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Muhammad Iqbal's Thoughts and its Relevance to Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Muhammad Iqbal as a Muslim philosopher also a humanitarian activist who voices the rise of Muslim people to achieve equality and justice that always carries the theme of nature in his works. He had deep thoughts in many scientific fields, much research has been done on them, but it rarely mentions his development ideas. In fact, environmental damage and steep economic inequality that are inconsistant with the doctrine of human as universe caliph in Islam, are the impact of technology driven by a capitalistic paradigm that ignores the sustainability of all resources in the world. For that reason, this article is structured through library research as an effort to dissect Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts in the sustainable development. The results are; first, humans are free creatures who can only submit to God, not others. Second, the universe was created by God for the benefit of humans. Both have inseparable existential relationships to maintain sustainability. Be ing responsible humans to understand, manage and utilize it. The relationship between humans and nature is as close as the relationship between humans and God, growth in sustainable creativity.

Keywords: Muhammad Iqbal, Thoughts, Sustainable Development

A. Introduction

The Muslim community is second largest community in the world after Christians. It has around 1.91 billion followers which Spreads across Saudi Arabia, the Maldives and Mauritania, where the population is 100% Muslim. Then in Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan, 99% of the people choose Islam as their guide for life. In total there are 50 Muslim-majority countries throughout the world, including Indonesia (Dwi, Andika, 2022). In such large numbers in the contemporary era with all its problems. Muslims certainly face complex humanitarian problems.

Islam has good work ethic teachings and teachings about sharing wealth with others, ironically the poverty rate is very high. Terminologically, ethos is a belief about work that functions as a behavioral guide for a person both individually, socially and institutionally. Ethos is a pattern for behavior that directs human behavior or actions to carry out work in accordance with the guidelines (Nursyam, 2023). Islam has the teaching of seeking the highest possible knowledge, but Muslim communities are consumers of science and technology products, not yet producers. Lisa Keister in *American Journal of Sociology* which



was published in 2011, published the results of its research that it turns out that religion has a direct impact on achieving wealth. Religious beliefs, such as; people have to have lots of children, and women don't have to work to have low incomes, both on a micro and macro scale. According to him, religion indirectly impacts the wealth of its adherents through educational attainment, fertility and female labor force participation (Keister, n.d.).

Classical Islamic religious studies which are thick with metaphysical and ontological concepts regarding the nature of divinity, humans and nature should not be underestimated. However, in the current context where the world is facing increasingly complex humanitarian problems, it requires a study of thinking that is rooted in the real problems being faced. Islamic thought must take part in providing solutions to contemporary humanitarian problems. The empowerment of the Muslim community is necessary, considering that the number of adherents is one of the largest, so it should not be the biggest contributor to problems. For this purpose, research on Iqbal's thinking and its relevance to sustainable development was carried out.

Muhammad Iqbal as a Muslim philosopher in the modern era has contributed ideas to encourage people to become a better society. From him, inspiration can be drawn on the importance of building an independent, authentic and creative Muslim character. Islamic studies, especially philosophy, must be directed as self-criticism towards problematic Islamic scientific phenomena and traditions, so that they function in solving humanitarian problems. (Ruswantoro, nd). Right in a situation of intellectual anxiety about the marginalized condition of Muslims, most of whom are spread across developing countries, the discourse on sustainable development was born.

Sustainable development has become an interesting subject both in international programs, state development planning, conference themes, academic studies and environmentalists (Ukaga et al., 2011a). It is a unique concept and is considered more comprehensive than other development concepts so that it becomes a new direction for a broader development paradigm over a longer period of time (Scopelliti et al., 2018a; Shepherd et al., 2016). However, despite the rise of sustainable development studies, there are also many critics who question the meaning, definition and implications of theory and



practice for development programs (Montaldo, 2013; Shahzalal & Hassan, 2019). Therefore, sustainable development seems to be a theme that seems cliche, where many people praise and appreciate it, but few are able to define it properly (Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2019).

