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DECODING *KHUDI*: HOW NICHOLSON'S TRANSLATION DEVIATES FROM IQBAL'S *KHUDI KA SIRR-E-NIHĀN*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation of Iqbal's Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān changes the original meaning and spirit of Iqbal's idea of Khudi. In the poem, Iqbal describes Khudi as a hidden force within a person a blend of spiritual strength, self-discipline, and divine potential. His language is rich with symbolism, Qur'anic echoes, and cultural references that carry emotional and spiritual weight. When these ideas are brought into English, however, they do not always survive in their full force. Nicholson, working from a Western scholarly perspective, often selects simpler or more familiar English expressions, which make the poem easier to read but also soften the depth and intensity that Iqbal intended. Through a close, qualitative comparison of the Urdu text and its English rendering, the study shows where and how these shifts occur. Some metaphors lose their sharpness, spiritual concepts become more philosophical than divine, and Iqbal's passionate tone becomes calm and explanatory. These changes reveal the broader challenges of translating a culturally rooted, mystical text across linguistic and postcolonial boundaries. The findings suggest that while Nicholson's translation has played a major role in introducing Iqbal to the world, it also shapes a more limited understanding of Khudi. The study concludes that translation is not simply a transfer of words it is a process that can reshape meaning, influence interpretation, and even redirect This pahow a powerful idea like Khudi is understood beyond its original context.

Keywords: *Cross-cultural interpretation; Khudi; Persian poetry*; *Postcolonial translation*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana terjemahan bahasa Inggris Reynold A. Nicholson terhadap Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān karya Iqbal mengubah makna dan semangat asli gagasan Khudi menurut Iqbal. Dalam puisi tersebut, Iqbal menggambarkan Khudi sebagai kekuatan tersembunyi dalam diri seseorang, suatu perpaduan antara kekuatan spiritual, disiplin diri, dan potensi ilahi. Bahasanya kaya dengan simbolisme, gema Al-Qur'an, dan referensi kultural yang membawa bobot emosional dan spiritual. Namun, ketika gagasan-gagasan ini dibawa ke dalam bahasa Inggris, kekuatan penuhnya tidak selalu bertahan. Nicholson, yang bekerja dari perspektif keilmuan Barat, sering memilih ungkapan bahasa Inggris yang lebih sederhana atau lebih dikenal, yang membuat puisi tersebut lebih mudah dibaca tetapi juga melembutkan kedalaman dan intensitas yang dimaksudkan Iqbal. Melalui perbandingan kualitatif yang cermat antara teks Urdu dan terjemahan bahasa Inggrisnya, studi ini menunjukkan di mana dan bagaimana pergeseran tersebut terjadi. Beberapa metafora kehilangan ketajamannya, konsep-konsep spiritual menjadi lebih filosofis daripada ilahi, dan nada penuh semangat Iqbal menjadi tenang dan bersifat penjelasan. Perubahan-perubahan ini mengungkap tantangan yang lebih luas dalam menerjemahkan teks mistik yang berakar pada budaya tertentu melintasi batas-batas bahasa dan pascakolonial. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun

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terjemahan Nicholson telah memainkan peran besar dalam memperkenalkan Iqbal kepada dunia, terjemahan tersebut juga membentuk pemahaman yang lebih terbatas tentang Khudi. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa penerjemahan bukan sekadar pemindahan kata-kata, melainkan suatu proses yang dapat membentuk ulang makna, memengaruhi interpretasi, dan bahkan mengarahkan kembali bagaimana suatu gagasan kuat seperti Khudi dipahami di luar konteks aslinya.

Kata kunci: Interpretasi lintas budaya; *Khudi; Penerjemahan pascakolonial; puisi Persia*

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of *Khudi* stands at the heart of Iqbal's philosophical poetry bold, spiritual, and transformative. It is more than selfhood; it is the hidden flame within a person that can grow into strength, purpose, and divine awareness. *In Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān*, Iqbal reveals this idea through powerful images and spiritually loaded expressions that speak directly to the human instinct for growth. The poem carries a sense of urgency, as if Iqbal is calling the reader to awaken a sleeping force within. Yet when these lines move from their original Urdu into English especially through Reynold A. Nicholson's early translation the intensity does not always travel with them. Something delicate shifts, and the message takes on a slightly different shape.

