

## IQBAL DAY AT LAHORE

The Central Iqbal Committee observed Iqbal Day at Lahore on April 23, 1967 as usual. The lecture delivered by Mr. A. K. Brohi, a brilliant lawyer and scholar, is reproduced below. But I would like to make one or two observations. Mr. Brohi thinks that the term "Islamic Socialism" is illegitimate. I merely wish to point out that Iqbal in one of his letters to the Quaid-i-Azam pleads for socialism and social democracy (28 May 1937). Similarly, in a letter to Sir Francis Younghusband, Iqbal has this to say: "Since Bolshevism plus God is almost identical with Islam. . . ." (Shamloo, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, 1948, p. 167). And yet I do not contest Mr. Brohi's right to express his personal opinion about these matters.

# IQBALIAN IJTEHAD & THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC SOCIALISM

*by*

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Iqbal day celebrations are a regular annual feature of considerable importance in the life of the State of Pakistan, and to participate therein necessarily involves an undertaking which is both solemn and serious. God grant that my own participation in this holy ritual be in accord with the spirit which is appropriate to the occasion and may I have His guidance to say from this sacred platform not that which the people of this country *want* but only what they *need*.

Iqbal symbolises for us primarily a poet *par excellence*, but he is also a philosopher who could justifiably be acclaimed, in the felicitous phrase of Plato, as a "Spectator of all-time and all-existence". He is, additionally, the architect of our polity. And for these reasons, whatever he has uttered is for us a part of our indestructible heritage — a heritage of which we have reason to feel proud. Therefore, in honouring him we are really honouring ourselves. A continual affirmation of the basic principles of his political philosophy is the surest way conceivable of safeguarding the moral and spiritual foundations upon which Pakistan was conceived by him and won by the sacrifices of those who, having listened to his call, gave the best of themselves to see that his dream came true. He was a poet, a philosopher, a sage — all

rolled into one. He drew his inspiration from the life-imparting reservoir of divine guidance which is contained in the Holy Book and the utterances of the Prophet of Islam through whom it was revealed to mankind. From that point of view, a study of his works is bound to contribute to a better understanding of that tactical principle in the light of which Islam came to transform the life of man on earth and to provide the frame-work of values in terms of which his destiny could be realised. A study of Iqbal's teaching in our own time is a *must* for all of us, if only because he has articulated the spirit of Islam in the vernacular of our age. He has interpreted for us its message in the light of the present day economico-political conditions.

Rich tributes have been paid to Iqbal by the best thinkers of the world, and I have no doubt that as long as Urdu, Persian and English languages live, and Pakistan, his spiritual child, endures, his name will continue to evoke admiration and respect in the heart and soul of men and women, not only of this country, but all over the globe. If it be true that the world is ruled by God through a few heroes and pre-eminent persons as has been suggested by Dr. Martin Luther, Iqbal will, being one of these, continue to rule it. Of such heroes it was that H.S. Chamberlain had remarked, "The mightiest of these 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 feelings of powerful the less 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 lifetime; their sway lasts long but begins late, specially when we leave out of account the influence which they exercise upon individuals and consider the moment when that which filled their lives begins to affect and mould the life of the whole people". And to those words of Chamberlain, I would like to add the following: when the clap-trap and sound and fury of the pretenders to the noble mettle and vocation of the real heroes of history ends with the end of the brute-power they wield, they are bound to be exposed by the response which posterity makes to them. Thereafter, such is the inexorable law, they continue to be condemned by the teeming millions and none is deprived as to do them honour. Our posthumous name, fame and immortality is a function of our character — not of our power: This is the reason why not Ceasar but Christ prevails in History.

I shall try, in what follows, not so much as to offer a tribute to Iqbal as to consider, in the light of his teaching, one or two problems that have been in recent past posed for us in this country. Iqbal has taught us to accept the doctrine of *Ijtehad* as the "principle of movement in the structure of Islam" and it is our duty to think clearly about the validity of some of the "solutions" of our present day problems that are being daily advertised for our acceptance. The first of these has reference to what nowadays so frequently appears in the daily Press or is heard *ad nauseam* within the so-called intellectual circles — I mean the concept of *Islamic Socialism*. It is claimed that "Islamic Socialism" if we could only realise it as a practical possibility is a panacea for all our ills.

