

THE KEY POINT IN IQBAL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Muzaffar Hussain

For any meaningful discussion on Iqbal's educational philosophy it is essential that we should first try to understand his views on man's nature, and his ultimate destiny. According to Iqbal, the "essential nature of man, then, consists in will, and not intellect or understanding".¹⁴⁰ He regards human will as "a germ of infinite power, the gradual unfoldment of which must be the object of all human activity".¹⁴¹ In his view, "a strong will in a strong body is the ethical ideal of Islam".¹⁴² Criticizing the educational system of his times he says very emphatically:

"I venture to say, that the present system of education in this country is not at all suited to us as a people. It is not true to our genius as a nation, it tends to produce an un-Muslim type of character, it is not determined by our national requirements, it breaks entirely with our past, and appears to proceed on the false assumption that the ideal of education is the training of 'human intellect rather than human will.'¹⁴³

The key point in Iqbal's educational philosophy, therefore, is the training of human will.

¹⁴⁰ Syed Abul Wahid, Ed. Thoughts & Reflections of Iqbal (Lahore : Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), p. 35.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 41

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 45.

Personality Man's personality can be defined as a combination of various wills held together by a unity of directive purposes.¹⁴⁴ To explain more elaborately, the wills constituting the various aspects of human personality can be listed as below:

Personality Aspect Needs Will-Attitudes Biological

- | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Food | | will to be |
| 2. Dress | | will to live |
| 3. Shelter | | will to survive Socio-biological |
| 1. Marriage | | will to survive and pre- |
| 2. Procreation | | serves species |

Personality Aspect Needs Will-Attitudes

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Socio-cultural skill | 1. Education | Will to acquire knowledge and |
| | 2. Training for economic products | Will to produce and earn |
| Psychological | 1. Cognition | Will to cognition |
| | 2. Conation | Will to conation |
| | 3. Affection | Will to affection |
| Psychical | 1. Conscious | Will to harmonise cons- |
| | 2. Unconscious Harmony | ciousness and unconsciousness |

¹⁴⁴ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Lahore : Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), p.

	Transcendental
1. Knowledge Reality	Will to know the Ultimate
2. Art	Will to transfer world into aesthetic order
3. Morality	Will to transfer world order into moral order
4. Religion:	
(a) Communion with God God	Will to have communion with
(b) Efficacy of Prayer	Will to pray
(c) Yearning to live in	Will to love God and eternal conscious co- achieve eternal life presence with God.
5. Ideal social order order	Will to achieve ideal world

Each of the wills listed above is an energy or force. Human personality can, therefore, be conceived as a combination of these forces which admit of various arrangements.¹⁴⁵ These various arrangements/formations of the wills are referred to as Shākila by the Holy Qur'an which determine the value of man's actions:

¹⁴⁵ Javid Iqbal, Ed. (Muhammad Iqbal), *Stray Reflections* (Lahore : Sh, Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1961), p. 17.

"Every man acteth after his own manner but your Lord knoweth who is best guided in his path" (xvii. 84).

One definite arrangement in which the transcendental (more specifically, religious) wills assume the governing or directive role is the real personality of man. Such personality is bestowed on man as his potential nature, the actualization of which must be the highest aim of life and hence the ultimate aim of education. To achieve his real personality man has to make effort and various wills have to be arranged in such a manner that the will to love God becomes the supreme overriding will and all other wills are governed and disciplined by it. When a personality with such will-attitudes is constituted, man takes a new birth. In fact, only such a personality is worth the name of personality as the Holy Qur'an warns:

"And be not ye as those who forgot Allah, therefore He caused them to forget their souls (personalities)" (lix. 19).

This verse is the very basis of Iqbal's concept of the self.¹⁴⁶ His concept of soul, personality, ego or self is, therefore, only that kind of man's self-

¹⁴⁶ The present author pointed it out for the first time in his serialised article under the caption Khudī Aura .Aakhirat which appeared in Islāmī Ta'lim two-monthly Journal of the All-Pakistan Islamic Education Congress, Lahore, in Vol, I, No. 2(March-April 1973), and again in Vol, II, No.4 July-August 1974) that Iqbal derived his idea of the self from this verse of the Holy Qur'an. The views of the author were confirmed indirectly by Sayyid Nazir Niyazi in his "Reminiscences" published in the Mithāq (a monthly journal of Anjuman Khuddām al-Qur'an, Lahore), January-February 1974, p. 74. The relevant portion is reproduced below:

ٹئشے کا فوق البشر زیر بحث آیا تو میں نے درخواست کی کہ اس باب میں دانستہ یا نادانستہ جو غلط فہمیاں پیدا ہو گئی ہیں یا کر دی گئی ہیں ان کا ازالہ ضروری ہے۔ ناقدین نے خواہ مخواہ فوق البشر کا سلسلہ نائب حق سے جوڑ رکھا ہے۔ فرمایا: ان کا ازالہ تو میں کر چکا۔ میں نے جو کچھ کہا میرے ناقدین اسے غور سے کیوں نہیں پڑھتے؟ میں نے عرض کیا: میں انہیں کے خیال سے کچھ ضروری سمجھتا ہوں کہ ان غلط فہمیوں کے پیش

consciousness which is aroused and activated by God-consciousness.¹⁴⁷ When God-consciousness becomes the illuminating centre of man's self-consciousness, he realises his real position in the universe as one of the greatest energies of Nature called upon by God to remake and refashion the universe by conquering the natural environment and bringing an ideal social order into being character. Every educational endeavour should, therefore, aim at carving out of human life a character which Iqbal regards as "the ultimate equipment of man, not only in his efforts against a hostile natural environment, but also in his contest with kind-red competitors after a fuller, richer, ampler life."¹⁴⁸ It is, therefore, not difficult to understand Iqbal's utter dissatisfaction and disgust with those educational systems which restrict their function to mere intellectual development of the human self. He favours only that-type of educational system which can bring out characters or Volitional personalities:

"The intellectual self is only one aspect of the activity of our total self. The realization of the total self comes not by merely permitting the wide

نظر چند ایک باتوں کی ایک حد تک وضاحت ہو جائے اور وہ بھی آپ کی طرف سے، تو اچھا ہوگا۔ فرمایا: اگر تمہارا ایسا ہی خیال ہے تو کل سہ پہر کا وقت مناسب رہے گا۔ ذرا جلدی چلے آنا۔ دوسرے روز حاضر خدمت ہوا اور کاغذ فلم لے کر بیٹھ گیا، تو فرمایا: یہ سامنے کی الماری میں قرآن مجید رکھا ہے۔ قرآن مجید اٹھا لاؤ۔ میں اپنے دل میں سمجھ رہا تھا کہ شاید مجھ سے فلسفہ کی بعض کتابوں کی ورق گردانی کے لیے کہا جائے گا۔ میں اٹھا لایا تو ارشاد ہوا: سورہ حشر کا آخری رکوع نقل کرلو۔ رکوع نقل کرچکا تو پھر چند ایک عنوانات کے تحت یکے بعد دیگرے کچھ شذرات لکھوانے لگے۔ یہ دن تھا جب میں پوری طرح سمجھا کہ اقبال نے نائب حق کا جو تصور قائم کیا ہے اس کی اساس فی الحقیقت کیا ہے۔"

The Quranic verse quoted by Iqbal is the first verse of the portion of the Holy Qur'an which Sayyid Nazir Niyazi was asked by Iqbal to re-produce.

¹⁴⁷ Darb-i Kalīm/Kulliyāt, p. 15/477

خودی ہے تیغ، فسار لا الہ الا اللہ

خودی کا سر نہاں لا الہ الا اللہ

¹⁴⁸ S.A. Vahid, Ed., op. cit., p. 41.

world to throw its varied impressions on our mind, and then watching what becomes of us. It is not merely by receiving and intellectually shaping the impressions, but mainly by moulding the stimuli to ideal ends and purposes that the total self of man realises itself as one of the greatest energies of nature."¹⁴⁹

When the love of God dominates the entire will-hierarchy of man he develops a personality with a Divine taste kindling an insight of looking upon the world of matter as subservient to man in the realisation of his social goals struggle. The obstruction of the world of matter in the realisation of human ideals, then, becomes an incentive for struggle and a favourable circumstance in the development of his self. Science is a useful weapon in this struggle. According to Iqbal, "the Universe that confronts us is not *bātil*. It has its uses."¹⁵⁰ The world of matter is an indispensable obstruction which forces our being into fresh formations. Its most important use is that, in our efforts to overcome the obstructions offered by it, we "sharpen our insight and prepare [ourselves] for an insertion into what lies below the surface of phenomēn coming closer to God. He believes that" it is the intellectual capture of and power over the concrete that makes it possible for the intellect of man to pass beyond the concrete."¹⁵¹

Neomysticism of Science. Thus, according to Iqbal, science is important for two reasons: (i) It bestows power on man which enables him to capture the material world, and (ii) it sharpens his insight for a closer and better appreciation of God.