This shift becomes clearer when we remember the worlds from which both writers came. Iqbal wrote as a thinker shaped by the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual atmosphere of a colonized Muslim society. His poetry carries the weight of a community rediscovering identity and selfhood. Nicholson, on the other hand, translated the poem from within a Western scholarly environment that valued clarity, explanation, and analytical phrasing. English, during Nicholson's time, was not simply a language of communication it was a language of academic authority. Texts translated into English often became the "official" versions for international readers, and the translator's voice gained the power to frame how the original was understood.

Because of this imbalance, translation becomes more than a linguistic act; it becomes a cultural and ideological exchange. The translator must decide what to keep intensely close to the original and what to adjust for the new audience. Whenever a line is kept highly faithful, the meaning remains rooted in Iqbal's experience. Whenever it is adjusted for readability or smoothness, the meaning bends slightly toward the expectations of English-speaking readers. This constant movement between closeness and adaptation shapes the final text, even when the translator is careful and respectful.

Iqbal's poem itself is a dense world. The metaphors of polishing the self like steel, igniting courage like fire, and rising like a falcon are not merely poetic flourishes they are spiritual symbols. They reflect the journey of becoming strong through struggle, trust in God, and inner

transformation. Many of these symbols have emotional and religious depth that makes them immediately clear to Urdu-speaking audiences. But when Nicholson translates these images, he often softens their intensity. He chooses words that explain rather than evoke, that define rather than inspire. Some metaphors become general ideas. Some spiritual terms turn into psychological ones. Some lines lose the passionate force that Iqbal deliberately built into them.

This process is not unique to Nicholson it is part of a larger pattern often found in translations from Eastern, mystical, or culturally embedded texts into Western languages. The translator's interpretations, shaped by Western literary habits, may unintentionally shift the original meaning. In the case of Khudi, this means that a concept meant to be deeply spiritual and linked to self-transformation can appear in English as simple individuality, ego, or personality development. These words may be easier for English audiences, but they do not fully capture Iqbal's vision of a self-empowered by divine connection, moral strength, and purposeful struggle.

Understanding this gap is essential, because for many international readers, Nicholson's translation was the first doorway into Iqbal's thought. If that doorway is shaped differently from the original, the entire understanding of *Khudi* changes. This raises the central question guiding this study: How does Nicholson's translation alter, soften, or reinterpret Iqbal's original message in Khudi ka *Sirr-e-Nihān*, and what effect do these changes have on the overall meaning of *Khudi*?

This paper argues that Nicholson's translation, while valuable and undertaken with clear scholarly respect, inevitably reflects the cultural, intellectual, and linguistic environment of its time, resulting in several noticeable deviations in tone, symbolism, and philosophical depth from Iqbal's original text. These deviations do not diminish Nicholson's significant contribution to introducing Iqbal to a wider audience; rather, they underscore the importance of reexamining the concept of *Khudi* with renewed sensitivity to its original historical, cultural, and spiritual context. In order to develop this argument, the study seeks to identify the major textual differences between Iqbal's poem and Nicholson's translation, analyze the shifts in philosophical and spiritual meaning that occur in the process of translation, and examine how these translational choices have influenced the global understanding of Iqbal's conception of selfhood.

LITERATURE REVIEW

llama Muhammad Iqbal's *Asrār-e-Khudi* (*The Secrets of the Self*) is a Persian philosophical poem that explores the concept of *Khudi*, often translated as "selfhood" or "self-realization." In Iqbal's philosophy, *Khudi* represents a dynamic spiritual and intellectual principle that encourages individuals to cultivate inner strength, moral agency, and spiritual independence. Rather than referring to a simple notion of personal identity, *Khudi* emphasizes the development of the self through ethical struggle, faith, and creative action within society. Scholars have noted that this concept forms the central pillar of Iqbal's philosophical system and reflects his attempt to revive intellectual and spiritual consciousness within the Muslim world (Rehman, 2024; Gul & Nasim, 2021).

