

IQBAL AS A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER

G. Allana

Heedless of the barriers of climate, man has risen to be the master of the entire geography of the world. He is unlike and different from all other species of the animal kingdom, insofar as he has the capacity to bring into his service any special skin and temperature. His sovereignty is in a process of eternal expansion in the dimension of time by an ever-increasing power of knowledge, which has enabled him to expand the frontiers of his facility to borrow from the treasure-house of the past from all corners of the globe, from all periods of history.

It may be said that man lives in an indestructible universe of history, where he has created an environment of an unceasing remembrance for himself. The animal leaves behind himself an impact of his own existence through the multiplication of its own specie. As against this, man wins immortality through the landmarks of progress built by his mind, as he wends his way in his pilgrimage through life. The all-embracing orbit of his knowledge and wisdom draws its sustenance and strength from the far-off reaches of the river of history.

Besides his abode in this material world of time and matter, an enlightened and illumined man creates for himself also a dwelling-place in the kingdom of inner realisation. There, the richly cultivated soil of his mind, sometimes, gives birth to trees and flowers that burst forth to smile in a world of luminous freedom. The sages, the poet philosophers are beacon-lights, that throw rays of illumination on the path of Man, which ultimately lead Man to outer freedom, a freedom that melts the chains of physical and mental slavery. They also lead a few individuals to an inner freedom, a freedom that cannot be described in words, a freedom

that defies description. Iqbal, the philosopher and poet of East, sang of both these freedoms. while speaking on this aspect of Allama Iqbal's philosophy, it would be appropriate to quote a passage from his great book, *The Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam*. Iqbal in the following passage has emphasised that material and spiritual freedoms are not a negation of one another. He writes:-

"With Islam the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which can not be reconciled Both demand the affirmation of the spiritual self in Man with this difference only that Islam, recognizing the contact of the ideal with the real, says 'yes' to the world of matter and points the way to muster it with a view to discover a basis for a realistic regulation of life."

When Creation launched Man on his long and wearisome voyage, it endowed him with limitless potentialities of inner unfolding, which is best fostered and cultivated in an atmosphere of inter-relationship with one's fellow human beings. Man discovers himself more fully in the larger ambit of good human relationship leading him from unity with mortals to unity with the Immortal. And both these unities are spiritual in their essence. It would be true to say that relationship is the basic and most outstanding truth of this world of life and death. It is like the water that gives sustenance to life in this desert of existence. This relationship transcends the boundaries of country and climate, race and religion. It is to be based on Divine Law.

Iqbal believed in this eternal truth. In a letter to Maulvi Zafar Ahmad Siddiqui in 1932, he wrote, "If in the past Muslim thinkers and statesmen had carefully reflected on the contents of the Quran, a League of Nations in the Muslim world would have come into existence centuries earlier. The history of the League of Nations, which has been created in the twentieth century, is a living testimony to the fact that unless the ego of nations is

hedged around by Divine Laws, there is no way by which peace of the world can be assured."

We have an echo of the same thought in Iqbal's *Zarb-e-Kaleem*:-

مکے نے دیا خاک جنیوا کو یہ پیغام
جمعیت اقوام کہ جمعیت آدم⁷⁹

League, Mecca this message gave to the Genevese authority —
of Nations or a League of Human Fraternity?

There is a perceptible evolution in the process of political thinking of Allama Iqbal. This is true of all political Western and Oriental philosophers. Starting as a nationalist of the Western type, he became an advocate of world Muslim unity. This was but a stepping stone to advocating man's universalism. In 1904, Iqbal wrote, "If we look in to the conditions of the Muslims... their state of affairs seems to be very doubtful. This unfortunate nation has lost its rule, given up industry and abandoned commerce. Now ignorant of the challenges of the time, injured by acute poverty, it is relying on meaningless fatalism." Finding that some Muslims stood away from the main current of activities of the Millat or actively opposed it, he was constrained to say subsequently in *Bang-i-Dara*:-

فرد قائم ربط ملت سے ہے تنہا کچھ نہیں
موج ہے دریا میں اور بیرون دریا کچھ نہیں⁸⁰

An individual lives if with the Millat

⁷⁹ *Zarb-i-Kalim* p-55.

⁸⁰ *Bang-i-Dara*, p. 210

himself he identifies;

If alone he stands, he surely dies.

The waves flourish in the bosom of the sea,

Outside the ocean they all cease to be.

This was truly in continuation of the line of thinking established in the 19th century by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Maulana Shibli and Maulana Hali. The above couplet of Iqbal is so very much like what Sir Syed had said in 1882 while addressing a gathering of Muslim students at Ludhiana:-

"Remember a nation is nothing, unless it is a nation in the real sense. All individuals, joining the fold of Islam, together constitute a nation of the Muslims. As long as they follow and practise their religion, they are a nation. Remember, you have to live and die by Islam, and it is by keeping up Islam that our nation is a nation. Dear children, if someone becomes a star of the heaven, but ceases to be a Muslim, what is he to us? He is no longer a member of our nation. Thus, achieving progress by keeping up Islam means national well-being.

