

# IQBAL'S CONCEPT OF POWER

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For Russell 'the intoxication of power...is the greatest danger of our time]<sup>28</sup>. Lust of power being the most potent danger of the present day, it appears to be worthwhile, to analyse Iqbal's treatment of power, who is claimed to be a political thinker of some position.

Power has been eulogized by Iqbal without any reservations. Since 1907, he seems to have realized the importance of power as it is evident from the poem 'March 1907', wherein the aspiration and the ambition is to overcome the more powerful tide, the small ants will become stronger and the 'tiger' will awaken to senses.<sup>29</sup>

It is evident from his letter written in 1915 that it was since 1906 that he was deeply concerned to determine the relation of power with religion. It is also asserted that religion without the support of power is mere Philosophy. And his assertion in this letter that he wrote his *Asrar-e-Khudi* with the purpose to make the Muslims realize the importance of power for religion<sup>30</sup> is borne out in clearest possible terms by some of his poems in this very work.

Here Iqbal is critical of Plato for his escapism, which he believes, to have largely influenced the thinking of the Muslims.

"He dominates our thinking,

His cup sends us to sleep and takes the sensible world away from us.

The soul of the Sufi bows to his authority.

And called the world of phenomena 'a myth'?"

"Our recluse had no remedy but flight:

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<sup>28</sup> Russel, B., *History of Western Philosophy*, George Allen And Unwin, 1957, p. 855.

<sup>29</sup> *Bang-e-Dara*. p. 150, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Ataulah Shaikh, Ashraf Publications, *Iqbal Namah*, vol. II, p. 45.

He could not edure the noise of this worlds".<sup>31</sup>

To counter the impact of such sufism which teaches other-worldliness and makes the Muslims morbid and inactive, Iqbal wishes to make them conscious of their ownelves and of their ideals and mission in the world.

"The moral and religious ideal of man is not

self-negation but self-affirmation...".

"My criticism of Plato is directed against those philosophical systems which hold up death rather than life as their ideal..."<sup>32</sup>

Iqbal's criticism of Plato's thought and his argument about a life of action and expression of power has been interpreted differently. In this regard Iqbal himself has taken a stand, which in the first glance, looks too brutish and radical. Thus, in the *Asrar* he talks about truth and strength as going hand in hand. They appear to be two sides of the same coin.

Strength is the twin of truth.

'Falsehood derives from power the authority of truth. And by falsifying truth deems itself true'.<sup>33</sup>

Here it has been emphasized that physical power also is of great importance, because without power nothing could be achieved. It is true that power is declared to be, the sustainer of truth, but not the creator of truth. But admiration for power is so unreserved that his commentators ascribe it to the influence of Nietzsche.

- (a) Aziz Ahmad in his *Nai Tashkil* emphasises that Iqbal in spite of his difference in detail with Nietzsche had accepted his influence in the concept of power.<sup>34</sup>
- (b) Very recently, a political scientist in a Doctoral dissertation asserts "that Iqbal was subject to a certain amount of

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<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, Reymond. A. Tr. *Secrets of the Self*, pp 57 and 59

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, — pp. xviii and xxii,

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad, Aziz, *Nai Tashkil*, p, 282

Nietzschean influence. It was Nietzsche's great emphasis on power which was a matter of constant attraction".<sup>35</sup>

- (c) By ascribing Nietzsche's influence on Iqbal's concept of power, it is quite logical to involve the latter also in Fascism and as it actually happened. The assertions are made about Iqbal that his national ideal for Islam must make the fascist, leap for joy"<sup>36</sup> he was looking for "a dictator saviour"<sup>6</sup> and ultimately to his satisfaction he declared:

"In Germany Hitler has found a new era"<sup>37</sup>

Iqbal was acquainted with Nietzsche. But to assert that he was influenced by the latter in his concept of power with all of its implications does not, appear to be tenable. It is contended so on the ground that the two not only differ in the vital aspects of the problem, but they face each other from hostile camps, although there might appear some resemblance here and there superficially.

The following will show that there is neither any validity (1) in ascribing Nietzsche's influence on Iqbal's concept of power, nor (2) in the assertion that Iqbal was pro-fascism.

