

# BOOK REVIEW

In his book, *Iqbal: His Political Ideas at Crossroads* (Aligarh, 1974), Dr Syed Hasan Ahmad of Aligarh Muslim University has no doubt made an addition to source materials for studying Allama Mohammad Iqbal by reproducing in it nine letters of the Allama written to Professor Edward J. Thompson of Oxford University during 1933-34. While reproducing these letters, the Aligarh scholar has also written a 68-page "commentary", based partly upon these and other letters of Iqbal and partly upon his speeches and statements,

In this commentary the author's major concern has been to establish that during the early 1930s, as stated on the dust cover, Iqbal was not sympathetic to the Pakistan idea. Hasan Ahmad's other findings, in his own words, are that "till 1934, his (Iqbal's) own proposal of a Muslim province envisaged that it should form part of the Indian Federal State" (p. 12), that "during the last two years of his life, Iqbal had come closer to the Muslim League movement in the Punjab" but this "is not the same thing as being a protagonist of Pakistan in those years" (p. 13), and, finally, that Iqbal is a Muslim and an Indian at the same time, a good Muslim and a good Indian" and the "question of which comes first and which [comes] second is a wrong question" (p. 35).

Let us relate these findings to what Iqbal has himself stated and take Hasan Ahmad's last finding first because this point is basic to understanding Iqbal. In his presidential address at the All India Muslim Conference in March 1932 Iqbal unambiguously stated "Patriotism is a perfectly natural virtue and has a place in the moral life of man. Yet that which really matters is a man's faith, his culture, his historical tradition. These are the things which, in my eyes, are worth living for and dying for, and not the piece of earth with which the spirit of man happens to be temporarily associated."

On this issue Iqbal's thinking never underwent any kind of change. For shortly before his death, in a rejoinder to Maulana Husain Ahmad Madni, Iqbal said in a statement (from which Hasan Ahmad has also quoted in his booklet): "Love of one's native land is a natural instinct and requires no impressions to nourish it. In the present day political literature, however, the idea of nation is not merely geographical ; it is rather a principle of human society and as such it is a political concept. Since Islam also is a law of human society, the word 'country', when used as a political concept, comes into conflict with Islam."

To disprove Hasan Ahmad's contention that in the case of Iqbal the question of precedence of country over religion and vice versa is a wrong question, it is unnecessary to advance any further explanation except to point out what should be known to every intelligent student of Iqbal that because in India loyalty of a Muslim to his country (in the political sense) came into conflict with his loyalty to Islam, Iqbal unhesitatingly gave precedence to Islam over nationalism even though he never denied that he was an Indian as well as a Muslim.

So far as Iqbal's attitude to the Pakistan concept is concerned, Iqbal's letters to Professor Thompson reproduced by Hasan Ahmad do not throw any new light. The well-established facts are:

(i) Since Iqbal died in 1938 and the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution (the League did not call it Pakistan Resolution) was passed in 1940, Iqbal obviously could not be a protagonist of Pakistan during the two years before his death ;

(ii) in 1933 it was Chaudhri Rahmat Ali (and not Iqbal) who had started a campaign in favour of his 'Pakistan Scheme.' ; and

(iii) at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930 Iqbal had put forward two alternative proposals, one based upon safeguards for Muslims in the constitutions of the existing provinces and the proposed federation of

India as demanded by the Muslim League and the Muslim Conference, and the other his own, which envisaged the creation of a large Muslim state in the north-west of India, in which the Muslims would have substantial majority. In such a state, it needs hardly be added, Muslims would be in a position to order their individual and collective lives according to the principles of Islam.

There can be no doubt that Iqbal had also envisaged that the state he was proposing could be independent. Indeed this is implied in his saying that the proposed state might be within or without the British Empire and in his reference to the final destiny of the Muslims of North-west India. This implication of his proposal was understood by thoughtful persons and Professor Thompson objected to the proposal on the ground that, if implemented, the defence of residuary India would become very difficult.

Anticipating opposition to his proposal from Hindu and British leaders and intellectual, Iqbal had stated in the address itself that the proposed state would not sever its links completely with the rest of India but remain associated with it in common defence arrangements and, as a consequence, "the North-west Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion the one of ideas or of bayonets." Nevertheless, the vision that the projected state might, *at some future date*, become completely independent had remained in Iqbal's mind. This is confirmed in his letter to the London *Times* in October 1931, in which he stated that the independent status was "a guess at the possible outcome in the dim future of the mighty forces now shaping the destiny of the Indian sub-continent." Iqbal must have been disappointed that his proposal could not get the support of even the Muslim leaders at that time, but he never changed his own mind.

However, it soon became apparent to the Muslim leaders that the Hindus were opposed to the Muslim demand that they should be allowed to retain their separate identity. Not only did the Hindu leaders consistently deny the Muslims their rightful representation on the basis of population in the legislative assemblies of the two large Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, at the second session of the Round Table Conference, the most outstanding Hindu

leader M.K. Gandhi took the incredible stand that the overwhelmingly Hindu Congress was the sole representative of all the peoples of India.

The issue was finally clinched by Jawaharlal Nehru's election to the Presidency of the Congress during the crucial years 1936-37, when arrangements were being to introduce autonomy in the provinces as provided in the Government of India Act of 1935.

Nehru then made it plain that henceforth Congress was going to follow socialist policies. Muslim leaders in general and Iqbal in particular were opposed to such policies being foisted upon Muslims because they believed that Islam provided a much better system for removing poverty amongst the people. The Congress President also said that there was no communal problem in India and organised a campaign to bring Muslims under the banner of the Congress. If successful, these moves would have inter alia, resulted in ending the separate identity of the Muslims and their merger in one Indian nation which would be dominated by Hindu values. Devoted so greatly Iqbal was to Islamic values, he could not obviously reconcile to this possible development. Indeed Iqbal thought that the separate identity of the Muslims was absolutely necessary because as Muslims they could make their distinct contribution to the well-being of humanity. In this context it should be noted that he had earlier asked the Muslim community:

جلوہ در  
تاریکی کی ایام  
کن  
آنچ بر تو کامل  
آمد عام کن

In view of the developments noted above, it is quite logical that Iqbal's views about the link of his proposed Muslim state with residuary India should change and, in 1937 he decided in favour of complete independence for areas where the Muslims formed the majority in the population—the same kind of state of which he had a vision in 1930, with the difference that Muslim Bengal was also now to be included in it. However, the Aligarh scholar considers Iqbal's 1937 decision as a shift in his earlier position.

The most important questions which arise in the mind of the reader of Hasan Ahmad's small book is What would have been the possible attitudes of Iqbal to the Pakistan Movement as it was launched in the wake of the Lahore Resolution and to Pakistan that in fact emerged in 1947 ? These questions have been posed by the learned author himself at one place in his commentary, but he has avoided answering them by saying that these are not within the scope of his present work. The reader can however, easily make a safe guess about the author's thinking on these questions.

Latif Ahmed Sherwani