موج ہے دریا میں اور بیرون دریا کچھ نہیں

And in a similar vein Maulana Hali had said:-

جماعت کی عزت میں ہے سب کی عزت
جماعت کی ذلت میں ہے سب کی ذلت

In your Millat's honour you will honoured be;

In its disgrace your identification you will see.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of Pan-Islamism swept across the length and breadth of the Muslim world. Its most vocal and spectacular spokesman was Jamaluddin Afghani. He was deeply influenced by the appeal of this doctrine. Iqbal developed an abiding faith in the universalism of the Muslims of the world. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Muslims of this sub-continent found themselves emotionally attached to the doctrine of Pan-Islamism. In 1918, the Aga Khan wrote in his book, *India In Transition*,

"There is a right and legitimate Pan-Islamism to which every sincere and believing Muhammadan belongs.... that is, the theory of the spiritual brotherhood and unity of the children of the Prophet. It is a deep perennial element in Perso-Arabic culture. It connotes charity and goodwill, towards fellow-believers everywhere from China to Morocco, from the Volga to Singapore. The real spiritual and cultural unity of Islam must ever grow, for, to the followers of the Prophet, it is the foundation of the life of the soul."

Only recently, Gamal Abdul Nasser wrote in his book, *Philosophy of the Revolution*,

"Can we ignore that there is a Muslim world with which we are tied by bonds, which are not only forged by religious faith, but also tightened by the fact of history when my mind travelled to the 80 million Muslims in Indonesia, the 50 million and the several other million in Malaya, Siam, and Burma, and and the 100 million in Pakistan, the 100 million or more in the Middle East, and the 40 in Russia, as well as the other millions in the distant parts of the world... When I visualise these millions united in one Faith, I have

the great consciousness of the tremendous potentialities that cooperation amongst them all can achieve."

In the world of creative art, man is freed from the jungle of selfishness, enabling him to have a clear vision of universal unity, which is a matter of undying joy for the artist. Similarly, in the world of the Spirit, the Soul must free itself from the clutches of the Ego to reach its goal of undying and ecstatic joy. For such individuals, Truth lies in unity and true freedom in its Realisation. In the following couplet of Iqbal, we hear the echoes of the universalism of the Muslims of the world:

بتان رنگ و خون کو توڑ کر ملت میں گم ہو جا
نه تورانی رحی باقی نه ایرانی نه افغانی⁸¹

Break, break the idols of colour and race. In the Millat yourself you must efface. Call not yourself of Turkish nationality, nor an Irani, nor an Afghani.

There is no doubt that Allama Iqbal drank deep at the fountain of Western knowledge. But at heart he always remained an Oriental. The glitter and glamour of the West fascinated him. But it did not enslave him. The bark of his inquiry that set out on its venturesome voyage on the high seas of Western learning came safely back to its haven in the East. In his poetry, Iqbal speaks of many poets, philosophers and thinkers. But, in a sense, he pays the greatest tribute to Maulana Rumi. For, he has said,

پیپر روم ی خاک را اکسیر کرد
از غبارم جلوه ها تعمیر کرد

Into elixir my dust Rumi transformed,

⁸¹ Bang-i-Dara p. 308

Out of this dust brilliant illumination he formed.

What is true of Iqbal in this respect is equally true of so many of the great thinkers and poets of the East. West to them has been only a temporary halting place, a mere port of call. The East is the place where they rest permanently the anchor of their boat of search. This reminds me of that great Lebanese poet and thinker, Khalil Gibran. Disillusioned and disappointed in Lebanon, he sets out for the West. He stayed for a number of years in the United States. There he wrote like one possessed. But the spell of Western civilisation did not enslave him. In one of his letters to Mikhail Naimy, a Lebanese friend of his, like Khalil Gibran settled temporarily in the United States, he wrote as follows:-

"This false civilization has tightened the strings of our spirits to the breaking point. We must leave before they break ...

The West is a machine and everything is at the mercy of the machine."

Iqbal has put this same idea in a mere picturesque way in Bang-i-Dara. He says:—

دیار مغرب کے رہنے والو خدا کی بستی دکان نہیں ہے!
کھرا جسے تم سمجھ رہے ہو وہ اب زر کم عیار ہوگا!
تمہاری تہذیب اپنے خنجر سے آپ ہی خود کشی کرے گی
جو شاخ نازک پہ آشیانہ بنے گا، نا پایدار ہوگا⁸²

Oh you, who have in the West your living place, God's acre is not a market-place.

⁸² Bang.i-Dara, p. 150

The coin that you today real deem soon to you will counterfeit seem.

