

From Kashf ul Mahjoob to Javed Nama: Exploring the Spiritual Influence of Syed Ali Hujveri on Allama Iqbal

Dr. Muhammad Sarwar

Assistant Professor, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, sarwarsiddique@uvas.edu.pk

Abstract

This study investigates the enduring spiritual influence of Syed Ali Hujveri, more precisely through his seminal writing, Kashf ul Mahjoob, on Allama Muhammad Iqbal's philosophical and poetic growth. Through cross-fertilization of medieval classical Sufism and modern Islamic philosophy, this article examines how Hujveri's metaphysics influenced Iqbal's conception of selfhood (khudi), God's love, and the ideal human person (Insan-e-Kamil). By comparative analysis and textual reference, particularly to Javed Nama, this study highlights how Iqbal reinterpreted and integrated Hujveri's esotericism in the context of a 20th-century revivalist construct. Inclusion of pertinent Urdu passages adds depth to the argument, demonstrating the richness and continuity of Islamic spiritual heritage in South Asia.

Keywords: Syed Ali Hujveri, Allama Iqbal, Kashf ul Mahjoob, Javed Nama, Sufism, Islamic mysticism, Khudi, Insan-e-Kamil, spiritual influence

Introduction

The Islamic intellectual and spiritual heritage has been developed by a succession of scholars, saints, and poets whose influence has lived on through the ages. Among the great leaders, Syed Ali Hujveri (d. 1077), popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh, holds a central place in the development of South Asian Sufism. His Kashf ul Mahjoob is not only thought to be the first surviving Persian treatise on Sufism but also a spiritual manual that continues to inspire seekers of truth. Centuries later, the same soil gave birth to another intellectual giant—Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), hallowed as the philosopher-poet of the East. Leaving aside the differences of time and place, the spiritual affinity between Hujveri and Iqbal is self-evident. Whereas Kashf ul Mahjoob outlines the fundamental tenets of Islamic mysticism in terms of an exposition of major doctrines, spiritual states, and the responsibilities of a Sufi, Iqbal's Javed Nama develops these motifs into a sophisticated cosmic spiritual odyssey driven by divine enlightenment and philosophical sophistication. The affinity between these two souls transcends geographical or temporal closeness; rather, it is a union of shared aspiration for the metamorphosis of the self (khudi) through the instruments of divine love, self-control, and profound insight.

Syed Ali Hujveri was the first to describe systematically the inner dynamics of Sufi thought in the Indian subcontinent. His discussion of concepts like fana (annihilation of the ego), baqa (permanence in God), marifat (knowledge), and wilayah (sainthood) provided the basis for later mystics and thinkers. Allama Iqbal, in his critique of some of the historical forms of Sufism, recognized its metaphysical and ethical aspect. He saw realization of spiritual autonomy and self-culture as the greatest challenge for modern Muslims. Iqbal's poetry often shows a profound respect for mystics like Hujveri, who combined inner purification with social responsibility. In Bang-e-Dra, Iqbal renders glowing tribute to Syed Ali Hujveri:

"ہزاروں سالوں سے، نرگس اپنی عدم روشنی پر انگبار ہے۔"

"In gardens, it's a hard task to cultivate people with vision."

He also addresses Hujveri directly:

"نہ تھا اگر تو شریکِ سفر تو کیا پروا
میں کو راستے کے گھاس اور کانٹوں نے روشنی دی۔
کسی کو دیکھ کے چلتے تھے راہرو ورنہ

"The light that followed me was only from Your doorway."

Iqbal identifies Hujveri as a great source of spiritual enlightenment, whose influence transcends temporal limits. The current study investigates this legacy in depth, emphasizing how Kashf ul Mahjoob laid the intellectual and spiritual foundation that facilitated Iqbal to develop his philosophical paradigm, particularly in works like Javed Nama, Asrar-e-Khudi, and Payam-e-Mashriq. The current article follows some basic themes: an initial review of Syed Ali Hujveri's doctrines, Allama Iqbal's poetic and philosophical leanings, points of spiritual convergence between the two thinkers, and finally, how Hujveri's mystical legacy affected Iqbal's vision of a spiritually awakened Muslim Ummah in a subtle yet deep way.

