

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF IQBAL

PROF. SAID AHMAD RAFIQ

For nearly five hundred years, from the ninth to the thirteenth century, the Muslims virtually ruled over mankind's intellectual domain. However, this intellectual development of the Muslims Was arrested, on the whole, after the fall of Baghdad; and a downward trend was at once discernible thereafter. Centuries rolled by, and reigned over their intellectual life. During this long period not a single great thinker was born, in the Muslim community, commanding the ability to move the "millat" forward.

It was after five centuries long slumber, in the middle of the 18th Century that Mohammad-bin-Wahab in Arabia and Shah Waliullah in India started their puritan movements which aimed at awakening the Muslims of these countries, and following the simple teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Unluckily none of the two movements proved a success; at least in the first phase of their struggle. The slumber was so long and so deep that the movements could not have the desired effect.

From the beginning of the 19th Century, however, collision between the Eastern and Western cultures was noticeable in the East. This conflict, born of several external and internal factors; and increasing in its sharpness with the passage of time, made the Muslims gradually conscious of their stagnancy, and began to awaken them from their age-long slumber. Various movements started, one after the other, in different Muslim countries; in Turkey, India, Egypt, Persia etc. in the 19th century. These movements were, generally speaking, national in their character and political in their nature. These movements were limited not only geographically in their sphere of influence, but they were also narrowly conceived in that they did not compass the different aspects of life. They did not and could not see the life in its totality. The need of change in the total scheme of life, in each and every aspect of it, was hidden from their ken.

Other type of movements were started in some Muslim countries. The main of these movements were the movements of Jamaluddin Afghani, of Khairuddin in Tunisia, the Sanusiyah movement in Tripolis; movements

sponsored by Anwer Pasha and Saeed Haleem in Turkey, of Mehdi in Sudan, of Abdul Qadir in Algeria, and the Naqshbandiyah movement against Russia. These movements were basically religio-political and tried to awaken the Muslims of their countries on the basis of Islamic laws and Tradition. These movements were not a success; no doubt, but the spirit of the Age and the inspirations of the Muslims all over the world were clearly reflected in them. One of the reasons of the failure of these movements, except that of Jamaluddin Afghani, was the absence of a great mind who could analyze the demands of the time, could inspire the nation and guide the people on proper lines. The spirit of the Age certainly demanded a great thinker to guide the life in all its aspects; to analyze all the new forces of the modern age and to interpret Islamic laws and principles afresh. Iqbal proved himself equal to this difficult task. He was a great scholar; possessing all the necessary qualities of head and heart, a man of profound knowledge -- religious and secular, and Eastern as well as Western. He was conscious of the demands of the time. He made an attempt; a great attempt no doubt, "to reconstruct the Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical tradition of Islam and the more recent development in the various domains of human knowledge".

Before coming to his philosophy, I beg to say a few words regarding his medium of expression. Generally the thinkers have expressed their views in the prose. Simplicity, clearness and distinctness are the basic qualities of prose, and prose is a better medium of expression to achieve these aims. Effectiveness, on the other hand, is the basic attribute of poetry. Iqbal has expressed his views in prose too, but the major portion of his writings is in verse. Taking into consideration the national traditions and literal background of the nation, he adopted the verse as his medium of expression. He was convinced of the fact that a verse goes deep into the mind, and affects the audience and reader more deeply than many a sentence of prose. Ibn-Taimiyya raised his voice against Pantheism, and says Iqbal, "his profound logic had some effect, no doubt, but the fact remains that a logical argument cannot compete the charm and allurements of poetry... So I have not discussed this problem philosophically, but have presented it through imagination, so that the problem may be followed and understood easily". Iqbal is really a great poet-philosopher; and just like Plato, Lucretius, Rumi, Dante, and Goethe he put forward his philosophy in verse.

Iqbal has a definite point of view; and it is from this point of view that he studies the different problems and tries to solve them. He does not limit his study to some of the problems only, but studies nearly all of the social problems which Man of today has to face. All the great thinkers have a particular point of view. They survey the life; its phenomena, attributes and conditions; and wherefrom deduce their philosophic conclusions. Some of these Philosophers have their own ideals, based upon their point of view no doubt, and pass the judgments, normatively, upon the different aspects of life. Apart from these differences of point of view and the Method, some of them have thronged in the heart of some aspects of life only; while others have a totality of life in view. The thinkers who discuss, positively and normatively, only some aspects of life, have, of course, their own importance in those particular domains; but as compared to this the philosophy which takes the whole life in view is by far a greater contribution to life itself. Iqbal belongs to that class of thinkers who have taken the whole life in view, and have discussed nearly all its problems. He has discussed not only cosmological, ontological, epistemological problems etc. but also those problems which have a direct bearing upon our life-moral, political, social, educational, economic, aesthetic etc. He studies these problems not only positively, but some of them are discussed normatively too. This norm Iqbal finds in Islam and so he bases his standard on Islamic Ideology.

