

IQBAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REAWAKENING OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

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Some time before his death the poet and philosopher Mohammad Iqbal, in whose memory this meeting is held, wrote the following quatrain:

"When I depart from this world
everyone will say: "He was known to me
But in truth, none knows this traveller,
Or what he said, and to whom nor whence he came."

I have neither the good fortune of knowing Iqbal personally nor am I an Iqbal scholar. When I was asked by the Honorary General Secretary, Pakistan Cultural Group, to participate in this meeting and to share with you some of my thoughts on the contribution made by Mohammad Iqbal to the renaissance of the Muslim World in general and to the re-awakening of Muslims of pre-partitioned India in particular, I accepted, mainly for the following two reasons:

Firstly I feel that as a Muslim whose own understanding of Islam has been deeply influenced by Iqbal it was my duty to join you in paying homage to this great and noble soul repaying some of the debt of gratitude I owe him for enlightening me through his writings on so many aspects of Islamic teachings and for increasing my love and respect for the Messenger (peace be upon him) -- and his message through Iqbal's inspired exposition of the religion of Islam, -- the religion of my choice.

Secondly acceptance of your kind invitation to address tonight lies in the fact that I hail from a country for which Iqbal has always had the highest esteem and what is more, a deep and abiding love and admiration i.e. Germany.

Iqbal himself tells us in the preface to *Payam-e-Musbriq* the book in which his art has probably reached the height of power and perfection, that of the two great sages who have influenced him more than anyone else in his career as a thinker and poet, one was Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi -- who hailed

from the East, the other was Goethe, who came from West.

Iqbal went to Germany in 1906 when he studied philosophy at the Universities of Heidelberg and Munich. He presented his doctoral thesis entitled "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia" to the Munich University which, in November 1907, conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His thesis was an original contribution to the subject and it still retains its importance.

During his stay in Heidelberg and Munich he developed deep admiration for Germany, German thought, and poetry. As every scholar of Iqbal knows there are innumerable instances in his writings, his letters and in recorded conversation with him which clearly indicate that the works of German philosopher and poets have been a source of great inspiration to him.

I have in my possession a number of letters which Iqbal wrote to his German tutor in Heidelberg. These letters, some of them written in fluent German, express his love and admiration for Germany in a most touching and convincing way.

"It is impossible for me", writes Iqbal to his tutor "to forget your beautiful country where I have learned so much". "My stay in Heidelberg is nothing now but a beautiful dream. How I'd wish I could repeat it". "I am very fond of Germany. It has had great influence on my ideals, and I shall never forget my stay in that country". Never shall I forget the days I spent at Heidelberg, where you taught me Goethe's Faust, those were very happy days, indeed". -- And a final quotation, "Germany was a kind of second home to my spirit. I learned much and I thought much in that country. The home of Goethe has found a permanent place in my soul".

Iqbal's stay in Europe from 1905 till 1908 has had, I think one can call it, "revolutionizing" effect on his attitude to life, and nowhere does this find a more forceful expression than in his poetry.

Iqbal's career as a poet began during his school days. His earlier poems show him as a lover of nature and as a patriot to his country, undivided India. Iqbal was, indeed, an ardent Indian nationalist, until he went abroad. However, during his stay in Europe he had an opportunity of studying modern nationalism at close quarters in its various manifestations, with the result that he came to realize the fundamental, antithesis between the narrow creed of racial and geographical loyalty and the broad humanistic outlook of Islam. Now he was no longer the poet of a particular nations. Despite he

became the poet of Islam, and as such I dare say the poet of humanity.

