

# **IQBAL AS A PHILOSOPHER-POET**

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All great men live historically with us after they have ceased to live biologically: we share their thoughts and give to their life's work a setting in which it continues to fulfil the very tasks which they had set before themselves to accomplish. If we want to maintain the high resolve of being worthy successors of the great tradition that the Faith of Muhammad and the labour of those who have worked in the cause of its propagation and realisation have built for us to draw our inspiration from, we cannot do better than by maintaining a sense of our kinship and continuity with these mighty figures of the past, thereby consciously participating in the making of Muslim history and giving to it the impetus it needs for the progressive realisation of its cultural potential, and for the propagation of its liberating influence for the benefit of mankind at large.

And Iqbal is significant to us precisely because nobody has served more than he has the cause of Islam — he is, for us, the mouthpiece of Muslim destiny as it articulates itself in our own day. It is a measure of his greatness that he reflected in his poetry as even in his philosophy, an attitude of a mind that was typically Muslim; and he has succeeded, as no one has succeeded before him in the recent past, in imparting to our history that vital touch which has been responsible for invigorating and enlivening it, and in a highly significant sense, for giving to it the direction it needed for enabling the Muslims all over the world in general and of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent in particular, to fulfil their historical role of meeting the challenge that has come to them from the West. When the history of our times comes to be written by an impartial student of human affairs, I am sure it will be to the influence of Iqbal more than to any other single factor that he will attribute the awakening that the Muslims of India have experienced — an awakening which, in its turn, has been responsible for the very creation of the State of Pakistan itself. It is to his poetry that we owe the moral and intellectual

regeneration of the Mussalmans of the mid-twentieth century. If the best thing we can get out of any man is the sense of general enthusiasm that his life's work arouses in us, we will be well within our right to put it down to the credit of Iqbal the typical pride that we all take in our being Muslims, and we have reason to be grateful to him for his having so everlastingly enriched our cultural heritage by the powerful and magnificent creations of his poetic imagination and philosophic contemplation.

To my way of thought Iqbal is a triumphant missionary in the cause of Islam; he is a warrior in the cause of the political liberation of the Mussalmans of the Indo-Pakistan sub-Continent, and above all, he is that high priest of humanity who has incited us, in words that cannot be improved upon, to give to the world the best that the Religion of Islam has to offer.

There have been, to be sure, much greater figures in the total range of Muslim history than Iqbal; but, I submit, the supreme importance of his example for us is to be traced to the fact that he is so near to us in terms of time: he has articulated for us the fundamental spirit of Islam in the very vernacular of the age in which we live. For every cultivated and civilised man Iqbal's thought possesses an everlasting value, but to the Mussalmans in particular it conveys a kind of significance that is vastly more important — his poetry and his thought epitomise for them a 20th century manifesto of what Islam has to offer for the solution of those perplexing problems with which they are daily being confronted.

If it be true, as Doctor Martin Luther teaches us to believe, that the world is ruled by God through a few *heroes* and *pre-eminent persons*, we would like to find out the credentials by which the claim of these heroes and pre-eminent persons to rule the world can be recognised. And, therefore, the all-important question to answer is: who are these heroes and how shall we identify them? I suggest that it is only by the impact they and their teaching makes on History that we can discover who the *real* rulers of this world are.

And the whole human history, I submit, attests the truth of the thesis that "the mightiest of these ruling heroes are the princes of *intellect*, men who without sanction of diplomacy or force of arms, without the constraining power of law and police, exercise a defining and transforming influence upon the thought and feeling of many generations, men who may be said to be all the more powerful, the less power they have, but who seldom, perhaps never, ascend their throne during their life-time; their sway lasts long but begins late, often very late, especially when we leave out of account the influence which they exercise upon the individuals and consider the moment when that which filled their life begins to affect and mould the life of the *whole* peoples."<sup>1</sup> All strength is acquired by Man, thanks only to the forces of righteousness, and it is durable only on a moral basis. And nothing makes for moral outlook or for the dispensation of justice more than the gift of knowledge radiated by clarity of thought. He who sneers at the servant and prides himself on his brute strength is undermining his own authority to rule, to say nothing of the fact that he is running counter to the total current of Human History and plotting against the very life of mankind.

