

ISLAMIC SOCIALISM AND IQBAL

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As a social and religious thinker, Iqbal emphasises the unity of God and finality of prophethood. According to him nothing deserves to be made an object of love and worship except Allah. The greatest contribution of the Prophet of Islam was that he laid great stress on a direct approach to God with duties towards humanity. In describing the principles of service to humanity, Islam lays down that every action done towards the good of humanity falls under the category of religion. The Holy Quran significantly points out that "it is not piety that you turn your face towards the East and West, but it is piety that one believes in Allah, and the next world, the angels and the book of the Prophet, and gives wealth out of love to the kith and kin, the orphan, the needy, the travellers and the beggars." (2: 20).

Thus religion, based on the Unity of God and Islamic Socialism is a true and universal religion and as such it can never be the cause of factions. What has been the cause of trouble is sectarianism and Churchism.

It is, therefore, held by Iqbal that a true Muslim has a universal character, but when he joins a sect, he loses that character. Unless the thick crust of particularisation which does not allow us to see ourselves in others, is scraped off, there can be no harmony in the world. The relation between man and God is natural and does not hang on sectarianism. The significance of the doctrine of unity of God is beautifully illustrated by Iqbal in his following verses:

اینکه در صد سینه پیچد یک نفس سرے از اسرار توحید است و بس

یک شو و توحید را مشمہود کن غائبش را از عمل موجود کن

دین ازو حکمت ازو آئین ازو زور ازو قوت ازو تمکین ازو¹

¹ *Asrar-o-Rumuz*, p. 105, 182, 183.

What is it that infuses one breath in a hundred hearts?

This is one of the secrets of faith in Tawhid.

Be united and thus make Tawhid visible,

Realise its latent meaning in action;

Faith and Wisdom and Law all spring from it,

It is the source of strength and power and stability.

Iqbal further emphasises the point that finality of prophethood was the need without which the unification of humanity was impossible.

از رسالت در جهان تکوین ما از رسالت دین ما آئین ما²

Prophethood is the basis of our organisation, our religion and our law.

National Prophethood cemented the bonds of national unity, but international unity was needed and this could be effected by sending one prophet to all the nations of the world. Only thus could be the idea of unifying the human race brought to perfection. This idea is to be found as a central motif of thought in all the writings of Iqbal.

فرد بر می خیزد از مشت گلے قوم زاید از دل صاحب دلے³

The individual is born of a handful of dust,

The nation out of the heart of the inspired individuals.

² *Asrar-o-Rumuz*, p. 16

³ *Asrar-o-Rumuz*, p. 136.

Thus the idea of unifying the human race and gathering it together under one banner was brought to perfection by the Holy Prophet. All geographical limitations were thus swept away as were all bars of colours and race, and the basis of the unity of human race was laid on the golden principle that all men constitute the family of God and were thus a single nation.

It is thus held by Iqbal that creedal compartmentalism is the very negation of Islam, which is something unifying, and universalistic and not at all diversive and exclusive. It is much higher than a mere set of conventions. It is that vital spiritual touch that makes the whole world akin. Iqbal lays particular emphasis on the fact that the deeds are more important than dogmas and conduct is more worthwhile than creeds. Hating one another for the love of God and shunning one another for the salvation of soul are altogether anti-social tendencies which undermine the very foundation of religious faith. Hence recognition of inherent human dignity is the necessary prelude to human harmony. Brotherly behaviour towards one another is the only glory of mankind. Says Iqbal:

آدمیت احترام آدمی باخبر آو از مقام آدمی!⁴

بنده عشق از خدا گیرد طریق می شود بر کافر و مومن شفیق!

کفر و دیس را گیرد در پهنائے دل دل اگر بگریزد از دل، وائے دل!

گرچه دل زندائی آب و گل است ایس همه آفاق آفاق دل است⁵

What is Admiyat? Respect for man!

Learn to appreciate the true worth of man;

⁴ *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*, p. 149.

⁵ *Javid Namah*, p. 242.

The man of love learns the ways of God

And is benevolent alike to the believer and the unbeliever:

Welcome faith and unfaith alike to the heart!

If the heart flees from the heart, woe betide the heart!

The heart is, no doubt, shut in this prison-house of clay.

But the entire Universe is the domain of heart⁶

Since all human beings are the children of the same Lord, it is either ignorance or insanity to fight about trifles and to ignore the core of all religious creeds i.e. charitableness towards one another and subordination of selfishness to the greater good of humanity, irrespective of social, religious and linguistic differences. It is social service alone which should determine one's status in society. Iqbal, therefore, positively contends that alleviating human misery is the highest form of the glorification of God and social service is the best worship of the Lord. Hence cultivation of harmonious relations among human beings, regardless of colour, creed, clan and caste, is, according to him, the pith of all religions. Undoubtedly Islam aims at the fullness and enrichment of life which consists in human freedom and human dignity.

To achieve freedom and dignity, Iqbal emphasises the life of struggle and activity, and warns us against the consequences of inactivity and too much dependence on others. Lethargy is surely a disease that seriously affects the social, political, religious and economic progress of a country. Iqbal therefore stirs the people to action not only against religious morbidity, but also against social, political and economic evils. According to him, one can realise one's destiny only through a life of strenuous activity and faith in God; not one of renunciation and self-centred contemplation. He makes this clear in the language of poetic symbolism:

بہل افسانہ آن پا چراغی حدیث سوز او آزار گوش است

⁶ *Javid Namah*, pp. 241-42.

من آن پروانه را پروانه دایم که جانش سخت کوش و شعله نوش است⁷

Leave out the story of the restless moth

Whose tale of burning repels my ears;

That moth alone is a true moth

Which is active in striving and can swallow the flame.