Rhetorically, the concept of sustainable development still requires a clear and indepth definition (Gray, 2010; Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2019). Promotion by academics and practitioners is needed to more fully and comprehensively ground it (Giovannoni & Fabietti, 2013). There has been a lot of literature on sustainable development which discusses the definition, concept, history, pillars, principles and implications for development, but further studies on how the concept of sustainable development fits with an Islamic perspective remains an important study, considering the welfare of the people. is still a big unfinished project.

Iqbal's thoughts can be used as a starting point for how Islamic values become the spirit in efforts to raise the standard of life of the people. For this reason, the focus of the study in this article is the relationship between humans and Nature and God in the frame of sustainable resources. Then, in terms of sustainable development, the meaning, concept, dimensions, principles and implications of sustainable development are discussed. This is important to provide comprehensive information to researchers, academics and practitioners about sustainable development so that they can provide policy, decision making and further research.

B. Literature Review

1. Traces of Iqbal's Thought in the Treasures of Islamic Science

Muhammad Iqbal (Allama Iqbal) was a prominent Muslim poet, philosopher, politician and statesman in India in the 20th century. Born in Sialkot, Pujab, British India (now Punjab Pakistan) on 9 November 1877 and died in Lahore on 21 April 1938 at the age of 61 years. Coming from a family with a Kashmiri Brahma caste background, he was educated in Lahore (1895), Cambridge (1905) and Munich (1907) (Hussain, 2019). There are many of Iqbal's writings in Urdu, Persian and English which are aimed at reconstructing Islamic thought in modern times and encouraging Indian Muslim society to escape the pressure of Western colonialism. Several of Iqbal's works were written in various forms



such as works on philosophy, religion and lectures which have been recorded, including: 'Ilm al-Iqtisad, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, The Reconstruction of Religious Thaught in Islam, Stray Reflection (Iqbal's Diary), Asrar-i-Khudi, Rumuz-i-Bekhudi, Payam-i-Mashriq (Message from the East), Bang-i-Dara (Caravan Bells), and Zabur-i-'Azam (Persian Psalms).

Alim Roswantoro (Roswatoro, 2017) philosophically explores Iqbal's thoughts on mysticism and the attitude of mystics in facing worldly life from his magnum opus, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam. His research explores Iqbal's thoughts on mystical experience and the rejection of the silence of self-abnegation. Iqbal removed the implications of the passive-active attitude of worldly life that was developing at that time. For him, there are two experiences; namely ordinary experiences and mystical experiences. Mysticism is the inner world of humans in capturing reality as a complete or non-serial time reality behind their encounter with the Supreme Ego. To understand mysticism, one must have a deep understanding of the basic character of human mystical experience which is very unique compared to normal humans.

Muslims who avoid real-concrete life by running away from worldly affairs as intended by Sufism, show a passive existence, spiritually egoistic religiosity. Iqbal perceives that the mysticism of Sufism generally seems like a "denial of life" and an attitude of mind that avoids facts, although not all Islamic Sufism is like this. For him, true Islamic Sufism is prophetic Sufism exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW in his concrete history. The difference between these two types of mysticism is; Pantheistic and prophetic mysticism both gain the experience of encounter and union with Ultimate Reality, but the former denies real life. Considering that experience as the ultimate goal of religiosity,

Iqbal's Islamic mysticism reflects his philosophical consistency regarding the ego or self. His Islamic mysticism fiercely rejected the notion of fana' (merging oneself into God) and boldly denied passive selfishness. He taught active selfishness which was a harsh condemnation of the self-denial of classical Islamic mysticism. The attainment of active selfhood as the fruit of the unity of the experience of human selfhood and God's selfhood, is not a final thing but on the contrary, a continuous and incessant actualization of human



selfhood to reshape and refresh worldly _factual life_. Iqbal's Islamic mysticism cannot end with spiritual perfection and peace achieved by passive absorption in the contemplation of God and divine things.

Jaleel in his research highlighted two main life issues raised by Iqbal; religion and science. Iqbal as a poet deals with the reality of religion in his own philosophy. Jaleel tries to show Iqbal's attitude towards Western science in relation to religion and ideal self-construction. His views on knowledge, intuition, reason, reason, and experience sometimes agree with Western scientists but at other times are at odds. The visible differences between West and East for Iqbal are the religious commitment that Western society does not have, and the scientific technological regression that the East has.(Jaleel, nd).

