

IQBAL AND INTERNATIONALISM

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Iqbal drank deep at the fountain of Islamic learning and its eternal source, the Holy Qur'an. His thoughts and philosophy were deeply influenced by the teachings of the Qur'an. The fundamental teaching of Islam is *tawhid* or unity of God. "Islam emphasised the unity of God-head in a manner which has rarely been equalled by any other religion. "There is no God but God' proclaims Islam. It has carried this urge for the unity of God so far as to deny that there is any religion but one. Each country and each age had its own prophet. Each prophet preached to his own people in his own language. The language, the people and the period may be different, but the religion was the same in every case. Islam has, therefore, repudiated the idea that an individual is the founder of any religious faith.

"Islam's claim to universality follows from this emphasis on the unity of God. It holds that, as a religion valid for all times, it must reveal the eternal nature of truth.

"Islam's emphasis on the unity of God was the basis of its scientific outlook. It was equally the foundation of its democratic temper. The universality of reason demands from all rational beings the same behaviour in the same circumstances. So far as men are rational, they are equal in the sight of God. There is no distinction between man and man on the plane of humanity."

Islam realised the concept of equality both in theory and practice. Even its worst enemies have been forced to admit that Islam broke down the barriers of colour and birth among Muslims. Not only in the formal act of worship but also in daily social intercourse, the darkest Nubian from the heart of Africa enjoys equality with the haughtiest of the Quraish or the most race-conscious of the blue-eyed and fair Aryan. Bernard Shaw held that the

real test of equality lies in inter-marriage. In formal worship, one can adopt an attitude of equality as one puts on ceremonial robes on formal occasions. Inter-marriage-ability is, however, a test which permits no subterfuge. The theory and practice of equality in Islam passed even this crucial test.

Reverence for the empirical fact is another reason for Islam's insistence on the equality of man in the eyes of God and society.

As already mentioned, Iqbal's philosophy of life and his conception of the individual and the community are based on Islam. The conception of life and universe as presented by the Holy Qur'an found expression in Iqbal's philosophy. Life is movement and strife as well as thought and contemplation. Power has greatest value in life but not such power as is devoid of any direction or objective. Rather, such power which is subservient to laws and has definite objective to the attainment of which it helps. This objective is the recognition of the dignity of humanity. Life progresses every day towards new objectives and aspirations and creates new values. It is the birth-right of man to unfold the secrets of nature and utilise its laws for his own benefit.

According to Iqbal the individual and the community build each other. The individual develops his ego and all its potentialities and then utilises them for building up the community. But such relationship cannot exist in a community based on class struggle and on privileges of race, colour or wealth. Only true realisation of the teachings of Islam based on the unity of God and equality of man, can ensure such a relationship most conducive to human welfare and progress.

Iqbal says, "Muslim society, with its remarkable homogeneity and inner unity, has grown to be what it is, under the pressure of the laws and institutions associated with the culture of Islam." Islam believes in a universal polity — a politico-religious system, or a social polity-based on fundamentals that were revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

According to Iqbal, the best social order is the Muslim. *Millat* based on the unity of God and equality of human beings. Iqbal was inspired by the vision of a world-wide Islamic State, not divided by territorial or racial considerations. The *millat* is a free and solid Muslim brotherhood, with *Ka'ba* as its spiritual centre, bound together by the love of Allah and devotion to the Prophet.

Man is a social being. He can only live in the society of his fellow men. The individual and the *millat* reflect each other. The individual is elevated through the *millat*, and the *millat* is organised through the individuals.

Allah is the real repository of sovereignty. His sovereignty extends to the entire universe, the whole humanity, and all organisations. Allah is the real source of religion, philosophy and law.

The object of Islam is to establish the fundamental unity of mankind on the basis of equality, liberty and fraternity. It is a message of human equality in social status and legal rights. The Islamic *Millat* is not therefore, circumscribed by geographical limits. Nationalism is foreign to Muslim genius. To a Muslim the entire world is his home, for it lies within the sovereignty of God. Islam bases the community of mankind on the belief in one God, and consequently on the belief of human brotherhood and fraternity as opposed to the idea of nationalism based on the accident of geographical situation, race, colour and language. The universal spirit of Islam means submission to the will of God and peace with fellow-men. Believing in one Supreme God a Muslim believes in the universal idea of fraternity and cannot confine himself to a particular territory or geographical boundary.

To Iqbal, Islam is a world system of living force which frees the outlook of man from racial, geographical and materialistic conceptions. Islam definitely rejects the claims of racial and geographical factors to order the loyalties of the Muslims. Territorial nationalism or aggressive patriotism is

not allowed in Islam. Narrow nationalism disrupts the essential unity and the humanising spirit of mankind.

