

IQBAL AND COMMUNISM

Dr. Waheed Ishrat

Trans. Dr. M.A.K. Khalil.

During Allamah Iqbal's life some people had attempted to create the impression of Iqbal's leanings towards communism, basing their arguments on some verses in favour of communism and its ideology. An Indian communist, Shamsuddin Hasan, commenting in the *Zamindar* of June 23, 1923 on the arrest of Professor Comrade Ghulam Hasan and his communist co-workers had said, "If supporting Bolshevik thought is a crime our country's greatest poet, Sir Muhammad Iqbal cannot escape legal action, because, the Bolshevik system of government is the essence of its political philosophy and Karl Marx' (1818-83) philosophy is commonly called socialism and communism. In these circumstances even a person of average intelligence will soon see by a careful study of Sir Muhammad Iqbal's *Khizr-i-Rah* (The Journey's Guide) and *Payam-i-Mashriq* (The Message of the East), that Allamah Iqbal is not only a communist but communism's high priest"⁵⁹.

Immediately on publication of this articles, i.e. the very next day Allamah Iqbal explained his principles in the daily *Zamindar* as follows:

"I am a Muslim and believe, on the basis of logical reasoning, that the Holy Qur'an has offered the best cure for the economic maladies of human societies. No doubt the power of capitalism is a curse if it exceeds the limits of the happy mean. But its complete elimination is not the right way for freeing the world from its evils as the Bolsheviks propose. To keep its power within reasonable limits the Holy Qur'an has prescribed the law of inheritance, prohibition of usuary and the system of zakat etc*(b), and considering human nature, this is the only practical system. Russian Bolshevism is a strong reaction against the selfish and short-sighted capitalism of Europe. But in fact the European capitalism and the Russian Bolshevism are two extremes. The happy middle path is what the Holy Qur'an has shown to us and to which I have alluded above. The equitable

⁵⁹ Sarguzash-i-Iqbal

Shariah(c) aims at protecting one class from the economic domination of the other, and in my belief, the path chosen by the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) is the one best suited for this purpose.

“Islam does not exclude the power of capital from its economic system, but on account of its deep concern for human nature, maintains it and prescribes for us an economic system practicing which would not allow its power every to transgress reasonable limits. I am sorry at the Muslims’ indifference towards studying the economic side of Islam, otherwise they would have appreciated the great blessing of Islam in this particular respect. I believe in the allusion to this blessing in” *فاصبحتم بنعمة اخوانا*, because the individuals of a nation cannot feel mutually fraternal relationship without equality among themselves in all respects, and this equality cannot be attained without establishing a social system aimed at containing the powers of capitalism within reasonable limits. Europe today is engulfed in troubles and tribulations by ignoring this. I sincerely wish that all nations of mankind frame laws in their respective countries aimed at restraining the power of capitalism within reasonable limits, thereby leading to the creation of the above equality. Also, I am sure that the Russian nation itself --- experiencing the shortcomings of its own present system, will be obliged to incline towards a system whose basic principles will be either purely or approximately Islamic. In the present century, however laudable the economic ideals of Russians may be their practical programme cannot win any Muslim’s sympathy. The Muslims of India and other countries, who are very easily swayed by Western thought, by the study of Europe’s political economy, should make a deep study of the Holy Quran’s political economy. I am convinced that they will find the solution of their economic problem in this book. The Muslim members of the Lahore’s Labour Union should pay special attention to this. I have genuine sympathies with their aims and objectives but I hope that they will not adopt a course of action or ideology which will be contrary to the teachings of the Holy Qur’an.”⁶⁰

This clarifies the following points:

⁶⁰ Zamindar, Lahore, June 24, 1923.

1. Allamah Iqbal did not accept anything except Islam as an article of faith or philosophy of life and the Holy Qur'an is the source and center of all his thoughts.
2. Allamah Iqbal considers unbridled capitalism as an anathema for the whole world.
3. He rejects the use of Bolshevik system as a panacea for the evil effects of capitalism.
4. He considers the Islamic laws of inheritance, prohibition of usuary and institution of zakat as very close to human nature for effective protection against capitalism.
5. Iqbal considers the Russian Bolshevism to be a forceful reaction against the Europe's selfish and short-sighted capitalism. Still he considers capitalism and Bolshevism as extremes, with the golden mean being the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.
6. Islam does not exclude capital's power from the economic system. To Iqbal, it is impossible to establish real fraternity between the individuals of a nation without economic equality. To achieve this equality the social system is imperative which would aim at containment of the forces of capitalism within reasonable bounds.
7. The Allamah expresses his ardent desire that all human nations frame laws within their respective countries which would aim at establishing the aforesaid equality by containment of the forces of capitalism within reasonable bounds.
8. The Allamah also predicts that "I am convinced that the Russian nation also, after experiencing the failures of their present system, will be compelled to incline towards a system whose basic principles will be purely or approximately Islamic".
9. The Allamah clearly says that "In the present conditions, however laudable the Russian's economic ideals may be, their practical programme cannot win any Muslim's sympathy".

