

IQBAL DAY IN INDONESIA

Speech by

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We have assembled here tonight to pay homage to the genius of one of the noblest sons of Islam, the poet, politician and philosopher, the late Mohammad Iqbal. Iqbal undoubtedly was instrumental in bringing about the renaissance of the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in particular and the Muslims all over the world in general. He shook the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent from their slumber by expressing his thoughts in lyrical poetry. He stirred the conscience of the Muslims which had become dormant mainly for political reasons and also due to distorted interpretation of Islam and the Islamic principles.

I must confess that I cannot undertake an exhaustive critical study of Iqbal's poetry for the very weighty reason that all his poems are in Urdu and Persian languages. It is a pity that my knowledge of Iqbal's thoughts and poetry, besides being scanty, is derived mainly from the translations of his works. And a translation, as we all know, even at its best, can never be a perfect rendering of the original. I sincerely and earnestly wish that I had the knowledge of Urdu and Persian so that I would have been enabled to follow the flow of Iqbal's thoughts in their original. Moreover, the knowledge of these languages is important because we Muslims can know each other's mind and thoughts much better through a common language, and above all the languages like the Arabic, Persian and Urdu are the store-house of literary and philosophical treasures of our past.

I need not dwell on the point that it was mainly Iqbal's thoughts expressed in beautiful verses which had inflamed the dwindling light of Islam in their hearts by creating a strong self-confidence in them. It was Iqbal whose ideals gave a fresh vigour, resulting in a momentum for the Muslim movement which today stands in the concrete shape and form of Pakistan. Iqbal reminded the Muslims of their glorious past, wept over their present plight and rekindled in them a hope for the future by hammering on his theme of *Khudi*, i.e., ego. Said he:

خودی کو کر بلند اتنا کہ ہر تقدیر سے پہلے

خدا بندے سے خود پوچھے بتا تیری رضا کیا ہے؟

Develop your ego so high that before writing your destiny,

God may himself ask you : ordain what I should write !

An instance of his, I should say, initial approach on the above theme is well illustrated in his 'Shikwah' and 'Jawab-i-Shikwah'. The English rendering of these two of his epoch-making poems by Altaf Husain with an introduction by Parvez has been published under the title *The Complaint and The Answer*. The former is in the form of a complaint from the Muslims to the supposed partiality of the Almighty towards non-Muslims, and the latter is a rejoinder to the Muslims. The Introduction to the translation is so elucidative that I am tempted to quote some portions from it.

"Iqbal", says Parvez, "did not share the complaint nor did he accuse God. He merely put into language the feelings of his generation, feelings which he knew were based on that perversity of human nature which blinds self-analysis, and rationalises its own misfortune by blaming the injustice of others. For the particular object the poet had in view, his method was most effective. The 'Shikwah' summed up the accumulated bitterness in the minds of the Muslims who subconsciously shrank from uncomfortable introspection and blamed Fate for the ills which they had become heirs to. When he had thus effectively focussed attention on the degradation of the Muslims, for which they were holding the caprices of the Providence responsible, the poet produced his 'Jawab-i-Shikwah', pricking their bubble of complacent self-delusion. In the 'Jawab-i-Shikwah' Iqbal puts his unerring finger on the ailing pulse. He tells Muslims that God is not unjust to them but that they are unjust to themselves. He shows that their fatalism is mere self-deception, a screen wherewith to hide their own shortcomings. He reminds them that if they will only be true to their great heritage, the Quran, their effort is their Fate."

In my opinion, as I have already expressed above, the 'Shikwah' and the 'Jawab-i-Shikwah', the epoch-making poems of the early stage of development of his thought, not only conveyed in a nutshell the past and the present of the Muslims all over the world, but also pointedly directed

towards a pre-destined goal and a clearly defined path, i.e., the teachings of the Holy Quran and the principles of Islam.