Choiriyah dissects Muhammad Iqbal's political thoughts. This Muslim philosopher is known as the 'spirit' driving the modernization of South Asian Islam. His thoughts about the decline and progress of Muslims have had an influence on the renewal movement in Islam. According to him, the decline of Muslims over the last five hundred years was caused by a rigidity in thinking. Law in Islam has reached a static state. Even though Islamic law is dynamic, it develops over time. Therefore, Iqbal contributed to the development of Islamic legal political thought (Choiriyah, 2016).

2. Sustainable Development Concept

Development is defined as an evolutionary process in which human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, overcoming problems, adapting to continuous change, having effort and creativity to achieve new goals (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). Development is also understood as a social condition of a nation, where the resources and systems it has can meet the needs of its population in a sustainable manner (Reyes, 2001). Not only that, development is defined as a multidimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes, institutions, economic growth, minimal inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty (Todaro & Smith, 2012).

Sustainability itself is interpreted as the capacity to maintain several entities, results and processes over time continuously (Basiago, 1998). In development literature, most researchers, academics and practitioners apply this concept to relate it to improving and maintaining a healthy economy, ecological and social systems for community



development (Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2019; Thomas, 2015; Tjarve & Zemīte, 2017). Sustainability is also interpreted as an efficient and equitable distribution of resources both intergenerationally and between generations with socio-economic activities in the use of limited ecosystems (Stoddart, 2011).

Sustainability on the other hand is seen as a dynamic balance that connects population and the environment so that the population develops to its existing potential without having a negative impact on the environment (Ben-Eli, 2018). Sustainability also focuses on human activities and abilities to meet their needs without depleting existing resources (Thomas, 2015).

Sustainable development is defined as development that can meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). Viewed as an approach, sustainable development is a development approach that uses resources so that these resources are continuously available (Molinario et al., 2020). When viewed from this point of view, sustainable development aims to achieve social progress, environmental balance and economic growth (Gossling-Goidsmiths, 2018; Zhai & Chang, 2018). Therefore, in order to achieve sustainable development goals, we must avoid harmful socio-economic activities and carry out activities that have a positive impact on the environment, economy and social (Ukaga et al., 2011b).

The explanation above shows that there are three things that are interconnected in sustainable development, namely: environment, economy and social (society). All human activities must consider the implications of sustainability and welfare in environmental, economic and social aspects (Wanamaker, 2018). This is as shown in the following image:



Source: (Wanamaker, 2018)

Figure 1. Relationship between environmental, economic and social sustainability *Proceeding of 1st International Conference on Islamic*

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The concept of the three pillars of sustainable development above is in line with Wanamaker's opinion, that the right decisions regarding sustainable resource management will produce sustainable economic growth and will ultimately create a sustainable society. (Yang, 2019). Another argument states that if the three concepts in sustainable development can be implemented well, then human existence will be realized because natural resources can be conserved, the environment is protected, the economy can develop rapidly, social life will improve because of the creation of peace and respect for human rights man (Kaivo-oja et al., 2014). So it can be concluded that the three main issues that are pillars of sustainable development are economic growth, environmental protection and social equality (Taylor, 2016).

a. Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability can be interpreted as the use of a production system that can meet current consumption needs without sacrificing or causing losses to future needs (Lobo et al., 2015). The three main economic activities are production, distribution and consumption which must be evaluated so that these activities have a good impact on the environment and society. The limited availability of natural resources and not all of them can be renewed will encourage new thinking that evaluates the feasibility of uncontrolled growth and consumption levels. Therefore, community economic activities must be created and implemented fairly by considering sustainability aspects.

b. Social Sustainability

Social sustainability includes ideas about equality, empowerment, accessibility, participation, cultural identity and institutional stability (Daly, 1992). The basic understanding of social sustainability is closely related to the relationship between social conditions such as poverty and environmental damage. Poverty alleviation must not result in environmental damage, thereby causing economic instability. Social sustainability must aim to alleviate poverty based on the existing environmental and economic resources of society (Kumar et al., 2014; Scopelliti et al., 2018b).