Islam is not a religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It is the code of life; the whole life. Islam provides us with the basic and fundamental principles of every aspect of life. Iqbal in his attempt to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy and in interpreting Islamic principles according to the spirit of Age, has discussed the different spheres of life from the Islamic point of view, and has given us the fundamental principles, which are basically Islamic. All the problems, whether purely speculative or comparatively practical, are discussed by him from the same point of view.

Islam is the basis of his thought. Reality can be known, according to Iqbal, through Intuition as well as intellect. But intuition is a better guide as it is “ a higher kind of intellect”. “Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other”. “He (Imam Ghazali) failed to see that thought and intuition are organically related and that thought must

necessarily stimulate finitude and inconclusiveness because of its alliance with serial time. The idea that thought is essentially finite, and for this reason unable to capture the Infinite, is based on a mistaken notion of the movement of thought in knowledge". Their method of grasping Reality is, no doubt, somewhat different from each other. "The one grasps reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal and the other on the temporal aspect of reality. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek visions of the same reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life". So Iqbal, on the whole, relies upon the Intuition of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and regards it as the final word.

But what is this Reality which is sought by both intuition and thought? For Iqbal, as a true Muslim, Reality is one. The nature of the reality is spiritual. The whole life is spiritual, and cannot be divided into religious, moral, political, social, economic etc. "In Islam it is the same reality which appears as church looked at from one point of view and state from another". "Islam is a single unanalysable reality, which is one or the other as your point of view varies". "The Quran considers it necessary to unite religion and. state, ethics and politics in a single revelation". "Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the Universe, spirit and matter, church and state, are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit; realizing itself in space and time".

Iqbal bases politics on Religion and Morality. He condemns Machiavelli as he makes politics independent of Morality and Religion.

وہریت چوں جا مہء مذہب درید
 مرسلے از حضرت شیطان رسید
 آن فلار نسادئ باطل پرست
 سرمہء او دیدہ مردم شکست

نسخہء بہرِ شہنشاہ ہاں نوشت
درگل ما دائۂ پیکار کشت
مملکت را دینِ اُ مذموم را محمود ساخت
فکرِ اُو مذموم را محمود ساخت
نقدِ حق را بر عیارِ سُود زد
باطل از تعلیمِ اُو بالیدہ است
حیلہ اندازی فنے گرویدہ است

If politics is divorced from religion, then, according to Iqbal, it changes itself into tyranny.

جلال پادشاہی ہو کہ جمہوری تماشاہو
جداً ہو دیں سیاست سے تورہ جاتی ہے چنگیزی

He criticizes Luther too, as he also makes the distinction between Religion and Politics. “He (Luther) did not realize that in the peculiar conditions which obtained in Europe, his revolt would eventually mean the complete displacement of the universal ethics of Jesus by the growth of a plurality of national and hence narrower systems of ethics”. “A careful reading of history shows that the Reformation was essentially a political movement, and the net result of it in Europe was a gradual displacement of the universal ethics of Christianity by systems of national ethics.”

Religion, in the real sense of the term, includes politics in it. If the two are separated and made independent of each other, the Religion becomes just a code of beliefs, and losing its grip, has very little influence upon our life:-

ہوئی دین و دولت میں جس دم جدائی
ہوس کی امیری، ہوس کی وزیری
دوئی ملک و دیں کے لیے نامرادی
ادوئی چشم تہذیب کی نابصیری

Islam is a religio-political system. The highest form of political organization i.e. State is an endeavour to transform the ideal principles into space-time forces, an inspiration to realize them in a definite human organization. State, as an abstract idea, exists for ever, but as a concrete institution, it is found in space and time. Man is a social being and cannot lead his life in isolation. It is only in a society that a man can live a normal human life.