Speaking for myself, I find much difficulty in understanding precisely what is meant by the concept of Islamic socialism. The term "socialism" one can understand; and, to some extent, I suppose I understand what "Islam" is. But it is, if I am permitted to so put it, the spurious concoction of these two concepts which creates complications for the rational mind. The dilemma posed to normal human intelligence by this hybrid expression "Islamic Socialism" can be presented as follows : If "socialism" is precisely what Islam enjoins us to accept, then socialism by itself should be acceptable to us as our national ideology. If, however, it is not the conventional type of socialism that Islam enjoins upon us to accept, then in what essential particulars, one may ask, has Islam modified this concept so that it must be designated as *Islamic Socialism* to distinguish it from its non-Islamic varieties. Why is the word "Islam" which is a substantive, being degraded into becoming an adjective of "socialism" is a question that no one that I know of in this country can, consistently with logic, honestly answer. On the one hand we say, do we not, that Islam provides a comprehensive code of life bearing upon questions related to the economic, political and social organisations of mankind ; yet, on the other hand, we are called upon to say that there is an ideology called "socialism" which is what we need provided we somewhat modify it thus it is not Islam simpliciter, but Islamic socialism that will redeem us and will help us to organise our lives much more meaningfully than we are able to do at present.

If Islam is a universal religion, that is to say, a way of life which is valid for all time for all people and for all geographical habitats, then why does it not have also an adequate answer to those specific economico-political problems with which we are confronted in Pakistan — so that we must be forced to borrow our 'model' from an alien culture and civilisation? If socialism may be defined as a theory or a policy of social organisation which advocates the ownership and control of the means of production, capital, land, property, etc., by the community as a whole and their administration or distribution in the interests of all, it is clear that Islam cannot have much to say in the matter. If you think that is the only way to secure justice, you may subscribe to the theory or the policy of socialism, but, on the other hand, if you think that it will not advance the cause of justice but frustrate it, you may not subscribe to its doctrine. But what has that got to do with Islam, anyway? Strategy of socialism may be of some importance today to realise the ideal of justice but tomorrow it may not — it is no use, therefore, implicating Islam in this manoeuvre.

By "socialism" one ordinarily understands an economic philosophy which enjoins upon its votaries the necessity of regarding the instruments of production and the questions relating to the distribution of wealth to be matters exclusively for state-ownership and concern. In the context of Marxian philosophy, which necessarily is a part and parcel of materialistic interpretation of history, we are taught to believe in the primacy of economic categories. One thought that, within the frame-work of Muslim view of life, this avowedly materialistic approach must

be rejected since it is in conflict with the contention of the Quran, that it is the moral and spiritual categories which are primary and fundamental. The main purpose of the Quran, according to Iqbal, is to awaken in man a higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe. Iqbal. emphasises, in ways too numerous to mention, the primacy of the spiritual life and, over and over again, he calls our attention to the fact that all things have their origin in the Divine and in the end return to the Divine. In his words, "The ultimate Reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being. The greatest service that modern thought has rendered to Islam, and as a matter of fact to all religions, consists in its criticism of what we call material or natural — a criticism which discloses that the merely material has no substance until we discover it rooted in the spiritual.

"There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realisation of spirit. All is holy ground. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it, 'The whole of this earth is a mosque.' The State according to Islam is only an effort to realise the spiritual in a human organisation. But in this sense all State, not based on mere domination and aiming at realisation of ideal principles, is theocratic."

There is, accordingly, no place in Islam for the materialistic interpretation of history so that you might, with some

justification, be able to argue for the primacy of the economic factor. Socialism, as an offspring of materialistic interpretation of history, cannot be acceptable to a Muslim. Therefore, no wonder efforts are afoot to suggest that "socialism" can be spiritualised — and this is sought to be achieved by the simple device of labeling it as "Islamic".

I suspect that the word 'Islam' is in Pakistan constantly being utilised as a cloak for importing alien stuff — be these ideologies or institutions. By this device, ideologies and principles of social organisation which have been sanctioned by the growth of atheistic, nihilistic and materialistic philosophies of West in our time are given an air of plausibility, an appearance of respectability. I have often heard it said : If you add God to communism the product becomes equal to Islam. Although I am a philosopher by training, I confess, I do not know much about this "dialectical arithmetic" and I will not venture to say any, thing about it. But what I can say with some authority is this: that God is too all-comprehensive to be added to anything and communism which is assuredly based on Godlessness cannot survive for you to accept it, if you were to be a believer in God. You cannot have both together you have to make up your mind as to what you want and then you have some choice in the matter. "Theistic Communism" absurd — as is Islamic socialism or Islamic Capitalism.

