

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES ACCORDING  
TO IQBAL

Khurram Ali Shafique

## ABSTRACT

In *Javid Nama*, the spirit of Rumi takes Iqbal on a journey in search of immortality. The itinerary includes the spheres of Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and finally "Beyond the Spheres". On the Sphere of Moon, which is the first stop in the journey, they come across seven visions. All of these demonstrates a specific type of intelligence. The similarities between *Javid Nama* and the theory of multiple intelligences need not surprise us too much because some of the earlier work in the domain of human intelligence, which was either developed further by Gardner or refuted by him, had already started by the time Iqbal took up the writing of *Javid Nama* in 1927. Several references in his prose work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930-34), written simultaneously with *Javid Nama*, indicate his familiarity with this type of work being carried out in his times.

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- a. The first column lists the seven visions encountered on the Sphere of Moon
- b. The type of intelligence corresponding to each vision is described in the second column.

THE SPHERE OF MOON	MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES
THE CAVE OF VISHVAMITRA: the great <i>brahmarishi</i> is in meditation, which has filled the cave with a celestial light, illuminating not only objects but also their shadows. He opens his eyes, talks about the destiny of India, interviews Iqbal regarding a number of things, offers nine sayings, and goes back to meditation.	RATIONAL-INTUITIVE INTELLIGENCE: to find out the truth through thought and intuition. Mathematics, logic and philosophy are some common examples of this type of intelligence.
THE MUSIC OF SAROSH: the angel of poetic inspiration is singing a sublime melody. Quite interestingly, the angel is depicted as having two long tresses, each flowing down to the small of his back from either side of his head – hence symbolizing the division of the left brain and the right brain.	MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE: the ability to appreciate the rhythms of sound even for their own sake. This intelligence is usually ascribed to the right brain, which responds to unusual and novel situations.

THE SPHERE OF MOON	MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES
THE POETRY OF SAROSH: the ghazal sung by Sarosh consists of seven couplets, corresponding to the visions of the Sphere of Moon as well as the number of stages in the overall journey of <i>Javid Nama</i> .	LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE: using language as a medium. Verbal arts of all sorts, including poetry and storytelling, are some common examples.
THE TABLET OF BUDDHA: Buddha is offering sermon to a coquettish dancer, who repents and asks Buddha to take over her heart.	BODY-SPIRIT INTELLIGENCE: the use of one's body as a tool for achieving a higher purpose. Some common examples are worship, dance and martial arts.
THE TABLET OF ZARATHUSTRA: Ahriman, the equivalent of the Devil in Persian mythology, tries to dissuade Zarathustra from going out to the people, but Zarathustra is adamant.	INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: appreciating the "other" as a medium for realizing one's own self. Many forms of ethical social interaction are examples of such activity.
THE TABLET OF JESUS: The Russian reformer Tolstoy sees in his nightmare that the Western civilization has crucified the soul of Jesus.	INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE: appreciating one's own self as a medium for realizing the "other" – as evident in dreaming, mystic experience, spiritual psychology and the ability to connect with the environment.
THE TABLET OF MUHAMMAD: Abu Jahl, the leader of the infidels of Makkah, is standing before Kabah, asking the idols to stay there but if they must leave the holy precinct then they should at least stay in the hearts.	SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE: using the space as a medium. Architecture, geometry, drawing, painting, calligraphy and navigational skills are some of the most common examples.

### **Multiple Intelligences in Personal Development**

It may be observed that the sequence in which these seven intelligences are presented on the Sphere of Moon is the same in which they are acquired by an individual as one grows up from infancy to maturity.

A newborn child cannot express a thought in words, music, controlled body language or drawing and painting, but presumably some kind of thinking process must be at work although it cannot be expressed at this stage. Hence, the rational-intuitive intelligence is the first to be acquired by a newborn. Soon, it will enable itself to start responding to music, develop speech a little later and then finally gain control over body movement as well. Hence the musical, linguistic and body-spirit intelligences will be acquired and mastered.