Iqbal's Concept of Khudi

Iqbal's poetic expression of *Khudi* is deeply embedded in Islamic metaphysics, Qur'anic symbolism, and the cultural heritage of Persian literary traditions. As a result, the poem is characterized by dense metaphors, spiritual symbolism, and culturally specific references that reflect both religious philosophy and socio-historical experience. This complexity presents significant challenges for translators, as the meaning of the text is constructed not only through linguistic structures but also through layers of cultural, philosophical, and historical context. Consequently, translating *Asrār-e-Khudi* into English involves more than a linguistic transfer; it requires interpretive decisions that inevitably shape how Iqbal's ideas are understood by new audiences.

One of the earliest and most influential English translations of *Asrār-e-Khudi* was produced by Reynold A. Nicholson, a British Orientalist scholar who sought to introduce Iqbal's philosophical poetry to Western readers. Nicholson's translation played a crucial role in disseminating Iqbal's ideas beyond the Persian-speaking world and contributed significantly to the global recognition of Iqbal's intellectual legacy. However, scholars have also noted that Nicholson's translation reflects interpretive choices that affect how the philosophical meaning of *Khudi* is conveyed in English (Hanif, Zaffar, & Khan, 2024).

Historical evidence further illustrates the complexity of this translation process. Later research indicates that Iqbal himself reviewed Nicholson's translation and reportedly marked approximately 150 corrections in a copy of the text, suggesting that certain meanings and nuances in the original Persian were not fully captured in the English version (Durrani, 2024). This episode highlights a central issue in translation studies: even highly respected translations may diverge from the author's intended meaning when cultural and philosophical concepts are transferred across languages.

Nicholson's Translation: History and Context

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Newmark's Equivalence in Translation

One of the key theoretical frameworks used to examine such translational shifts is the concept of equivalence. According to Newmark (1988), translation generally seeks to achieve either **semantic equivalence or communicative equivalence**. Semantic equivalence prioritizes the closest possible meaning of the source text, even if the resulting translation appears less natural

in the target language. Communicative equivalence, on the other hand, focuses on producing a message that is clear and easily understood by the target audience, sometimes at the expense of the source text's exact wording or cultural specificity.

In the context of Nicholson's translation, several scholars argue that the translation tends to prioritize communicative readability over strict semantic fidelity. By adapting Iqbal's philosophical language into more accessible English expressions, Nicholson makes the poem understandable for Western readers who may be unfamiliar with Persian literary conventions or Islamic philosophical terminology. However, this strategy may also lead to a simplification of key philosophical concepts and symbolic imagery embedded in the original text (Hanif et al., 2024).

This tension between readability and fidelity is particularly significant in the translation of philosophical poetry. Because philosophical meaning is often conveyed through metaphor, symbolism, and culturally embedded terminology, any shift in wording can potentially reshape the conceptual depth of the original text. As a result, translation decisions may influence not only how the poem is read but also how the philosophical framework of *Khudi* is interpreted in cross-cultural contexts.

Loss of Deep Metaphors

Another major challenge in translating *Asrār-e-Khudi* lies in the treatment of metaphor and culturally embedded symbolism. Iqbal's poetry frequently employs metaphors drawn from Islamic spirituality, Persian literary tradition, and historical experience. These metaphors often carry philosophical implications that cannot easily be rendered through direct lexical equivalents in English.

Newmark (1988) argues that when translators prioritize fluency and communicative clarity, culturally dense metaphors may be simplified or replaced with more general expressions in the target language. While such strategies improve readability, they can also reduce the conceptual richness of the source text. In Nicholson's translation, some metaphors appear to be rendered into broader English phrases that convey the general meaning but omit the deeper cultural and spiritual associations present in the original Persian text.

This phenomenon illustrates a common dilemma in literary translation: maintaining accessibility for the target reader while preserving the cultural and philosophical depth of the original work. The translator must constantly negotiate between these competing priorities, and the resulting translation inevitably reflects interpretive choices that shape the reader's understanding of the text.

Post-Colonial Translation Theory

eyond linguistic considerations, translation can also be examined through broader cultural and ideological frameworks. Postcolonial translation theory highlights how translation practices are influenced by historical power relations, particularly when texts from formerly colonized societies are translated into the languages of colonial powers. Within this framework, translation

is not viewed as a neutral transfer of meaning but as a cultural process shaped by ideological assumptions, cultural hierarchies, and interpretive frameworks (Baker, 2006; Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999).

Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* emerged within the intellectual and political context of colonial India, where debates about spiritual renewal, cultural identity, and resistance to colonial domination were central to Muslim intellectual life. In this context, *Khudi* functioned not only as a spiritual philosophy but also as a form of intellectual resistance that encouraged self-empowerment and moral independence. When Nicholson translated *Asrār-e-Khudi* into English, the text entered a different cultural and intellectual environment shaped by Western academic traditions and Orientalist scholarship.

Postcolonial scholars argue that such translations may involve subtle transformations of meaning as translators interpret non-Western concepts through Western philosophical categories (Spivak, 1993; Niranjana, 1992). In the case of Iqbal's poetry, the concept of *Khudi* which in the original context conveys spiritual resistance, ethical self-affirmation, and anti-colonial consciousness may be reframed within more universalized philosophical terminology that aligns with Western intellectual traditions.

Venuti (1995) further notes that translations produced within dominant linguistic cultures often domesticate culturally specific meanings in order to make them more accessible to the target readership. This process can lead to the generalization of culturally embedded expressions and the reduction of their historical or political resonance. In Nicholson's translation, for instance, spiritually charged metaphors rooted in Islamic metaphysics may appear as broader philosophical ideas rather than explicitly religious concepts. Such shifts do not necessarily indicate mistranslation but rather reflect the interpretive mediation that occurs when complex cultural texts move across linguistic and historical boundaries.

From this perspective, examining Nicholson's translation of *Asrār-e-Khudi* provides valuable insight into how philosophical poetry is reshaped through cross-cultural translation. It also reveals how translation choices influence the global reception and interpretation of Iqbal's intellectual legacy.

Comparative Insights from Translation Studies

Although there is limited direct scholarly analysis focusing specifically on Nicholson's translation of *Asrār-e-Khudi*, broader research on the translation of Iqbal's works suggests recurring challenges. Studies indicate that translations frequently simplify cultural symbolism, literary density, and rhetorical intensity in order to accommodate the expectations of target audiences (Ajmal et al., 2024). Furthermore, deeply embedded cultural, spiritual, and historical meanings are particularly difficult to preserve fully in English due to differences in worldview, metaphysical assumptions, and philosophical traditions (Bassnett, 2014; Venuti, 1995).

These observations support the argument that while Nicholson's translation remains historically significant in introducing Iqbal to a global readership, it may not entirely preserve the philosophical depth and spiritual force of *Khudi* as articulated in its original context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Newmark's translation theory and the lens of postcolonial translation studies. Newmark's framework, which distinguishes between semantic translation (focusing on preserving the exact meaning and cultural depth of the original) and communicative translation (focusing on readability and comprehensibility for the target audience), provides a useful tool for analyzing Nicholson's translation. This study applies these principles to identify where Nicholson prioritizes clarity for English readers over the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical nuances of Iqbal's Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān.

At the same time, a postcolonial perspective is applied to understand the broader cultural and historical implications of translating a non-Western text into English during a period of Western intellectual dominance. This perspective helps reveal how Nicholson's translation may reflect the subtle power dynamics of colonial-era scholarship, where Western interpretations could inadvertently reshape or domesticate Eastern philosophical concepts. By combining Newmark's theory with postcolonial insights, the study aims to analyze both linguistic choices and their ideological implications.

Research Design

The research follows a qualitative, comparative textual analysis design. The study involves a close reading of Iqbal's original Persian poem alongside Nicholson's English translation to explore meaning shifts, deviations in tone, and changes in philosophical and cultural expression. By systematically comparing key verses, the study identifies where Nicholson uses semantic translation strategies to preserve meaning and where he uses communicative strategies that prioritize reader comprehension, sometimes at the expense of depth.

This design allows for a detailed understanding of how translation functions not just as a linguistic process, but as a cultural and ideological act. The study examines both the surface-level lexical choices and the underlying shifts in Iqbal's spiritual and philosophical vision.

