

THE CONCEPT OF PAKISTAN IN THE LIGHT OF IQBAL'S ADDRESS AT ALLAHABAD⁴

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Pakistan was demanded on the fundamental basis that the Indian Muslims constituted a nation by themselves and were, therefore, entitled to the right of self-determination. During the period of the struggle for Pakistan, this was made clear by the Quaid-i-Azam more than once. For instance, he refused Mr. Gandhi's offer in 1944 that the Muslim majority areas could separate from an all-India union by invoking the right of self-determination on a territorial basis. And he emphatically told him that the Muslims claimed the right of self-determination as a nation and not as a territorial unit; indeed, they were entitled to exercise their inherent right as a Muslim nation which was their birthright.

This at that time, appeared to be a novel concept of Muslim nationhood, but its theoretical foundations had already been worked out by the poet-philosopher Iqbal in his brilliant Allahabad Address. He said; "Islam as an ethical ideal has been the chief formative factor in the life-history of the Muslims of India. It has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups, and finally transform them into a well-defined people, possessing a moral consciousness of their own." "Islam as a people-building force," he said, "has worked at its best" in no other country than India.

In other words, Islam was the main factor. which set the Indian Muslims apart from the rest and made them into a nation. True, even at the height of

⁴ Iqbal Memorial Talks 1977.

their political supremacy in India, the Indian Muslims allowed themselves to be Indianised and influenced by their Hindu neighbours in several spheres. But they ever stuck firmly to the anchor of their Islamic heritage. They retained their own distinct individuality in the Indian body politic and to this, several European travellers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bear testimony.

The loss of their political power was the signal for the Indian Muslims to begin exhibiting their old intense feeling of nationality. In the eighteenth century for instance, the Muslims exhibited a growing separation from the Hindus which they had never thought necessary in the days of their supremacy. This growing anxiety on the part of the Indian Muslims to keep their entity separate and intact, was amply reflected in the movements launched by them since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sayyed Ahmad Shahid's Mujahidin movement, uprising of 1857, the Aligarh movement, the Muslim League and the Khilafat movements were all raised on the basic assumption that the Indian Muslim community represented a distinct politico-cultural unit on the broad canvas of India. The words "nation," "nationality" and "people" were freely used in the speeches and writings of eminent Indian leaders like Sayyad Ahmad Shahid, Sayyad Ahmad Khan, Hali, Shibli, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Allama Iqbal to denote the Indian Muslims and to focus attention on their distinct, national identity.

The idea of a religious community entitling itself as a nation could hardly fit into the prevalent Western concept of nationalism in which considerations of race, language or territory occupy an important place. The Indian Muslims did not come from a single racial stock, nor did they manifest any linguistic similarity. On the other hand, they comprised a host of linguistic groups possessing certain well-defined characteristics; they differed considerably from each other in social customs, food and even national predilections.

What explained the concept of Muslim nationhood were not these mundane factors but a spiritual principle which Iqbal termed as the ethical

ideal. This ethical ideal, as Iqbal said in his Allahabad Address, does not regard man as an earth-rooted creature, bound by this or that portion of the earth. On the other hand, it regards man as a spiritual being understood in terms of a social mechanism, and possessing rights and duties as a living factor in that mechanism. Thus, it is not land, race or language that would go to constitute a nation. Iqbal visualized a nation as a living soul, the product of a spiritual principle. And viewed from this angle, a people dedicated to a spiritual ideal, sharing a rich heritage of memories and possessing a desire to live together would fully qualify itself for the status of a nation.

Indeed, this spiritual factor more than others is basic to the very idea of a nation. It is not altogether absent even in the Western concept of nationalism. It is now generally agreed in the West that no polity can endure or make progress unless it is based on some set of moral principles and moral values. Thus even the Western national states are obliged to seek some moral concept from whatever source they can to base their actions and policies upon. Evidently, in their case, this source could not be other than the old Greek and Judge-Christian traditions which serve as the fountainhead of all Western thought streams.

In the case of Indian Muslim nationalism, however, this ideological factor was of supreme significance and was represented by Islam. There could be no doubt that Islam provided the strongest link binding the Indian Muslims into a single living soul and thus welding them into a nation. It was Islam which, through the centuries, had developed in them a tradition of loyalties, emotions and discipline. Islam alone provided them the aspiration to dream and the energy to actualize their dreaming and the discipline to keep personal interests within the bounds of community goals.

And this sense of unity created by Islam was further heightened by a common history which the Muslims shared in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. They felt proud of the glorious victories won by their forefathers against formidable odds in the sub-continent of cultural

achievements that gave the world unique cultural and architectural gems; of establishing empires like the Moghul Empire that either in territory or in splendor excelled every other empire in that age; of giving the subcontinent an administration that stood the test of time leading towards humane integration of diverse elements. They also shared the memory of the humiliation to which they were increasingly subjected since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the humiliation of defeat at the hands of an alien power and of their own subjugation. Nor could they forget the fact that they were treated with hostility in every walk of life by the dominant community living in the subcontinent simply because they believed in Islam.

