

# IQBAL ON THE CONCEPT OF IDEAL STATE

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From the very dawn of civilization right up to the present day, poets, philosophers, and political thinkers have been contemplating to establish an ideal state or society where men can live happily and beautifully with equal rights and privileges. Many have given formulae and prescriptions for the solution of this vexed problem, but none has been able to deliver the goods. Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, and many other 'isms' have appeared in the arena, but all of them have failed to give any relief to the suffering humanity. A wit has rightly observed: "All 'isms' have now become 'wasms'."

Against such a disappointing background, it is of special interest to study Iqbal's ideas about the establishment of an 'Ideal State' on Islamic ideology.

The idea of establishing a model state, providing equalrights, privileges and liberties for people, originated with the Greek philosopher Socrates. He first conceived the idea of establishing an "Ideal City" for the people of Greece. But he had some queer notions about his project. He said that men and women of his city should be placed on equal footing without any discrimination at all, so that their power and potentialities might have full and free play. He advocated community-life of citizens and was of the opinion that guardians should have wives and children in common, so that no one could know his father and mother and every one of the citizens could feel related and inter-linked with one another, as do the members of one family. He also recommended that the marriages and begetting of children should be regulated by the State, as such an important national problem should not be left for solution to the sweet will of the individuals. Then, again, his ideal city was to be Governed by "Philosopher-Kings", who could rightly be expected to turn away from this world of decay and to look upon the unchanging eternal world of ideas. His ideal city was thus in "heaven", and not in this

physical world. It was a city for gods and children of gods and not for men of flesh and bones. Slaves and barbarians also had no place in that blessed land.

The "Ideal State" of Plato was equally fantastic and impracticable. He improved upon the ideas of his master, Socrates, but, nevertheless, his own ideas were also wild and beyond the range of implementation.

The great sage of ancient China, Confucius, also thought of equal human rights. "Within the four seas all are brothers", was his assertion. But that was a pious wish and nothing more.

Great expressions of human rights have emanated from many other idealists and law-givers, but the "Ideal State" always remained a utopia with them.

We next find Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire and other political idealists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries formulating and developing a new social order. They propounded the theory of "Social Contract" and were of the opinion that the foundation of a society or state should be broad-based on mutual contract or on a give-and-take policy between the ruler and the ruled. The ruler must not behave in the way the shepherd treats his sheep, rather he should meet his people on an equal footing "Liberty, fraternity, and equality" should be the guiding principle of all social and political institutions. Such a contract, it can be asserted, was in existence from the very beginning of human history In the Old Testament, as also in the Holy Qur'an, we find frequent references to the "Covenant of God" made with the Jews and the Christians, as also with the Muslims. We also learn that the Jews and the Christians violated all covenants and did a lot of mischief to humanity. The following quotations will testify to it:

In the Old Testament, God says to Abraham:

"I shall establish my covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee; and I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the lands of Can'aan for an everlasting possession." (Gen. 17:7-8).

In this respect, the Holy Qur'an says:

"And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel.— But on account of their breaking their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard; they altered the words from their places and they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; and you shall always discover treachery in them excepting a few of them; so pardon them and turn away; surely Allah loves those who do good to others and with those who say we are Christians, we made a covenant, but they neglected a portion of what they were reminded of; therefore we excited among them enmity and hatred to the day of resurrection ; and Allah will inform them of what they did."

—(Al-Quran V: 12-14)

The "Kingdom of Heaven" that God desired to establish on earth was thus frustrated by the Jews and the Christians,

The building up of a State on the principles of 'Equality, Liberty, and Fraternity advocated by Rousseau and other political philosophers was, therefore, a far cry. The idea of 'Social Contract' was also not original with them. They only echoed the teachings and ideals of Islam which, in the meantime, spread far and wide in Europe, Africa and Asia and which must have influenced their mind and way of thinking.

But these revolutionary ideas, though not fully assimilated and put in their proper context, fired and inspired the popular mind in Europe and ultimately led to the French Revolution and there was an urge for social and political re-adjustment throughout the whole Europe. As a result, a new

political movement in the shape of Socialism came into being. This Socialist Movement contaminated many parts of Europe and ultimately culminated in its extreme form in Russia in the shape of Communism.

But even Communism has failed to build up an ideal State. It has been converted into a Dictatorship — not of the proletariat, but *over* the proletariat. An atheistic and materialistic view of life, absence of individual liberty and complete regimentation of thought and action are the dominating features of this new political cult.