Power is declared to be the deciding factor between right and wrong. The emphasis on the decisive role of power in matters of right and wrong or even victory and defeat is the result of Iqbal's study of History. The gist of a poem given below will show that it is his study of History which has enabled him to recognize the importance of power and which in no way is Nietzsche inspired. The very caption of the poem apart from its contents is significant: *Qummat our Din* (Power and religion).

In this poem it is pointed out that humanity so many times has had to suffer at the hands of the conquerors like Alexander and Changez. And that it is the verdict of History that lust for power has catastrophic implications. Power without religion is most poisonous, whereas power for the sake of

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<sup>35</sup> Hassan, Dr, Parveen Feroze, *The Political Philosophy of Iqbal*. United Limited, Lahore, 1970.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, W.C. Victor Gollancz, London, 1946, *Modern Islam in India* p. 120-21.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

religion is the panacea of all ills.<sup>38</sup>

Here it may be pointed out that had Iqbal been inspired by Nietzsche, instead of warning against dangers of lust for power he would have sung in praise of the Conquerors.

Before proceeding further to examine the relation between Iqbal and Nietzsche in the context of power, it will not be out of place to say a few words about power as understood by Iqbal.

Power may be taken as the capacity to achieve the desired object. Thus two elements compose it (1) Capacity (2) Desire. Both the capacity and the desire' may have two aspects each:

'Capacity' may be created either through love, affection, sympathy, unity, or through falsehood, deceit, terror; unity through terror, support through fear by exploiting and sacrificing the weak as suggested by Machiavelli and Nietzsche.

So also 'desire' may be of two types: Material, personal and selfish gain, conquest and personal glory, or moral, impersonal and selfless.

The two stand poles apart both in the capacity or means and Desire or end of Power. Nietzsche aims to achieve power by sacrificing the society (believed in 'individual power' and exercises his power for personal glory and self aggrandizement.

To Iqbal the source of power is radically different from that of Nietzsche. In the case of Iqbal power comes through unity based on religion. Iqbal's emphasis on unity is of vital importance in the context of power which has been generally neglected by his commentators. Power, unity and religion are inter-related. It is unity which creates power and it is religion or *Tauhid* which creates the unique sense of unity. Unity based on *Tauhid* brings power.<sup>39</sup> Iqbal emphasises the importance of religion in forging a unique sense of unity. Religion based on sincerity and truth forges unity of thought among them. The loss and gain for one becomes so for all. It creates common outlook among them. Thus they are bound together firmly for the purpose of achieving common goal.<sup>40</sup>

In the case of Nietzsche, neither unity, nor religion has got anything to

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<sup>38</sup> Iqbal, *Zarb-e-Kalim*, p 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Javed Namah*, pp, 227.

<sup>40</sup> *Ramuz-e-Bekbudi*, pp. 106,107.

do with power, as it is with Iqbal. Nietzsche was no believer either in unity or in religion or God. He rejects both.

A "good and healthy aristocracy" in the words of Nietzsche must "accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of a legion of individuals, who for its own sake, must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society is not allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their high duties" <sup>41</sup>

Thus for Nietzsche power is to be achieved by sacrificing the society—whereas for Iqbal unity (or millat or society) is not to be sacrificed for the sake of the individual. Society or Millat is the source of Power.

"In his striving for power, Nietzsche *ubermensch* cynically tramples all the generally accepted moral and ethical values, and the people for him are a mere crowd, a herd above which he must proudly rise and reign. Iqbal on the contrary wants the entire people to be made up of strong, wilful personalities united by common ideals of friendship, fraternity, and mutual service. In his works Iqbal repeatedly disassociated himself outright from Nietzsche's cynical aristocracy" <sup>42</sup>

Nietzsche declares God to be dead. The question of God's being the source of strength and inspiration in case of Nietzsche does not arise.

"When Zarathustra was alone, however, he said to his heart: "could it be possible! This old saint in the forest hath not yet heard of it, that God is dead" <sup>43</sup>

"Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy! but God died, and therewith also those blasphemous" <sup>44</sup>

### **The two face each other**

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<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche, *Philosophy of Nietzsche*; p.576, translated by Thomas Common, Helen Zimmer etc, The Modern Library, New York, 1927.