The different organizations came into existence to make human life possible. The state was established as a concrete institution in space and time to organize the Government and to maintain the individual liberty; but its ultimate end is the perfection of humanity. Like some other great thinkers, in Iqbal also, we have a process of evolution of thought, particularly in the sphere of political thought. Iqbal, in the beginning regards a political organization as an end-in-itself. In one of his lectures delivered at the Stratchy Hall of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, he emphasises rather, over-emphasises, the importance of state. Here he regards it as an end-in-itself. It exists independently of the individuals; the individuals depend upon the social organization for every right, even for life. In this lecture he discusses the laws and the principles which govern the life of state. The life of the social and political organism does not depend upon the individuals; but is higher, nobler and more important than that of the individuals. It is an organism having its own principles of growth and decay.

فصلِ گل از نسترن باقی است
از گل و سرودسمن باقی تراست
کانِ گوہر پرور سے گوہر گر سے
صبح از مشرق و مغرب شام رفت
جام صد روز از خمِ ایام رفت
بادہ ہا خوردند و صبا باقی است
دوش ہا خون گشت و فروا باقی است
ہم چنان از فرد ہائے بے سپر
ہست تقویم امم پائندہ تر
در سفر یاراست و صحبت قائم است
فرورہ گیراست و ملت قائم است
ذاتِ او دیگر صفاتش دیگر است
سنتِ مرگ و حیاتش دیگر است
فرد پور شخصت و ہفتاواست و بس
فرد قوم را صد سالِ مثلِ یک نفس

Plato and Hegel are also of the opinion that state is an end-in-itself, irrespective of any other function or purpose. Iqbal's general trend during this period is, to a great extent, the same.

فرد قائم ربطِ ملت سے ہے تنہا کچھ نہیں

موج ہے دریا میں اور بیرون دریا کچھ نہیں
شاخ بریدہ سے سبق اندوز ہو کہ تُو
نا آشنا ہے قاعدہ روزگار سے
ملت کے ساتھ رابطہ استوار رکھ
پیوستہ رہ شجر سے، امید بہار رکھ
فرد و قوم آئینہء یک دیگراند
ملک و گوہر کہکشاں و اختر اند
فرد تا اندر جماعت گم شود ۱۱
قطرہء وسعت طلب قلم شود ۱۱
در دلش ذوق نمود از ملت است
پر کہ آب ازمزم ملت نخورد
شعلہ ہائے نغمہ در عودش فسرد
فرد تنها از مقاصد غافل است
قولش آشفستگی را مائل است
قوم باضبط آشنا گرد اندش
نرم دو مثل صبا گرد اندش
پابہ گل مانند شمشادش کند
۱۷ دست و پابند و کہ آزادش کند

But in his later writings the State and individual are made interdependent. Here he maintains the balance between the two, and regards them as equally important. Individual cannot realize his self spiritually without the help of state, and state cannot maintain itself and cannot make any progress without the inner worth of individuals:-

فردی گیرد زملت احترام
ملت^[vii] از افراد می یابد نظام

“The ultimate fate of a people does not depend so much on organization as on the worth and power of Individual man. In an over-organized society, the individual is altogether crushed out of existence. He gains the whole wealth of social thought around him, and loses his own soul”. For Iqbal the Summuni Bonum is the spiritual elevation of the individual; this end cannot be achieved unless he is given full freedom and liberty to realize his ownself. State can help and does help the individual in achieving this highest aim; and so state is an essential aspect of human life, but as a mean only, and not as an end-in-itself. The aim of a Muslim state is to eradicate evil and to perpetuate virtue in accordance with a specific ethical ideal, as laid down in the Holy Quran. So the importance of state, as a mean, and not as an end, cannot be over-emphasised.

It is because of this reason that Iqbal wanted to establish a Muslim state; a Muslim India independent of Indian state. He has expressed his views on the subject very clearly and vividly in his presidential address of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad on the 29th December, 1930. “India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and professing different religions. Their behaviour is not at all determined by a common race-consciousness... The Muslim demand for the creation of a “Muslim India” without India, is, therefore, perfectly justified, personally ‘ I would go further than the demands embodied in it; (the

resolution of the All-Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi), I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state Self Government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State, appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of the 'North-West India'.

Really speaking this demand was based on the two-nation theory. Iqbal had been preaching this theory after his return from Europe in 1908. But we find the elements of the theory earlier than this; at least in one of the writings of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. For Sir Syed it was the language and not religion or politics which was the point of dispute. Some of the prominent Hindus of U.P raised their voice against Urdu. They wanted to replace it and make Hindi the popular medium of expression and instruction in India, particularly in U.P. Sir Syed raised his voice against this movement. In one of his discussions with Mr. Shakespeare, the Commissioner of Benares, he emphasized the fact that Urdu and Urdu alone was the Lingua franca of India and would be the National language of the whole country. He further expressed his views saying that the movement of popularizing Hindi would widen the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims; and then it would not be possible for the two communities to live together peacefully. How very true was his prediction!