And now I venture to touch on another aspect of Iqbal. He was a poet, an educationist, a lawyer by profession, an art critic, a politician and a philosopher — all combined in one. It will be assuming too much even to think of touching every aspect of his genius. This versatile genius of Iqbal is not only admirable but is very rare. As I have said, it is difficult even to touch the outer fringes of the various fields in which Iqbal has expressed himself. But at the moment I would like to give a brief reference to his thoughts as a political thinker. Here I refer to conception of a State based on Islamic principles.

An Islamic State, in his opinion, is comprehensive in its functions. From a purely philosophical angle I am quoting extracts from one of his historic lectures in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought In Islam*. Referring to the principles of a State, he says:

"In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of the mind with which the agent does it. It is the invisible mental background of the act which ultimately determines its character. An act is temporal or profane if it is done in a spirit of detachment from the infinite complexity of life behind it; it is spiritual if it is inspired by that complexity. In Islam it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another. It is not true to say that the Church and the State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies" (p. 154).

Arguments are advanced very strongly, and to a great extent sincerely too, that politics and religion should be separated; that State and religion are two separate entities. Need I go into the historical details to explain how the idea of the separation of State from religion originated in the West. We all know that this political theory or philosophical thinking was introduced with the separation of the domain of Caesar and the domain of Pope. The aftermath of this theory when vigorously put into practice and enthusiastically pursued resulted in a complete divorce of spiritual values from the material values in life. With the adoption of the theory that inherent

rationalism in human beings became dominant factor unchecked by the spiritual forces counteracting on its unbridled forces. The result was the mastery of knowledge and science which ultimately produced racialism, accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, the creation of privileged classes, the development of class antagonism, the perpetuation of the domination of one group over the other group; all combined together breeding the ugliest monster of hatred and vengeance and wars.

Iqbal, again and again, has referred in his verses that the golden age of spirit has gone and the iron age of matter has set in. The old moral ideas have given place to crude utilitarianism in general and in its extreme form, commercialism. He has defined this conception of the separation of politics from religion and its results in the following verses:

Intellect and religion have been fouled by thy heresy,
And love (*Ishq*) has been degraded by thy commercialism.
Thy affection is a disease and a secret disease.
Thy spite spells death, and a sudden death.
Thou associateth with matter,
And hath stolen away man from before the presence of God.
Science that solved the problem of things,
Has yielded thee nothing but the outlook of Changez.
Thy death heralds the advent of life for the world,
Wait awhile, and know thy end.

Iqbal vehemently points to the fact that both the Western Capitalism and Marx's Socialism are essentially based on material values of life and devoid of spiritual heritage. He regards Karl Marx's Socialism as a scheme based on the equality of stomachs, not on the equality of spirits. Similarly, he regards Capitalism, Imperialism, Colonialism and Racialism as fatness of body, and disapproves them both in the following strain (J.N., 70):

Both possess a restless and impatient soul,
Both are strangers to God and deceivers of man;

The one is nurtured by the spirit of rebellion,

The other is fed by the revenues of the State.

And between these two stones humanity is being ground.

The one defeats the ends of science, religion and art,

Whilst the other takes away life from the body, and bread from the hand.

I have seen both sunk into the abyss of matter,

Their body is illuminated, their heart is black.

Now the conception that religion and politics occupy separate and distinct spheres is born out of failure to grasp the full significance of religion because of the strong influence of matter dominating life today. Therefore, it is imperative for us to understand what religion is and what its functions are. Religion should serve as a guide to an individual to attain the highest possible development of spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical faculties. In its functions, it is to maintain and harmonize relationship between God and man and also between man and man. Regarding relationship between man and man, its function is to sustain that relation in all aspects of life. Here we should also consider the function of politics in maintaining the relationship between man and man. Does politics cover a single aspect of life or does it embody all the aspects? Need I point out that politics covers but only one aspect of man's relationship with man, whereas religion's function is to maintain relationship between man and man in all aspects of life. Hence, how could religion, which is the embodiment of all aspects, be divorced for the sake of politics, which covers only one aspect? Hence, to my mind, those who still clamour for the separation of State from religion, after all the bitter experiences, are putting too narrow a construction on the functions of religion. For them religion signifies either an individual's relationship with his God or the normal performance of certain acts of worship. But for us this is not the conception of Islam. Islam in essence is *Tawbeed*. Iqbal has stated it so clearly in his Lectures: "The essence of *Tawbeed* as a working idea," I am emphasising 'a working idea', "is equality, solidarity and freedom." Iqbal further explains in the same strain that "State from the Islamic standpoint is an endeavour to transform this ideal principle into space time forces, and inspiration to realise them in a definite human organization" (p. 154). I would

point out that his emphatic reference is "to transform this ideal principles into space-time forces."