And for a grateful Nation that is Pakistan, Iqbal is the Hero — and it is he who continues to rule it. It is in this sense that he continues to live. The moment we awaken to a consciousness of the freely exercised creative power which is embedded, embalmed and treasured in his verse we cross a definite boundary of existence and begin to live a larger life. Endowed with such a consciousness a man becomes a decisive force in History, and indeed a new element in the Cosmos. It is in this sense that Schiller has to be understood when he said, "*Nature* has formed *creatures* only, but *art* has made *men*." Schiller goes on further to explain the point of this aphorism as follows:

"Nature does not make a better beginning with man than with other works; She acts for him while he cannot yet act for himself as a free intelligent being. But what precisely makes him a man is the fact that he

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<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, H.C., *Foundations of Nineteenth Century*, p. 3.

does not stand still as mere Nature made him, but is endowed with the capacity of retracing with the aid of Reason the steps which Nature anticipated with him, of transforming the work of Necessity into a work of his free choice and of raising the physical Necessity to a moral one."

This conflict between Man and Nature is the never-ending refrain of Occidental Philosophy and there is a sense in which it is permissible to look at the relationship between the two in the way Schiller looks at it. But Islam has taught us to transcend the grammar of this encounter and who has helped us' to understand the point of the Qur'anic Teaching on this subject more than Iqbal himself?

Commenting on the well-known line in the Qur'an that the Soul proceedeth from my Lord's *Amr*,<sup>2</sup> (which he translates as "Command") Iqbal goes on to point out:

"In order to understand the meaning of the word 'Amr', we must remember the distinction which the Qur'an draws between 'Amr' and 'Khalq'. Pringle-Pattison deplors that the English language possesses only one word — 'creation' — to express the relation of God and the Universe of extension on the one hand, and the relation of God and the human ego on the other. The Arabic language, however, is more fortunate in this respect. It has two words 'Khalq' and 'Amr' to express the two ways in which the creative activity of God reveals itself to us. 'Khalq' is creation; 'Arne is direction. As the Qur'an says: 'To Him belong creation and direction.' The verse quoted above means that the essential nature of the soul is directive, as it proceeds from the directive energy of God; though we do not know how Divine 'Amr' functions as ego-unities. The personal pronoun used in the expression *Rabbi* (My Lord) throws further light on the nature and behaviour of the ego. It is meant to suggest that the soul must be taken as something individual and specific, with all the variations in the range, balance, and

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Qur'an: xvii:85.

effectiveness of its unity. 'Every man acteth after his own manner: but your Lord well knoweth who is best guided in his path.' (xvii:84). Thus my real personality is not a thing, it is an act. My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to one another, and held together by the unity of a directive purpose. My whole reality lies in my directive attitude. You cannot perceive me like a thing in space, or a set of experiences in temporal order; you must interpret, understand and appreciate me in my judgments, in my will-attitudes, aims, and aspiration."

The Qur'an thus does not view Nature and Man in opposition to each other but takes them merely as representing different aspects of one and the same Divine Will.

I do not, however, agree that the word *Amr* means the same thing as 'command' — for to say that would mean that Nature does not come to be or exist in obedience to God's command. The world of *Amr* in my opinion is the world of significance, of meaning; and represents from man's point of view the inward movement of God's creative power. What issues forth as a result of God's *command* "Be" is both 'creation' and 'significance' — only for man, such is the mechanism of his perception, the process acquires a dual complexion with the result that his intellect separates the indivisible creative process into two: (a) the world of matter, of Necessity, on the one hand and (b) the world of Spirit and of Freedom, on the other. In order that Man should escape this mode of viewing Reality he has to become more *conscious* of the true ground of his being, and then it is that he escapes the law of mechanical necessity which rules Nature and gets anchored in the world of Spirit and of Freedom. Regarded in the abstract, Man is both Nature and Spirit — but it depends on him *where* he wants to take roots. That is where his fundamental Freedom is to be found!