Iqbal thus electrifies human efforts to combat the forces of evil and to subjugate nature. He maintains that religion which takes the place of efforts is a neurosis and not a true religion. According to him, God has created man to conquer the forces of Nature and realise his inner potentialities. He is supported in his contention by the following verses of the Holy Quran:

Certainly we have created man to face difficulty. (90-4)

"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for, and that his striving shall soon be seen; then shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward. (5:3 39-41)

O my peoples! work in your place! I am a worker.(39.39)

Thus a true Muslim, according to Iqbal, is not in a stationary condition; nor is he the slave of his environment. He struggles and strives throughout his life to master it. In fighting for it, lies his dignity.

Like other seers and sages, Iqbal has been tirelessly harping on the theme of promotion of human happiness and global peace by purging human beings of those devastating defects and inveterate infirmities that tend to produce disharmony and discord. In order to achieve this, the three most distinctive features of the socio-economic principles of Islam i.e. the abolition of interest, institution of Zakat, and the negation of concentration of wealth in a few hands, must be kept in view. Though equality is the basic human right, it means equal rights and opportunities for all men. The Holy

⁷ *Payam-i.Mashriq*, p. 24.

Quran gives man the right to the benefit of the rule of law. The highest dignity of the State is, therefore, subject to the same discipline of law in Islamic state as the ordinary poor man. Thus all are equal in the eyes of Law in Islam and the social status of man is not determined by his self-acquired or inherited power of wealth but by his personal qualities and by his contributions to social welfare. Iqbal therefore wishes to rid the Muslim of the influence of all the traditions and forces of habits left over by the exploiting classes and the influence of imperialism. He is fully conscious of the fact that once freed from all these influences they will generate a mighty force and play a powerful role. He, therefore, fosters the socialistic ideology of Islam. The plight of depairing humanity moves Iqbal very much and he strikes a note of warning against the evils of imperialism:

ابھی تک آدمی صید زبون شہریاری ہے
 قیامت ہے کہ انسان نوع انسان کا شکاری ہے⁸

Man is still a miserable prey to exploitation and imperialism: is it not a grievous calamity that man should prey on man?

Iqbal is also very much touched and moved by the ever increasing misery and degradation of the working class. He awakens the poor and the working class by his message and points out that the social order in which the means of production are concentrated in a few hands, and the small producers are being swallowed by the large capitalists, and the productive system is rent by crises and depression, can never be a true Muslim social order.

He, therefore, longs for a perfect social order in which exploitation of labour will cease, private enterprise will give place to state enterprise, and the means of production will be socialised and class antagonism will disappear.

This perfect harmony and social order can only be achieved in an atmosphere of socialism. The fundamental idea of socialism is the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and its substitution by State ownership. The State should own and manage the industries and appropriate

⁸ *Bali-Jibril*, P. 161.

the profit which would be spent on public welfare. It should provide for all men equal opportunities for realising of what is best in their moral and intellectual nature. The function of the State besides keeping law and order and protection of life and property of the individual, and administration of justice, is also to protect the weak and to promote the welfare of the people, so as to enable them to pursue their moral and spiritual ideal. It is the duty of the Islamic State to provide social security to all classes of people, to protect them against want, ignorance, disease, and to take steps to assure a minimum standard of living to all people. Under the powerful impact of socialistic thinking, Iqbal looks upon the State as the supreme and positive good and considers it to be the duty of the State to concern itself with every aspect of the social life and to provide for all men an equal opportunity of realising their noble aspirations in life. He urges a vast extension in the function of Government. It should promote the common weal of all classes of people and assume the ownership of the means of production and distribute the product more equitably among all classes of population, preventing the exploitation of the many by the few. According to Islamic Socialism, private ownership of land and other means of production is completely unjustified. The lands and minerals are the gift of nature and should, therefore, belong to all not a few. The Quran says:

We created land for the nourishment of all the people.(Quran 54: 10)

Iqbal gives expression to the same idea in the following lines:

پالتا ہے بیچ کو مٹی کی تاریکی میں کون؟
 کون دریاؤں کی موجوں سے اٹھاتا ہے سحاب؟
 کون لایا کھینچ کر پچھم سے باد سازگار؟
 خاک یہ کس کی ہے؟ کس کا ہے یہ نور آفتاب؟
 کس نے بھر دی موتیوں سے خوشہ گندم کی جیب؟
 موسموں کو کس نے سکھلائی ہے خوئے انقلاب
 دہ خدایا! یہ زمیں تیری نہیں، تیری نہیں
 تیرے آبا کی نہیں، تیری نہیں، میری نہیں

Who nourishes the seed beneath the dark clay?

Who raises the clouds from the waves of the sea?

Who brought the favourable wind from the west?

Who is the landlord and to whom does the light of the sun belong?

Who filled with pearls the pocket of wheat?

Who taught the seasons, the principles of change?

O'Landlord, the land is not yours, certainly it is not yours.

It neither belongs to your ancestors, nor to me, nor to you."

The theory of Islamic socialism is an extension of the principles of democracy. Real democracy can only exist when there is economic equality. Unplanned economic system is liable to frequent break-downs due to periodical crises. Iqbal is strictly against the antidemocratic and anti-liberal philosophy of Fascism which is opposed to all the progressive ideas which have gained currency during the last few centuries. The notion of the totalitarian State which Fascism seeks to build up is opposed to the liberty of the individual. The State, according to Iqbal, is not the end in itself. It may be a brilliant organisation, but it is only a means for promoting the development of personality of the individual.

In short, Iqbal says, "So long as the so called democracy, wretched nationalism and degraded imperialism have not crumbled into dust, so long as men have not demonstrated by their actions the belief that the entire world is one family of God, so long as the distinction of race, colour and nationality have not been completely swept away, we will not be able to lead a happy life, and the fine ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity will never be realised."