbal's Philosophy), published in Bardoum, Egypt. Fazil Sahib has also written an excellent review in Arabic on this book.” (26)

Conclusion

The intellectual and diplomatic contributions of Afghan ambassadors in propagating Iqbal's thought are of immense historical and academic significance. Their translations, articles, and diplomatic engagements have helped bridge cultural and philosophical ties between Afghanistan and the broader Islamic world. Future researchers must delve deeper into this rich legacy to further explore the intricate connections between Iqbal and Afghanistan's intellectual and diplomatic circles.

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