Population

The population of this study consists of two primary texts: the original Persian version of Iqbal's *Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān*and Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation of the poem. These texts were selected because Nicholson's translation is widely recognized as the principal medium through which English-speaking audiences have encountered Iqbal's concept of *Khudi*. Consequently, it plays a significant role in shaping cross-cultural interpretations and global understandings of Iqbal's philosophical ideas.

Sampling Technique

This study employs a **purposive sampling technique** to select specific couplets and verses from the poem. The selected passages meet the following criteria: they represent the central philosophical, spiritual, and ethical dimensions of *Khudi*; they contain rich symbolism, metaphors, or culturally embedded expressions; and they display noticeable deviations or shifts in Nicholson's translation. By applying this sampling strategy, the analysis focuses on passages where translation choices significantly influence meaning, tone, and ideological interpretation.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected from authenticated scholarly editions of Iqbal's *Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān* and Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation of the poem. Both texts were examined through multiple close readings to ensure the accurate identification and extraction of relevant verses for analysis. The analytical process consists of three main stages:

Linguistic and Semantic Comparison

This stage focuses on comparing lexical choices and stylistic elements between the original Persian text and its English translation. The analysis examines several aspects, including word choice and diction, where Nicholson may replace culturally rich or spiritually dense expressions with simpler English equivalents. It also investigates imagery and metaphor to determine whether key poetic symbols such as light, fire, self, falcon, and sword are preserved, modified, or softened in translation. In addition, the analysis considers tone and emphasis by identifying instances where the emotional intensity, passion, or revolutionary spirit of the original poem appears diminished in the translated version.

Communicative and Semantic Translation Shifts

Using Newmark's translation framework, this stage identifies whether particular lines reflect semantic translation strategies that remain closely faithful to the original text or communicative translation strategies that prioritize readability and accessibility for English readers. The analysis further evaluates how these translational shifts influence readers' interpretation and understanding of the concept of *Khudi*.

Postcolonial Contextual Analysis

The final stage situates the translation within its broader cultural and historical context. It evaluates the potential influence of Western scholarly traditions and colonial intellectual frameworks on Nicholson's translation. The analysis also observes instances where cultural, religious, or philosophical elements of the original text may be domesticated or universalized for English-speaking audiences, and examines how such transformations shape the global reception and interpretation of Iqbal's philosophical ideas.

FINDING

The analysis of Muhammad Iqbal's *Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān* and Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation reveals several significant shifts in meaning, tone, symbolism, and contextual emphasis. These findings emerge from a close comparative reading of the original Persian text and its English rendering, with particular attention to how key philosophical and spiritual elements of *Khudi* are represented in translation.

Iqbal's *Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān* is a deeply layered poetic work that explores the hidden essence of *Khudi*. In Iqbal's philosophical framework, *Khudi* is not merely a psychological notion of "self." Rather, it represents a dynamic spiritual force that develops through faith, discipline, struggle, and a conscious relationship with God. The poem employs powerful symbolic language that carries religious resonance, cultural memory, and philosophical depth. As a result, translating such a text involves more than a simple linguistic transfer; it also requires negotiating complex cultural and spiritual meanings.

The analysis indicates that Nicholson's translation strategy tends to prioritize clarity and accessibility for English readers. His translation was intended to introduce Iqbal's ideas to a Western intellectual audience, and this objective appears to influence many of his translational choices. In several instances, the English version simplifies expressions that in the original poem contain layered spiritual or philosophical meanings. While this approach produces a text that reads smoothly in English, it also reduces the density of meaning embedded in the source text.

One of the most noticeable shifts occurs in the translation of the central concept of *Khudi* itself. In the original Persian text, *Khudi* simultaneously encompasses spiritual agency, moral responsibility, and divine potential. It is closely connected with the human relationship to God and the ethical responsibility of the individual. Nicholson frequently renders *Khudi* as "self" or "ego." In English, however, these terms generally carry psychological or individualistic associations rather than spiritual or theological ones. As a result, the translation tends to shift the meaning of *Khudi* from a spiritually grounded concept to a more human-centered interpretation.