It is generally said that to base a State on Islamic principles will be a theocracy. We must clearly understand the implication of the word 'Theocracy'. If a theocracy is interpreted in philosophical terms, then, according to the above conception of an Islamic State based on the essence of *Tawbeed*, such a state undoubtedly will be a theocracy. But if the term theocracy is interpreted in the political usage to the effect that a State is headed by a representative of God on earth, who can always screen his despotic will behind his supposed infallibility, then I as a Muslim contradict it with all vehemence at my disposal. Islam in essence is against theocracy, because there is no recognised priesthood in Islam. According to the Holy Quran, man is the vicegerent of God on earth, Islam gives a set of simple principles, such as, democracy, freedom (freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion, etc.), equality, tolerance, social justice, etc., and along with these fundamental human rights it also imposes certain fundamental human duties for the collective good of mankind.

The question which a majority of the world population is asking is: How can mankind be saved from another catastrophe? As I have already pointed out, most of the serious and right-thinking people of the world are of the opinion that these unparalleled crises in history are the product of purely material conception of life, devoid of any spiritual forces capable of restraining man in his zeal for the accumulation of more and more mastery of the matter. The solution of our troubles lies in the synthesis of spiritual and material values in life. What mankind needs today, and I am again quoting Iqbal, is (1) a spiritual interpretation of the universe, (2) spiritual emancipation of the individual and (3) basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis (*Ibid.*, p. 179).

We all know that revelations come to prophets at those critical stages of civilization when everything was at the verge of retrogression, disintegration and annihilation ; when mankind through sheer ignorance, lack of knowledge and laziness, or through the mastery of knowledge in the material field at the expense of spiritual values in life, reached the stage of barbarism, where every tribe, every sect, nay, even minor groups were set against each other determined on the total annihilation of others ; when there was no law and order and there was no spiritual embodiment commanding loyalties of

mankind. Let us see what is happening all around us today. We have witnessed in our life time two World Wars. We are now the pathetic expectators of frantic and feverish activities of the guardians of peace for yet another war. We have suffered the horrors of the last two wars. We have witnessed the behaviour of man towards man. And we are watching the attitude of man towards his God; which is due to the separation of the spiritual values of life from the material values. The only hope of salvation lies in an emotional culture that can bring together mankind once more into unity, pledging its loyalty to one central authority.

And so I appeal from this stage today to all those who believe in the worship of one God to rise to the occasion and re-sustain the spiritual values in life, to re-emphasise the importance of religion in life and thus get together to control the unbridled forces of evil arising out of matter and to utilize them under the restraint of spiritual impact for the greater and beneficial use of science for mankind. Science is both a virtue and an evil. The evil aspect of it has been and is being demonstrated before us. It now devolves on men of conscience, on the believers in one God, to demonstrate its virtues under the restraint of spiritual forces. If we fail to do so, we will stand convicted before posterity.

I repeat Prophet Muhammad's appeal to the peoples of other religions as quoted in the Holy Quran (iii. 63):

"O followers of the Book ! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah "

Humanity calls on the believers of those religions to worship God and not matter. The crying need of the moment is the re-evaluation of spiritual values in life. As for as the Muslims are concerned, it is their duty now truly to interpret the fundamental principles of equality, tolerance and freedom.

It is not only the Muslims but even some prominent modern Western thinkers have also come to the conclusion that Islam can offer the much-coveted and the desired solution to save humanity from catastrophe. It was with this object in view that Iqbal called upon the Muslims of today in the following words:

"Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, re-construct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto

partially revealed purposes of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam" (*Ibid.*, p. 180).