The Modern World is sharply divided into two hostile blocs: *viz.*, Communist Bloc and the Capitalist Bloc, and they are at loggerheads with each other. Forces of chaos and confusion have been let loose and the world is in the vortex of constant tension, unrest and international dissensions. The League of Nations failed to restore peace and amity in the world. The United Nations is also going the same way. It has produced a "Declaration of Human Rights"; but its practical significance is meagre. It grants rights to other nations with some reservations. There is always a saving clause like "in so far as they do not conflict with the law of the State" or "subject to the requirements of public safety and order" or "so far as they do not conflict with public welfare". Such limiting clauses turn the sacred guarantees into ineffective phrases. Insincerity, hypocrisy, and treachery are thus the root cause of the frustration of all attempts of the peace organisations of the Western world. Is there no hope of any redemption, then ?

Iqbal says 'yes' to the question. He gives a message of hope to the trouble-afflicted world.

The 'Ideal State' of Iqbal is not a figment of imagination, but a historical reality. He has not propounded any new theory; he has only restated and re-oriented a theory that was put into practice fourteen hundred years ago. The 'Ideal State' of Iqbal is the 'Islamic State' of Muhammad (peace be on him) Hence, "back to the Qur'an" and "vision of a new Makkah" are the two principal motivating forces behind his poetry and philosophy.

Iqbal thinks that the Islamic State is the perfect form of Government, wherein individual and social life will be reared on most healthy and life-giving foundations. It is the '*vita nauva*' of all ills of humanity.

What is this Islamic State?

The Islamic State is a republican state based on the eternal verities of Islam and, therefore, of humanity. The model of this state was set up in Madinah by the Prophet Mohammad himself, (peace be upon him), who granted an International Magna Carta to all the Jews and the Christians and declared equal political rights and social justice to all.

Political consciousness has been flowing through two distinct channels: (i) Through the line of Israelities and (ii) through the line of Ismailites. The main stream which took its origin in Abraham was, after his death, bifurcated in this way. The Jews and the Christians fall in the first category, while the Arabs fall in the second. Historians have completely blacked out the social and political activities of the second group of mankind. They speak of Socrates, Plato, Rousseau and others, but never mention Muhammad (peace be upon him) or Islam or the part they played in the awakening of social and political consciousness among the people. The history of the first group from ancient times right up to the UNO is a history of failures and frustrations. They have failed to establish social equilibrium. Can covenant-breakers make fresh covenants with others? Can universal love and common brotherhood be expected from those people who hated and exploited other nations? Can they vouchsafe equi-distribution of wealth and property without recognising the Sovereignty of God over the universe and unity of mankind?

Iqbal does not, therefore, believe in the peace attempts of Western people because of this past history and tradition. He turns to the second and the only alternative source of remedy and redemption, viz., Islam, as it fulfils all the conditions of an ideal state. Islam believes in the unity of Godhead and unity of mankind; it assigns supreme sovereignty of all lands to the Almighty Allah, and not to the Kings or to the people; it aims at establishing

the "Kingdom of Heaven" on earth, it recognises the Vicegerent of Allah in the person of Muhammad (peace be on him), who came down to earth with the Qur'an as the Divine Code; it establishes a capital-city at Mecca which is still the Centre or Headquarters of the Muslim world. The Islamic State is thus a well-founded and well-organised entity and not a castle in the air. It is still a dynamic and progressive world force. It has got many other outstanding qualities and potentialities for building up a universal welfare state. Islam has no geographical frontier. It ignores all caste and class distinctions and gives exalted position to women and slaves and protection to minority. Charity and poor rate are compulsory and obligatory in it. It combines God and Universe, heaven and earth, spiritualism and materialism, communism and capitalism, church and the state and sword and the Qur'an.

With these ideas and convictions at the back of his mind, Iqbal explains as to how this ideal state can be strengthened and well-fortified. As the State is the highest form of society and as society consists of individuals, he first explains the relation between the Individual or Self and the Society. He says that self and society are relative terms; one cannot stand without the other. As an edifice cannot be perfect and beautiful if its units are defective and bad, so a Society cannot be ideal if its individual members are not ideal. He, therefore, starts with the 'Ego'. In his *'Asrar-e-Khudi'* he explains the secrets of the self. He lays much importance on the strengthening of the self and holds that a person is successful in life to the extent of the strength he commands. The degree of strength is thus the key-note of all differences and gradations between the high and the low, the rich and the poor and the perfect and the defective. How beautifully he says:

"When the mountain loses its self

It turns into sands

And complains that the sea surges over it.

Because the earth is firmly based on itself

The captive moon goes round it perpetually.

The being of the sun is stronger than that of the earth

Therefore is the earth fascinated by the sun's eye."

At another place he says:

"Only that truly exists which can say: I am,

It is the degree of the intuition of 'I-am-ness.'

That determines the place of a thing in the scale of being."