Syed Ali Hujveri: The Mystic and His Teachings

Syed Ali Hujveri, also referred to as Data Ganj Bakhsh, is an important figure in South Asian Islamic mysticism. He was born in Ghazni in the early 11th century and traveled far and wide across the Islamic world in search of spiritual enlightenment and camaraderie of saints. His spiritual quest climaxed at Lahore, where in his later years he devoted his life to preaching, writing, and social work. His Lahore mausoleum remains a source of spiritual guidance, drawing millions of his followers from all classes of society. Syed Ali Hujveri's most enduring legacy is his Persian treatise, Kashf ul Mahjoob (Unveiling of the Veiled), the first comprehensive guide to Sufism written in the Persian language. Written with scholarly precision and profound insight into spiritual realities, the treatise unites the domains of theology, metaphysics, and practical mysticism. Additionally, it is a spiritual manual for spiritual seekers and a critical analysis of the common misconceptions pertaining to Sufi traditions.

Basic Principles in Kashf ul Mahjoob

In Kashf ul Mahjoob, Hujveri describes the journey of the seeker (salik) through the stations (maqamat) and states (ahwal) that make up the spiritual path to union with the Divine. The work is organized in terms of the fundamental principles of Sufism, such as:

- Tawheed (Oneness of God): Hujveri holds that true mysticism has its foundation in belief in the oneness of God, not as a theoretical proposition but as a living perception that reorganizes the self.
- Fana and Baqa: He explains that annihilation (fana) of the self is not destruction but transformation—a step leading to living (baqa) in God. This idea of transcending ego closely correlates with Iqbal's idea of khudi.
- Ishq (Divine Love): Hujveri teaches love as the essence of spiritual practice. Without love, its outer devotions are empty. He states,

"Love is the way to truth, and without love, there is no knowledge."

("Love is the way of the truth, and without love, gnosis is impossible.")

- Marifat and Wilayah: He equates marifat (gnosis) as an intimate intuitive knowledge of God and wilayah (sainthood) as its manifestation. A Wali, in his view, is not a worker of miracles but one whose whole life is in perfect harmony with the will of God.

Ethics and Social Engagement

Contrary to later interpretations of Sufism that may emphasize ascetic withdrawal, Hujveri encourages active engagement in the affairs of the world. He states that a true Sufi is strongly rooted in the Sunnah and the Qur'an, and

leads a life of service. He condemns hypocritical dervishes who use mysticism as a cloak for idleness or debauchery. His own life—characterized by humility, generosity, and wisdom—lived this principle.

Urdu Kashf ul Mahjoob Passage

"A Sufi is a person who is inwardly with God yet outwardly coping with humanity."

("A Sufi is one who is inwardly with God and outwardly with men.")

This balanced vision had a revealing impact on subsequent Sufi orders in South Asia, specifically the Chishtia, Suhrawardiyya, and Qadiriyya orders. It also inspired the beginning of a more profound philosophical debate that would bloom centuries later in the intellectual production of Allama Iqbal.

Syed Ali Hujveri's works, although rooted in a pre-modern period, are not time-bound. They address the universal barriers in the spiritual journey—ego, pride, ignorance, and hypocrisy—yet offer a systematic way of cultivating sincerity, wisdom, and God's love. His spiritual and pragmatic ethical material formed a basis for later intellectuals, like Iqbal, to reframe Sufism in modern language.

Iqbal's intellectual vision and literary genius

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the Poet of the East and the Spiritual Father of Pakistan, is the most eminent among the intellectual and spiritual leaders of the Muslim world. As a thinker, poet, and visionary, Iqbal's thinking was shaped deeply by Islamic metaphysics, Persian Sufism, Western philosophical traditions, and the spiritual legacy left by saints like Syed Ali Hujveri. His own contribution went beyond the revival of Islamic thinking; it involved the re-creation of the self (khudi) in the light of Qur'anic lore and Sufi wisdom. Iqbal's verses, written in Persian and Urdu, are literary flourishes only in the sense that they are a form of expressing profound philosophical ideas. He often employs metaphysical, ethical, historical, and theological elements to redefine the relationship between the self, society, and the Divine.