Jamaluddin Afghani and Ch. Rehmat Ali, among so many others, also pleaded for a Muslim Home. The latter has given us the name of this homeland. During his stay in Europe, Iqbal had realized that nationalism and patriotism would ultimately result in tyranny, cruelty, despotism, aggression, -exploitation to other nations and to the humanity at large. So he turned against these 'isms', and after his return from Europe he preached against nationalism; based upon geographical boundaries, racial distinctions, linguistic differences etc.

سیت، کلیسا، سلطنت، تہذیب، رنگ
نے خوب چُن چُن کر بنائے مسکرات

کا امتیازِ رنگ و خون، مٹ جائے گا
رنگاہی ہو یا اعرابیِ والا گھر

مسلم کی مذہب پر مقدم ہو گئی
دنیا سے تو مانندِ خاک رہ گذر

In his lecture at Aligarh, referred to above, he had discussed the problem analytically and systematically. Here he emphasizes the fact that the Muslims and non-Muslims are two different nations; and the basic principles of this distinction are religion and culture and nothing else. Says he, "The essential difference between the Muslim community and other communities of the world consists in our peculiar conception of nationality. It is not the unity of language or of country or the identity of economic interests that constitutes the basic principles of our nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the Universe, and participate in the same historical traditions that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam.

"Islam adhors all material limitations, and bases its nationality on a purely abstract idea objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities. It is not dependent for its life-principles on the character and genius of a particular people; in its essence it is non-temporal, non-spatial "The unity of religious belief on which our communal life depends is supplemented by the uniformity of Muslim Culture. Mere belief in the Islamic principle, though exceedingly important, is not sufficient. In order to participate in the life of the communal self, the individual mind must undergo a complete transformation. Just as the Muslim community does not recognize any ethnical differences, and aims at the subsumption of all races under the universal idea of humanity, so our culture is relatively universal and is not indebted for its life and growth to the genius of one particular people...

In order to become a living member of the Muslim community, the individual, besides having an unconditional belief in the religious principle, must thoroughly assimilate the culture of Islam. The object of this assimilation is to create a uniform mental outlook, a peculiar way of looking at the world and a certain definite standpoint from which to judge the value of things; which sharply define our community and transform it into a corporate individual; giving it a definite purpose and ideal of its own”.

Apart from this lecture, his presidential address of the All- India Muslim League and so many of his verses, Iqbal had expressed his views on the topic in his ‘letters’, particularly his letters to Quaid-e-Azam. In his letter of 28th May, 1937, he writes, “But the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India ...In order to make it possible for ‘Muslim India’ to solve these problems, it is necessary to redistribute the country and to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities. Don’t you think that the time for such a demand has already arrived?” Again he writes on the 21st of June 1937, “The only way to a peaceful India is a redistribution of the country on the lines of racial, religious and linguistic affinities. Many British statesmen also realise this, and the Hindu-Muslim riots, which are rapidly coming in the wake of this constitution (of 1935) are sure further to open their eyes to the real situation in the country. I remember Lord Lothian told me before I left England that my scheme was the only possible solution of the troubles of India, but that it would take 25 years to come A separate federation of Muslim provinces, reformed on the lines I have suggested above, is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslim. Why would not the Muslims of North-West India and Bangal be considered as nations entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are?”

It was on the basis of the two-nation theory that Iqbal demanded the “Muslim India”. The non-Muslims of India did not accept this two-nation theory, opposed it like anything, and so rejected the demand of “Muslim India”. But the ideal put forward by the great poet-philosopher was accepted by the nation as a whole. The Muslims demanded ‘Muslim India’ which was

renamed as Pakistan, and fought for it. India was divided and Pakistan was achieved in less than twenty years after the demand was put forward by Iqbal. It is perhaps the unique example in the history of the world that such a great ideal was achieved within so short a period of seventeen years! Pakistan-Zindabad!

Notes and References

[i] کلیات فارسی ص ۱۱۶

[ii] کلیات اردو ص ۳۳۲

[iii] ایضاً ص ۴۱

[iv] کلیات فارسی ص ۱۱۸

[v] ایضاً ص ۸۶

[vi] ایضاً ص ۸۶

[vii] کلیات اردو ص ۲۶۲

[viii] ایضاً ص ۲۶۵