Thus when Iqbal pleaded for a separate Muslim state in India, he was not asking for the creation of yet another independent territorial unit in the subcontinent. What he emphasized in his address was that the life of Islam as a cultural force in India very largely depended on its centralization in a specified territory. The driving force behind the concept of Indian Muslim nation-hood was, therefore, essentially ideological in character. It was not merely a question of establishing a state but of giving Islam a political and territorial expression. And it was on this plank that the Quaid-i-Azam subsequently launched the struggle for Pakistan. The creation of a state of our own, he said, was a means to an end and not an end in itself. The idea was that we should have a state in which we could live and breathe as free men and which we could develop according to our own lights and culture, and where the principles of Islamic social justice could find free play. The Quaid-i-Azam exhorted the Muslims to sacrifice their all in building up Pakistan as a bulwark of Islam and as one of the greatest nations.

On more than one occasion, the Quaid-i-Azam tried to elaborate the theoretical basis of Pakistan which had earlier been spelt out by Iqbal. He tried to impart a definite meaning to the Muslims struggle for territory and to provide the motive force so essential to carry it to a fruitful end. The Quaid-i-Azam knew that without an intellectual basis to nourish and sustain it, no movement stood any chance of success. He knew that, devoid of its

ideological content, the movement for Pakistan would fail to draw any support from the Indian Muslims. And the very fact that this movement galvanized a scattered community into a determined, united nation, which ultimately wrested its freedom from unwilling hands, goes to prove the existence of a powerful ideological force behind it.

The object of the Pakistan movement, it cannot be over emphasized, was not the separation of a few provinces in the sub-continent. If it were merely that, the Muslims of the minority provinces would never have gladly agreed to bear the main brunt of the freedom struggle. For, no one can deny the fact that the Muslims of these provinces were the greatest sufferers, both before and after partition. They knew that they would stand to gain nothing, indeed might lose everything, if Pakistan was created. And yet they joined the Muslims of the majority provinces whole solidly in their struggle simply because the battle was not for territory, but as Iqbal put it, for the preservation of the life of Islam in the subcontinent.

Again, it was this ideological force that enabled the new state of Pakistan to survive the stresses and strains to which it was subjected in the first crucial months of its existence. As a noted Western scholar on Islam then put it ; “It is Islam alone that holds the new state together. It is only this Islamic quality that can call forth the morale and loyalty without which it would never have survived its first six months and would hardly survive the numerous other challenges with which for some times it would doubtless continue to be faced.”

If, as Iqbal visualized, the ethical ideal or the spiritual principle was the very fountainhead of the concept of Indian Muslim nationhood, there can be no doubt that Pakistan can organise and build herself up only by honouring that principle. In other words, it is only in the Islamic atmosphere which facilitated her birth, that Pakistan can hope to survive and make progress.

Rooted as it is in the Islamic ideology, Pakistani nationalism can never hope to sustain itself on any other plank. Indeed, we know it to our own cost

how a turning away from that ideology brought us to the verge of national extinction. We seemed to have lost sight of our destiny and loosened our hold on the basic ideology which had given birth to our country. We took the achievement of the immediate goal as the culmination of our march towards our destiny; we could not see the woods for the trees. We lost ourselves in a mad rush for power and pelf and completely forgot our ultimate aim. Materialism soon dominated our thoughts and actions and before long we started drifting into a spiritual vacuum.

A nation, no less than an individual, cannot hope to live without idealism, without that driving force which impels it forward to energetic action, to lift itself above petty material gains and to expend itself in the service of noble worthwhile ends. And when such a force ceases to be of any consequence in the life of a nation, a terrible crisis of character results as it did in Pakistan since the death of Quaid-i-Millat and particularly after 1953. Indeed we have been through a period of the worst spiritual stagnation and moral degradation. Such were the depths to which we lowered ourselves that it had become a fashion to look down upon morality and good conduct, in such an atmosphere the very word “ideology” might come to be regarded as a taboo. No wonder the country almost came to the very brink of ruin.

Islam thus remains central to the concept of Pakistani nationalism. Through its ideological orientation Pakistan has presented a new concept to the world: ideological nationalism. And the measure of Pakistan’s progress will be a measure of the soundness of this concept. Indeed, by putting this concept into practice honestly we shall not only be making a positive contribution to our generation but also paying a befitting tribute to the poet-philosopher Iqbal who dreamt of a Muslim state in the sub-continent and to the great Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who crystallized that dream into a living, pulsating reality.