With its own dagger your civilization will bring about its own annihilation.

"Unlike some other political philosophers, Iqbal descended from the isolated heights of pure philosophy to participate actively in the vociferous arena of everyday politics. He entered the sunshine era of his adolescence at an eventful period of our political history. When Allama Iqbal resigned his job as a Professor at Government College, Lahore it seemed as if Fate itself had made a decision for him. He had freed himself from the suffocating restrictions that went with Government service in those days. Recalling that decision, he said to his devoted servant, Ali Baksh, 'Ali Baksh, I have a message for my people. It could not be conveyed to them, if I remained in Government service'."

It was no logic that decided the issue, but intuition. For Iqbal seems to have intuitively felt at that early period of his life that he was destined to play an active and important role in the political affairs of his nation. History has proved that he was right in making that decision. By his active participation in the political struggle for our independence and for a homeland for the Muslims of this sub-continent, Iqbal has earned a prominent place for himself among our Freedom Fighters, whose memory is a glorious legacy and a deathless heritage of our nation

It may be appropriate here to quote some of the couplets of Iqbal in which one sees flashes of his political philosophy. He lived at a time, when the British held the sub-continent as a colony. His sensitive mind revolted against this. And he sang:—

آ بتاؤں تجھ کو رمز آئینہ ان الملوک

سلطنت اقوام غالب کی ہے اک جادوگری
خواب سے بیدار ہوتا ہے زرا محکوم اگر
پھر سلا دیتی ہے اس کو حکمران کی ساحری⁸³

Come, of a king's duties I will unravel the mystery... .

Empire is a conquering nation's jugglery

If from slumber awakens a subject's face,

Into sleep lulls him the magic of the ruling race.

Although a political leader of great stature, Allama Iqbal was fully aware of the crushing poverty of his people, of the widespread illiteracy among them. His heart beat in sympathy with their downtrodden condition. This is reflected in the following lines of his poetry:-

اٹھو مری دنیا کے غریبوں کو جگا دو
کاخ امرا کے در و دیوار ہلا دو
سلطنتی جمہور کا آتا ہے زمانہ
جو نقش کہن تم کو نظر آئے مٹا دو
جسک ہیئت سے دھقان کو میسر نہیں روزی
اُس کھیت کے ہر خوشہ گندم کو جلا دو⁸⁴

Arise, and the poverty-stricken people of my world awaken;

Let the doors and walls of Caesar's castles be shaken;

From yonder approaches the King of Democracy;

⁸³ Bang-i-Dara, p.295

⁸⁴ Bal.i-Jibreel, p. 149

Erase from the earth the signs of the old sovereignty.

Land that to the peasant bread does not yield,

Burn to ashes the corn and wheat of such a field.

As Iqbal began to participate in active politics, he was fully aware that it was a decisive period of the history of the Muslims of this sub-continent. History was being written before his very eyes. Destiny of his own nation was in the process of taking a final shape. And he made rich and copious contribution to the struggle for our freedom. In his presidential address in 1930 at Allahabad at the All-India Muslim League Open Session, he sounded the clarion-call for a homeland for the Muslims of this sub-continent. His work in this field will continue to be remembered so long as Pakistan lives. And Pakistan will live for ever.

In 1938, at the age of 61, Allama Iqbal breathed his last, full of honours in the service of his people.

On the death of the Great Poet and Philosopher, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah said:

"To me he was a friend, guide and philosopher. During the darkest moments through which the Muslim League had to go, he stood like a rock. He never flinched for a single moment."

Subsequently, Quaid-e-Azam on another occasion said:-

"Iqbal was a remarkable poet of world-wide fame. His work will live for ever. His services to his country and the Muslims are so numerous that his record can be compared with that of the greatest Indians that ever lived. Although a great poet and philosopher, he was no less a practical politician. With his firm

conviction and faith in the ideals of Islam, he was one of the few who originally thought over the feasibility of carving out of India an Islamic State in the north-west and north-east zones, which are historical homelands of Muslims."

The first centenary of the birth of Allama Iqbal will take place in 1977. I would appeal to the Iqbal Academy to bestir itself from now on to celebrate it in a befitting manner. The music of his poetry must be heard by peoples of other countries. The light of his philosophy should be shared by us with other peoples.

In conclusion, may I make an appeal to our nation? Leaders like Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam gave to us an Ideology, which was the basis for the foundation of Pakistan. It would be a folly for us to forget that Ideology. A nation that forgets its past, forgets itself. Let our nation stand united to defend and to perpetuate that Ideology, which was in fact the reason why Pakistan came to be established. We who belong to that generation, which worked as soldiers in the cause of our freedom struggle are, one by one, passing away to the Great Beyond. We look to the youth of our country to work ceaselessly and tirelessly to safeguard and preserve our Ideology.