From the perspective of semantic equivalence, this shift suggests a partial loss of meaning. Semantic translation aims to preserve the cultural and philosophical depth of the original text even when the resulting expression may sound unfamiliar in the target language. In Iqbal's poem, the language is intentionally intense and challenging, designed to provoke spiritual reflection. Nicholson's translation often moderates this intensity, leaving some of the deeper layers of meaning only partially visible.

At the same time, the translation demonstrates features of communicative translation. Nicholson's English version presents the ideas of the poem in a form that is accessible and logically structured for Western readers. The sentences flow smoothly, and the arguments appear clear and coherent. However, this communicative clarity also alters the overall effect of the poem. While Iqbal's original text seeks to inspire spiritual awakening and moral transformation, the translated version often invites intellectual reflection rather than existential engagement.

Another important finding concerns the shift in tone. In the Persian original, the poem adopts a strong, exhortative voice. Iqbal speaks as a guide urging the reader toward self-realization and spiritual struggle. In the English translation, this tone becomes calmer and more explanatory. The sense of urgency and motivational force that characterizes the original poem becomes less pronounced, resulting in a more reflective and academic tone.

The analysis also reveals changes in the contextual framing of the poem. Iqbal composed *Khudi ka Sirr-e-Nihān* during a period of colonial domination, when Muslim societies were confronting a crisis of identity and intellectual confidence. In this historical context, *Khudi* functions as a call for spiritual and moral regeneration. Nicholson's translation, however, tends to present the poem in more universal and timeless terms. While this approach makes the text broadly accessible, it reduces the historical and political urgency embedded in Iqbal's original message.

Symbolism also undergoes noticeable transformation in translation. Iqbal frequently employs powerful images such as fire, sword, struggle, and light to represent spiritual strength and divine guidance. These symbols carry mystical and religious significance within the poetic structure of the original text. In the English translation, however, these images are often softened or interpreted in more rational terms. Consequently, the symbolic expressions appear closer to metaphors of personal development rather than representations of spiritual awakening.

A further shift can be observed in the overall language style. Iqbal's Persian poetry is rhythmic, emotionally intense, and highly evocative. Nicholson's English rendering, by contrast, adopts a more controlled and scholarly tone. This stylistic transformation changes the experiential quality of the poem: the inspirational and poetic force of the original text becomes more philosophical and explanatory in translation.

These linguistic and stylistic changes also affect the potential response of readers. In the original text, the reader is confronted with a passionate call for spiritual awakening and self-transformation. In Nicholson's translation, the reader is more likely to encounter the poem as an intellectual exposition of philosophical ideas. The spiritual urgency that characterizes Iqbal's concept of *Khudi* becomes moderated in the translated version.

Despite these shifts, it is important to recognize the historical significance of Nicholson's translation. His work played a crucial role in introducing Iqbal's philosophy to a global readership. Without this translation, Iqbal's ideas might have remained largely confined to Persian and Urdu-speaking audiences. Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest that the process of translation also involved interpretative transformations. Greater accessibility for international readers was achieved, but this accessibility was accompanied by a partial reduction of the original philosophical and spiritual intensity.

Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that Nicholson's translation diverges from Iqbal's original poem at several interconnected levels, including conceptual meaning, tone, symbolism, historical context, and linguistic style. These findings highlight that translation

functions not merely as a transfer of words, but as an interpretative process that can reshape how philosophical ideas are understood across cultures. While Nicholson's version successfully communicates the general themes of *Khudi*, it does not fully reproduce the depth and spiritual resonance of Iqbal's original vision.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the English translation of *Khudī ka Sirr-e-Nihān* by Reynold A. Nicholsondoes not merely transfer the poem into another language but significantly reshapes the philosophical interpretation of the concept of *Khudī*. While the translation successfully introduces the ideas of Muhammad Iqbal to English-speaking audiences, it simultaneously modifies several important dimensions of meaning, including spiritual depth, cultural symbolism, and historical context.

One of the most prominent patterns revealed in the findings is the dominance of communicative translation strategies. According to Peter Newmark, communicative translation prioritizes readability and the effect of the message on the target audience, whereas semantic translation aims to preserve the contextual and cultural meaning of the original text (Newmark, 1988). The analysis suggests that Nicholson's translation frequently favors communicative clarity, particularly in the rendering of the key philosophical term *Khudī*. By translating *Khudī* as "self" or "ego," the translation simplifies a complex spiritual concept into a more familiar psychological category for Western readers. Similar observations have been noted in translation studies, where culturally embedded philosophical terms often undergo conceptual narrowing when translated into dominant global languages (Baker, 2018).