<sup>42</sup> Anikeyev N P., *Iqbal Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, p. 273 Ed. Malik Hafeez, Columbia University Press, 1971.

<sup>43</sup>Nietzsche, *Op. Cit.* p.6

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p.7.

It is not only in the source of power that they oppose each other, the opposition between the two in assigning the role to power is still more pronounced. Without going into the details it may be said that it is not a question of difference between the two rather the two face each other from hostile camps. Iqbal desires power to protect the weak from exploitation and oppression.<sup>45</sup> Besides in the poem '*Qunwat Aur Deen*' as noted earlier, Iqbal tells it in unequivocal terms that power for religion is panacea, whereas power without religion is poi-son. Nietzsche, on the other hand has a different attitude towards owper. Power is to be used for exploitation.

"Exploitation" does not belong to a deprived,  
or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs  
to the nature of the living being as a primary  
organic function; it is a consequence of the  
intrinsic will to power, which is precisely  
the will to life"<sup>46</sup>

## FASCISM

Now an attempt should be made to analyse briefly how far it is tenable to hold that Iqbal has fascist leanings. A dispassionate and also extensive study of Iqbal's political ideas will not encourage one to link him with this creed of destruction and barbarism. In this regard an analysis of the key fascist concepts will throw the whole discussion in proper perspective.

### **(a) Individual and the State**

The individual in the Fascist state does not have his own will. He is to act according to the will of the state. According to Mussolini he is "deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual, but the state

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<sup>45</sup> *Pas Che Bayad Kard* p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, *Op.cit.* p. 578.

alone".<sup>47</sup>

"The Fascist state" he (Mussolini) writes "is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality—thus it may be called the 'ethic' state".<sup>48</sup>

### **(b) The State**

State according to Mussolini has a personality and a will of its own which is superior to the wills of individuals. It must be obeyed by all. Obedience is to be tacit so much so that it becomes an object of worship. The state is all pervading:

"Nothing outside of the state, nothing against the state, nothing, above the state".<sup>49</sup>

### **(c) The Leader and the State**

As a matter of fact State itself is something abstract. It is the Leader who 'emerges' in the fascist society and identifies his own will with the will of the State.

"The function of the course of justice was openly asserted to be to serve the interest of the state: and the state could be bound by no law, laws was the will of the state formulated by the Fueer.<sup>50</sup>

### **(d) Law and the will of the leader**

The position of a fascist leader is quite different from that in a democracy. His will is supreme. He is both the creator of Law and its interpreter. He is himself above the law. He is infallible and is always just. This is what Hitler's Lieutenants used to preach; "Justice and Hitler's will are one and the same thing" (Goering) "since Hitler has been presented to us by God— those who do not place themselves at his side are evil willed".<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Joad, G.E. \4. Gollancz Ltd., London, 1948, *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, p .622 .

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.588.

<sup>49</sup> Mussolini — quoted by Ebenstein William; *Modern Politics, Thought* Rinehart and Company Ltd., New York, 1955, p. 324.

<sup>50</sup> Weldon. T.D , *States and Morals* John Murray London, 1962, p. 179,

<sup>51</sup> Joad, *Op. Cit.* p. 608.

Under fascism as noted earlier the state is worshipped and on behalf of the state the leader is worshipped.

This brief analysis of fascist thought shows that Iqbal can hardly be said to echo it. Inspired by Islam Iqbal is a firm believer in the rule of Law. It is for this reason that he eulogizes Khilafat. He refers to it again and again that Khilafat is based on the supremacy of Law. The ruler and the ruled both are equally bound by the same Law.

The Law of God is absolutely supreme...Islam has a horror for personal authority".<sup>52</sup>

"The Caliph...is fallible like other men and is subjected like very Muslim, to the impersonal authority of the same law"<sup>53</sup>.

