

IQBAL'S DOCTORAL THESIS

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Allama Iqbal got himself registered as an advance student in the Cambridge University. He wrote a dissertation for this degree. He submitted the same dissertation with a few modifications in the Munich University of Germany. He was awarded Ph.D. on this research. The purpose of this article is to bring to light some new aspects of Iqbal's doctoral thesis.

Iqbal's Cambridge dissertation, his Munich thesis and its published editions all bear the title: "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia". But it is interesting to note that Iqbal in his application for registration in the Cambridge University, worded the topic in a slightly different way. This application was addressed to the Senior Tutor of Trinity College and was written in September, 1905. About his research topic Iqbal writes.⁶¹

...My knowledge of Arabic and Persian and my acquaintance with European philosophy (the study of which I began 12 years ago) suggest to me that I might make a contribution to the knowledge in the West, of some branch of Muhammadan Philosophy I would propose as subject of Research -- "The genesis and development of Metaphysical concepts in Persia" or some contribution to the knowledge of Arabic Philosophy which the University might approve."

So Iqbal originally conceived his topic as "The genesis and development of Metaphysical concepts in Persia," which on the advice of his teachers he might have simplified as "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia."

A few documents which are available in the Munich University archives contain valuable information about Iqbal's thesis. Credit goes to Dr. Saeed Akhtar Durrani who in 1988 wrote an article about these papers for the first time. So far this archival material has not fully utilized because it consist of hand written pages in old German style which is not also very legible. The writer of these lines got these documents transcribed and translated with the help of some German Colleagues during his stay at Heidelberg University in 1983.

Iqbal's thesis was first published by Luzac Co. London in 1908. The

⁶¹ Iqbal's application addressed to the Senior Tutor, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1905.

copies of these edition which are found in some university libraries of Germany bear the following description on the title pages:⁶²

"Inaugural-Dissertation

Philosophischen Der Facultat Sekt I (Resp II) Ludwig Maximilians-
Universitat, Munchen

But the other copies do not have this description. This variation in the title pages of the thesis has led some scholars to conclude that two editions came out in 1908.⁶³ But the correct position is that only one edition with two different titles was published in 1908. The copies with above description were submitted in the University because it was so required under the rules. The relevant rules were as under:⁶⁴

After passing the examination, the candidate will get his thesis printed and make possible changes desired by the Faculty and also add the previously submitted curriculum vitae. On the title of the thesis the following will be explicitly written:

"Inaugural Dissertation der Philosophischen

Fakultat Sket I der Ludwig - Maximilians

Universitat Munchen."

(Inaugural Dissertation of the Philosophical Faculty Section of the
Ludwing Maximilians University Munich)

After delivering 150 copies of the printed dissertation, the author receives the doctor Diploma in the Latin Language signed personally by the rector and the dean and with seal of the Faculty and the University. It will also carry the date of examination."

(Translation)

So this extract clearly shows why some printed copies of the thesis carry a special description with the full names of the Faculty and the University.

Iqbal's examination record preserved in the Munich University reveals some interesting but useful details. The Faculty of Philosophy Section I,

⁶² Iqbal, S.M. The Development of Metaphysics in Persia preserved in Munich University.

⁶³ Hashmi, Rafiuddin, Dr. Tasanif Iqbal..., Iqbal Academy, Lahore, 1982.

⁶⁴ Standing orders for Ph.D., Munich University, No. 6 & 7.

issued a letter on 21st July, 1907 to the distinguished professors of the faculty for the doctoral examination of Iqbal.⁶⁵ They included Prof. F. Hommel, Von Hertling and Lipp. This letter also indicates that Iqbal took philosophy as his major subject and oriental and English Philosophy as his minor subjects. This letter also helps in determining the approximate date of Iqbal's arrival in Germany. Atiya Begum's account certifies Iqbal's presence in England till 16th July, 1907.⁶⁶ He might have reached Germany between 17th-20th July. Iqbal deposited a sum of 260 Marks as examination fee on 22nd of July and the receipt is available in the record.

It is said that Iqbal was introduced to Munich University by his teachers in England. Prof. Arnold's name in the panel of examiners suggests that he might have also helped Iqbal in registering himself for Ph.D. Arnold was the first to give his report. Prof. Hommel, the German guide of Iqbal, has given an extract from Arnold's report which is as under:⁶⁷

I have read Prof. Muhammad Iqbal's dissertation "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia" with great interest. So far as I am aware, it is the first attempt that has been made to trace the continuous development of ancient Iranian speculation as they have survived in Muhammadan Philosophy and to bring out the distinctly Persian Character of many phases of Muslim thought. The writer has made use of much material hitherto unpublished and little known in Europe, and his dissertation is a valuable contribution to the history of Muhammadan Philosophy.⁶⁸

Prof. Hommel has also admired the standard of the thesis. He expressed that an orientalist of Goldziher or Maxe Mullers stature could have done justice with the thesis.⁶⁹ Hommel out of modesty did not consider himself equal to the task. In the end of his report he also gave a proposal for oral examination.