Let this serve as a clarion call to the Muslims of today. They have to demonstrate to the world that the virtues of Islam are not the monopoly of Muslims alone, but a unique gift for mankind. The best way of demonstration is by putting those virtues into practice first in their own house. They have precedents before them. They have got before them the examples of the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) and the Khulafae-e-Rashedeen.

I would not tax the patience of my listeners, but would like to quote a historic document, which would be an eye-opener to the Muslims themselves when they would know what steps the Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) had taken as the Head of the State. I am quoting the Charter, which the Prophet had granted to the Monks of the Monastery of St. Catherine and to the Christians. The Charter is so expressive of the practical use of the Islamic principles that I quote the gist of the Charter as given by Amir Ali in his *History of the Saracens*:

"By it (the Charter) the Prophet secured to the Christians important privileges and immunities, and the Muslims were prohibited under severe penalties from violating and abusing what was therein ordered. In this Charter the Prophet undertook himself, and enjoined on his followers, to protect the Christians, to guard them from all injuries, and to defend their churches, and the residences of their priests. They were not to be unfairly taxed ; no bishop was to be driven out of his bishopric ; no Christian was to be forced to reject his religion ; no monk was to be expelled from his mona^stery ; no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage; nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mo^sques or houses for Muslims. Christian women married to Muslims were to enjoy their own religion and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account. If the Christians should stand in need of assistance for the repair of their churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to their religion, *the Muslims were to assist them.*"

As is clear, from the Charter, that besides others, the virtue of a true Muslim is the spirit of tolerance — tolerance not born out of cowardice or

fear, but a tolerance born out of solid conviction of the righteous cause. It is also ordained that they should, as true Muslims, even sacrifice their lives to protect the life, honour, religion and the freedom of others. Islamic history is replete with such examples. And Iqbal summarises the whole in one of his beautiful verses (B.D., 307):

سبق پھر پڑھ شجاعت کا، صداقت کا، عدالت کا

لیا جائے گا تجھ سے کام دنیا میں امامت کا

Learn once again the lesson of valour, truth and justiczz....

For you will be called upon once again to lead the nations of the world.

SPEECH

By

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It is a great honour to have the opportunity to speak about Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, the great Islamic disciple, at the moment when our whole humanity in the East and West is facing a mental crisis as we all know. Iqbal was born in the year 1876 in the town of Sialkot and died

on the 21st of April, 1938, at Lahore. As he came from a very simple family it was only by heavy sacrifices that his father succeeded in giving him a good education and thus to prepare him in the best possible way for the daily struggle for life. He has had the opportunity to visit Europe where he studied in England and afterwards got a doctor's degree in Philosophy at the University of Munich (Germany).

*His contribution to society has been so important that in Lahore (Pakistan) a magazine is printed under the title *Iqbal* which is specially dedicated to the study of his thoughts and ideas on different subjects, as, for instance, the problems of Islam, philosophy, history, sociology, comparative religious studies, literature, arts, etc. It is clear that it is very difficult for us to evaluate a man who has shown such a great versatility and we can only try and make a humble effort in honour of this excellent person who has inspired all who have approached him.*

*It has been mainly due to the publicity given by Mr. B. Ranguti who has written many articles about the poet and philosopher and has translated a number of the most important works as, for instance, *Asrar-i-Kbudhi* (The Secrets of the Self), etc., that the person of Iqbal is known in Indonesia. The great amount of poetry and prose which exists represents one of Iqbal's outstanding achievements. At the same time, however, he had a great piety of heart as a devoted Muslim towards the Prophet, who was for him the representation of complete perfection and whom he described in words full of devotion and love.*

During his stay in Europe he has had the opportunity to deepen his insight into Western civilization and to become aware of its various aspects.

With an open mind and heart he studied the thoughts and ideas of the Western philosophers and sciences, and the great thinkers of the Western world, as, for instance, Nietzsche, Kant, Bergson and others. He was astonished to see the western developments but he was not blind to its defects so humiliating to human dignity. Western life in his opinion contained all elements which made struggles inevitable, between beings as well as between peoples.

