

A Study on Mohammad Iqbal with Reference to His Political Thought

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Abstract:

Iqbal's early life was driven so strongly by his antipathy for British imperialism that he failed to fully analyse the actual consequences of nationalist thought. At a period when British imperialism and Western ideologies were sweeping through the Eastern countries like a spell, Iqbal, too, criticised modern democracy and highlighted all its flaws. But Iqbal's critique was not directed against democracy per se, but rather at its flaws. In this article an attempt has been made to study the socio political philosophy of Mohammad Iqbal. It also discusses the ideas of Mohammad Iqbal on the Historic Propagation of Islam through Peaceful Measures.

Introduction:

Iqbal was born in 1873 in Sialkot in British India to devout parents who imparted Islamic education to him at an early age. For his secondary education he attended both an Islamic school as well as a missionary school imparting English education on British lines. For his graduation, he went to Government College Lahore where, after obtaining his degree in Philosophy, English Literature and Arabic in 1899, he was appointed as a lecturer in the Philosophy Department. During this time Iqbal also made a name for himself as a poet. In 1904 he composed Taranae-Hind, popularly known by its first lines saare jahan se achcha, which carried a message of love for Hindustan and its people, united beyond religious identities. The song is sung to this day in India as a popular nationalist composition. In 1905, Iqbal went to Europe for further studies. He obtained a degree in Law from Trinity College, Cambridge and a PhD degree from Munich University. After returning to India in 1908, subsequently Iqbal left his teaching career and started practicing law in Lahore, the city where he spent his life. Soon he became well known as a poet and thinker in the sub-continent. In Europe Iqbal was introduced to the ideas of leading western philosophers as well as to influential contemporary Islamic thinkers. It was in Europe that Allama Iqbal began to ponder methodically on civilisational questions. Although he was profoundly influenced by western philosophers like Nietzsche and Bergson, he began to develop a critique of dominant western political and cultural forms. Most notably, he could see the divisive nature of national identities. Iqbal saw a solution to divisions produced by nations and moral dilemmas generated by modernity in Islamic ideas of universal brotherhood and ethics.

In contemporary India and Pakistan Iqbal is often portrayed as the spiritual father of Pakistan. Iqbal was associated with a host of Muslim organisations including the All India Muslim League till his death in 1938. It was at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930 that in his presidential address Iqbal outlined his idea of a political framework to ensure welfare of Muslims. In his speech he envisioned an autonomous state along Islamic lines in the north-west of India. Usually, this vision is held to be the birth of the idea of Pakistan. Yet, for Iqbal such a state was desirable not because of his hatred of other religions

in the subcontinent, nor for his love for a separate nation, but because he believed that an Islamic polity and society could lead to fullest development of man and eventually to universal brotherhood, as against the western political ideas which divide people along national lines. Scholars have tended to see Iqbal variously as an 'Islamist,' 'a reformer,' and a 'third world nationalist.'

Objectives: The present study has been undertaken for the following reasons-

- ✓ To study the Socio-Political Philosophy of Mohammad Iqbal
- ✓ To study Iqbal's ideas on the Historic Propagation of Islam through Peaceful Measures.

Significance of the Study: Even now, Muhammad Iqbal is regarded as one of the most influential Muslims in history. Understanding the development of the concept of nationalism as a political ideal in twentieth-century colonial India, Iqbal's life and ideas remain of paramount importance. Because of the time he lived in and the ideas he reacted to, he is now essential reading for anybody thinking deeply about issues of faith, identity, and government. Images of peace and mutual regard in his writings made them very popular.

Socio- Political Philosophy of Iqbal:

Humanity and Culture A society is a group of people who have come together to form a cohesive unit. The individual components of a living organism are inseparable from the total. In a same vein, the person and society cannot exist independently. As a social creature, man needs other people to survive. Humans cannot flourish as individuals apart from social interaction. Only in a community can an individual fully develop to his potential. It wasn't hyperbolic to suggest that society liberates man by forcing him to conform to its norms. A man's sense of self is enriched by the history, tradition, and future accomplishments of the society in which he participates. The person is a microcosm of society's variety, and society's diversity is manifest in the individual (Bhatti, Anil ,28 June 2006)..