Khudi: The Creative Self

The foundation of Iqbal's thought is the principle of khudi, which he understands as the individual's selfhood, potentiality, and inner spark. But, as opposed to the ego of Western psychology, Iqbal's khudi is to be developed and raised up through love, discipline, and divine consciousness.

خودی کو کر بلند اتنا کہ ہر تقدیر سے پہلے
"اللہ بندے سے خود پوچھے، بتا، تجھے کیا پسند ہے؟"

"Elevate your self so high that before every destiny,

Allah Himself asks the servant, tell me, what do you desire?"

This perspective has a strong resemblance to Hujveri's system of fana and baqa. In Hujveri's system, fana is the destruction of individual ego in the oneness of God, but Iqbal conceives of this process as the consolidation of the ego in consonance with Divine Will—a self not characterized by passivity, but by creative energies and moral responsibility.

Criticism of Passive Sufism

While a profound admirer of Sufi tradition, Iqbal was also critical of what he referred to as "pantheistic quietism" or mysticism that withdraws from the world. In his lectures and poetry, he insists on an active spirituality which renews the self and the world. Syed Ali Hujveri is appreciated by Iqbal in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* particularly for establishing mysticism in the context of Qur'anic ideals. He uses *Kashf ul Mahjoob* to justify his view that true Sufism is not world-denying but world-reforming. The authentic Sufi is not characterized by laziness or escapism, but by abiding by the virtues of the Qur'an in every breath. The balance between inner light and outer work is precisely what Iqbal was seeking in his ideal of the mard-e-momin (the true believer), who walks the path of the Prophet but also lights the candle of the saints like Hujveri.

The Spiritual Heritage of Persian Poetry

Iqbal's Persian poetry, particularly in his poems like *Asrar-e-Khudi* and *Javed Nama*, carries the stamp of an earnest engagement with spirituality. He adopts classical Sufi symbolism and reworks it to awaken the Muslim Ummah. The pilgrimages to the heavens in *Javed Nama*—organized in a similar framework as Dante's *Divine Comedy*—involve meetings with great spiritual and historical leaders like Rumi, Hallaj, and others. In these, the spiritual legacy of Syed Ali Hujveri can be seen, both in tone and content. Iqbal's literary ability is demonstrated in his ability to integrate disparate intellectual traditions while situating them in Islamic spirituality. Iqbal conceived of the saint less as a retrograde figure, but as a modern guide for Muslims in their moral and metaphysical search.

Iqbal's Visits to Data Darbar: Instances of Reflection and Enlightenment

Allama Iqbal's relationship with Syed Ali Hujveri was not one of mere admiration; it was substantiated by his frequent visits to Data Darbar, which was referred to as the spiritual center of Lahore. The visits were not characterized by protocol but by deep thinking. For Iqbal, the Darbar was a sacred oasis where philosophical rest found its spiritual repose and intellectual inquiry found a divine echo.

A Source of Internal Enlightenment

Iqbal would normally claim that whenever he was bogged down by the intellectual burden of his work or the decline of the Muslim Ummah, he would visit the shrine of Hujveri to seek guidance. These pilgrimages were more for spiritual moorings and counsel:

ہوں جاتا بیٹھ کر آپ در تیرے ہوں، تھمتا بھی جب"

"Your shadow adds a new meaning to reflection."

Hujveri's presence, even in his grave, provided Iqbal with an atmosphere characterized by uncompromising tawheed (oneness of God), bravery, and majesty. The atmosphere provided Iqbal with the space to transform his ideas into poetic and philosophical assertions that could awaken a sleeping nation.