"From a legal standpoint, the Caliph does not occupy any privileged position. In theory, he is like other members of the common-wealth. He can be directly sued in an ordinary law court".<sup>54</sup>

In this context Iqbal mentions the role of Judiciary for maintaining its independence without fear and favour of the Chief Executive. It did not hesitate in summoning the Head of the State to the Court of Law and impose punishment on him if found responsible for the violation of the laws.<sup>55</sup>

So far as the state is concerned, in Iqbal's scheme it is necessary no doubt. But its necessity does not lie in itself, because to him it is a means and not an end itself. And the means for the implementation of the law. In his letter to Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1973 he writes that enforcement and development of Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states".<sup>56</sup>

Apart from state worshipping under fascism, war is no less adored. All problems are solved with the help of brute force. Mussolini believed in the importance of state but attached greater importance to war, rejecting peace in human society. William Ebenstein points out "More important than Mussolini's plea for a strong state is his frank rejection of the ideal of peace

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<sup>52</sup> Wahid, Syed Abdul Sh. Muhammod Ashraf, Lahore, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, p. 52

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64

<sup>55</sup> *Ramuz-e-Bekbudi*, p. 123—25

<sup>56</sup> Malik Hafeez, *Op. Cit.* p. 386.



among nations". War is eulogized because 'war alone' in the words of Mussolini 'puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it.'<sup>57</sup>

"Though words are very beautiful things", Mussolini declared "rifles, machineguns, ships, aeroplanes and cannons are more beautiful things still".<sup>58</sup>

"For Fascism" Mussolini writes, "the growth of empire, that is to say, the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality and its opposite a sign of decadence"<sup>59</sup>

Iqbal emphatically denounces the war of conquest in the name of religion.

"That the Muslim peoples have fought and conquered like other peoples, and that some of their leaders have screened their personal ambition behind the veil of religion. I do not deny; but I am absolutely sure that territorial conquest was no part of the original programme of Islam. As a matter of fact, I consider it a great loss that the progress of Islam as a conquering faith stultified the growth of those germs of an economic and democratic organization of society which I find scattered up and down the pages of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet"<sup>60</sup>

There is no place for war of aggression in Iqbal's scheme of things. He considers the aggressors as robbers. The dialogue between Alexander and the Sea Pirate, shows the hatred that Iqbal had for war of aggressions, when he identifies, the great conqueror, Alexander with a Sea Pirate. The profession of both is the same, to plunder, one does it on land and the other on seas<sup>61</sup> .

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<sup>57</sup> Ebenstien, *Op. Cit.* p. 324.

<sup>58</sup> Joad, *Op. Cit.* P. 639.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 646.

<sup>60</sup> Ed. Vahid, S.A. *Op. Cit.* p. 100.

<sup>61</sup> *Zarb-e-Kalim*, P. 157.

This shows that Iqbal would admire only those generals who fight for the right and would brand those as plunderers and tyrants who fight not for the right, rather to establish the supremacy of their might.

In a letter in 1936 he asserts that for territorial gain war in Islam is forbidden so also for preaching religion.<sup>62</sup>

## **IQBAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

As a believer in peace, Iqbal rejects the idea of war both on economic as well as on religious grounds. Also some of his ideas may be conducive to international peace. One of the basic needs for inter-national order is the existence of international community which unfortunately does not exist and so also the international peace.

Laski emphasizes the point that the nations of the world with their own sovereignties defied the League of Nations and violated the international Law, because they do not possess the sense of being an 'Organic community guided by some superior law. "There is no organic community of its own to which their own law is subordinate"<sup>63</sup>: In the absence of international community with a sense of unity there cannot be peace in human 'society. There is international society but no such community.

"International Society lacks the Solidarity without which an effective political order is unthinkable"<sup>64</sup>. Referring to the League of Nations, in the *Zarb-e-Kalim* Iqbal points out that although the nations, have formed an association, but even they have failed to conceive the idea of unity of mankind, or international community hence the League of Nations is not human association, rather an association of the different nations of the world.<sup>65</sup> Believing and believing firmly in the unity of mankind, Iqbal asserts:

In the interests of a universal unification of mankind the Quran ignores their minor differences and says, "Come let us unite on what is common to us all"<sup>66</sup>

### **Khudi and War**

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<sup>62</sup> Ataulah Sheikh, Ed. Ashraf Publications, *Iqbal Nama* vol. I.p. 204.