(II)

**His Art and Poetry**

There is a general belief prevalent even with those who ought to know better, *viz.*, that *Islam does not set much value on art in general and poetry in particular*. One fails to understand the reasons that have contributed to the maintenance of this crude belief. God describes Himself in the Qur'an as an Artist (*Mussawir*) and there is a general invitation extended to every man to incarnate in himself the attributes of God. It is true that in the *Surah* of the Qur'an which is entitled "*The Poets*"<sup>3</sup>, the vocation of a poet has been sharply contrasted with the one pursued by the Prophet. But this emphasis on discrimination was necessary in view of the fact that, by and large, there does exist a type of poetry which is not better than an irresponsible utterance, and, what is more, the life of the poet does not as a rule minister to the ideal of righteousness. There was the general charge urged against the Prophet by those who were the detractors from his mission that he was no better than a poet and that the verses of the Qur'an had no higher value than that which could be predicated of the verses of an ordinary poet. This charge had therefore to be expressly repudiated by the Qur'an, because decidedly the role of the Prophet is vastly different from that of a poet and it stands to be considered from another perspective altogether.

It was the role of the Prophet (a) to *purify* his people, (b) to apprise them of their *destiny*; and (c) to teach them *Hikmat* or philosophy: by the very example he gave in his own personal life his followers were expected to practise a life of piety and righteousness. Much of the message of the Qur'an was calculated to secure a total transformation of the life of those who came under its influence. All this is understandable-as also the insistence of the Qur'an that the mission of the Prophet had to be carefully distinguished from that of a poet. But from this it cannot be argued that poetry has no place in the scheme of things and that deliverances of poetic consciousness are to be roundly denounced by all and sundry as being arbitrary and irrelevant. The whole Muslim tradition runs counter to this type of thinking and the cultural

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<sup>3</sup> AI-Qur'an, *Surah XXVI*.

history of Islam presents to us poetry of a very high order written by poets were also men of the very highest calibre.

Poets are the law-givers of the world: they are the men who are endowed with a sort of sixth sense by reason of which they are able to see more into the nature of things. They are gifted with what we call "vision". They, by their utterances, have lubricated the rough gears of life and have saved society from the wasteful friction which is involved in its members living unaesthetic lives. It is for this reason that the Arabs used to celebrate only *two important events in the life of the nation*: one of these was the *birth of a swift horse* and the other, the *birth of a poet*. There is also the well-known Arab saying which points out that the best place for man is the saddle of a swift horse and best friend for man is the book. There appears to be something common which had linked up the two symbols, that of the horse and the poet, in the minds of the Arabs: the one enabled them to cover enormous distances in the shortest possible time and the other enabled them, in their imagination at least, to glance from Earth to Heaven and Heaven to Earth and thus cover the entire range of human experience in relation to the boundless universe in which our lives are cast.

Human history shows to us the supreme importance of the role which men of vision play in the lives of nations: people are known to have perished merely because no men of vision or imagination came to live amongst them. There is a saying of the Prophet which shows that it is the tongues of the poets that furnish to us the keys with which we are to unlock the secret treasures that are to be found in the Universe.

It is necessary to point out that Islam has been responsible for the evolution of the art of poetry along lines that are radically different from those that were pursued before its advent. There was no such thing as romantic poetry, or romantic music or romantic literature before the birth of Islam. All art forms of antiquity were retained by Muslim poets but with them their application had to subserve other purposes. Iqbal's Poetry, for

instance, represents the high-water mark of the reach of this evolution. He is essentially a poet of the idea in the sense that he uses the gift of poetry in the service of setting forth a view of Man and his place in the scheme of things, that is, as a means for articulating those fundamental and basic truths without which a man cannot feel at home in this universe. It is for this reason that some have found it difficult to draw a line where Iqbal as a poet ends and where Iqbal as a philosopher begins. But this mode of regarding Iqbal's work, I submit, is open to the objection that no such distinction is at all possible in his case.