Maturity, and tactfulness in handling people, comes with years. Hence excellence in the interpersonal intelligence is acquired next. Strains that test relationships, and heartaches of that sort, eventually provide reality check about one's own personality – and hence, excellence in the intrapersonal intelligence.

Spatial intelligence, in its broader sense, may include an ability to place not only the physical objects but also the immaterial things in their proper place. This is a higher level of maturity, where a person is said to have finally “settled down”.

### **Points for Discussion**

It can be a very interesting activity to compare the following passages from *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* with the various types of intelligences demonstrated on the Sphere of Moon in *Javidnama*.

### **Rational-Intuitive Intelligence**

Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. (Lecture 1: ‘Knowledge and Religious Experience’)

### **Musical Intelligence**

It appears that the time of the appreciative self is a single ‘now’ which the efficient self, in its traffic with the world of space, pulverizes into a series of ‘nows’ like pearl beads in a thread. Here is, then, pure duration unadulterated by space. (Lecture 2: ‘The Philosophical Test of the Revelations of Religious Experience’)

### **Linguistic Intelligence**

“The Sufi's book is not composed of ink and letters: it is not but a heart white as snow. The scholar's possession is pen-marks. What is the Sufi's possession?—foot-marks. The Sufi stalks the game like a hunter: he sees the musk-deer's track and follows the footprints.” (Rumi, quoted in Lecture 3: ‘Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer’)

### **Body-Spirit Intelligence**

The ego, as an individual, is inconceivable without some kind of local reference or empirical background ... In view of the past history of man it is highly improbable that his career should come to an end with the dissolution of his body. (Lecture 4: 'Human Ego – His Freedom and Immortality')

### **Interpersonal Intelligence**

A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries, and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. (Lecture 5: 'The Spirit of Muslim Culture')

### **Intrapersonal Intelligence**

The search for a purely psychological foundation of human unity becomes possible only with the perception that all human life is spiritual in its origin. (Lecture 6: 'The Principle of Movement in Islam')

### **Spatial Intelligence**

It may be that what we call the external world is only an intellectual construction, and that there are other levels of human experience capable of being systematized by other orders of space and time... (Lecture 7: 'Is Religion Possible?')

### **Disclaimer**

The concept of Multiple Intelligences was famously articulated by the American neuropsychologist Howard Gardner in 1983, with the identification of seven types of intelligences (and addition of two more later on). The model emerging from *Javid Nama* is radically different from Gardner's, especially on the following points:

- a. NAMES, DEFINITIONS AND THE NUMBER: Gardner named the initial seven intelligences as spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Naturalistic and existential were later added to this list, and it has not been claimed that the list is final ("ethical" intelligence is one possibility that has been considered inconclusively). Iqbal's list (i.e. the list derived from the Sphere of Moon in *Javid Nama*) would consist of seven only, many of which would need to be named and defined differently from Gardner's.
- b. SEQUENCING: Gardner has proposed that these intelligences need not be treated in a fixed sequence. However, the sequence in which the intelligences appear in the Sphere of Moon turns out to be important, because it seems as if the sequence is not only being followed consistently elsewhere in

the works of Iqbal but also in history and personal development.

- c. UNITY OR DICHOTOMY: The above-mentioned differences between Iqbal and Gardner seem to be derived from the general differences between the worldview of Iqbal and the Western milieu on the issues of whether there is an organic unity between matter and spirit, though and intuition, and the self and the “other”. Western thought tends to favor separation between these. Hence, the multiple intelligences as proposed by Gardner seem to be tilting either towards the material or the spiritual:

MATERIALISTIC	SPIRITUAL
Logical-mathematical	Musical
Linguistic	Intrapersonal
Psychomotor kinesthetic	Naturalistic
Interpersonal	Existential
Spatial	

- d. UTILITY: Especially in the Pakistani society, the model derived from Iqbal may have some special implications for use in education which Gardner’s model may not be offering at present. For instance, since the model derived from Iqbal offers a fixed number of intelligences in a sequence consistent with history, literature and personal development, it may help us integrate the syllabus in a manner not possible otherwise.

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