Sustainability at the social level requires guidance, development of people, communities and culture to achieve a meaningful life, as well as being able to utilize



adequate health services, education, gender equality, peace and stability globally (Saith, 2006). Social sustainability is not about ensuring that human needs are met, but enabling the conditions for each individual to have the capacity or ability to realize their needs (Kolk, 2016). Apart from that, social sustainability also covers many issues such as human rights, gender equality, public participation, rule of law so as to promote peace and social stability for sustainable development (Guo, 2017).

c. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability means how the environment is maintained so that it remains productive and in good condition so that it can support human life. The existing system on earth has limits so it requires balance to be maintained. The implication is that natural resources must be used according to their regeneration capacity, and the waste produced does not pollute or even damage the environment (Evers, 2018). The important issue here is that environmental sustainability includes how the natural environment remains stable and productive so as to support human development.

The global concept of sustainable development was then translated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). MDGs are a continuation of SDGs. MDGs mark global mobility to achieve social priorities around the world (Breuer et al., 2019). Even though the MDGs are relatively effective, not all of the eight targets can be achieved over 15 years (2000-2015). So that the development agenda is continued by the SDGs program which is targeted to be achieved by 2030 with an agenda to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure human welfare (Taylor, 2016).

The 2030 Agenda has an overall theme known as 5P, including: people (manuation), planet (planet), prosperity (prosperity), peace (peace) and partnership (partnerships), which are arranged in 17 SDGs programs (Guo, 2017; Zhai & Chang, 2018). These programs aim to address the root causes of human inequality covering areas such as hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, inequality, sustainable cities and communities, consumption and production, climate change, natural resources, peace and



justice. So it can be said that the SDGs are sustainable development, aiming to achieve social progress, environmental balance and economic growth.

C. Research Methods

This study of Iqbal's thoughts on sustainable development is a qualitative research of his main work; The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Iqbal, 1934), *Javid Name* (Iqbal, 1966) and A Message from the East (Iqbal, 1977). For enrichment material, several works which discuss Iqbal's thoughts are also used, such as Ishrat Hasan Enver's The Metaphysics of Iqbal, then Iqbal: Siratuh wa Falsafatuh wa Syi'ruh written by Abdul Wahab Azzam, Dialogue on the Epistemology of Mohammad Iqbal and Charles S. Peirce written by Rodliyah Khuza'i and other supporting references.

The next study leads to references about sustainable development based on primary works with the title: *Economic, social, and environmental sustainability in development theory and urban* planning *practice* (Basiago, 1998), Sustainability: definition and five core principles, a systems perspective (Ben-Eli, 2018), *Translating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) interdependencies into policy advice* (Breuer et al., 2019), What Is Sustainability? A Review of the Concept and Its Applications (Giovannoni & Fabietti, 2013), A review of sustainable development principles: Center for environmental studies (Taylor, 2016) and several reputable articles indexed by Scopus.

Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts, which do not explicitly emphasize the concept of sustainable development, in this study are dissected using a hermeneutic approach (Ricoeur, 2021). Examining Iqbal's work under study then trying to interpret it intuitively, placing it in the contemporary context as a new world so that it is more lively and factual.

D. Result and Discussion

1. Iqbal's Philosophy: Nature as a Vehicle for the Actualization of Sustainable Human Creativity and Innovation

The source of Iqbal's thoughts on the use of natural resources is his criticism and resistance to European hegemonic politics. According to him, the democratic political system developed in the West is an intolerant and selfish democracy.



"The pure thought on which the system of government in Europe was built was incapable of carrying the spirit of living faith that personal revelation could bring. This is why pure thought has so little influence on humans, while religion always elevates individuals and changes society. European idealism was never a living factor in his life, and the result was an egoism that sought itself through intolerant democracies whose sole function was to exploit the poor at the expense of the rich." (Iqbal, 2016).

For Iqbal, humanity requires three important things; spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of individuals, and basic principles of universal development that can direct the evolution of humanity towards spiritual foundations.