After his return to his home country, he felt more and more the sad conditions in which the nation and the people were finding themselves and where human beings were groping in darkness. When he realised this he felt the urge to revolt, to fight against all the misery and evil which his nation suffered from the oppression of the foreigners. He raised his voice for the benefit of all Asian peoples who had already for so long been living under heavy pressure and who had already forgotten their greatness and the splendid periods of the past. A revolution like this is based on a dynamic mind which is not content with the living conditions with which it is confronted and it is as if an inner force drives it forward and upwards seeking for something which can satisfy the wounded heart and the suffering mind. In his inner revolt he still was lucky, for he had a firm hold, and as a faithful Muslim he knew and was conscious of the greatness of God and the all-loving spirit which was for him the upper light in the darkness and distress which were surrounding him. He was convinced that by trying to approach God it was the only way to realise his love for him.

As explained before, we are only able to read some of his publications, mainly those which have been translated into the Indonesian language but nevertheless we can enjoy his pure and serious language which brings us into a holy and sublime world. The longing and the love for God is the base of the Iqbalian philosophy in his studies of the relationships between humanity and God. He felt that the human beings should try and purify their souls so that they have the joy of coming into the possession of divine qualities. Different from the Sufi teaching of Islam which preaches that human soul is entirely merged into Divinity, he has been preaching another opinion, even the opposite one.

For him humanity has an active way to struggle for a higher stage and in this way absorbs Divinity. Several obstacles and trials he had to overcome and after he had reached a holy stage he must try again to get a higher one. In

this way life for Iqbal was symbolised as an eternal struggle, inviting each individual to train himself and try to reach perfection and have the joys of the divine which is the serene end. For Western people it is possible to appreciate Iqbal's philosophy as an attitude of life resembling that of Bergson, who holds that the whole world is dominated by an inner force, which he calls *elan vital* and which stimulates each being to reach a more perfect goal from one moment to the other. But there are principal differences between the theories of these two philosophers. *Elan vital*, which is a moving machine of all activity in the world and of human life, is, according to Bergson, not directed towards a definite goal, while the dynamic soul of Iqbal which is pushed by a tender feeling of love is longing for divinity ; the quintessence of Iqbal's philosophy is that he is longing for perfect humanity, which he calls *Insan al-kamil*, humanity which possesses divine qualities.

Those who know Western philosophy might in this case hear the voice of the Western philosopher Nietzsche in the superior man (Uebermensch, Superman), but Iqbal's opinion differs from this great Western thinker, who based his opinions of life on atheism and the aristocracy of the mind, while Iqbal in all aspects of his views on life has been illuminated by the holy light, e.g., the symbol of God as the organiser of the whole world.

For us the dynamic soul, owned by Iqbal, is very important, and is a special characteristic of this individual as a Muslim. In coming across the results of sciences, especially the natural sciences, as we do in the twentieth century, we never have seen a person who has analysed the material and spiritual world as he has done and has penetrating Islamic views.

After the picture we have given of Iqbal above, we have to mention that on an important theory of the West which regards the position of the human being in his relations to the whole surrounding world, e.g., the evolution theory of Darwin, Iqbal has taken an attitude which we have to explain further.

The essence of Darwin's theory is the evolution of all beings from a simple form and stage, by several phases, to a stage which is considered perfect. This evolution causes external changes, caused by the need to adapt to the conditions and demands of the environment. This causes, according to Darwin, the origin of various species, as a result of their instincts to defend

themselves in the daily struggle for life. Thus, according to the evolution theory, only something which can possess the form necessary to face the demands and overcome the obstacles of the surrounding world, that is to say, everything which can adapt itself, will be able to go on living (the survival of the fittest). This natural selection which is exclusively based on the superiority of external factors of life and form of the world might have always existed since millions of years up till now. Although Darwin himself has never had the intention to exceed the limits of natural sciences, his theory in its further developments has advanced far beyond its frontiers and has influenced sociology ; even this mechanistic-materialistic theory has its influence on politic.