It is sufficient to emphasise that Iqbal is essentially a poet of another dimension: his essential technique seems to be to fall in love with the idea that appeals to him and then to let that idea issue forth from the profoundest depth of his being. The result is that in the process the expression of that idea gets highly charged with an emotional halo and splendour. In Iqbal's poetry one encounters ideas that are by and large familiar to us: some ideas are taken from the Qur'an, others from Rumi and yet some others from German philosophers of the 19th century. But nevertheless while we read about these ideas in the poetry of Iqbal we are moved by them, and, as if for the first time, begin to notice how powerful their appeal can be. It is not so much the love of the sunset and the dawn, of the seasons, of the flowers or any other tangible object which seems to possess the soul of Iqbal: his poetic fancy seems to be specially designed to fall in love with intangible entities — the ideas, ideals, philosophic truths and convictions. He lets them be reborn in his poetic consciousness before they are articulated poetically. The result of this is the tremendous appeal which the thought-content of his poetry makes upon the mind of a sensitive reader. What is original with Iqbal is not the ideational-content of his poetry — but the transformation it undergoes as a result of its orientation in his being. That is why, although on logical analysis his poetry could be ranked as "Literature of information", in reality it is "Literature of power".

But it is not the function of poetry merely to give to the ideas it articulates the emotional colouring by reason of which the minds of men may be moved: it is also its office to impart to the expression thus attempted a quality of, what Robert Lynd has called, "memorableness". It is far more easy to *remember* the verses that a poet writes than a statement of the same idea contained in prose, no matter how very elegantly it may have been set forth therein. The reason of this is that the general device of arranging words in rhythmic cadences and rhyme-endings, fastens the content of poetry in a scaffolding which gives to it the appearance of being a compact whole. Our power of recall is greatly assisted if what we are to recall is a significant whole and chimes with the rhythm of our inward being.

Apart from the unusual architectonics inherent in the poetical rendering of the content of the ideas, Iqbal may be regarded as being essentially a transcendental poet from yet another perspective. The scale on which he attempts the poetical theme is so cosmically great that the sympathetic reader for a time at least is able to escape the grip of his narrower consciousness and thus begins to live in a world of the objective and universal truth. Iqbal as a poet has not only the *wealth of expression* and the *depth of feeling*, he has also the *breadth of vision*. When he sings he remains of Earth, earthy no doubt; but when he sings, he also soars: his poetry helps you to follow him in his flights heavenward. He enables you to dart in imagination from one end of the universe to another: he helps you to track down the distant stars and encounter them while they are engaged in careering across their orbital paths during the course of their cosmic hurrying. And when he enters into a dialogue with the angels and the spirits of the immortal figures who have left their marks on our history, he lets you live for a moment at least upon a different plane altogether. And yet all the while you are with Iqbal in this sense, he lets you feel *earnest* about everything. Instead of dulling the keen edge of your consciousness, he sharpens it so that it can now be used by you as an effective weapon with which to fight those forces of evil and discord which are constantly at war with the harmonies of human life.

### Iqbal the Philosopher

As to Iqbal as a *philosopher*, there is not much that I need say. Such is the equipment of my mind that I understand him far more in his role as a philosopher than as a poet, and it would suffice for a general observation if I were to state about him what could with equal justification be observed about the philosophy of Goethe: his philosophical convictions are not the *result* of any metaphysical meditations on the nature of human experience or the offsprings of his power of rational comprehension of the ground of universe but, so at least it seems to me, his convictions seem to have come to him from a source which is alien to his consciousness. In fact, he gets the philosophical truths ready-made from a source of which he has no understanding; but having got them, he is prepared to look at them *philosophically* and so give to them a *local habitation and a name*. Iqbal is perpetually receiving gifts in the shape of ideas from a source of which he has no awareness, but having received them he is able to assign to them their logical values in the general scheme of a philosophical perspective. That is why he remains so loyal to the cultural tradition in which he has been steeped. With him intellect is not in rebellion against his Extra-Rational convictions: it plays not a *sovereign* but merely a subordinate role in his life. His philosophic outlook has thus been conditioned by the limits of his poetical consciousness. Philosophy with him is not an instrument of discovery of truth but merely of ordering experience, a mode of organising his ideas, of pigeon-holing them, of cataloguing them. He loves order and harmony and is all the time busy in arranging the various toys that he has received as gifts from higher powers in the shape of great ideas. Fundamentally, unless I am mistaken, he is not possessed of philosophic consciousness at all — at any rate with him philosophical consciousness is not a primary phenomenon.