10. The Muslims of India (Pakistan and India) as well as other countries, who are very easily swayed by Western thought, after studying Europe's political economy, should make a deep study of the Holy Qur'an's political economy. I am convinced that they would find the solution of their problems in this book.

The purpose of the above explanations was to clarify Allamah's views about capitalism and communism with the help of his own statements, which leaves no doubt about his thoughts concerning these two systems.

The question now remains as to why Allamah Iqbal lauded communism, Marx and Lenin so much. There are three basic reasons which follow:

1. The first reason is psychological and political. The Indian sub-continent as well as Islamic countries were under the capitalistic colonial system. The colonial system appeared invincible, and its defeat and destruction alone could free the Islamic world. When the defeat and destruction of this centuries old capitalistic colonial system started at the hands of Marx and Lenin it naturally attracted the sympathy of Iqbal, who had been perturbed by capitalism's colonial system, in that they had dealt an effective blow to this very huge monster of despotism, who was parading in the cloak of democracy, and had demolished the spell of its invincibility.
2. The second reason was that the inevitable result of the defeat and destruction of capitalism would not only be the freedom of the Islamic world from colonialism but that of the entire world from slavery.
3. Iqbal was convinced that, resulting from the defeat and destruction of capitalism, Islam also would rise as an economic power together with communism, and that when the human race would have experienced the two extremes of individual ownership in capitalism and collective ownership in communism it would appreciate the closeness of Islam's middle path approach to human nature, and would be inclined to accept it. He believed in the rise of Islam with its economic system and their universal acceptance of it in the wake of the destruction of capitalism and disgust with communism. To

him the creation of Pakistan was inevitable for this experiment in Islamic economics and was necessary, in Iqbal's view, to show the world an "old spectacle".

This was the background in which Allamah Iqbal, while cautiously illuminating and praising the affirmative and positive aspects of the communist experiment, persuaded Muslims to benefit from it, also pointed out its negative aspects and warned them to guard themselves against their ill effects.

A basic principle must be remembered that no system either deserves complete rejection or uncritical acceptance in its entirety. Human nature loves extremism. It strays about between extremes instead of adopting the mean. It was fascinated once by the Western system and then by communism. Very few people accept the positive aspects of both, considering them the lost heritage of the Mumin (believer in Islam), and discard the negative aspects on account of their ill effects. Iqbal commended the feeling of human compassion in communism, Marx and Lenin, and accepted their struggle for destroying the idol of capitalism. What appealed most to Iqbal was the elixir that communism proved to be for the cancer of the concept of national organization on the basis of colour, language and race in the capitalist system, and that it created, in Europe, the new concept of ideological nationhood. Islam itself shapes its nationhood on the ideology of tauheed (monotheism). This concordance in thought between the two produced a soft corner for communism in Iqbal's conscience. In other words Iqbal viewed with pleasure the successes of communism against capitalism as the ground preparation for Islamic renaissance. at the very outset of the communist experiment he predicted the arrival of the period when the meaning of the phrase *(e) would be revealed, i.e. between the two extremes of the communistic and capitalistic systems the human race will benefit from the concept of "or the middle of the road of Islam". That is why the Allamah says:

قرآن میں ہو غوطہ زن اے مرد مسلمان
اللہ کرے تجھ کو عطا جدت کردار

جو حرف "قل العفو" میں پوشیدہ ہے اب تک
اس دور میں شاید وہ حقیقت ہو نمودار!