Likewise, his penetrating study of Western philosophy and social thought at their source, so to say, his stay in Europe enabled him probably as the first Muslim in Modern times, -- to study Islam in the light of modern philosophical concepts. In this process and this is significant as it shows the mettle of which Iqbal was made, his faith in his religion -- Islam and significance and lasting character of the fundamental values of Islam which far from weakening, gained so much in strength and conviction and assumed such dimensions that from now on he devoted himself wholly and solely to *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* -- to use the title, of his well known collection of lectures on the subject -- he became the foremost Muslim thinker of our age. But we cannot say him the philosopher of Islam, for he was far more than a mere lover of wisdom. His feet were too firmly planted in the earth. The very essence of his teachings was movement, dynamism, creative activity and not passive contemplation.

Art thou alive? Be enthusiastic,

be a creator,

Be a conqueror of the Universe like me

Smash the World into pieces if it does not

suit thee

And bring forth another world from

the depth of thy being

It is irritating for a free man

to live in a World made by others

He who is devoid of creative power

Is naught for me but an infidel and a heretic.

This is the spirit which made him take upon himself the gigantic task of rousing millions of fellow countrymen, millions of human beings and making them cast off the moral inertia which had paralysed their mind and spirit in the course of centuries.

And this is also the spirit which prompted him, perhaps even compelled him to associate himself actively with politics from the later 1920s till the day of his death.

"It is because the political ideas such as are taking shape in India today, may affect the structure of Islam", Iqbal is reported to have said, "that I am interested in politics".

And he said elsewhere: "Politics has its roots in the spiritual life of man - Religion is a force of great importance in the life of the individual as well as of nations".

"And religion which in its highest manifestations is neither dogma nor priesthood nor mere ritual, can alone ethically pre-prepare modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves.... It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence and whither, that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religious and political values".

So far Iqbal, the political thinker and visionary, who in this capacity too has found a place in history, through his famous presidential address at the Annual Session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad in December 1930, in which he gave the world the concept of a consolidated, independent Muslim State in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent. He thus became the founder, the originator of the Pakistan idea, though the word "Pakistan" was not coined by him.

Iqbal's unique contribution to Muslim thought is his concept of the Ego and of the perfect man, as other speakers tonight are likely to dwell upon at length.

This is a point, should like to make according to Iqbal --man can achieve his highest possibilities only within and through society. This society must, however, fulfil certain conditions which Iqbal has formulated very clearly and which I may be permitted to enumerate, because of the importance which I personally attach to them.

The ideal society must have a spiritual basis which is provided by the principle of *Tawhid*. "The state according to Islam, is only an effort to realize the spiritualism in a human organization".

"Islam, as a policy, is only a practical means of making this principle, the principle, of *Tawhid*, a living factor in the intellectual and traditional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God, and, this in my opinion is a pointed reference to British raj in India, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate

spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his ideal nature." Iqbal further insists that it must centre around the Prophet (peace be upon him), that it must have a code -- the Holy Quran and a focus -- Mecca, and it ought to apply itself to conquering the forces of nature. Iqbal was convinced that the decadence of the East as it obtained in his days and before, its economic and political disintegration were caused to a large extent by its neglect of science.

But let us not forget that he also demanded that his ideal society must maintain traditions, for traditions are a factor of stability.

His ideal society is the *Ummah* as envisaged by Islam. His ideal man the Prophet (peace be upon him). At a time when the East was in an extremely distressing and difficult situation, defeated and humiliated by an adversity who seemed to be all powerful while the West stood at the apex of its glory, when no one would have given a frame for the Muslims and their future - he brought out in verse/and rhyme/and prose -- thus laying the foundation for the resurgence of Islam of which we are witnesses -- he brought out restated fundamentals, nay essentials of Islam in a clarity which cannot be surpassed.

And by doing so he restored confidence in the hearts of millions of our brethren, fortified their belief and gave them new hope for the future.

A future -- and that was Iqbal's most cherished vision -- in which all Muslims would form an indivisible community, united in the belief that their religion, the religion of Islam -- and here I may be permitted to quote Iqbal once again -- that their religion, i.e. Islam is not a departmental affair. That is neither mere thought nor mere feeling, nor mere action; that it is the expression of the whole man.

May God bless his soul.