With a deep conviction Iqbal has been opposed to this opinion, which places man as a member without intelligence in society as if he has to prepare to adapt himself to factors outside his power. Iqbal emphasizes the individuality of man who has the unlimited potentiality to try and to continue climbing the various steps of the ladder in order to realise his longing and love for God. For Iqbal there are no external factors which control the changes of the world, but the existing world is the result of the activity and inner force which works and does its best to prepare and to create. Such a view is in accordance with his conception of the development of the individual which will lead to perfect humanity, *Insan al-kamil* or what is called by B. Rangkuti, humanity equal to God.

Following the research made in several fields, it can be said that the Western philosophers in our days begin to accept Iqbal's theory that the evolution story in the universe could not be understood if there were no inner force which is the cause of movement. The development of the whole world is not possible if it is only based on external factors but it mainly is the result of inner potentiality.

Of those, who study Iqbal's philosophy, some are disputing the originality of his thoughts and ideas. They say that many of them originated from the Western philosophers. As explained above, Iqbal got ample opportunity during his stay in Europe to study the ideas of the Western philosophers but also has made a profound study of the philosophy of Jalaludin Rumi, an Islamic philosopher of the Middle Ages. It is astonishing to notice that he has been capable to form such original conclusions after

having studied so many sources of different thinking, an originality which is indisputable.

Other objections against Iqbal are that he emphasizes the fact that his ideas have been based on the holiness and purity of Islamic thoughts in its first period of development. One critic says that Iqbal is referring to past times. The important thing for Iqbal has been the spirit and soul of Islam in its early period, which was full of dynamism and great potentialities. Islam then affirmed that only by searching and researching, the road to goodness and to the joys of the divine sphere could be found.

Since that period Islam has gone back and has become static. Iqbal has tried to recapture those hidden treasures and to become again aware of its potentiality for the benefit of humanity. Islam at this moment indeed reorientates itself with regard to principal problems, as, for instance, the status of man in this whole world.

The basic sciences face at the moment a big crisis and moreover people are conscious of the problem of existence on earth. The science based on the mechanic materialistic theory regards humanity only as a grain of sand on the seashore. This theory has been opposed by great philosophers as Bergs in and the psychologist McDougall.

Einstein brings us a new world. His theory on the relation of mass and energy explains the intimate relationship between matter and force in which one can take the form of the other. We cannot judge how great Einstein's influence on the development of human knowledge will be in future. We regret, however, that on the basis of the theory of this genius the atomic bomb has been constructed which has had such a sad beginning for civilisation, although we are glad that the majority of our peoples hope that nuclear science will only be used for peaceful purposes and for their welfare.

At once the question arises : if the barrier between mass and energy, between matter and force, is lifted, will it not be possible that a more difficult problem will arise, e.g., will it be possible to lift the barrier between body and soul ? This is the main problem which the future generations will have to face. Will the body be more perfect as a result of the mechanical materialistic theory or will the soul be more strongly expressed ?

In this respect we want to give our attention to a situation which has developed in Indonesia. Science in general has very quickly developed here. In accordance with its position as a big country, Indonesia has always followed science in all directions. Recently on the initiative of UNESCO a seminar on nuclear science has been held in Bandung. We know also that the astronomical observatory near Bandung will have a big telescope. Indonesia, too, will investigate the Universe and penetrate intergalaxial space. The Indonesian experts have to take care that they will not become vain or too proud.

Although science has developed immensely there are still secrets in this world which we cannot understand. Kant, the great Western philosopher, in his work *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, acknowledges that human intelligence is limited. How beautiful are the words spoken by Newton, the excellent scientist, who said in his old age: "I do not know how I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in finding now and then a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinarily while the great ocean of truth lies all undiscovered before me."

For the Indonesian youth, mostly for those who are Muslim, these words can guide them through life. With Muhammad Iqbal we shall also find this same principle. It is therefore that we can remember with great respect the death anniversary of this wise and good Muslim.