Iqbal specifically explains in footnote 13, in Chapter VI of his book Reconstruction, ...mystical methods have attracted some of the best minds in the history of human thought. Maybe there's something in it. But I am inclined to think that it undermines the most important concerns of life, and is driven by a desire to escape the very difficult task of conquering matter by means of the intellect. The most convincing way to realize the potentialities of the world is to connect them with actualities that have changed. I believe that empirical knowledge _ which deals with things that are visible _ is a necessary stage in the life of contemplation. In the Qur'an, the universe that confronts us is not something false. It has its uses (Iqbal, 2016).

The paragraph above shows that Iqbal does not deny the role of mysticism in history. However, there is something more important to study, namely how to understand and utilize the universe in ever-changing time and space. Iqbal invited the people to get involved in the development and application of science. According to him, Allah created nature as a potential to be managed, if there is a disaster it means humans have to learn more about natural law/sunatullah.

Iqbal's interest in nature is also evident in his book Javid Nama. In the poem which tells the story of an ancient Indian philosopher who advised Zinda-Rud entitled the rise of Islam, Iqbal considers that the world is a product of human effort.

Tulu-e-Islam (Iqbal, nd)

The dimness of the stars is evidence of the brightness of the morning. The sun had risen over the horizon; the time for deep sleep had passed.

The blood of life flows in the veins of the dead Timur: Avicenna and Farabi could not understand this secret.

Storms in the West meant that Muslim pearls were produced in abundance from the pounding sea.

If there is still a trace of sleep left, my nightingale, Then make your song sadder, for you find their desire too little to hear your melody.



You are the ever strong hand and the tongue of the eternal God; Give birth to certainty from the heedless, for you are humbled by doubt.

The Muslim goal lies beyond the blue sky; You are the caravan, followed by the stars like dust on the road.

Space is temporary; its inhabitants are temporary, but the beginning of time is yours; the end is yours. You are the final message from God; you are immortal.

Your heart's blood is the henna that adorns the bridal tulip. You belong to Abraham; You are a world builder.

Your nature is the guardian of all life's possibilities; You are like a touchstone of the hidden essence of the world.

Who left this world of water and clay for the eternal life brought by prophecy, you are that gift

Read more lessons in truth, justice and courage!

You are asked to do the work of taking responsibility for the world

This is nature's destiny; this is the secret of Islam, Brotherhood throughout the world, abundant love.

Destroy the idols of color and blood astray in the community, don't let the Turanians, Iranians or Afghans remain.

In another fragment of his poetry,
In the world, believers live like the sun;
they sink, there they emerge, there they sink,
there they sink, here they emerge!
The world you see
You are the reason your spinning wheel spins
Even the thread coiled on it
Submit to the law of rewards for actions
Because from deeds, hell is born, the cleansing of the soul and heaven(Iqbal, 1966)

experience of the human caliphate.

Muhammad Iqbal's poem above shows his thoughts that, God made humans as God's representatives on Earth, entrusting this world to be shaped according to his will. Therefore before God humans are responsible for their own actions or passivity. This suggests that in the world there are fixed laws/sunnatullah that humans can manipulate to produce something useful. Islamic civilization is thus nothing other than the result of the accumulated journey of the people's struggles when faced with the dialectical process between the permanent normativity of the teachings of revelation and the historicity of the

The Qur'an places great emphasis on the importance of observing natural phenomena and contemplating them. Examines the laws of nature, taking examples from cosmology, physics, biology and medical science as a sign for everyone. "Didn't you see how the camel was created? And heavens, how it is raised? And mountains, how are they



established? And the earth how is it spread? (QS. Al-Ghasiyah, 88:17-20) There are many other verses from the Qur'an that encourage Muslims to study nature, reflect on and investigate the original by using reason as best as possible and trying to gain natural knowledge and understanding. as part of social life(Iqbal, 1934). Individuals are central to Iqbal's thinking, the main capital for building society. Groups are made up of individuals, just as stars attract stars, and planets are controlled by planets. The group before the arrival of the guide sent by Allah walked aimlessly and was careless of their intentions and weak and helpless.