He has a sure instinct for knowing the philosophical truth when he encounters it — but this is with him an innate and not a cultural phenomenon. In my opinion he remains a poet through and through, but occasionally he is seen employing the philosophical method in defining the logical relationships between several insights and intuitions with which he has been favoured by higher powers.

The foregoing opinion of mine may sound somewhat strange, but from my point of view, its strangeness seems to lie in the fact that it is so sound. As I see it, the fundamental difference between poetic consciousness and the philosophic consciousness may be explained analogically thus: a poet is essentially a *feminine* spirit in that he can create only under an alien stimulus — even as the woman can create only under the fecundating influence of her male partner. The greatness and the grandeur of a poetical genius consists in his being able to serve in a spirit of "wise-passiveness" as a vehicle for the communication of that which he himself does not *understand*. Poetic consciousness in the being of Man, functionally considered, may be compared with a telephone wire through which it is somebody else who is to speak. The *wire* has no message to give; it is only a means for the articulation of another man's voice. This is what is meant by saying that a poet must await the advent of the moment of inspiration when he can create. The philosopher, on the other hand, is a masculine spirit and as the ground of his creativity is in his own being, all the time he is embedded in a layer of consciousness where *nothing is allowed to intrude unless it can be rationally comprehended*. In many ways, therefore, the *reach* of a philosophic consciousness is more limited, for the philosopher by the nature of his mission is pledged to labour under the *feeble light of human knowledge*, which knowledge, as Santayana has described it, is after all only "a torch of a smoky pine which lights but one step ahead".

The dignity and importance of philosophic consciousness, from the point of view of History, consists in its *capacity* for being able to transfer faithfully its findings for the benefit of all. What is philosophically discovered

is capable of being realistically, not merely symbolically, communicated in the oral word and its record can be preserved in a written word for all time to come. The poetic consciousness transfigures reality, whereas the philosophic consciousness

is qualified only to interpret objectively facts of human experience in order that enlightened action can be designed: thus it is that it seems as though deliverances of philosophical consciousness were the modern substitutes for the system of *Revealed Truth*: in our day, it is philosophy that furnishes the guidance which it was one time the function of Revealed Truth to provide. And so the Prophet was asked to teach his followers Hikmat — Philosophy. But he was also asked to first purify them and teach them their Destiny. This is because unless a man is inwardly pure and knows his destiny he cannot very well apply knowledge to the end that he may live well and fruitfully on Earth. For Islam, purity is the first step to spiritual life: with us cleanliness is not next to Godliness — it comes before Godliness can itself become possible. That is why the old commentators of the Qur'an prefaced the Book with the warning "Except that one is pure no one can touch (that is understand) the Book". (*La yamussubu ill al mutabhoon*).

(IV)

### **On Ijtihad**

It now remains for me to refer to the great service that Iqbal has rendered to the world of Islam by the way in which he has taught us to look on *Ijtihad* as the source of Muslim law. So very fundamental is this concept of *Ijtihad* that its proper comprehension by the world of Islam today alone will ensure its survival and enable it to meet the challenge that has come to it in the name of modernity, from the West. The question is how is the law of Islam to be adjusted to the conditions of a fast changing society. What I propose to do is not merely to paraphrase the answer that Iqbal made to this question but also to draw some of the deductions that inevitably seem to follow from his formulation of the doctrine of *Ijtihad*, deductions which, in

my submission, must be drawn and the principle to be deduced therefrom to be applied to redeem the Law of Islam from that creeping paralysis that has overtaken it and has virtually made it immobile and stationary. If it be true that the immortality of a great thinker consists precisely in the posthumous influence which his ideas have on the life of mankind, it must follow that the historical effectualness of the teaching of a great mind must transcend the narrower frame-work in which that teaching was applied by it to tackle the problems as they presented themselves to it. It is in this sense that I propose, in the general scheme of my present undertaking, to draw as clear a picture as I can, of what the Law of Islam would be today if the insight which Iqbal had in regard to *Ijtihad* (which he characterised as the principle of movement in the structure of Islam), be applied to it.