“O Muslim dive into the depths of the Qur’an

So that God may reward thee with renovation of character⁶¹

The late Mr. Justice S.A. Rahman writes in his English book “Iqbal and Socialism”⁶²

“It is now evident that Allamah Iqbal praised communism in a limited sense and for a limited purpose, while viewing it in a broader sense and for broader purposes he regarded it as deleterious and harmful to the human race, and pointed to the Holy Qur’an as the only cure for social ills. We should view Iqbal’s sympathies with communism and his appreciation for Karl Marx and Lenin in the light of these facts. Whereas Iqbal has often praised the positive aspects of communism and has said:

صاحب سرمایہ از نسل خلیل
یعنی آن پیغمبر بے جبرئیل
زانکہ حق در باطل او مضمحل است
قلب او مومن دماغش کافر است
دین آن پیغمبر حق ناشناس
بر مساوات شکم دارد اساس
تا اخوت را مقام اندر دل است
بیخ او در دل نہ در آب و گل است

⁶¹ Iqbal, Sir Muhammad (1936) Zarb-i-Kaleem. Published by Munira Banu Begum at the Kapoor Arts Printing Works, Lahore (Second Impression 1941, p. 138.

⁶² Rahman, S.A. (Iqbal and Socialism.

“The author of Das Kapital is the descendant of Khalil”(f)

That Prophet not blessed with divine revelation brought by Jibreel

There is some truth concealed in his false line of thought His heart seems to be a believer but infidel is his thought

The creed of that apostle devoid of the perceptions of the Truth.

Is based on equality of materialistic life (not spiritual Truth)

When fraternal feelings are established in the human heart

Their roots are also established in the heart and not in water and earth⁶³

In “The Satan’s Advisory Council” the third advisor of Satan says; about Marx:

وہ کلیم بے تجلی، وہ مسیح بے صلیب!
نیست پیغمبر و لیکن در بغل دارد کتاب!
کیا بتاؤں، کیا ہے، کافر کی نگاہ پردہ سوز
مشرق و مغرب کی قوموں کے لیے روز حساب!
اس سے بڑھ کر اور کیا ہوگا طبیعت کا فساد
توڑ دی بندوں نے آقاؤں کے خیموں کی طناب!

“That Moses without Tajalli*(g) that Christ without cross He is not a prophet, but keeps the Book for specious appearance

How can I explain what that pagan’s eye will be

⁶³ Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad (1932). Javid Nama. Published by Dr. Javid Iqbal Printed at Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, Lahore, Seventh Impression (1970), p. 69.

To the East and West nations on the Day of Judgement*(h) No worse human nature's mischief can there be

Than that the slaves have toppled the master's tent*(i)⁶⁴

Allamah Iqbal has written these and similar verses in praise of Karl Marx and Lenin. This is a tribute of approbation from him as well as a pointer to the fact that, in spite of attaining the climax of intellectual thought, establishing a rationalist system and writing a book aiming at curing human ills and misery, Marx is a Moses without divine guidance and is a Christ who was not crucified in a divine cause. While these verses exhibit extreme approbation for Marx on the one hand they also expose his deprivation from prophetic revelation and his lack of vision in spiritual values and ecstasy. Marx has been called a materialistic prophet, i.e. one who was devoid of the exhilarating and life-giving revelations brought by Hazrat-i-Jibreel. Marx presumed materialistic equality to be the panacea for human ailments. The Allamah says that the roots of his (Marx's) imagination have not penetrated the depths of his heart but are only floating in the baser existence, and though his sympathy for mankind may give the impression of a believer's heart, his insight, being deprived of divine revelation, the system produced by him through the innovations of his intellect is not beneficial. Being deprived of the divine revelation it is no more than the gleanings of an infidel mind. Consequently, Iqbal has said that the problem would not be solved by the proletariat's control of government. On the contrary the bourgeoisie would parade in the cloak of the proletariat, because the real revolution is more a change of, the intrinsic feelings of the heart than that of the material resources and conditions, and so

زمام کار اگر مزدور کے ہاتھوں میں ہو تو پھر کیا!
طریق کوہکن میں بھی وہی حیلے ہیں پرویزی
جلال پادشاہی ہو کہ جمہوری تماشا ہو

⁶⁴ Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad (1938) Armaghan-i-Hijaz. Published by Dr. Javid Iqbal, printed at the Kapur Art Printing Works, Lahore First Edition (1941), p. 218

جدا ہو دیں سیاست سے تو رہ جاتی ہے چنگیزی

“The transfer of political power to the proletariat will make no difference

The ways of the proletariat are the same as those of the bourgeoisie

It may be the majesty of kingship or the fun of democracy

If religion is separated from politics the latter becomes mere tyranny⁶⁵

In these verses Iqbal has rejected the concept of communism that the establishment of a proletarian society is the solution of all problems. Iqbal rejects the very basic hypothesis of Karl Marx’ book Das Kapital in the following verses:

یہ علم و حکمت کی مہرہ بازی، یہ بحث و تکرار کی نمائش
نہیں ہے دنیا کو اب گوارا پرانے افکار کی نمائش
تری کتابوں میں اے حکیم معاش رکھا ہی کیا ہے آخر
خطوط خم دار کی نمائش، مریز و کج دار کی نمائش
جہاں مغرب کے بت کدوں میں، کلیساؤں میں، مدرسوں میں
ہوس کی خوں ریزیاں چھپاتی ہے عقل عیار کی نمائش!⁶⁶

“The world does not like tricks and guiles of science and will not their contests

This age does not like ancient thought, from core of hearts their show detest.

