A UNIQUE ASPECT OF IQBAL'S EVOLUTION THEORY

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"Praise be to God

Who created the heavens

And the earth,

And made the Darkness

And the Light ... .

He it is Who created

You....

And He is God

In the heavens

And on earth.

And He knoweth

The (recompense) which

Ye earn (by your deeds)" (Qur., vi. 1-3).

The term "evolution" in a restricted scientific sense signifies the physical development of the diverse species, including plants, animals and humans, inhabiting our universe. It also is used to convey more broadly structural patterns' earlier and progressive forms as well as cultural advancement respectively in the animal, such as primate and ape, and in the human societies.

Iqbal's evolution doctrine comprises diverse aspects also. They include

(a) physical; (b) mental; (c) cultural; and (d) other develop-mental forms. They respectively fall under the categories of (a) anthropology; (b) psychology; (c) philosophy, literature, art, etc.; and (d) socio-economics, law, etc. He linked them all together under one major heading: Religion. This discussion shall centre on his anthropological views. It was fostered by most recent research, including observations in the wild,[10] and the subsequent theories which, however, remain incomplete and subject to revision. After recently reading some of the most modern works,[11] and then re-reading Iqbal's lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*,[12] my eye fell on a few lines incorporated in Chapter Ill, entitled "The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer". He explained in this chapter why "Adam yielded to Satan". His explanation was that Adam gave in to the Devil "not because he was elementally wicked, but because being 'hasty' (*ajul*) by nature he sought a short cut to knowledge,"[13] It recalls, of course, the Paradise story according to which human disobedience led to the first human pair's[14] expulsion from the Garden of Eden [15] Iqbal's interpretation is truly anthropological.[16] It implies a wholly novel approach only now presented by those scientists particularly studying primates, amongst them chimpanzees,

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[10] Jane van Lavick-Goodall; Vernon Reynolds; Dr A. Kortlandt; Drs S. Azuma, T. Nishida; N. Tinbergen, to name a few outstanding scholarly observers,

[11] J. van Lavick-Goodall, *In The Shadow of Man*, Boston, Houghton Miflin Co., 1971; N. Tinbergen, *Social Behaviour in Animals*, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1953, and Science Paperbacks, 1969 reprint ; Elaine Morgan, *The Descent of Woman*, New York, Stein and Day, 1972; V. Reynolds, *Budongo*: *An African Forest and Its Chimpanzees*, Garden City, N Y., Natural History Press, 1965.

[12] Published in innumerable reprints and based on a series of Lectures. (Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Jan. 1962 reprint used.)

[13] Ibid., p. 86.

[14] See, for instance, Qur'an, ii. 35-36.

[15] Edin or "plain," presumably the fertile Tigris-Euphrates valley.

[16] There are other interpretations, viz, naturalistic: a change in climate effected altered living circumstances ; and religious, based on man's disobedience to God, although in Judaism and Christianity Eve, not Adam, is held responsible for

giving in to the Devil.

and hence called primatologists. This idea of Iqbal, indeed, involves a non-religious and, hence, a non-traditional interpretation. It raises the question of humanity's adaptation to the physical environment. It negates Darwin's[17] "Biological Materialism" stressing "external causation" which Iqbal regarded too mechanistic, unrelated to any Divine Creation theory — to which he subscribed — and too deterministic which he severely opposed. To understand more clearly his brilliant perception, the present pertinent data on human evolution and the primates' adaptability stated in capsule form now follow.

(a) *Human Evolution*. In view of the discoveries made in Africa, it now is believed that the human species began to evolve over four and possibly five million years ago. This would have occurred about the end of the arid Pliocene[18] and the beginning of the Pleistocene, whose exact beginnings still are in doubt. It is held by some anthropologists that during the approximately twelve million Pliocene years, when the forests dried up, a number of species,[19] including those as yet non-specialised that later evolving into humans, eventually[20] took to the water. The latter at that time were four-footed (*quadrupeds*). They consequently became bipeds or two-footed, for they were forced to stand up. They did not lose their legs which, in some instances, became fins, because they also would sit on the water edges, particularly when the female had to feed her offspring. They furthermore developed certain facial features and expressions such as, respectively,

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[17] Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), author of On *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). He created a furore by maintaining that the human race descended from an anthropoid animal. He is interred in Westminster Abbey. The argumentation is not altogether dead and there apparently is increasing evidence that there may have been two main parallel branches one giving rise to the human, the other to the apes.