This tendency reflects a broader issue in cross-cultural translation. Scholars argue that translation is not a purely linguistic process but also a cultural negotiation that reshapes meaning within new interpretive frameworks (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999). When translators prioritize accessibility, culturally specific concepts may lose their philosophical and spiritual complexity. In the case of Iqbal's poetry, the reduction of *Khudī* into a psychological notion diminishes its original significance as a spiritually grounded principle connected with divine guidance, moral discipline, and metaphysical self-realization (Schimmel, 1963).

The findings also reveal a significant shift in tone between the original poem and its English translation. In the Persian text, Iqbal's voice is assertive, inspirational, and emotionally intense, aiming to awaken spiritual consciousness and encourage ethical action. The poem functions not merely as philosophical reflection but as a motivational call for personal and collective transformation. In Nicholson's translation, however, the tone becomes more explanatory and reflective. This shift corresponds to what Lawrence Venuti describes as the domestication of foreign texts, in which translators adapt stylistic and rhetorical elements to conform to the expectations of the target culture (Venuti, 1995). While domestication enhances readability, it can also reduce the rhetorical force and cultural distinctiveness of the original text.

From a postcolonial perspective, the transformations observed in this study can also be understood within broader historical dynamics of knowledge production. Postcolonial translation scholars emphasize that translation has historically played a role in mediating relationships between dominant and marginalized cultures (Niranjana, 1992). During the colonial period, translations of Eastern texts into European languages often reframed non-Western intellectual traditions through Western philosophical categories. In this context, Nicholson's translation may be interpreted as part of a broader intellectual process in which Eastern spirituality is rearticulated through Western academic discourse.

A similar concern is raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who argues that translation can produce what she calls "epistemic violence" when culturally specific meanings are reshaped to fit dominant interpretative frameworks (Spivak, 1993). In the case of Iqbal's poetry, the universalization of *Khudī* in translation may obscure the cultural, religious, and historical context from which the concept originally emerged. The reduction of colonial context observed in the findings supports this argument, as the translation presents the poem primarily as a universal philosophical reflection rather than a response to the socio-political challenges of colonial South Asia.

Another important aspect highlighted in the findings concerns the transformation of symbolic imagery. Iqbal's poetry is rich in symbolic motifs such as fire, light, struggle, and the sword, which represent spiritual power, ethical courage, and the process of inner transformation. These symbols are deeply rooted in Islamic intellectual traditions and Sufi metaphors. However, the translation often softens or rationalizes these images, presenting them primarily as metaphors of personal development rather than as expressions of mystical experience. Similar patterns have been observed in studies of religious and philosophical translation, where symbolic language is frequently simplified in order to align with rationalist interpretive traditions (Munday, 2016).

Despite these limitations, it is important to recognize the historical significance of Nicholson's translation. His work played a crucial role in introducing Iqbal's philosophy to a global readership and remains one of the most influential English translations of Iqbal's poetry. As noted in studies of Iqbal's reception in the West, Nicholson's translation helped establish Iqbal as a major intellectual figure beyond South Asia (Majeed, 2009). Without such translations, the international dissemination of Iqbal's philosophical ideas would have been far more limited.

Overall, the discussion confirms that translation is not a neutral act of linguistic substitution but a complex cultural practice shaped by ideology, historical context, and intellectual traditions. Nicholson's translation reflects the scholarly environment of the early twentieth century, which emphasized clarity, universality, and philosophical interpretation. While the translation successfully communicates the general message of Iqbal's poetry, it also reshapes the philosophical depth, cultural specificity, and spiritual urgency embedded in the original concept of *Khudī*. Future translations of Iqbal's works may therefore benefit from adopting a more balanced approach that preserves cultural nuance and symbolic richness while maintaining accessibility for global readers.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation of *Khudī ka Sirr-e-Nihān* in order to explore how the philosophical concept of *Khudī* is represented when transferred from its original Persian context into English. By applying Newmark's theory of translation equivalence together with postcolonial translation perspectives, the study aimed to identify how translation choices influence the interpretation of Iqbal's philosophical ideas.