This Ego, he says, can be strengthened by communion with God who is the fountain-head of all power and success. Nearness to the God, therefore, indicates power to the Ego. The nearer is the individual to God, the stronger is he. But Iqbal does not support self-abnegation or absorption in God; rather he enjoins man to absorb God in himself. He says:

"Flee to God and being strengthened by Him

Return to thyself.

But the Ego or Individual has got no independent reality. In Islam, an individual is always envisaged as a member of the society. His 'I' is always a national "I". The Individual has no doubt, a permanent value, but it lives and moves in Society and has its being in society. It may be compared with the waves of the Sea:

"An individual owes his existence to the

Social cogency and is nothing alone,

The wave exists in the river and is nothing outside it."

In "*Ramuz-e-Bekbudi*", Iqbal has clearly explained the relation between the Ego and the Society. The following lines are worth quoting:

"The individual becomes strong when in society,  
The Society also gain; strength from the individuals  
Words have meaning and beauty if they are in rhymes.  
But they are meaningless if they are stray and loose.  
Does the spring come to that garden  
Where the green leaves forsake the branches of trees ?"

Iqbal denounces geographical nationalism and regards it as a menace to the ideals of Islam, which does not recognise native land to be the only basis of political solidarity. It was this perverted and misconceived concept of nationalism that was responsible for the last two great wars of Europe. Iqbal, therefore, advocates supra-territorial love of mankind. He says with a clarion voice:

"China is ours, Arabia is ours, India is ours.

Muslims are we, the whole world is ours."

This spirit of world-citizenship was best illustrated by the great Arab general, Tariq, when he destroyed his own fleet after landing at the shores of Spain. His soldiers remonstrated saying it was not wise of him to burn the last resource of going back to their native land, in case that eventually occurred. But the brave hero smiled with his sword in hand and said:

پر ملک ملک ما ست کہ ملک خدائے ماست

"All lands are ours because they belong to Allah."



Iqbal, therefore, warns the Muslims against the growing tendencies of nationalism, in blind imitation of the West. He says:

"The Muslims have built up a new Harem.

Wherein the '*Azar*' of modern civilization has supplied many idols

Among those living gods, the god of nationalism is the biggest.

Its attire is the shroud of our religion."

He then reminds the Muslims:

"The meaning of a Mussalman is that he will love everybody

He shall bind the entire world with bonds of fraternity.

Destroy all barriers of caste and creed, and declare the message of universal love,

So that there remain no Irani, no Turani, no Afghani."

He advises the Muslims to live like the fish of the river, now staying here, now staying there according to the exigencies of circumstances.

"If you confine yourself within the pond of your mother-land You will surely die.

Live like a free fish in the river."

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) acted upto this principle. He left his native land of Mecca and migrated to Medina where he found better opportunities to fulfil his mission. This corroborates the view that the realisation of ones' ideal or mission must be the *summum bonum* of ones' life, no matter whether he has got to forsake, his hearth and home and adopt another country as his native land.

A comparison of the pattern of this Islamic State with other social and political systems of the world, both past and present, will bring home the superiority of the former over the latter.

The Islamic concept of an 'Ideal State', as advocated by Iqbal, has a great bearing of far-reaching consequences for Pakistan. Pakistan has been formed and named just on the lines of Iqbal's thought and liking.

Pakistan has already shown a clear indication of its departure from the old pathway and is now creating a history of its own. While European political scientists declare that two territories cannot combine into a State if there is no contiguity between them, the Islamic political theory declares that no geographical barrier can stand in the way of unification of Mankind. While the poet of the West sings that "West is West and East is East; and never the twain shall meet." the poet of the East sings the song of unity and amalgamation of the West and the East. The birth of Pakistan with two wings, one about a thousand miles apart from the other, is a direct challenge to the political and ideological theories of the West. Western thought-leaders are still pursuing a policy of racial discrimination, dividing mankind into watertight compartments of caste, creed and colour. They have kept the church separated from the State. But here in Pakistan, the 'Church' and the State go hand in hand. A new experiment is thus going on with the ideals and teachings of Islam. Pakistan, therefore, marks a new epoch in the history of mankind. Pakistan has a mission to fulfil. Being the largest Islamic State in the modern world, it may first unite all the Muslim countries into an Islamic Commonwealth (because they are already trained and advanced in the same ideology and thought) and then may show the way to the entire world to come under the banner of the 'Horned moon'. It may lead to the establishment of a 'one-world' confederacy with Mecca as its Capital. Pakistan is thus destined to play a historic role on the political stage of the world. It may unite all nations and bring about a happy synthesis among the opposites and proclaim to the four corners of the world, the great Islamic message of universal love and brotherhood.

*"All mankind is a single nation".*