Symbolism of the Darbar

For Iqbal, Data Darbar was more than a historical landmark; it was an icon of Islamic renaissance, religious power, and moral accuracy. It represented:

□ Continuity of Spiritual Wisdom: Hujveri's shrine connected Iqbal with centuries of spiritual tradition based on sincerity and service.

Resistance to Decline: Darbar showed its resistance to decline by withstanding both colonial forces and internal decay, an expression of Iqbal's individual struggle against Western imperialism and ethical decay.

A Beacon in the Future: Iqbal regarded Hujveri's teachings as a benchmark for revitalizing Muslim society, with a focus on reasserting spiritual energy and moral uniqueness.

"نہیں ہے نا امید اقبال اپنی کشت ویراں سے

ذرا نم ہو تو یہ مٹی بڑی زرخیز ہے ساقی"

"Iqbal is not hopeless from his barren land,

If there is moisture, this soil is very fertile, O cupbearer."

It is no wonder that numerous verses and spiritual thoughts by Iqbal were either conceived during or shortly after his trip to Data Darbar. The intellectual struggle he suffered came to a point of reaching spiritual calm through the silent companionship of Hujveri.

Converging Visions: Resurgence of the Muslim Ummah

Both Allama Iqbal and Syedi Ali Hujveri had a passionate desire to restore the Islamic and moral pillars of the Muslim Ummah. Though they lived in different centuries and were faced with diverse socio-political scenarios, their teachings bear a remarkable similarity in their essential message: both called for a new vision of genuine Islamic values, spirituality, and personal rebirth to be the main pillars for social progress.

Hujveri's Revival through Sufism

Syed Ali Hujveri, in *Kashf ul Mahjoob*, emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah-e-nafs*), the sincerity of worship (*ikhlas*), and the abandonment of materialism. He speaks of the maladies within that drain the spiritual energy of the individual from Allah and emphasizes devout, disciplined devotion, humility, and honesty.

"پرستی۔ رسوم نہ پیرویے، کی شریعت صفت سپہ پر حقیقت تصوف"

With his preaching and life, Hujveri sought to restore Islamic morality to the world. He was of the opinion that only a spiritually awakened person could assist in creating a kind and equitable society.

Iqbal's Revival through Selfhood (Khudi)

Allama Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* (selfhood) has a direct resemblance to the focus of Hujveri on inner purification. According to Iqbal, the rejuvenation of the Muslim Ummah was contingent upon the reactivation of the divine potential in each believer. According to him, an assertive sense of self, rooted in *Tawheed* and prophetic guidance, would enable Muslims to counter colonial dominance and cultural degeneration.

Elevate your self to a status that previously each fate

God asked Bande to ask himself, tell me what is your will?

Iqbal did not exclude Sufism; rather, he differentiated between true spiritual Sufism, as represented by Hujveri, and aberrant mysticism that led to passivity. He advocated a Sufism of active struggle, hardness, and moral toughness.

Unity in Vision, Method in Diversity

Hujveri focused on men's spiritual and bodily change in the *khanqah*, while Iqbal promoted social and political awareness by philosophical debate and poetry. Both of them, nonetheless, shared a single goal:

A self-aware Muslim based on religious belief.

A meritocracy founded on moral and spiritual principles.

A community renewed from the inside, and not just from the outside.

In practice, Iqbal's call for Islamic theological reform was a modern reinterpretation of Hujveri's spiritual system.

Heritage and Contemporary Significance

The religious principles preached by Syed Ali Hujveri, and their impact on Allama Iqbal's writings, are extremely relevant to the modern Muslim world. In a time dominated by materialism, crises of identity, and socio-political instability, their emphasis on spiritual revival, moral regeneration, and inner strength provides a model of direction for individual and collective renewal.

Hujveri's Enduring Legacy

Syed Ali Hujveri's *Kashf ul Mahjoob* is far more than a scholastic text for students of Sufism; it is a mirror to the soul. Its value lies far beyond the limits of medieval mystical thought. Hujveri's emphasis on the compatibility of Sufi practices with *Shariah*, his condemnation of hypocrisy in religion, and his tolerant attitude towards spiritual knowledge present a coherent system that remains valid in the contemporary world, as it did a thousand years ago.