Prof. Hertling has also spoken very high of the research standard. In his opinion it appears to be a paper written by a man of extensive education. But he thinks that oral examination cannot be arranged before the prior permission of the Faculty. Prof. Lipp and Prof. Kuhn both have fully

⁶⁵ Iqbal - Examination record, page 1.

⁶⁶ Atiya Begum, Iqbal, Lahore 1969, p.21.

⁶⁷ Arnold, Thomas, E.R.P-2.

⁶⁸ Hommel, F. Ibid.

⁶⁹ Hertling, E.R.P-3.

endorsed the views of their colleagues about the thesis. Prof. Kuhn has also stated that Iqbal wants to return to England by 10th of November, 1907. In this way he was stressing that oral examination should be held before 10th November. The Faculty gave the permission for this examination.

(The oral examination of Iqbal was held in the Senate Chamber at 5'O clock in the afternoon of Monday on 4th November, 1907.⁷⁰ The panel of examiners consisted of the following:

Professors of the faculty:

1. Prof. F. Hommel
2. Prof. Lipp.
3. Prof. Schick
4. Prof. Kuhn

Professor Dr. H. Breymann, Dean of the Faculty was also present. Iqbal was declared successful in the examination. The Dean of Faculty forwarded Iqbal's case for the award of Ph.D. to the Royal Rectorate of the University on the same day after the completion of the oral examination.⁷¹

Iqbal's date of birth has remained a controversial issue for a long time and the controversy also arose from the date of birth given by Iqbal himself in his thesis. Iqbal recorded 3rd Zilqa'd' 1294 A.H. (1876 A.D.) as his date of birth. But he could not correctly convert the Hijra year into Christian year. Actually 3rd 'Zilqa'd of 1294 fell on 9th November, 1877. In 1958 Jan Marek pointed out this mistake.⁷² He has also mentioned some scholars who recorded 1877 as the year of Iqbal's birth. The Government of Pakistan had to appoint a Committee to decide Iqbal's correct date of birth. The Committee agreed on November 9, 1877. But in Germany the mistake was corrected very soon. In the year book of 1907-08 about the research thesis written in Germany, Iqbal's date of birth i.e. 9th November, 1877 has been correctly recorded.⁷³ However, it escaped the attention of the scholars like Dr.A.M. Schimmel, Jan Marek and others.

⁷⁰ Ibid,-4

⁷¹ Ibid, P-5

⁷² Jan Marek, The Date Muhammad Iqbal's Birth, Archive Orientalmi Nakladatelstvi Ceskoslovenske Akademic.

⁷³ Jahres verzeichnis der an den Deutschen Universitaten erschienenen Schriften, Berlin 1909, p.544.

Iqbal first submitted typed copies of his thesis and then printed copies as required under the rules which provide:⁷⁴

"submitting a thesis which is ready for print and written legibly so that it can be checked by the respective section.... (Translation).... The printed paper has to be submitted within one year in 150 copies."⁷⁵

The original typed copy of Iqbal thesis was handed over to Indian government as a gift for Iqbal's Centenary Celebrations. Now that copy is traceable neither in India nor in Germany. It has been replaced by a printed copy in Munich University Library. The card of this thesis reads as under:⁷⁶

"The original of this work was handed in December 1969 to the Bavarian Staatskanzlei through the intermediary of Director General' of Bavarian Staatl Bibliotheken Dr. Hans Striedle. They handed the book to the Indian Government as a present on the occasion of birth anniversary of the author, since the book was allegedly not available in India.

(Translation)

This was a very disturbing news for Pakistanis but some scholars tried to console the Iqbal lovers by saying that only printed copies were submitted in the University and the removal of original thesis of Iqbal from the Library seems out of question of them. But their assumption stands refuted by the forgoing extract.

Atiya, in her monograph on Iqbal published in 1947, has written that Iqbal's thesis was translated in German and published.⁷⁷ But it was not published even long after the publication of this monograph. Dr. Durrani says the German translation of the thesis was completed in 1977 as a commemorative work on the occasion of Iqbal's Centenary celebrations. Dr. Durrani's information is also incorrect. However, the first German translation of Iqbal's thesis was done by an Iranian scholar Ali Raza Rahbar with the collaboration of Dr. A.M. Schimmel. It was published in 1982 by Hafiz Verlag, Bonn, West Germany.

⁷⁴ Standing Orders 2-b.

⁷⁵ Ibid, No.7

⁷⁶ Munich University Library Card No. 3150.

⁷⁷ Atiya, p-22.