

# CREATIVE WRITING AND ISLAMIC SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

*(With Special Reference to Iqbal)*

Dr. Ahmad Sajjad

It goes without saying that life is the whole and language and literature a part of it. But sometimes in some respects this becomes a dominant part of the whole. Man's superiority over other creatures is on account of its intellect and the entire action and reaction of this intellect takes place through the help of language. According to the Holy Quran one of the most important reasons of man's greatness is Illmul Asma (علم الاسما) (And he taught Adam all the names). The entire chain of thinking, and expression and action and reaction comes into being with the help of language. God created the world with the word 'kun' (Be done) and then when he gave new meanings to this universe through his messengers, a series of divine books were also sent to this world. When the first divine words to be sent to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), they began with, words like

'Iqra اقرا (Read) and Allamma Bil علم بالقلم (Teaching with pen). This led even the materialists to regard man as the speaking animal. Since language has played a pivotal role in the origin and development and in the nurture and preservation of all forms of knowledge and arts it will not be inappropriate to maintain that to a large extent language is at the root of all human culture and civilisation. Language is also the most effective instrument of all movements, and revolutions, revival and re-forms. So when Moses appeared in the court of Pharaoh, he prayed in the following words:

رب شرح لي صدرى و يسر لي، يفقهوا قولى واحلل عقدة من لساني

When this language assumes the status of literature with the help of art and aesthetics, it becomes still more effective and can perform constructive and destructive, positive and negative roles. The Holy Quran has warned in Surah Luqman:

ومن الناس من يشتري لهو الحديث ليضل عن سبيل الله

'And of mankind is he who payeth for more pastime of discourse, that he may mislead from Allah's way without knowledge, and maketh it the butt of mockery'. (31:6)

Once when Hazrat Ali was amazed at the linguistic competence of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), he said that God Himself had done his linguistic training.

### ادبى فاحسن ئادىبى

The magnificent revolution caused by the Quran and Hadith to the Arabic and Persian languages and literatures is itself a vast topic for study. Again, the way which gradually influenced world languages and literatures will form a separate subject of study not touched hitherto sympathetically. The discerning know it well how Arabic or Islamic literature had begun to cast this all round influence on the social environment within less than half-a-century. Then as its influences began to expand they were also felt far and wide. Dante's Divine Comedy considered a masterpiece -- world literature drew upon 'Alghufrān, a journal brought out by Abul-ala Moarra. In the same way Goethe, Fitzgerald, Arnold Nicholson, Jan Marik did not only like the literary forms of Ghazal and Rubai but also composed in these forms and added new dimensions to their respective language and literature. Robert Brefolt admits that the renaissance in Europe took place not in the 15th century but under the influence of cultural revival of the Arabs and Murs. The cradle of this new birth of Europe was Spain and not Italy.<sup>105</sup> There came a time in German literature when Saadi Shirazi became its real ideal. The Persian language itself, which was originally Pehlavi became Persian under the influence of Arabic. Arabic became so popular in Persian within a period of two centuries that similar examples are hard to find in world literature. Arabic became the literary language of Persian and for centuries no intellectual of any consequence cared to write in Persian. A very important effect of this all round influence of Arabic on the inhabitants of Persia was that they embraced Islam which was soon followed by a series of works written in Arabic and such eminent personalities as Imam Abu Hanifa in jurisprudence, Imam Bukhari in Hadith and Abu Obaida Muammar bin Ulmani in literature enriched the language.

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<sup>105</sup> *Making of Humanity* - Robert Brefolt, p. 292.

Islamic literature and civilisation also influenced the Tatars of Turkey, the Negroes of Egypt and even the Buddhists, Jains and Hindus of Indonesia, China, Burma, Afghanistan and India and brought about a total change in the economic and social systems in these countries.

But when on account of a lack of Islamic dynamism the same people fell a victim to spiritual downfall, moral decadence and mental inertness, they were humiliated all over the world despite their numerical majority, political leadership, they suffered from prejudice, nationalism, western materialism and luxury.