"ہے۔ بناتا ذریعہ کا طلبی دنیا کو تصوف راہ کہ نہ ہے، کرتا پیروی کی شریعت لیے کے قرب کے خدا جو ہے وہی صوفی"

In South Asia specifically, Hujveri's spiritual model shaped thousands of Sufi orders, scholars, and reformers. His shrine in Lahore is not only a site of spirituality but a symbol of healing and unity for people of varied backgrounds.

Iqbal's Call to Mobilization in Modern Contexts

The thoughts presented by Allama Iqbal are crucial to grasping the spiritual malaise of modernity. His critique of Western materialism, blind imitation (taqleed), and spiritual decline remains a source of inspiration for thinkers and reformers in the Muslim world. Iqbal exhorted Muslims to recover their intellectual and spiritual roots—without nostalgia for the past, but through active re-engagement.

His respect for Syed Ali Hujveri says a lot about his belief in gaining strength from authentic spiritual sources to address modern-day problems. Kashf ul Mahjoob, to Iqbal, was not a historical treatise but a spiritual ideal for modern Muslims.

"Although I did not understand the hand of anyone on the religious path, the religious proximity of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh⁷ has illuminated my consciousness."

A Shared Heritage for Contemporary Muslims

Contemporary Muslims, particularly the younger generation, tend to grapple with the contradiction between spiritual indifference and dogmatic religious orthodoxy. The complementary heritage of Hujveri and Iqbal provides a balanced model—one that is full of spirituality, robust in intellectual inquiry, and solidly grounded in moral values.

Schools, mosques, and social reformers can all derive a great deal from remembering the lessons of these two giants not merely as heritage, but as living wisdom. Together, their call evokes Muslims to:

Restore their inner strength by faith and reflection.

Reconnect with authentic sources of Islamic spirituality.

Combat cultural decadence through moral reform and innovation.

Revive the Ummah through personal reform and service.

Conclusion

The spiritual kinship between Syed Ali Hujveri and Allama Iqbal is a reflection of the profound continuity of Islamic intellectual tradition across centuries. Hujveri, in his work Kashf ul Mahjoob, laid down the fundamental parameters of Islamic mysticism that emphasized authenticity, purification of inner self, and adherence to Shariah. A couple of centuries later, Allama Iqbal, in the intellectual face-off of colonial modernity, found in the teachings of Hujveri a spiritual mentor who helped him redefine Muslim identity and re-activate the spirit of Ijtihad. Iqbal's passion for Hujveri went beyond mere veneration of him as a saint; he engaged with him actively as a spiritual mentor whose urgings about divine love (Ishq-e-Haqiqi), self-discovery (Khudi), and moral courage continued to remain of profound importance to his philosophical and political endeavor. Kashf ul Mahjoob and Javed Nama are in fact two such milestones in the development of Muslim consciousness—of mystical insight and of prophetic rebirth. Together, they call the modern Muslim to a redemptive journey: from inner purification to outward renewal, from contemplative seclusion to active involvement, and from servitude to God's will. This spiritual path is not a relic of the past; rather, it remains a living heritage to be rediscovered and fulfilled in every individual who strives for truth, justice, and spiritual elevation. The single spiritual path is the path that leads to gnosis, to knowledge of self, and to service to humanity—this makes up the common message of Data Ganj Bakhsh and Iqbal.

References

- Hujveri, Ali ibn Uthman. *Kashf ul Mahjoob*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. Lahore: Al-Faisal Publishers, 2001.
- Iqbal, Muhammad. *Javid Nama*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1932.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism*. New York: HarperOne, 2007.
- Rizvi, S. A. A. *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978.
- Malik, Jamal. *Islam in South Asia: A Short History*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Ahmad, Bashir. "Allama Iqbal's Concept of Khudi and the Influence of Sufism." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2014): 21–36.
- Iqbal Academy Pakistan. "Iqbal's Spiritual Relationship with Syed Ali Hujveri." <https://www.iap.gov.pk>