Science and technology, therefore, assume an extremely important place in Iqbal's philosophy of education. He regards the scientific observer of Nature as a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer; because scientific

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁵¹ Reconstruction, p. 131.

observation of Nature keeps us in close contact with the behaviour of Reality."¹⁵²

"The quest after a nameless nothing, as disclosed in Neo-Platonic mysticism—be it Christian or Muslim—cannot satisfy the modern mind which with its habits of concrete thinking demands a concrete living experience of God."¹⁵³

The education of science thus become a God-seeking, God-appreciating and God-finding activity in the educational system of Iqbal which "disenthrals man from fear giving him a source of power to master his environment".¹⁵⁴ He, therefore, proposes an educational system in which "Religion and Science may discover hitherto unsuspected mutual harmonies"¹⁵⁵ and are no longer antagonistic. For him science blended with religion is a kind of mysticism most appropriate to the minds of the present generation. He proclaims emphatically that science divorced from religion is nothing but blindness and woefully laments that secular science and technology presently in vogue in our educational system inculcates a forgetful attitude towards God. He, there-fore, raises a clarion call for waging war against Godless science which has polluted the minds of the present generation.¹⁵⁶ He exhorts the Muslims to create a new world order by integrating science with religion in their educational system so that it gives "a spiritual interpretation of the universe" which is one of the basic needs of humanity today.¹⁵⁷

Individual's Spiritual Emancipation. In the training of human will for spiritual emancipation, Iqbal maintains that "the medium of great personality" is essential. For him religion of a people is "the sum total of

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 30.16.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁵ p. vi.

¹⁵⁶ Zabūr-i 'Ajam/Kulliyāt, p. 95/487

¹⁵⁷ Reconstruction, p. 179.

their life-experiences finding a definite expression through the medium of a great personality".¹⁵⁸ He believes that the personality of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) is operative in the spiritual emancipation of individuals and all mankind, and will continue to be so for all times to come.¹⁵⁹ Our educational system must, therefore, impart such instruction to its educatees as motivates them to follow the life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) as an ideal of individual spiritual emancipation of the highest order as well as for the creation of a unique society based on the freedom and equality of all the individuals. He says: "in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth".¹⁶⁰ He also revered the illustrious personalities of great Muslim saints (mystics) as in their company great transformations of character used to take place and the model of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) shone in their lives in full glory. He greatly admired their role in the society as upbringers.¹⁶¹ He, however, lamented that such saints are so rare in our times, and it saddened his heart that this great institution of sufism had become so barren.¹⁶² For the revival of this great institution he prescribes neo-mysticism of God-appreciative science. It is now for the Muslim scientists to play the role of mystics and evolve "a method physiologically less violent and psychologically more suitable to a concrete type of mind".¹⁶³

Spiritual Democracy Iqbal views democracy as the most important aspect of Islam.¹⁶⁴ "Islam," says he, "has a horror of personal authority. We

¹⁵⁸ S.A. Vahid, Ed., op. cit., p. 31. Iqbal derives this idea from the following Quranic verses: and

¹⁵⁹ *Jāwīd Nāmāk/Kulliyāt*, p. 128/716. Also see Iqbai's letter to Muhammad Niyazuddin Khan published in *Makātīb-i Iqbal* (Lahore : Bazm-i Iqbal), p. 40.

¹⁶⁰ *Reconstruction*, pp. 179-80.

¹⁶¹ *Bāl-i Jibrīl/Kulliyāt*, p. 14/306 :

¹⁶² *Asrār-o Rumūz/Kulliyāt*. p. 18 :

¹⁶³ *Reconstruction*, p. v

¹⁶⁴ S.A. Vahid, Ed., op. cit., p. 51.

regard it as inimical to the unfoldment of human individuality."¹⁶⁵ According to him, the "best form of Government for such a [Muslim] community is democracy, the ideal of which is to let man develop all the possibilities of his nature by allowing him as much freedom as practicable".¹⁶⁶ He however, confesses that the Muslims with democracy as their political ideal could do nothing for the political improvement of Asia and that their "democracy lasted only for 30 years and disappeared with their political expansion".¹⁶⁷ He pays rich tribute to the British empire which spread this civilising factor with missionary spirit in the political evolution of mankind.¹⁶⁸ But at the same time he also maintains that democracy in Europe could not fully bloom and soon degenerated into an instrument of exploitation:

"The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich."¹⁶⁹

Our educational system must, therefore, provide instruction, training and practice in the Islamic concepts of freedom and equality in order to bring about that kind of "spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam."¹⁷⁰

Conclusion, Briefly speaking, the central theme of Iqbal's educational philosophy is to produce an Islamic type of personality and character through the training of human will so that they can play their destined role in the world in meeting the challenge of this age. According to him, "humanity needs three things to-day:

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁹ Reconstruction, p. 179.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

[i] A spiritual interpretation of the universe,

[ii] Spiritual emancipation of the individual.

[iii] Spiritual democracy.¹⁷¹

For the attainment of these objectives we may recommend for practical purpose that:

(i) Science should be made a God-seeking, God-appreciating and God-finding source of knowledge. For this purpose the concept of Tauhīd should be integrated with scientific teachings.

(ii) The sīrat of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) should find a central place in our educational system so that the students develop an emotional and intellectual attachment with his great personality and practically follow him as a model of ideal character throughout their lives.

(iii) The Islamic concepts of equality (masāwāt), fraternity (ukhuwat) and freedom (hurriyat) should be taught and inculcated in the students so that they are enabled to practice "spiritual democracy" when they start practical life after their education.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.