The religious impulse which lies at the back of all Muslim institutions stems from the recognition of the real relationship of man to God; this relationship according to the Qur'an is one of absolute and unconditional obedience of Man to the will of God to such an extent that everything that a man thinks, feels, or does ought to be an aspect of that obedience. No wonder the name of our religion is "Islam" which means submission to the Will of God Who is absolute and all-powerful and with whom no other power shares his sovereignty. This relationship of God to Man may also be likened to the relationship of the General to his soldier; and in fact, one of the greatest of the 20th century philosophers has so viewed it. This is what Keyserling writes in *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* about the relationship which man has with God, according to the tenets of Islam. He says: Islam is the religion of absolute submission. What Schleiermacher has described as the nature of all religiosity does in fact define that of the Mussalman. He feels himself to be at all times in the absolute power of his divine Master, and, moreover, in his personal power, not in that of his ministers and servants; he always stands face to face with Him. This conditions the democratic quality of Islam.....When the faithful perform their prayers at fixed hours in the mosque, kneeling there line upon line, when they all go through the same

gestures simultaneously, this is not done, as in the case of Hinduism, as a means to self-realisation, but it is done in the spirit in which a Prussian soldier files past his Emperor. This fundamentally military attitude explains all the intrinsic advantages of a Mussalman.

But having paid that tribute to Islam, Keyserling goes on to add, as though it were an inevitable deduction, the following:

"It also explains simultaneously his fundamental failings: his lack of progressiveness, his inadaptability, his lack of inventive power. The soldier only has to obey his orders; the rest is Allah's business."

I am afraid Keyserling cannot very well be blamed for the view he takes of the fundamental failings of the Muslim: *viz.*, his lack of progressiveness, his inadaptability. After all, it meant some courage even for a man of the fame and name of Iqbal to be able to expound the Doctrine of *Ijtihad* as constituting the principle of movement in the structure of Islam. While doing so even he could not help complaining of the rigorous conservation of our Doctors of the Law. He had, however, no doubt "that a deeper study of the enormous legal literature of Islam is sure to rid the modern critic of the superficial opinion that the Law of Islam is stationary and is incapable of development."

It is necessary that we ought to look at this Iqbalian formulation of the "Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam" somewhat more closely.

Obedience to the Will of God is possible in principle, provided *we know what that Will has ordained*. During the life time of the Prophet it was he who was the channel of communication between God and man, and the revelation that he received is contained in the Qur'an, and the Mussalmans believe that the revelation has been preserved in as pure a form as it was received, and till the very end of time its text will remain unadulterated and uninterpolated. Supplementing the word of the Qur'an are the traditions of the Prophet more generically known as the *Sunnah* of the Prophet — the

traditions by themselves being but evidence of that *Sunnah*. These two sources of law exist for every Muslim and it is his duty to strive to discover for himself what they can mean to him in relation to any action that he may be called upon to take with a view to ordering his individual and collective life in the society of which he is a member. In themselves these two sources are incapable of any automatic expansion and their utility to man is available precisely to the extent to which he is prepared to exert his thinking faculties to discover what they can *mean* to him in order that he be able to design enlightened action to deal with environmental emergencies posed by the ever-changing conditions of society in which his lot is cast.

But a far more important idea is to appreciate the importance of the conception of the finality of Prophethood in the context of the foregoing ideas. No Prophet will ever come to man after Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), and this is so because the system of Revealed Truth is complete in the Qur'an and it now lies with man to realise that Truth in his own being and so apply its light to discover for himself what he is to do in order to fulfil his mission on Earth. It is in the comprehension of this idea that the writings of Iqbal are of immense assistance to the student of Islam.

We would, in the first place, do well to recall what Iqbal said in his lecture on "*The Spirit of Muslim Culture*" in regard to the necessity of revealed source of Truth during the "minority of mankind". In his words:

"A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which 'unitary experience' tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunity of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life. In his personality the finite centre of life sinks into his own infinite depth only to spring up again, with fresh vigour to destroy the old, and to disclose the new directions of life . . . . Now during the minority of mankind psychic energy develops what I call prophetic consciousness — a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready-made judgments, choices, and ways of action. With the birth of

reason and critical faculty, however, life in its own interest, inhibits the formation and growth of non-rational modes of consciousness through which psychic energy flowed at an earlier stage of human evolution."