[18] Following upon the Miocene occurring twenty million years ago. It was characterised by mild weather, heavy rainfall and flourishing forests. During this period in Kenya many "apes of generalised body structure" and of diverse types, such as the small gibbon and the large guerilla emerged.

[19] Including it appears the whale's, and the elephant's ancestors.

[20] It probably took a few million years.

eyelids, noses, brow contractions,[21] which are considered uniquely human.[22] When the Pleistocene dawned, they also had become accustomed to all kinds of food (*omnivorous*), meaning that they ate fish, eels (usually hidden under rocks), and other marine specimens apart from roots, fruits. etc. (*herbivorous*) and meat (*carnivorous*). When the climate once again warmed up and forests reappeared,[23] the "aquatic anthropoids" had turned into hominids or creatures of a more specialised human type. They were two-legged, stood and walked erect (Homo-Erectus[24]), no longer slept in trees (unlike the chimpanzees, amongst the apes ; and the baboons, amongst the monkeys, for example), and could cover much larger distances than any other primate. The new human species, in fact, had become well prepared to adapt themselves to life on earth. This is a mini-description of some physical evolution aspects.

The humans furthermore were forced to use their ingenuity in making dramatic *mental* forward Ieaps.[25] This was essential for their further development. To cross waterways, they had to build rafts which they perhaps did even before the Pliocene melted into the Pleistocene. Boats were to follow seemingly during the Bronze Age (*circa* 3200-1200 B.C.). During the (projected) "Bone" Age[26] (about one million years ago), hunting may have become a way of life. The invention of fire by Peking Man (*Homo-Sinanthropus*) circa 360,000 years ago allowed for the serving of roasted meat,

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[21] Necessitated by sharp sunlight which in the forests is broken by the innumerable trees.

[22] Amongst them, crying ; tears are salty (sodium chloride).

[23] During the Pleistocene, the northern world suffered Ice Ages interrupted by warmer interglacial eras.

[24] *Homo-Erectus* (emerged circa 700,000 years ago, extinct by about 150,000 years ago) had a broad flat nose. Cf. the Proboscis monkey, which is the only one to have the nose covered with a lid — it takes to water.

[25] The hedonic mode characterised by "display," viz. the use of tricks or showing unusual objects so as to gain attention and leadership, are used by chimpanzees and guerillas (ape groups). The baboons (monkeys), however, employ an agonic mode based on threats, biting, and fighting. Their behaviour pattern, unlike that of the apes and man, is stereotyped and does not permit mental exercise and initiative. While the *agonic* mode is not fully absent from human conduct involving attacks on one's own group and species, it has profited from the *hedonic* pattern.

[26] The Old Stone Age's start sometimes is projected at one million years ago.

and, in the Copper Age (about 4200-3200 B.c.) for breadbaking in clay ovens. Fishing with angles and probably nets already was practised in the Old Stone Age (between 100,000 and 15,000 B.c.). "Natural" agriculture meaning the use of serrated sickles cutting wild-growing grain stalks became customary in the Middle Stone Age (15,000-7500 B.c.[27]). It was followed by "artificial" agriculture involving the building of irrigation-canal networks towards the end of the New Stone Age and the beginning of the Copper Age. Irrigational agriculture became most developed in Bronze Age times. Stockbreeding or the domestication of animals traditionally, said to have started during the Neolithic[28] period, may have begun in the previous Mesolithic era. It usually is associated with agricultural life. While earlier Stone Age men and women lived in caves,[29] those generations passing through the New Stone Age built mud huts, villages and towns (Jarmo, for instance). Their dwellings included brick and stone houses and palaces indicating class differentiation and affluence amongst a certain, usually small, group. This more luxurious style, complemented by innumerable magnificent artifacts (inlaid cosmetic chests, glass, bronze, and other ware for diverse purposes, etc.), typifies the Bronze Age. It furthermore is marked by distinctions according to occupation (baker, butcher, smith, jeweller, dressmaker, architect, weaver, dyer, *et al.*); religio-legal and socio-economic, as well as a tremendous scientific and literary developments.[30] The reason why humans reached far beyond even

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[27] All dates are approximate, although archaeological findings and their scientific analysis help in a more precise dating than ever before.