To the age-old question : What is the State to do for the individual where the individual is not able to provide for himself



those bare necessities of life which he is to have if he is to survive ? Islam has its own answer to return. It is the responsibility of the State to provide conditions upon which not only the mind and character of its citizens must develop but also the conditions upon which its citizens are to win by their own efforts all that is necessary to a full civic efficiency. It is not for the State to feed, house or cloth them. It is for the State to take care that the economic conditions are such that the normal man who is not defective in mind or body or will can by useful labour feed, house, and clothe himself and his family. The "right to work" and "the right to a living wage" are just as valid as the rights of person or property — that is to say, they are integral conditions of good social order. This was the concept of social order upon which " liberalism " of the nineteenth century European politics was based. " A society, " says L.T. Hobhouse, "in which a single honest man of normal capacity is definitely unable to find means of maintaining himself by useful work is to that extent suffering from mal-organisation. There is somewhere a defect in the social system, a hitch in the economic machine. Now, by the individual work, man cannot put the machine straight. He is the last person who can have a say in the control of the market. It is not his fault if there is over-production in the industry or if a new or a cheaper process has been introduced which makes his particular skill, perhaps the product of years of application, a drug in the market, He does not direct or regulate the market or the industry. He is not responsible for its ups and downs, but he has to pay for them. That is why it is not *charity* but *justice* for which he is asking. Now,

it may be infinitely difficult to meet his demands. To do so, may involve a far-reaching economic reconstruction. The industrial questions involved may be so little understood that we may easily make matters worse in the attempt to make them better. All this shows the difficulty of finding means of meeting this particular claim of justice, but it does not shake its position as a claim of justice. A right is right nonetheless though the means of securing it be imperfectly known, and the workman who is unemployed or underpaid through economic mal-organisation will remain a reproach not to the *charity* but to the *justice* of society as long as he is to be seen in the land."

Now L.T. Hobhouse whatever he was, was not at least a socialist. He was inspired by the ideal of justice and wanted to see that society was based on justice. Man's pre-occupation with the task of founding a just society is as old as the hills. This was long before socialism — or, as a matter of fact, long before any 'ism' was born. What could you say of the economic and political system of Abu Bakr, or Omar, or Usman or of Ali? Were they socialists? The instruments of production were not owned by the state of their day nor had they the type of control which a socialist state claims to have on the means of distribution of wealth. And yet they were, I suppose, consistently with conditions that obtained in their times, practising the gospel of Islam by founding society on justice.

I would like also to recall to your mind that celebrated passage in the epoc-making book of Iqbal entitled as *The Reconstruction of*

*Religious Thought in Islam*, where he, in his inimitable manner, so convincingly demonstrates the universality and the catholicity of the Muslim view of man's life. In his words, "The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change. It must possess eternal principles to regulate its collective life, for the eternal gives us a foothold in the world of perpetual change. But eternal principles when they are understood to exclude all possibilities of change which, according to the Quran, is one of the greatest 'signs' of God, tend to immobilise what is essentially mobile in its nature. The failure of Europe in the political and social science illustrates the former principle, the immobility of Islam during the last 500 years illustrates the latter. What, then, is the principle of movement in the structure of Islam? This is known as *Ijtihad*!"

It must follow that the *Mujtabid* in a Muslim polity has to look upon his own task with a sort of bifocal vision : he must have an eye on the eternal principles sanctioned by the Quranic view of man's place in the scheme of things as also have his eye firmly fixed on the ever-changing concourse of economico-political situation which confronts man from time to time. The *Mujtabid* must respond to the challenge of the time, by perceiving the nature of the change in the purple light of those enduring and universal principles which the religion of Islam has laid down for mankind. Whatever be his answer to the challenge of the time, the validity of his answer will depend upon the nature and character

of temporal situation with which a given society is confronted. The answer will differ from place to place and from time to time. If in the state of present day affairs that is observable in Pakistan our *Ijtihad* were to point out that system such as is suggested by the "socialism" of the West is the only solution that is available, there would be nothing wrong in our saying so. But it is no use calling all that as "Islamic socialism" if only because the model in question is taken from an alien culture which itself is premised upon certain principles for its ideological foundation that are different from those that are suggested by Islam. It would be dangerous in the extreme to speak of socialism of West as "Islamic" and to palm it off as an Islamic product.

