

IQBAL, MUSLIM UNITY AND ISLAMIC SUMMIT

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Iqbal's philosophy has two aspects: (i) particularity, (ii) universality. He believed in the reality of individual ego and he argued as well for life in a higher, comprehensive, all-embracing spiritual world. These philosophical thoughts provide two premises for Iqbal's political thought. He believed, on the one hand, in the emancipation and freedom of the Muslims of Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and on the other, he argued for the unity of Muslim nations. His politics became both national and international. This also shows that Iqbal's political philosophy is not atomistic but organic in that it implied the formation of an association of Muslim countries to better their own lot and be the upholder of peace and justice throughout the world. It has been argued in this paper that the recently held Islamic Summit, at Lahore, was in fact the translation of Iqbal's abstract thought into the language of practical international politics.

In the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal writes:

"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 republic...Islam is neither nationalism nor imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not restricting the social horizon of its members."¹

In these lines, Iqbal suggest:

1. Muslim nations should have the capacity to undertake an introspective analysis and assessment of their conditions.

¹ 1. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Sh. Mohammad

2. Their geographical national boundaries are merely matter of of convenience and not an occasion for hostile acts.
3. He further believes that this self-identity will show these nations their objectives for self-realization.
4. This will in the years to come make Muslim nations strong and
5. Finally will lead them to form a "family of republics" or a "League of Nations."²

The Summit declaration voices the same Iqbalian thoughts. At this historic conference it was solemnly proclaimed by the Head of Muslim States: "Determination to preserve and promote solidarity among Muslim countries, to respect each other's independence and territorial integrity, to refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs and to resolve their differences through peaceful means in a fraternal spirit."

The Islamic Summit not only made it possible for the Muslim nations to sit round a conference table, but also gave them confidence and self-respect. Iqbal has argued all along that the particular has value and significance and self-identity is the clue to existence Whether we are talking about individuals or small nations, we must accept the principle of self-identification. The Summit declaration correctly emphasised this fact.

Iqbal believes that once the level of self-identification is achieved, the Muslim nation ought to look for strength through social ends and objectives. Iqbal has said that territorial boundaries should not cloud the 'social horizons of its members'.

The task of the Redeemer of unity was not an easy one.

Having lain long in their own lain of ignorance, the Muslims had forgotten the glories of Islam--forgotten the golden era of their ancestors when they ruled more than half the known world. To arouse such masses he had to infuse in them the will to survive. He exhorted them to give up mental slavery and derive the inspiration from Islam.

O trustee of the wisdom of the Qur'an, Find thy lost unity again !

² Ibid., p. 159.

We; who keep the gate of the castle of Islam,

Have become unbelievers by neglecting the watchword of Islam.

During his stay in Europe he acquainted himself with the ideas and thoughts of the West. The absence of religious sentiments on the one hand and the presence of hollow materialism on the other nauseated him. Greedy and selfish competition between man and man and between nation and nation could not be the basis of a society of which Iqbal was dreaming:

O residents of the West, God's earth is not a shop;

The gold that you are thinking to be genuine will now prove to be of low value,

Your civilization is going to commit suicide with its own dagger ;

The nest which is made on a frail bough cannot but be insecure.

He is concerned with the entire world of Islam which knew no bounds of territory, race or caste. It is non racial and non-spatial and cuts at the root of nationalism which is based on the race and territorial affiliations:

Our essence is not bound to any place,

The vigour of our wine is not contained

In any bowl;

Chinese and Indian

Alike ore the shards that constitute our jar,

Turkish and Syrian alike the clay.

Forming our body ; neither is our heart

Of India, or Syria. or Rome,

Nor any fatherland do we profess

Except Islam.

His efforts bore fruit. His spiritual poems infused new blood, new vigour and new vitality in the veins of a sleeping race. Muslims all over the world struggled for their independence and broke away the chains of slavery. His fervent zeal and unbounded enthusiasm for Islam fired the imagination of Muslim world. His firm conviction that "Islam is itself destiny and will not suffer a destiny " stirred the Muslim intelligentsia. Apart from inspiring the Muslims of the sub-continent he guided them to the path of salvation with his prophetic vision he could see the future course of history. In the words of Quaid-i-Azam, "he was the interpreter and voice of Islam. Although a great poet and philosopher, he was no less a practical politician." Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar also paid him a high tribute. "He", said the Maulana, "was the poet of Islamic reawakening in the 20th century, and to no man does Muslim India owe greater debt than to this modest, shy and retiring barrister of the Punjab."³

He believed that the Muslims all over the world must unite together to achieve their lost glory.

Right from Nile's banks to Kasghar's Soil

Let Muslims all united stand

Of Islam's faces designs to foil

And guard haram in holy land;

He prayed to Almighty and sought Divine Guidance in the success of his mission.

O thou that art as the soul in the body of the universe,

Thou art our soul and thou art ever feeling from us.

We are dispersed like stars in the world;

Though of the same family, we are strange to one another.

³ Clause 4 of Summit Declaration.

Bind again these scattered leaves.

Revive the law of love!

Give us the strong faith of Abraham!

Make us know the meanings of 'there is no God.'

The dawn of Friday the 22nd February, 1974 was perhaps an answer to these prayers — a realization of these dreams, when hand in hand the Heads of the Muslim states, foreign ministers and high dignitaries pledged unity, amity and solidarity. This marked a new epoch in the annals of the world history--the beginning of a new era for the Muslims. The start of one of the greatest marches of civilization which will yet teach the world--in his own words — "so long as this so-called democracy, this accursed nationalism and this degraded Imperialism are not shattered, so long as distinctions of race, colour and geographical nationalities are not wiped out completely, they will never be able to lead a happy and contented life and the beautiful ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialise."⁴

Iqbal, the champion of the oppressed must indeed be satisfied with the discussions and deliberations considering the Middle East problem—the evacuation of territories acquired by force, the restoration of Muslim rights over Jerusalem and the restitution of the rights of the Palestinian people. Ever since the Balfour Declaration in 1917, he was keenly interested in the affairs of Palestine and wanted it to be a separate home-land for the Arabs of Palestine.

Buried beside the Historic Badshahi Mosque, Iqbal's soul must have experienced the Divine Grace at the Heads of states offering their Friday prayers together and perhaps murmured with approval and reminded them his universal message once again:

نه افغانيم و نه ترك و تتراريم چمن زاديم و ازيك شاخساريم

تميز رنگ و بو برما حرام است كه ما پرورده يك نو بهاريم

⁴ Shamloo, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, Lahore, Al-manar Academy, p. 146.

Called whether Tartars, Turks or Afghans, we
Belong to one great garden, one great tree,
Born of a spring tide that was glorious,
Distinction of colour is a sin for us.