

SOME UNREALISED DREAMS OF IQBAL

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To reinforce Muslim solidarity in the aftermath of London Round Table Conferences, the All-India Muslim Conference held its annual session in Lahore on 21 March 1932 and elected Iqbal as President. In his presidential address, Iqbal made some solid suggestions of permanent value which surprisingly have escaped the notice of the academician and the administrator so far. In this address, Iqbal envisaged "the formation of youth leagues and well-equipped volunteer corps throughout the country under the control and guidance of a central organisation". The Youth Leagues should actively concern themselves with "social service, customs reform, commercial organisation" of the Muslims. Iqbal suggested the founding of "male and female cultural institutes in all big towns. ... These institutes . . . should have nothing to do with politics" and should make the younger generation aware of "what Islam has already achieved and what it has still to achieve in the religious and cultural history of mankind". The cultural institutes were further advised to maintain close academic relationship with religious madrassas and modern Muslim educational centres "to secure the ultimate convergence of all the lines of our educational endeavour on a single purpose"¹³⁷

In December 1937, the Punjab Muslim Students Federation organised an "Iqbal Day" function. Iqbal and the then Premier of the Punjab, Sikandar Hayat Khan, were political opponents. In a message to the function, Sikandar Hayat Khan offered a deliberate insult to Iqbal's self-respect. "I propose," said Sikandar Hayat Khan, "that in the cities where Iqbal Day is celebrated, the citizens should collect money and present it to the Great Poet. The Iqbal Committee should immediately open an Iqbal Day Account in the Imperial Bank of India, and his followers and admirers should directly make contributions to this Fund."¹³⁸ Iqbal smarted under Sikandar's suggestion, but kept his composure and came out with a counter suggestion, which, if implemented, would have revived interest in the political and economic teachings of Islam. "I feel," said Iqbal, "that the needs of the people as a whole are far more pressing than the needs of a private individual even

¹³⁷ Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), pp. 41-42.

¹³⁸ *The Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, 5 December 1937.

though his work may have been a source of inspiration to most people. The individual and his needs pass away: the people and their needs remain. If the people want to honour me, they should establish a chair for Islamic research on modern lines in the Islamia College, Lahore." Iqbal hoped that his proposal "will meet the Premier's approval and his influence will make this proposal a success. I offer a humble contribution of Rs. 100 to the fund."¹³⁹ But the Punjab Premier who had all the power and re-sources to implement this scheme turned a deaf ear to it.

Iqbal was partial to *Hakīms* and the indigenous system of medicine. Though he appreciated and believed in the efficacy of Western medical system, he nevertheless had some reservations about Western drugs. Iqbal was no medical man and, from that point of view, his observations may be taken as a layman's opinion. Yet all *Hakīms* and many doctors would not disagree with the observations he made on the floor of the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Speaking on the resolution regarding Yūnānī and Ayurvedic systems of medicine (22 February 1928), Iqbal expressed the opinion that Western medical science had yet to learn much from the Yūnānī system. Many works of Muslim *Hakīms*, especially those of Najībuddīn Samarqandī, lay unpublished in European libraries. "If they were published," suggested Iqbal, they could yet give surprise "to those who boast of the superiority of Western system of medicine."¹⁴⁰

His second suggestion was that the Government should establish an Institute of Pharmacy to teach the *Hakīms* the improved methods of preparing medicines. At the same time, he thought that the *Hakīms* should not imitate the Western pharmacopoeia because their own simple preparations are more natural. Taken all together, Iqbal's recommendations are worthy to be implemented even today.

¹³⁹ Latif Ahmad Sherwani, op. cit., p. 249.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

References

Iqbal On

AN ASSEMBLY OF ULEMA*

" ... I suggest the formation of an assembly of ulema which must include Muslim lawyers who have received education in modern jurisprudence. The idea is to protect, expand and, if necessary, to reinterpret the law of Islam in the light of modern conditions, while keeping close to the spirit embodied in its fundamental principles. This body must receive constitutional recognition so that no bill affecting the personal law of Muslims may be put on the legislative anvil before it has passed through the crucible of this assembly. Apart from the purely practical value of this proposal for the Muslims of India, we must remember that the modern world, both Muslim and non-Muslim, has yet to discover the infinite value of the legal literature of Islam and its significance for a capitalistic world whose ethical standards have long abdicated from the control of man's economic conduct. The formation of the kind of assembly I propose will, I am sure, bring a deeper understanding of the usual principles of Islam at least in this country."

* Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim Conference, Lahore, on 21 March 1932 (Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* [Lahore : Iqbal Academy, 1977], p. 93).