Having pointed out the reason why we ought to regard revelation as the basis of Truth, Iqbal proceeds further to show why, after mankind crossed the age of minority, it was no longer possible to admit the relevance of revelation as a source of further guidance for Man. He points out that the Prophet of Islam represents in his person the bridge between the System of Revealed Truth and the gospel of self-realization of that Truth. In his words:

"Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam, as I hope to be able presently to prove to your satisfaction, is the birth of inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that in order to achieve full self-consciousness man must finally be thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Quran, and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality."

Not only are the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* the two sources admissible *to us for our* knowing *what* the Will of God is, but since no Prophet will come after Mohammed these remain for us the only sources to fall back upon.

(V)

**Past and Present**

That being the case the question that arises is: How are we to progress and face the challenge of the changing conditions of society if we are not to fall back upon our capacities for forming independent judgment on legal questions?

In the theory of our jurisprudence, it is the office of the *Mujtahid* to apply the principles of private and public conduct discernible by him in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, and so work out the rules of conduct which may then be enjoined by the State Authority to be obeyed by those who are members of that Society. I have elsewhere commented upon the nature and scope of this duty of the *Mujtahid* and have suggested that the value of the precedents which have come down to us from the practices of the early statesmen of Islam has to be assessed in the light of our knowledge as to the kind of limitations under which they came to evolve and apply them to the task of securing the day-to-day governance of the territory which fell into their prowess to administer.<sup>4</sup>

It would appear that the approach of the early administrators of Islam to the problems of state-craft was conditioned by two main factors:-

(a) All around the community of the believers lay, scattered about, organised religious groups like those of the Jews and the Christians and other 'non-believers' groups who, taken in their totality, were viewed by the early administrators of Islam as constituting a grave source of danger to the continued existence of the infant Muslim community under their care. The Muslim society was in a state of nascent growth, and was surrounded on all sides by religious communities that could not conceivably have contemplated its existence with equanimity. There was a suppressed sense of indignation against the Prophet and his band of believers who had, by their crusade against idolators, questioned the very foundations of a form of society that pre-existed the advent of Islam: there were, on all sides, to be seen forces of hostility, threats of subversion — and all these had to be counteracted. Every

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<sup>4</sup> See Brohi, A. K., *Fundamental Law of Pakistan*, Karachi, pp. 731-798.

precautionary measure had, therefore, to be taken to fortify the frontiers of the territories in which the Muslim Administrators had undertaken to establish the law of God, and steps had to be taken to ensure that the Muslim community was not harassed or destroyed by the scheming villainies and machinations on the part of the non-believers. Seen in this light, many of the provisions of the covenants drawn up by the early statesmen of Islam between themselves and the non-Muslim communities could be appreciated as reflecting this anxiety on their part to secure, by all appropriate means, the stability of the growing community of believers and to safeguard it against all the possible assaults from the non-believers. It was thus, from the point of view of our early statesmen, a state of emergency that they had to deal with, and the code of political behaviour prescribed by them had reference to their understanding of the practical methods whereby that emergency could, under those circumstances, have been faced by them.

(b) That all the early administrators of Islam were profoundly convinced that the religion of Islam was bound, at not a very distant day, to girdle up the whole of the globe, thus encompassing within it at once the whole of humanity: they felt that until such time as the whole world actually came under the banner of Islam they could afford to wait: they therefore proceeded to make *ad hoc* and *interim* political arrangements to continue the administration of the countries that came under their authority — these arrangements were provisional and were to continue till such time as they felt free to devise ways and means of providing a well-considered framework of governance on a world-wide scale.

They had not, in short, the time to sit back and design a form of policy which would be in accord with the spirit of the teaching of Islam. The more so, when such a thing could not have been considered even as important: it has been hinted earlier that basically the Islamic teaching had much to do with the development of the individual character of the believers and less to do with the establishment of particular forms of government necessary for the administration of secular affairs. In fact, during the time of the first four

right-guided Caliphs there was such a rapid expansion of the world of Islam resulting from victories won by our warriors that the problems that their administration was confronted with were too numerous to have left any time with any of these Caliphs to give any thought to the problem of designing the machinery of the State in accordance with the teaching of their religion. After all they could afford to wait for the day when the spirit of Islam would capture and possess the being of all the inhabitants living on the earth, and in the meanwhile, carry on as best as they could the administration of public affairs. This attitude on their part is amply illustrated in the nature of the measures they improvised from time to time to carry on with commendable skill, imagination and courage the historical task that had fallen to their lot to tackle.