The person and his society, in Iqbal's view, are mirror images of one another. In his two Persian books, *Asrar-i-Khudi* (The Secrets of Self) and *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness), he acknowledges the value of both individuals and communities. while the former is concerned with guiding the person in respect to his society, the latter is concerned with guiding the individual in reference to the philosophy of society. Iqbal examines the interdependence of the individual and the collective cultural life of a society in *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi*. Human life, motion, and existence all take place inside this civilization. In other words, social support is essential for human beings at every stage of life. Alone, man is weak and powerless; his energies are scattered and his aims narrow, diffused and indefinite. According to Iqbal, "it is the active and living membership of vital community that confers on him a sense of power and makes him conscious of great collective purposes which deepen and widen the scope for the growth of his individual self".

Nationalism and Iqbal Iqbal's thought on the issue of nationalism has ranged from his flexible view of nationalism to a critically hard one, especially when it came to European experience of nationalism. In his views "the idea of nationality is certainly a healthy factor in the growth of communities. But it is apt to be exaggerated, and when exaggerated it has a tendency to kill the broad human elements in art and literature."⁴ Iqbal propounded the idea of religious nationalism. He seems to be well aware of the inherent tension between Islam and secular nationalism in the present day. 'Islamic nationalism' is a theoretically

problematic concept. According to Iqbal, Islam is global and hence does not take into account variations in race or location. In contrast, nationalism is rooted in the 'specific' conditions of contemporary European history and undermines the groundwork of universalism. He reveals three fundamental reasons for his rejection of nationalism:

1. It keeps man rooted to the ground and blocks his path to enlightenment. The gratification of base instincts is not the end goal of the human race. A great soul like his should not waste its time licking dirt. A ideology that roots man in one place stymies his development as a spiritual being.
2. It goes against the larger humanitarian ideal that Islam promotes for humanity. It creates barriers between people based on their skin colour, language, or country of origin. As a result, unhealthy competition arises between groups of people from different countries who are all trying to prove themselves better. It gives rise to deceptive and heartless ideas like Hitler's Fascism, which justified the Holocaust against the Jews on the grounds that the Aryan race was superior to all others.
3. The conviction that one country has the right to dominate another, or even destroy it, is a direct result of nationalist ideology (3). War for the purpose of enslaving such races is justifiable, according to Aristotle's Politics (Book 1), since the barbarians (the non-Greeks) were formed by nature for that purpose. Back in their heyday, the Jews likewise reasoned that any offence against a Gentile might be excused. Hitler's book My Struggle has similar thoughts. The core of his ideology is "Germany above all," with the German people being accorded special status as a result of their Aryan ancestry. The British Imperialists shared this view, seeing people of colour as 'the White man's burden.

Iqbal's view on Democracy Democracy is a political ideal according to which the sovereignty of a state, or a government should be in the hands of its people. Perhaps, this is why democracy as a political system was defined by a great democrat, Abraham Lincoln in these words: "Democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people" (Muhammad Iqbal, 1916)

Throughout his writings, Iqbal argues that democracy and equality represent the purest forms of Islam. Iqbal was against the idea that monarchs had God-given authority. The Persian Islamic notion of zill-i-Ilahi, in which the emperor is considered as the 'shadow of God,' was rejected in favour of the practises of English monarchs as models to follow. The political systems of aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and anarchy were not included in Iqbal's comparison of monarchy. By going beyond Iqbal's words and understanding his ethos on our own, we conclude that Iqbal's preferred form of governance was neither monarchy or democracy but rather platonic timocracy. As opposed to those below them, like the oligarchs, who are motivated by personal interests and profit, and as opposed to the democrats, who are motivated by hedonism, timocracy refers to the rule of the brave, who are distinguished neither by supreme knowledge (as in the case of the philosopher king) nor by adherence to the original principles (as in the case of the aristocrats), but by valour and honour. (Muhammad Iqbal, 1908)

Iqbal's main beef with Western democracies was that they treated people like widgets instead than ends in and of themselves. He was uninterested in this facet of Western democracy. Iqbal argues that when democracy fails to foster the appropriate kind of leadership, it turns into a restrictive influence that stunts people's development as unique individuals and limits their freedom. It's little better than a random headcount, and it makes political knowledge and justice into nothing more than functions of a majority vote. He sees the primary problem with democracies as counting votes rather than weighing citizens.