It is interesting to notice that there is a chapter in the present Constitution of Pakistan which is headed as "Islamic Institutions" as if to suggest that the other institutions contemplated by the Constitution are un-Islamic or have nothing to do with Islam. Once again I would point out that here too the word "Islamic" is an unjustifiable prefix to the word "Institution". Similarly we hear it often said even by men who ought to know better : "All we want is Islamic education" — suggesting thereby that education in *Fiqh*, in *Hadith*, in Quran is alone Islamic, but in subjects like mathematics, engineering, medicine, law or modern inductive sciences is somehow not "Islamic" — and so on and so forth. And yet those who somehow are not persuaded to regard education of this latter type as Islamic, have not the least compunction in using the products of these disciplines : they travel on jet-planes with a great deal of gusto, use modern surgical

means in getting themselves treated for the removal of their bodily complaints, or watch the television — as if they were the acceptable fruits of a forbidden tree. I submit that one of the surest symptoms indicative of the canker of corruption and demoralisation having attacked a given people is that truth becomes with them the first casualty and a sort of general inflationary spiral begins to infect their language. Words are robbed of their meanings and no one understands any one and one half of society is set against the other half in a mortal conflict.

The second question I would like to refer to is : Who is discharging the role of a *Mujtabid* in the sphere of the Islamic State that we claim to have established? Is it the Head of the State, the National Parliament, the Provincial Assemblies or the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology visualised under Article 191 of the Constitution ? Iqbal, were he asked to identify the individual or institutions who are fulfilling the role of a *Mujtabid* in our polity, would not, in my opinion, be able to return any answer which would be satisfactory even to him.

Students of Iqbal are therefore under an obligation to look upon the operations of the present economico-political institutions of our country in the light of such thoughts as Iqbal has voiced concerning the universality, the catholicity of Islamic spirit — particularly in relation to its capacity to vivify and fecundate the present-day operations of governmental institutions. Iqbal, for instance, whole-heartedly accepted the approach of the Turkish nationalist poet Zia as he saw it reflected

in one of his poems to the effect that "in order to create a really effective political unity of Islam, all Muslim countries must first become independent ; and then in their totality they should range themselves under one Caliph. Is such a thing possible at the present moment ? If not today, one must wait. In the meantime the Caliph must reduce his own to order and lay the foundations of a workable modern State. In the international world the weak find no sympathy ; power alone deserves respect." Iqbal's own comment on this approach is well known. According to him, "These lines clearly indicate the trend of modern Islam. For the present, every Muslim nation must sink into her own deeper self, temporarily focus her vision on herself alone until all are strong and powerful to form a living family of republics. A true and living unity, according to the nationalist thinkers, is not so easy as to be achieved by a mere symbolical overlordship. It is truly manifested in a multiplicity of free independent units whose racial rivalries are adjusted and harmonised by the unifying bond of a common spiritual aspiration. It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us the truth that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognised artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members." In the context of these considerations, Iqbal admonishes us over and over again to regard our historical situation in the light of the ideal Islam has placed before mankind and increasingly to make efforts to approximate as much as it is practically possible to that Ideal.

The question in this regard to be raised is : Whether, across the twenty years of its history, Pakistan has conformed to this 'Ideal' ? Have we understood and applied that principle of movement in the structure of Islam for which Iqbal has spoken so eloquently with so much of fervour and which, as far as I know, is the best Re-statement of the strategy of Islam itself in terms of which earlier statesmen of Islam had set about doing their task in order to fulfil the Divine Law.

Apart from academic study of these thoughts and the inspiring message given to us by Iqbal in the works that he has left behind, there is the all important obligation to be assumed by the protagonists of Iqbal's philosophy to eagerly strive for the maintenance of those conditions in terms of which the reform of our institutions in the light of the Muslim Ideal that he depicted so eloquently for us has to be pursued.

Iqbal day celebrations ought to be directed to the end that we do a bit of heartsearching and take stock of our situation in the light of the teaching that he has imparted to us. Let us, on this day, consider his message from the view-point of the actual impact it has made upon us as a people, as a *millat*.