It would therefore be a misreading of the whole phase of the early history of Islam, if the forms of governance which were improvised by the Muslims during the thirty years intervening the death of the Prophet and the dastardly assassination of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam, are uprooted from their historical context and exhibited as though they grew up in a splendid isolation and then held aloft and characterised as models for being adopted in these times when the world has moved away from them in time by 1,300 years and has brought forth within itself an altogether different sort of economic-political cosmos for the modern man to adjust and adapt himself to. Our contemporary situation demands that we should apply our rational faculties for the purpose of designing action — and the improvisation of constitutional arrangements is just one of these actions and by no means any the more important than others — for regulating the life of society. It is only the indolent mind that would like to submit slavishly to the precedents of the past. The history of those first thirty years can be a source of in-spiration for us and can help us to reconstruct for ourselves the remarkable manner in which the early administration of Islam fulfilled their tasks — but to say that across these 1,300 years, the forms of government the early administrators of

Islam improvised continue to be relevant is, in my opinion, an attitude which cannot be defended upon the plain facts of history.

In the light of such rational powers as the Creator has endowed man with, it is his duty each time he comes to deal with it to look upon the world *de novo* and courageously assume the full responsibility for the handling of his own affairs, untrammelled by the consideration that those that had preceded him, by at least a time lag of 1,300 years, had solved their problems of statecraft in a manner radically different from the one which appeals to him as being relevant today.

Thus, upon a careful examination, the relationship of a Muslim to God turns out to be far more complex than Keyserling is wont to have us believe. Though a man is to be likened to a soldier who must unconditionally obey God's Will, there are matters in which a man is a law-giver also, that is, is himself a general — of course, the limit is that in laying down the law he cannot transcend the limits that have been imposed upon him by God's Law. But, then, it is here that the universality of Islam comes in, and may we not remind ourselves, in words quoted by Iqbal himself from that living Orientalist Mr. Horten, 'Professor of Semitic Philosophy, University of Bonn, that "the spirit of Islam is so broad that it is practically boundless. With the exception of atheistic ideas 'alone, it has assimilated all the attainable ideas of surrounding peoples and given them its peculiar direction of development."

It is in this sense that Islam as a spiritual force is capable of vivifying, fertilising all earthly formations and of raising them, of transforming them into becoming the expression of the Divine. This it achieves because of its universality, because of the catholicity of its outlook, because of its lack of specific content. It is for this reason again that it is Islam that each time has saved the people professing its faith from total decline and degeneration.

When voices of scepticism and cynicism are being heard all around, coming from those who are as little qualified to instruct us upon matters that we have been considering as is a pet kitten qualified to talk about tariff reform, it is heartening to know that we are not alone and that Iqbal is still with us — and his example to be conceived in the image of a light-house that shows the way to every weather-beaten, tempest-tossed, ship-wrecked mariner who is engaged in negotiating the boundless world of Muslim Thought and belief; and so long as we continue to take legitimate pride in the fact that we are fellow-workers with Iqbal in the very cause for which he laboured, we will not go under — this is so because, in the wise words of Hafiz:

بر گز نہ میرد آنکہ دلش زنده شد بعشق

ثبت است بر جریده عالم دوام ما

I have often for hours stood silently by the shrine in Lahore where the earthly remains of Iqbal lie buried under the cover of a grave and have mused within myself on the meaning of his Mission — and have invariably chanted those lovely lines of that immortal sonnet of *Blanco White* entitled "Night", as they for me seem to convey the secret of the darkness of earthly life which Iqbal too in his own way all through his life attempted to dispel:

Mysterious Night ! when our first parent knew

Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,

Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,

This glorious canopy of light and blue ?

Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,

Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,

*Hesperus* with the host of heaven came,

And lo ! Creation widened in man's view.

Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed

Within thy beams, O Sun ! or who could find,

Whilst flow'r and leaf and insect stood revealed,

That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!

Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife ?

If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life ?