There are four cases of this exemplary humiliation and downfall:

1. The doubts raised by the orientalist and so called progressive Muslims regarding the basic tenets of Islam.
2. Astingent imitation, diseased mentality and misleading mysticism of the common Muslim people.
3. Treating religion as a private matter and keeping it confined to oneself.
4. Following the distorted religion under the influences of Pseudo Islamic scholars by a majority of illiterate Muslims.

This mental stagnation and material prosperity did not only make the rich ease loving but also the poets and writers of the time and soon their literature began to reflect this stagnation and luxury in which they indulged. This gradually led to the freezing of the Muslim mind. The writer is not a monk. He is brought up in a particular social set up. His creative faculty is also influenced by this. So the fall of the Muslim world also made the artists mentally and morally sick and the entire Muslim world was faced with a trial.

On the contrary under the influence of Islam the West wake up from its deep slumber and marched ahead from the point of view of knowledge, thought and action. The reformist movement of Martin Luther and even new scientific inventions began to take it forward in a specified way. On account of Crusades and materialism the new forces of west regarded Islam as its greatest foe and waged an all out war against the followers of Islam. Soon the great forces of heresy made the Islamic world disintegrate and then captured it. Since the western thought had advanced as a reaction to Christian Popism so it had lost the concept of the totality of life. It tried to fill the void created by the rejection of God, religion and religious values by humanism. But soon the increasing materialistic outlook confined it to analytic wisdom, sentimentalism and their sensuality. Not content with this they indulged in

the image of 'unconscious'. Then mankind arrived at a nameless matter via animalism and as a result of this unbridled flight of intellect and materialism Nietzsche announced (God forbid) the death of God toward the end of nineteenth century and around 1925 D.H. Lawrence proclaimed the end of human relations and in 1945 -- Marlowe declared that man, himself was dead. Finally when this worst kind of heresy and decadence reduced the world to hell a conscientious western philosopher could not restrain himself and cried out that the elements of our culture are imprisoned in their own circles. Its theology is neglecting philosophy, science and literature. Its fruitless philosophy is quite ignorant from science. Its science is void of philosophy and hates literature.

This disorder disintegrated the individual and collective life of the west. Communism, dictatorship, nationalism, democracy, irreligiousness and facism began to sting their communal life. On the literary level romanticism, sexuality, existentialism, unconscious, progressiveness, modernity and a host of 'isms' made it a confused lot. And these began a blind imitation of all these in the Muslim world.

As is well known when darkness thickens the signs of the morning become clear. As Iqbal has said:

مسلمانوں کو مسلمان کر دیا طوفان مغرب نے  
تلاطم ہائے دریا ہی سے ہے گوہر کی تابانی!

The onslaught from the west make Muslim a true Muslim, the shine of the pearl increases with the strong currents of the sea.

So the revivalists and reformers of the Muslim world began the work of revival and reform on a large scale and an attempt to take out the Muslims from the citadel of darkness was initiated. These movements were of two types, that which was based on the clear cut principles of Islam. Its aim was to restore its original form to Islam. The other movement was influenced by the western thought. A great many countries also took refuge in nationalism in order to save themselves from the tyrannies of others.

The religious movement started by Mohammad Abdul Wahab (the blessed one) in the eighteenth century caused great awakening in the Island

of Arabia. Syed Ahmad Bareilvi (the blessed one) and Ismail Shaheed (the blessed one) benefited a lot from the revivalist movement of Shah Waliullah (the blessed one). In the same way the Sannosi Movement in Africa, the Nuri Movement in Turkey, the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and Jamat-e-Islami in India and Pakistan influenced the Muslim world on a universal scale. These revivalists gave a new and effective expression to Islamic thought and in the wake of the movement a whole team of poets and writers came into existence. These poets and writers adopted various styles and forms in order to accelerate the speed of this movement.