[28] The Latin words for Old, Middle and Late or New Stone Age are: Palaeolithic (lithos = "stone"), Mesolithic and Neolithic. They imply that stone (apart from wood) was the main material used at the time. When copper and then bronze came into vogue, the subsequent eras were named after these metals. Bronze Age man reached a civilisational zenith (in Babylonia and Egypt particularly). While Iran's and Turkey's beginnings are datable to about 2000 B.c or shortly thereafter, the latter reached its heights during the Hittite Era'(second millennium rec.), while Iran's heyday lay in the subsequent Achaemenid period covering the Iron Age (which began in 1200 B.C., but the Achaemenids arose in the seventh century B.c. and becamegreat under Cyrus and his successors).

[29] It is alleged that living in a cave, viz. a more or less permanent domicile,implied or gave rise to the nuclear family.

[30] Writing began in the (Sumerian) Jemdet Nasr or Proto-Literate period (*circa* 3100-2900 B.c.).

the primates in their broad intellectual/cultural progress may well be explained by their acclimatisation to a new life-pattern for which possibly they were prepared during their millions of watery existence years in that dry Pliocene Era forming an interval between the Eocene and the Pleistocene when a new age dawned in human history!

What has the foregoing discussion to do with Iqbal's evolution doctrine? One aspect of it already has been cited, namely, his assertion that the first human (Adam) gave in to the Devil because he longed for knowledge. This statement immediately precedes the following dominant sentence:

> "The only way to correct this tendency was to place him in an environment which, however painful, was better suited to the unfolding of his intellectual faculties."[31]

That the physical and ecologicala daptation process was "painful" is undeniable. That it forced *Homo-Sapiens*[32] ("Knowing" or "Wise Man/Woman") to use their intellect and ingenuity neither can be ignored. That it signifies a non-stereotyped mental and behavioural pattern with its trial and error aspects, seems obvious. That it finally re-presents a forward thrust (*teleology*) is attested by the rich evidence left by the past generations. It is basic to Iqbal's entire philosophy aimed at the Muslims' revivification. This explains his total rejection of any doctrine in the least reflecting statism.

He remained Qur'ānic by acknowledging Allah's beingness and creativity, and that humanity earns its rewards by its "deeds". He stressed its "deeds" in terms of fervent activism which he saw as an-other expression — apart from prayer, for example — of true spirituality.

One critical question applicable to this discussion is whether there is not an inherent contradiction between such a view's implied deterministic and non-deterministic aspects. This problem raised by the medieval philosophers in a theistic form, namely, whether it is possible for humans to have full freedom of action thereby determining their future if God foreknows, was answered by al-Ash'arī (873-935). He held that all humans are created free from belief and unbelief, so that unbelief and faults are their own acts, but

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[31] Iqbal, op. cit., p. 86.

[32] Emerged circa 35,000-30,000 years ago.

nevertheless are caused by Allah's will and knowledge. The Mu'tazilite rationalists, whose pupil he was originally, denied that acts are created by God's will and knowledge. Iqbal, therefore, seems to be a Mu'tazilite in the *philosophical* aspect of the doctrine under discussion.

What intrigued me, however, was the *anthropological* side of his evolution doctrine which clearly is anti-Darwinian in so far as the latter's "materialist" and "non-spiritual" theories are concerned. It was, indeed, unique in his time. It, once again, shows Iqbal's many-faceted thought and attests to his genius!

"Behold ! thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create

A vicegerent on earth' . . .

And He taught Adam the nature

Of all things ..." (Our., ii. 30-31).