Iqbal's Views on the Historic Propagation of Islam through Peaceful Measures:

Iqbal was a firm believer that Islam was propagated by nonviolent means since it is a religion of peace. If Muslim countries went to war with one other, the political unity of Islam would crumble, and if Muslims rose up against the central ideals of Islam, the religious solidarity would disappear. All of the Prophet's conflicts were seen as defensive measures in his eyes. Iqbal said emphatically: Islam is a religion that entails a state of conflict. Now, it's undeniable that war is a manifestation of a nation's vitality; a country that can't fight won't be able to withstand the pressure and stress of selective competition, which is a necessary condition for the advancement of humanity. While defensive war is sanctioned, the notion of aggressive war against non-believers is explicitly forbidden by the Quran. Quranic verses are as follows:

“Summon them to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and kindly warning; dispute them in the kindest manner. Say to those who have been given the book and to the ignorant: _Do you accept Islam? Then, if they accept Islam they are guided aright: but if they turn away then thy duty is only preaching; and God's eye is on His servants.l”

He further gave examples from Prophet's life in confirmation of his argument.

“All the wars undertaken during the life-time of the Prophet were defensive. His war against the Roman Empire in 628A.D. began by a fatal breach of international law on the part of the Government at Constantinople who killed the innocent Arab envoy sent to their court. Even in defensive wars he forbids wanton cruelty to the vanquished.....”

Moreover Iqbal justly maintained that Islamic history demonstrated that the growth of Islam is under no circumstances linked to the victories of its wars.

“... The history of Islam tells us that the expansion of Islam as a religion is in no way related to the political power of its followers. The greatest spiritual conquests of Islam were made during the days of our political decrepitude. When the rude barbarians of Mangolia drowned in blood the civilization of Baghdad in 1258 A.D., when the Muslim power fell in Spain and the followers of Islam were mercilessly killed or driven out of Cordova by Ferdinand in 1236, Islam had just secured a footing in Sumatra and was about to work the peaceful conversion of the Malay Archipelago.”

Iqbal further argued through Professor Arnold's point that Islam attained its luminous conquests when the political degradation arouse in Islamic history. Two of them, according to Professor Arnold, were the Seljuk Turks in eleventh and the Mongols in thirteenth century.

Islam in the Light of Modern Knowledge

Iqbal lived in times when various Islamic scholars and clerics were developing ideas of Islam in the light of the challenge posed by western knowledge systems and institutions. The idea of God and religion had been seriously challenged in the western world. Through development of science, the basis of the world seemed to be material evolution rather than divine intervention. Enlightenment thought in Europe put man in the centre of human development. It was recognised that it was the genius of man who created art, literature, wars, society, civilization etc. Western societies were not only beginning to see religion as a personal matter, but were also losing going through a crisis of faith. Christianity had lost its hold as the religion of the masses. Institutions and societies were being organised in a manner which put individual at the centre rather than religion. Rights and freedom of the individual was what mattered above all.

Iqbal belonged to the set of intellectuals who argued that Islam contained not only the fundamentals of personal belief and conduct but also the principles of governance and polity. In his book Reconstruction of Islamic Thought Iqbal sought to establish that the Holy Quran recognised the empirical realm of

experience to which scientific knowledge belonged, thus a scientific attitude based on perception of things outside is very much legitimate in Islam. In addition, the Quran revealed another realm of experience which lies within the individual. Spiritual or mystical experience is as real as empirical experience. While most other religions concern themselves with the former, Islam recognises and concerns both these realms of experience according to Iqbal.

Conclusion: From his religious perspective, Iqbal draws inspiration for his social and political writings. Closer inspection, however, reveals that he was motivated to begin his battle of waking Muslims because of their appalling socioeconomic situations. He did this by investigating the mental and cultural roots of their despair. He addresses the former since it is a direct cause of the latter, and he makes a diagnosis at the level of ideas that, if corrected, would lift the Indian Muslims out of their despair. 'Fixity or staticness' of the past is seen inferior to today's dynamic approach. Iqbal's inspiration was inductively provided by the community he served. Thus, the central tenet of his political ideology is the inevitable doom of the Muslim faith.

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