O wise economist the books you write are quite devoid of useful aim

⁶⁵ Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad (1935) Bal-i-Jibreel Published by Dr. Javid Iqbal at the Maktab-i-Jamia, Delhi, India (Second Edition 1941).

⁶⁶ Same as Reference 3, p. 139.

They have twisted lines with orders strange
No warmth for labour though they claim.

The idol houses of the West
Their schools and churches wide:

The ravage caused for greed of wealth
Their wily wit attempts to hide⁶⁷

So, to Iqbal communism is nothing but “wily wits” which attempt to hide the ravages caused by greed for wealth.

In “The Advisory Council of Satan”, where Satan and his advisors have been made to praise communism and Karl Marx Satan himself does not consider communism as a danger to his Satanic system (capitalism-colonialism). This means that the communism whose praises the Satan’s advisors celebrate, in the Satan’s opinion has lost its utility and importance. Actually, through Satan and his Advisors Iqbal, by comparing communism and Islam, wants to make it clear that the creed of the human race of the future would be Islam and not communism, and that Islam and not communism would lead the world opinion. This will be so, because if capitalism is the extreme of individualism, communism is the other extreme of anti-individualism and supports collectivism, Justice and fairplay is always in the middle path between two extremes and that is Islam. Hence, Islam is a rising power of the future and it has to shoulder the responsibility of the leadership of mankind. In other words Iqbal pleads for Islam’ acceptance after rejection of communism. So, Satan rejects communism as a danger to his Satanic system, and considers Islam and not communism as a challenge to his system as shown below:

دست فطرت نے کیا ہے جن گریبانوں کو چاک
مزد کی منطق کی سوزن سے نہیں ہوتے زفو

⁶⁷ Shah, Syed Akbar Ali (1983) The Rod of Moses. Versified English Translation of Iqbal’s Zarb-i-Kaleem. Published by the Iqbal Academy Pakistan at the Himayat-i-Islam Press, Lahore, Pakistan, p. 87.

کب ڈرا سکتے ہیں مجھ کو امشتراکی کوچہ گرد
 یہ پریشاں روزگار، آشفته مغز، آشفته مو
 ہے اگر مجھ کو خطر کوئی تو اس امت سے ہے
 جس کی خاکستر میں ہے اب تک شرار آرزو
 خال خال اس قوم میں اب تک نظر آتے ہیں
 کرتے ہیں اشک سحر گاہی سے جو ظالم وضو
 جانتا ہے جس پہ روشن باطن ایام ہے
 مزد کیت فتنہ فردا نہیں، اسلام ہے

“The collars to whom the Nature has torn The logic of Mazdak*(j) to them cant. Darn How can frighten me the socialist lads,

Since long jobless, confused and loafing fads From that nation but I feel a threat grave, Whose heart yet holds embers of crave. A few of them I espy in this nation yet,

At dawn who make wuzu *(k) with tear drops jet.

He knows on whom hidden times are bright That Islam not Mazdak*(j) is the future’s fright⁶⁸

So as far as the capitalist system is concerned it is evident from the Allamah’s political works that he was against capitalism and considered it contrary to Islam. The Allamah was pleased with communism because it had annihilated the tyranny of capitalism. However, in spite of all its goodness he considered communism harmful and destructive for mankind. He believed that Russia itself would eventually relinquish this system and would come close to the basic economic concepts of Islam. The fast retreat of China and

⁶⁸ Kabir, Q.A., (1983) Armaghan-i-Hijaz. Versified English Translation of Iqbal’s Armaghan-i-Hijaz. Published by the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, printed at the Himaya-i-Islam Press, Lahore, Pakistan. p. 133.

Russia from communism and Marxism is a step towards the first stage of Allamah's prediction. A conflagration of the buried sparks in Muslim Turkistan will not be surprising, and Russia, being faced with a new commotion may move towards a system which will be Islamic or very close to it.