The findings demonstrate that Nicholson's translation played a significant historical role in introducing Iqbal's thought to English-speaking audiences and in facilitating the global circulation of his philosophical ideas. At the same time, the analysis shows that the process of translation inevitably involves interpretive transformation. Certain dimensions of Iqbal's concept of *Khudī*—including its spiritual depth, cultural resonance, and philosophical complexity become less visible when expressed within a different linguistic and intellectual framework.

These results highlight the broader implication that translation is not merely a technical process of transferring words between languages but a form of cultural mediation that shapes how philosophical ideas are understood across contexts. The case of Nicholson's translation illustrates how literary and philosophical texts may be reinterpreted when they move between cultures, particularly when they are introduced to audiences whose intellectual traditions differ from those of the source text.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis focuses primarily on textual comparison between the original poem and a single English translation. As a result, it does not explore how other translators might represent the concept of *Khudī* or how different audiences interpret translated versions of Iqbal's work. In addition, the study concentrates mainly on semantic and philosophical dimensions, leaving other literary aspects such as poetic rhythm, stylistic texture, and aesthetic reception less explored.

Future research could expand this investigation by comparing multiple translations of *Khudī ka Sirr-e-Nihān* in order to examine how different translation strategies shape the interpretation of Iqbal's philosophy. Reception-based studies may also provide valuable insights into how contemporary readers engage with translated versions of Iqbal's poetry. Furthermore, interdisciplinary approaches combining literary studies, translation theory, and postcolonial analysis could contribute to a deeper understanding of how Iqbal's ideas continue to circulate and evolve in global intellectual contexts.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of approaching translated philosophical texts with critical awareness. While Nicholson's translation remains an important bridge through which Iqbal's ideas reached international readers, a fuller understanding of the concept of *Khudī* ultimately requires attention to the cultural, linguistic, and philosophical context of the original work.

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Appendixes

Translation by Reynold Nicholson

The secret of Self is hidden in this saying:
‘There is no god but Allah.’
Self is the sword, and the whetstone
Is ‘There is no god but Allah.’”
“This age is searching for another Abraham,
For the world is a temple full of idols:
Its guardian is he who cries—
‘There is no god but Allah
“Thou hast bartered away the treasure of thine honour;
Thou hast sold thy precious Self for a trifle—
A mere illusion of loss and gain:
The destroyer of illusion is
‘There is no god but Allah
“This wealth and the ties of relationship,
These are but idols of illusion and doubt;
The breaker of idols is this cry:
‘There is no god but Allah
“Reason has become the infidel’s girdle
Bound fast by the fetters of time and space;
Neither time nor space has reality—
‘There is no god but Allah.’”
“This song is not confined to the season of rose and tulip;
It is not the slave of Spring or Autumn:
Whether it be Spring or Autumn, still its cry is:
‘There is no god but Allah.’”
“Though the sleeves of the community hide many idols,
I am commanded to proclaim the Call to Prayer:
‘There is no god but Allah.’”

الله لا ہ ا لا ال ں ، فسا ے تیغ ي ہ الله خود لا ہ ا لا ال ں ر نہا ا س ي ک خود
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، ے جہاں ہ ہ م کد ے صن ں ہ ش مي ي تلا م ک ے براہي ر اپن ہ دو ي
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، ں و زیا د ب سو ا فري ا سود ر ک ع غرو ے متا و ن ے ت ا ہ کي
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، و گماں م ن وہ د بتا و پیون ہ ہ رشت ، ي ت دنیا و دول ل ہ ما ي
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، ہ مکاں ں ن ے زما ہ ہ ي ن ي زنار ں ک و مکا ن ے زما ي ہ د ہوئ خر
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، ہ خزاں و ک ر ہ د بہا ں پابن ا نہي ہ ک و لال ل ل گ ہ فص ہ نغم ي
الله لا ہ ا لا ال ، م اذاں ے حک ے ہ ت مجھ ں مو ں مي ي آستینو ت ک ں جماع ت ہي ہ ب ر چ اگ

اقبال( )