According to Iqbal, "The ultimate fate of a people does not depend so much on organisation as on the worth and power of the individual man. In an over-organised society, the individual is altogether crushed out of existence. He gains the whole wealth of social thought around him and loses his own soul". He says, "Islam is neither nationalism nor imperialism but a league of nations, which recognises artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members."

What has nationalism to offer? To quote Iqbal's own words, "Look at the history of mankind, it is an unending succession of deadly combats, blood-feuds and internecine wars. Now the question arises as to whether in these circumstances it is possible to bring forth a community the basis of whose collective life will be peace and goodwill. According to the Qur'an this is possible, but only when man adopts as his ideal the direction of all his thoughts and actions by faith in the unity of God, as ordained by the Almighty. But the quest and attainment of this ideal cannot be left to political statesmanship. It will really be a blessing from God, the Beneficent, that abolishing all self-imposed distinctions and differences among the nations of the world, a community is created which can be virtually styled as a 'people obedient to God', and whose thoughts and actions can be truly described in God's own words, as those of the 'guardians of mankind.'"

Islam is the only religion which brought the message to human race for the first time that religion is neither territorial, nor racial not even individual or domestic but it is purely human, meant for the whole human race. And its objective is to unite and organise the human race in spite of all natural differences. Such an organisation cannot be based on nationality or race. It can only be based on ideologies. It is the only way in which the emotional and intellectual life of the human society can be turned to one direction and

can be inspired with a singleness of purpose, which is essential for the formation and continued existence of an international or world society of human race as a whole. Any other system will be opposed to the true teachings of religion and against the dignity of human beings.

Iqbal was one of the strongest exponents of an international world-wide human society and opposed to all those movements which went against that ideal. He was therefore opposed to territorial and racial nationalism and preached the message of a universal human society based on the unity of God and equality of human beings, irrespective of race, colour or language. According to Iqbal, a Muslim can never be a party to narrow nationalism because he is a member of such a world-wide international organism which transcends all limitations of geography, race, colour or language.

It is true that in his earlier poems Iqbal extolled nationalism. But when he observed what miseries and sufferings were caused to human society by the clash of national interests, he realised that world peace and salvation of the human race lay in an international universal society based on equality and brotherhood of human beings, each working for the benefit of the other and not trying to exploit him, as in the poem called "وطنیت" where he says:

ان تازہ خداؤں میں بڑا سب سے وطن ہے

جو پیرہن اس کا ہے وہ مذہب کا کفن ہے

He also realised that the social order envisaged by Islam was the only organisation which could elevate the human society from the limitations of colour, race and nationality. That is why he preached the message of Islam in all his writings.

جوہر ما با مقامے بستہ نیست

بادۀ تندش ز جامی بسته نیست

"Our existence is not confined to a single locality; its strong spirit is not contained in a single cup."

The Islamic state is a world-state, its citizens are a world fraternity all inter-linked and knit into a harmonic body politic. Political delimitation is alien to Islam and race or class superiority and colour prejudice, a heresy. Richness of self fully realised, and not of self, is the real wealth in Islam. Such a self alone harnessed with all the vim and vigour of the brain and posed with all the goodness and sweetness of the soul, is a true Muslim to Allah — a leader and a servant and not a tyrant nor a master, over his fellow brothers.

In such a world state, the citizenship is not exclusive. It is not the prerogative of the landed few, the learned few or the wealthy few. It is the birth-right of all human beings. Every individual is a born citizen with certain talents which, it is the duty of the State, to provide for their proper exercise and development to the fullest extent they are capable of. There shall be freedom for all, but within the bounds of the natural laws. Thus the first and the foremost duty of the State is to provide fully and completely for the education of its members which embrace the entire mankind. There cannot be any ignorant or ill-bred person in such a State. The aim of this education will be to give to every individual a sense of complete self-realisation or a sense of ardent faith in self, harmonised with the will of the Great Unseen.

It is sometimes pointed out that Iqbal addressed himself primarily to the Muslim people. The reason is obvious. The Muslim community is already based on the unity of God and equality of human beings. So it is easy for the Muslims to organise on an international basis into a world community without the limitations of territory, race, wealth, language etc. When such a world-community is organised it would be easier to draw other peoples to its ideal so that the objective of one world working for mutual development and

benefit can be realised and the efforts of the United Nations Organization and similar other bodies can meet with success.

The Qur'an says that whatever is in the heavens and earth has been made subservient to man. The conquest of outer space by man is another demonstration of this eternal truth. When man could rise so high in space, would it be too much to expect that he would rise above petty selfish and narrow nationalistic outlook and would seriously apply himself to work for world harmony and peace? I believe in the goodness of human nature and I am confident that it will prevail in the end.