In spite of this all comprising awakening our progress in different sciences and arts is still in a very initial stage. On the one hand the west has presented its entire educational, cultural, economic and social systems in all its aspects but on the other Muslim world is yet to decide whether to base its thinking on the equality of relations between individual and society and politics and culture and economy. This had led to the division of the entire Muslim world into leftist and rightist camps. Socialism, democracy, monarchy and dictatorship as political systems have their respective champions all over the Muslim world. Also, there are absence of freedom of thought and expression. Consequently, the academic and practical aspects of the Muslim sociology are yet to be crystallized. It is not yet clear that this community is created by the mingling of individual with one another but its perfection is possible only through a divine progress. These are two chief components of the thought. First, a belief in Oneness of God which curse one of despair and fear and the second belief is the generation of feelings like emancipation, equality and unity. A social system is not possible without a constitution and the constitution of the Muslim Ummah is only one and that is the Holy Quran. Only a following of this constitution will lend maturity to its social character. Its perfection lies in emulating the character of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The felt centre of this community is Baitul Haram. The attainment of the conception of Ummah depends upon the adoption of the ideal of the community. The aim of the followers of Mohammad (peace be upon him) is to protect and propagate the belief in Oneness of God. The expansion of the community depends on the conquest of the world order. The continuity of the life of a community depends on following the specific traditions of that community.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Iqbal's *Ramoz-e-Bekhudi* and *Asrar-e-Kliudi*.

A section of the intellectuals do not believe in this universal concept of Islam and almost the entire ruling class is scared of this divine order. Therefore, a vast majority of Muslims is still in the grip of conceptual mist. Since creative skill is acquired by selected individuals of all sections of the society in a natural way, so this most sensitive group of the society could not also accept the Islamic order whole heartedly. Consequently, this formal contact with Islam has led to surfeit of creative writings of a formal nature. This is not helping in the formation of a Muslim

social order.

On the level of Islam thought also most intellectuals are still unaware of the role played by obedience, self control and caliphate in the formation of a social order because in this connection the positive and negative values of the Islamic way of life are yet to be presented in a learned way in contemporary terms. If this had been done with reference to the different sciences and arts, everyone would have felt attraction for this last divine book and the final religion and the Islamic world would have presented an altogether different picture. It would also have influenced the Muslim world in a very positive way.

It is well known that faith is of fundamental importance in the Islamic way of life and the demands of this faith are in the words of Iqbal, akin to the demands of love. This means a desire to unify oneself with the beloved. It can best be done by the creation of value and cures and turning them into a reality. The love of a truly religious person is not a formal love. The love of God is synonymous with a craving for creation, a taste for enquiry, restlessness of the soul and the power to absorb.

It does not only new objectives and create higher values and give them reality but helps mankind in attaining them.

Even in an ordinary student of literature knows that the emotions, and experiences of a heart lend colour to the imagination of an artist and inspires him to express it in an artistic way.

Iqbal has equated this emotion and hearty connection with the blood of the heart which results in a manifestation of artistic miracle. He has said:)

رنگ ہو یا سنگ و خشت، حرف ہو یا چنگ و صوت  
معجزہ فن کی ہے خون جگر سے نمود

"Be it colour, stone or buck, be it word or music or sound the miracle of art is manifested by the blood of the heart".

The manifestation of the miracle of art by the blood of heart of love and faith is possible when the artist does not only on the basis of the Oneness of God, Prophethood and the day of judgment realize there eternal truths and their effects on a general level but also on the level of emotion and soul.

The first of these eternal truths is:

وما خلقنا السما والارض وما بينهما لعين

"We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in play. If we had wished to find a pastime we could have found it in our presence -- if we ever did (21:16 & 17).

Thus this divine creation is greatly organised from the point of view of aspirations and aims.

The second truth is that man is the supreme creation

لقد خلقنا الانسان في احسن تقويم

"Surely We created man of the best stature" (45:4).

He has been made the deputy of God on this earth after conquering it. So the relationship between man and the universe is that man to lead his life according to the instruction of the creator and remain grateful to Him.