EPILOGUE

Western colonization of Asian and African countries, which included the Muslim world was no exception to the usual process of slow but sure intellectual death of the colonized people. Iqbal was quick to realize this and focussed his entire genius on counteracting this influence. Western political, economic and social norms started capturing the imagination of the Muslim youth who were being exposed to the ideology of the West through western education. Materialism and capitalism were the very foundations of this thought, Islamic thought and Qur'anic teachings were being slowly but surely effaced, partly by the efforts of the colonizers and partly by our own indifference. The deleterious effects of this change were being felt by the conquered Muslim nations. When communism appeared as an adversary of capitalism after World War I it had great appeal to Muslims. Iqbal brought home to the Muslim intelligentsia that both these systems were man-made and equally harmful and that Islam was the correct system. This has been amply shown in the foregoing. Iqbal went farther than condemning the above systems. He explained at great length the blessings of a system based on divine revelation as compared with man-made systems. His works are replete with this theme. However, special attention is invited to the following passages in Javid Namah (Reference 5, pp. 63-92):

زیارت ارواح جمال الدین افغانی و سعید حلیم پاشا دین و وطن اشتراکیت و ملوکیت زنده رود افغانی محکمت عالم قرانی خلافت آدم حکومت الہی ارض ملک خداست سعید حلیم پاشا پیغام افغانی باملت روسیہ	Firmament of 'Mercury: Glimpses of the souls of Jamaludding Afghani and Saeed Haleem Pasha Religion and Territorial Loyalties Communism and Imperialism Saeed Haleem Pasha: East and West Zinda Rud Afghani Basic Principles of the Qur'anic World: Vice-gerency of Adam Kingdom of God The Earth is the Possession of God Saeed Haleem Pasha The Message of Afghani to the Russian People
--	---

جذب حرم سے ہے فروغ انجمن حجاز کا
اس کا مقام اور ہے، اس کا نظام اور ہے

The splendour of the brotherhood of Hijaz depends upon the *Haram* (Ka'aba)
Its status is different, its system is different⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad (1924) *Bang-i-Dara*. Published by Sheikh Mubarak Ali, Lahore, Pakistan. Third Edition (1930), p. 119.

*(a) This paper was first published by Dr. Waheed Ishrat (Iqbal Academy) in the Urdu daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* of Lahore for April 21, 1987 in response to a letter from Mr. Zia-ul-Haque Maimon of Sindh. In that letter Mr. Maimon had stated that some books were being published in the Sindhi language in which Allamah Iqbal, on the basis of his revolutionary poetry was being shown as a communist as well as a cherisher of communism. As the Sindhi knowing public did not have adequate direct access to

Allamah Iqbal's thought and philosophy a clarification of his stand on communism was sought. This English translation is intended to convey Iqbal's views on communism to the English-knowing people in general and to English-knowing Muslims in particular, so that the misunderstanding created by the supporters of communism in the type of publications referred to above may be removed.

The secret concealed in "Spend what is surplus and is spare"

May perhaps be revealed in this age

- * (b) A system in Islamic economics in which a tax is levied on the property of a person in excess of prescribed limits. The proceeds of this tax are used exclusively for the financial support of the indigent.
- * (c) The divine system of Islamic jurisprudence.
- * (d) The Holy Qur'an iii:103 (part), which means "And He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace you become brethren. See The Holy Quraan: Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali; Published by the Hafner Publishing Company, New York, U.S.A. and printed by the Murray Printing Co. p. 149.
- * (e) See The Holy Qur'an ii:219 and the reference in Footnote (d).
- * (f) Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S.) whose title is Khalilullah (the Friend of God)
This is allusion to the fact that Karl Marx was a member of the Jewish race (Banni Israil).
- * (g) Appearance of God or His Powers as was witnessed by Hazrat Musa A.S. on Mount Sinai.
- * (h) It will bring doom to those who believe in his economic system in contravention of the clear message of the Holy Qur'an by which all mankind will be judged on the Day of Judgement.
- * (i) This degree of freedom of the down-trodden people would be completely unacceptable to the Satanic system and its flag bearers.
- * (j) Mazdak was a Persian thinker of the sixth century (C.E.) and lived during the reign of the famous Persian king Anushervan (531-578B C.E.). The most prominent feature of Mazdak's philosophy was communism, albeit rudimentary. He preached the equality of man and based his concept of equality on the equality of wealth. He said that the concept of individual property was the creation of demons hostile to God, with the purpose of turning God's Universe into a land of perpetual misery. For details see: "Iqbal, Muhammad (1908) The Development of Metaphysics in Persia. Published by Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore, Pakistan, Third reprint (1964): pp. 16-17.
- * (k) Ablution