The world needs an enthusiastic and optimistic individual attitude. The will of the individual is the driving force of life in society. The Muslim pioneer generation is proof that humans can change the world with the power of their will. Individuals will be successful if they direct all their strength and courage into their actions. A community can act if the individuals in it move forward to conquer nature and build a social order that is just, decent, free and in harmony with God's law. But also avoid rigid frustration as a negative force called Satan.

Humans as creatures chosen by God who carry out a great mission on earth, are equipped with a set of tools to conquer the universe in the form of; five senses, reason and intuition. In a very beautiful poem, Iqbal describes the close relationship between humans and God as partners in bringing nature to life. Becoming a Perfect Human/Insan Kamil is a Continuous Process of Humans as God's co-workers;

You created the night, and I created the lamp You create the clay, and I make the cup You created the Sahara, mountains and wilderness I also planted vineyards, gardens and fields I am the one who turns stones into mirrors I am the one who turns poison into antidote (Iqbal, 1982)

The universe is a source of knowledge besides humans (anfus) and history. Humans with their strength and energy try to change nature by utilizing the energy and power of nature itself to change its fate for the better. In this change effort, God plays an active role. Iqbal always stated that the spirit of the Qur'an is the spirit of things that are concretely experimental and anti-classical. The birth of Islam was the birth of inductive intellect



which became authentic Islamic culture and became the foundation for modern culture (Iqbal, 1982).

Iqbal mentions three levels of progress for each individual's ego, the first is obedience to divine law which requires self-mastery and unlimited commitment. Second, self-control (faqr) which is distancing (from) and superiority over material possessions. Third, the representation of God where "thought and action, instinct and reasoning become one(Vahid, 1994). Those who reach the level of God's representative direct events on earth. Inheriting the characteristics of the absolute ego, individuals like this are the most perfect representatives of God because they are the ones who are able to "direct a creative life rationally" which in Iqbal's terms is "the highest reality".

2. The Relevance of Iqbal's Thought to Sustainable Development

Exploration of Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts provides the following insights; first, that in the horizon of his philosophy humans _men and women_ occupy a central position. A Muslim's existential awareness is human capital as a leading culture for the advancement of civilization. His Islamic perspective does not necessarily position humans as weak creatures as often promoted by previous thinkers. Iqbal also does not pin human greatness on a particular race or gender. He calls for equality and shows the important roles of each individual in the process of community development. Iqbal stated that humans are creatures who are authentically free. Awareness of human freedom from "colonialism" by anything and anyone in the world.

Iqbal relies on development on moral values rooted in Islamic cultural identity. Reestablishing the power of civilization by "learning" from the West without feeling inferior, because the origins of science are Muslim scientists themselves. Access to progress and prosperity is the right of every individual wherever they come from.

Iqbal's thoughts above are in line with the spirit of sustainable development which emphasizes social aspectshuman empowerment, accessibility to scientific/educational facilities, opportunities for every individual to participate in development. His thoughts about adhering to the morals of the Koran are an effort to maintain cultural identity and institutional stability. Iqbal also emphasized gender equality, global peace and stability.



The existential awareness that Iqbal built allows each individual to have the capacity or ability to realize their needs without depending on the "power" of others.

Second, it is about the sustainability of the universe. According to Iqbal, the most important characteristic of Islamic culture is its emphasis in the soul on the concept of a moving universe and continuous laws. The components of a prosperous life are individuals who are creative and independent as a dynamic society in understanding, managing and utilizing the universe as partners with God.

E. Conclusion

Iqbal is a Muslim philosopher who campaigns for the values of equality and justice for humanity. It does not explicitly speak about sustainable development, but implicitly its philosophical ideas are a campaign for human empowerment in its existential relationship with the universe and God. Building awareness about the important position of each individual in maintaining a just world. The inferiority of Eastern peoples must be burned with mastery of science and awareness that humans are independent entities whose existence in this world is as God's partner in cultivating, utilizing and preserving the universe.

The interpretation of Iqbal's thoughts above shows that as a Muslim thinker, Iqbal's ideas about the relationship among humans, nature and God are very relevant to the context of Sustainable Development. This also confirms that Islamic science is actually always up to date for study, and its ethical principles continue to inspire the development and application of science.

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