The third truth is that man has been granted the power of determination and independence of choice. He has not been made unconscious like the universe. So he is free to adopt the path of right or wrong. If he leaves the only right faith (سو السبيل), he has to be ready to cross the stage of the worst as stated by the Quran: "Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low"(95: 57

The fourth truth is that although man is born individually he has to spend his life in a certain place, environment and society. So even though he possesses an individualistic personality he is closely connected with a group. It, therefore, becomes his individual and social responsibilities that he should be helpful of each other and thus make his universe more and more beautiful because it is a fact that at this stage of development it is not only impossible to reach this stage but life itself will be impossible.

But the fundamental fact which flows like blood in the relationship between man and the universe and man and man is the perpetual conflict between right and wrong. If there is any dialectic it is the act of good and evil. Individually, every living being especially man possesses a kind of natural instinct which helps him distinguish between right and wrong, black and white and useful and harmful. It is this instinct which makes him accept the right, useful and the good and reject the wrong, harmful and incorrect. This instinct of likes and dislikes makes him feel elated at accepting the right and inflicts agony when he commits himself to the evil and the wrong.

Iqbal has presented this in his own philosophical style:

"In my opinion truth is a combination of such elements which aspires to achieve totality by establishing a kind of relationship through conflict and this conflict will inevitably lead to their organization. In fact, conflict is essential for the growth and sustenance of life.... I consider all the forms of action which includes conflict necessary and in my opinion it leads permanence and strength to man. So I regard inaction and stagnation and the mystic philosophy of this nature which is based on sheer guess work, reprotected. I regard conflict essential not from a political point of view but from point of view of morality.<sup>107</sup>

Explaining this view of Iqbal an intellectual has observed that according to Iqbal the universe is essentially a vast expanse which conceals within it the power of thought and determination. In order to translate it into action he has divided himself into self and other self or in the term of philosophy into 'subject' and 'object'. The real function of the other self is that it should be

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<sup>107</sup> Iqbal *Namah* Part I, p. 464.



like a mission for experience and should be like an agent for its growth the self clashes with the other self in order to perfect and strengthen itself and its inner strength grows as a result of this conflict and gradually it goes through the different stages of development. Its existence is based on continuous movement, action and struggle. The place of a thing is fixed in the different stages of life in accordance with the degree to which it finds strength in itself and conquers the other self.<sup>108</sup> Thus human life is in fact an amalgam of spiritual and physical live. Human will strive for creation but matter obstructs its way. Thus life is a conflict between option and compulsion. The result of this conflict is progress. To .achieve the different stages of progress means a conquest of matter by the will and freedom itself from the compulsion of matter. This is also found in the life of animals and vegetable life. But it is best manifested in human life. This does not, however, mean that in the human life will power always dominates over matter. It succeeds when it acts according to the divine directives but when it acts in violation of these divine directive it meets with failure. Even in the event of failure we cannot prove its absence. The presence of this conflict is undoubted.

This eternal conflict between spiritual and material life is dependent on positive and negative values.

If our poets and artists ponder the reality of these values it will not only increase the appeal of their creations but-also augur well the human society. The utility of art depends on the creation of beauty and creation of beauty depends on appropriateness, perfection, proportion balance or in the terminology of Quran on delineated balance. Thus in such pieces of art variety, appropriateness artistic perfection and purity are of great significant. The most important of these positive values is action because this is the basic quality of life. In its absence life is worst than death, as Iqbal said:

عمل سے زندگی بنتی ہے جنت بھی جہنم بھی  
یہ خاکی اپنی فطرت میں نہ نوری ہے نہ ناری ہے

"Life can be turned into heaven or hell by action. This terrestrial element

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<sup>108</sup> Iqbal, *Risala-e-Urdu*, p. 25.

in our nature is neither light nor fire".

But faith is the basic requirement for action. Action can also be called the result of this faith. This faith is also required for love and creation. In contrast presumption, estimation doubt and suspicion weaken human organs. They do not generate that desire which is the basic requirement for action and in particular intensive action.