<sup>63</sup> Laski, Herold, J. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1955, *Grammar of Politics*, p. xviii.

<sup>64</sup> Peters, R.s, and Benn, S.1., *Social Principles and the Democratic States* Allen Unwin, 1966. p. 369.

<sup>65</sup> *Zarb-e-Kalim* p. 54

<sup>66</sup> *Op. Cit.* p.99.

Through *Khudi* and *Khilafat* Iqbal aims at improving the tragic human situation. He emphasizes upon the Muslim the need to establish *Khilafat* to serve the interest of humanity. *Khudi* is recommended to create "Unique" individuals. After passing through the two stages of the development of *Khudi*, the individual becomes 'Unique' and attains Divine vicegerency and in that capacity, Iqbal exhorts him to see that peace and harmony prevails in human society.

"Silence the noise of the nations, Imparadise our ears with the music,  
Arise and tune the harp of brotherhood, Give us back the cup of the  
wine of love"<sup>67</sup>.

Besides, in a letter<sup>68</sup> Iqbal himself points out that peace in human society is not possible unless the nations of the world develop their *Khudi*, i. e. completely subordinate themselves to the Divine Command, and power will be exercised only for the law and not for self aggrandisement.

It must always be kept in mind that Iqbal is well aware of the rule of moral law in the affairs of man. This, in fact, is the differentia which distinguishes Iqbal's thought from those of Nietzsche. Iqbal has insisted on the moral and spiritual elements and has identified them with self-restraint. In this regard he mentions Hazrat Ali.

Immediately after the section describing the stages for the development of *Khudi* leading to establishment of Divine Vicegerency or *Khilafat* (about *Khilafat* he wrote in so many places before mentioning it here in the *Asrar*), follows the section wherein he comes to eulogize Ali — the symbol of Power both Moral and Physical.

He is the symbol of moral power because he could control the physical desires. Body is considered by Iqbal as 'dark clay'. It is held responsible for debasing the ideas and thoughts of man and also for making him the slave of his lust.<sup>69</sup> But this physical power could be converted into moral power by means of subduing the 'body's clay'. By achieving this, Ali, the Lion of God could change the darkness of the earth into brilliance.<sup>70</sup>

It is painted out, that man with the help of his physical power can win

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<sup>67</sup> Nicholson, Reynold A. *Op. Cit.* p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> *Iqbal Namah* vol. I, p.202.

<sup>69</sup> *Asrar-e-Khudi*, p. 53

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

territorial war. However, his greatest or brightest possession is not territory but victory over himself.

"Man wins territory by prowess in battle, But his brightest jewel is mastery of himself".<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Iqbal not only talks about power in terms of brute force but links power with moral checks, and self-restraint.

Taken into the context of societies or nations the concept of restraint would imply that to satisfy one's own hunger at the cost of others is the sign of the barbarians. In this sense most of the nations today are barbarians. They are barbarians in the sense that they do not hesitate in doing harm to other nations, for their own national interest. And those nations which have the capacity of committing aggression against the smaller nations, do not hesitate in doing so. So far as the society envisaged by Iqbal is concerned, there is no question of aggression of the powerful against the weak either at national or at international level. The use of coercive power largely remains idle, because the individuals possess self control. If at all occasions arise for its use the man in authority will not misuse his it. He will not exercise it for self interest. Through 'self control' he becomes master of his desires.

A person with self control will obey the law out of his own inner conviction and not under coercion. This is the mark of civilized person, which distinguishes him from a barbarian who believes in force coercion. If the members of society obey the law not because it appeals to their moral sense, not because of their conviction, rather they obey only to avoid coercion, force and punishment, they are not civilized. Once the fear of coercion and punishment is removed they will turn barbarians as depicted by Hobbes — they will be thrown back to the state of nature where there is "continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"<sup>72</sup> And through his theory of *Khudi* Iqbal aims at producing such individuals in the society who obey the law out of their own inner urge and where the chances of going back to the state of nature do not arise.

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<sup>71</sup> Nicholson, R.A. op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, p, 97, quoted by Weldon T.D. *States and Morals*, p. 105. John Murray, 1962.