غلامی میں نہ کام آتی ہیں شمشیریں نہ تدبیریں  
جو ہو ذوق یقین پیدا تو کٹ جاتی ہیں زنجیریں

یقین محکم، عمل پیہم، محبت فاتح عالم  
جہاد زندگانی میں یہ ہیں مردوں کی شمشیریں

'Stronger belief, continuous action and love conquer the world, these are the weapons of man in his struggles in life. In slavery neither the swords nor any contrivance is of any use, if your faith is perfect all chains are cut'.<sup>109</sup>

Thus patience, strong determination, courage and strength are the essential requirement for action. Besides, collectiveness, emancipation, brotherhood, equality and unity of purpose are the positive values. Apart from these there are negative values on the individual and social level which act as impediments in our attempt to attain spiritual, moral and social heights. So it is not possible to attain perfection in one's individual conquering these negative values, nor can its action and thinking be perfect. These can also be called (مروف و منکر) 'good' and 'evil' in the terminology of the Holy Quran.

These positive and negative values are so much interrelated with each other that one cannot be thought of without the other. Thus there have been parallel discussions regarding love and request, self and self-denial, action and inaction, strength and weakness, hope and despair, originality and imitation,

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<sup>109</sup> *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu), p. 271-2.

resignation and the wrong type of resignation. The only way to strike a balance between the two is to follow the divine directives as given in the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

Of the negative values which confront the Muslim World today the Persian mysticism is the most pernicious. This has given the road to pantheism.

Iqbal was right when he said: "If mysticism means sincerity of action no Muslim will object to it. But when mysticism wants to become a philosophy and expresses views regarding the order to the universe and God Himself under non-Arab influence my soul reacts against it".<sup>110</sup> In a letter to Sirajuddin Pal, Iqbal further explains "The fact is that to search the inner meaning in the manners and code of conduct of a nation is to distort it and this is a very subtle way of distortion. This can be invented or adopted by such nation which are sheepish by nature."<sup>111</sup>

In the same way religious narrowness, inferiority of enquiry of fear and despair, the imprudence of limitation, doubt, demoralisation, hypocrisy, weakness and stagnation can become most dangerous negative values on individualistic level. How like the rest of the world, is also a victim of slavery, patriotism, monarchy, western democracy, dictatorship, capitalism and communism is evident to all.

These positive and negative values are the most important bases of the contemporary sociological problems and only the Islamic view of life can present their solution as has been proved in practice in the different periods of history. Naim Siddiqui observes: "Falsehood and evil are not permanent in the world, only good and the truth can flourish here. This provides with new matter to sociologists as well as poets and writers. When we encounter such imagination symbolism in literature as spring and autumn, pleasant and unpleasant wind, shelter and prison, garden and desert, gardener and the hunter, flower and throne, flame and dew, nest and the lightning, light and darkness, the morning of hope and the night of despair, meeting and parting, friend and rival, messiah and murderer, wound and ointment, display and concealment, they present two aspects to poets and writers".<sup>112</sup> One aspect is

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<sup>110</sup> Iqbal *Namah* I, p. 54.

<sup>111</sup> *Mid*, p. 26.

<sup>112</sup> Naim Siddiqui, *Islami Adab*, p.21.

of good, right and useful the other of sin and harm. Since the universe has been created on the principle of right and good only those poets can attain universal fame who represent this aspect in their poetry. Iqbal in Urdu, Rumi in Persian and Shauqui in Arabic are the best examples of this.<sup>113</sup>

اسے اہل نظر ذوق نظر خوب ہے لیکن  
جو شے کی حقیقت کو نہ دیکھے، وہ نظر کیا!

مقصود ہنر سوز حیات ابدی ہے  
یہ ایک نفس یا دو نفس مچل شرر کیا!

شاعر کی نوا ہو کہ مغنی کا نفس ہو  
جس سے چمن افسردو ہو وہ باد سحر کیا!

O people for the eye the craving to see is good but the eye which fails to see the reality is no eye. What is inspired for is the quality of possession for eternal life; one or two breaths are of no avail. Whether it is the poet's voice of the musician's note that which makes the garden sad is worthless.

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<sup>113</sup> *Kulliyat (Urdu)*, p. 580.

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