

IQBAL AND DEMOCRACY

(pt. 1)

Dr. WAHEED ISHRAT

TRANSLATION

Dr. M.A.K. KHALIL

The operation of democracy in the West has not been an unmixed blessing, and history is replete with oppression of the religious and ethnic minorities. The shortcomings of democracy have been disturbing Western intellectuals over the past two centuries. They have expressed fears and disappointments in their works, several of which have been reviewed.

The alternative Western political systems of monarchy and dictatorship have also been reviewed. Their performance has been found to be even more disappointing than that of democracy. As these are the only alternatives to democracy in the experience of the West this has added to the frustration of Western intellectuals.

These events in human history highlight the Qur'anic message that man-made systems are defective and that the human race is standing at the edge of an abyss, falling into which can be avoided only by Divine guidance. The Judeo-Christian ecclesiastical literature was, at best, vague and incomplete in providing any guidance, and the operation of theocracy in Europe during the middle ages had been a nightmare to the people.

Allamah Iqbal's service to humanity at this critical juncture was a very timely beacon of light. He declared to the world not to despair because there was hope of redemption in the "Islamic spiritual democracy."

In addition to the above objections to Western democracy Iqbal objected to its unaltered application to the undivided Indian sub-continent, on account of the country's special conditions in which Hindus formed a large privileged majority and Muslims a small and handicapped minority. In these

circumstances obviously the Muslims would have been losers and subservient to the Hindus. All efforts of the Muslim League, over a period of two decades in which Iqbal had played a prominent role, to come to workable understanding with the Hindus, had failed. In these circumstances it would have been impossible for the Muslims to lead their lives according to the dictates of Islam in the Western democratic system had been adopted. Political partition of the subcontinent was, therefore, unavoidable for the Muslims if they wanted to fulfil their Divine Commission of establishing the sovereignty of God first in their majority regions in the sub-continent, and then to extend it to the rest of the world in cooperation with their brethren in other Islamic countries.

The paper cites extensively from Allamah Iqbal's works, especially from his opus magnum *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, and concludes that Allamah Iqbal was convinced of the indispensability of the establishment of "Islamic spiritual democracy" for Muslim and that Islamic society could not be established without an Islamic State, which he considered as "the sixth pillar of Islam".

As Pakistan was the first country established in the name of Islam, after the Divinely guided Khilafah, it was obviously Iqbal's Prime Choice for being the bulwark of such a State. The paper considers the following objectives essential for the Islamic State:

1. The Objectives Resolution passed by the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in 1950 should form the basic guideline for all legislating and executive decisions.

2. We should realize that all Muslims are jointly responsible for establishing the Islamic State, and not any individual or group. The Consultative Assembly should be established by adult franchise and should, in turn, appoint the Executive. The Executive should enact and enforce, through the Executive, legislation in conformity with God's will and Commandments and should have the power of *ijtihad*. The Executive should be accountable to the Consultative Assembly and the latter should be responsible to the people. Important matters, including controversial *ijtihads*, should be referred to the people's referendum. Political parties should be permitted to formulate and enact their programmes for establishment and operation of

the Islamic_ State on the basis of which they should obtain people's mandate periodically through elections.

3. The State should provide the four basic needs of free education, free justice, equitable distribution of country's resources and economic freedom to all citizens,

4. Privileged classes on religious, social and political bases should be gradually, but surely, eliminated.

5. The State should guard the interests of Muslims all over the world and should struggle for freeing them from oppression of all kind and degrees.

6 Having established an ideal society, the State should invite all mankind to follow their example by adopting it and benefitting from Islamic ideals and their blessings.

7. The State should fight for the emancipation of un-privileged and under-privileged people all over the world, and should cooperate in all efforts for establishing a world society based on peace and freedom from want, which is the ultimate objective of Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Even apart from Allamah Iqbal's concepts democracy is a controversial subject which needs viewing with deep insight. Evidence exists in Allamah Iqbal's verse as well as prose which gives the impression of his strong opposition to the concept of democracy. The Allamah was particularly a strong critic of the present day commonly held concepts of Western democracy. As the Allamah has pointed out several basic defects of the Western concept in democracy it would be appropriate to clarify that he was against the well known and widely understood western concept of democracy only. This also was with special reference to the conditions prevailing in the Indian subcontinent, where the Muslims were a minority and the Hindus a majority. In opposing the Western concept of democracy the Allamah also had the fact in view that the promulgation of the Western democratic system in undivided India, with Muslim minority and Hindu majority, would result in perpetual political power for the Hindu majority and slavery for the

Muslim minority. This fact should not be ignored in connection with Allamah Iqbal's opposition to democracy. Still, the question arises whether the unaltered Western democratic system was acceptable in a new Islamic society outside the mixed society of Muslims and non-Muslims . The Allamah's reply to this also is almost in the negative. However, the system of government which Allamah Iqbal considers indispensable for the spiritual freedom of Muslims, according to the concept of ijihad and "spiritual democracy" has the Islamic democratic consultation as its foundation and spirit. Sovereignty belongs to the people in Western democracy and they are answerable to none except themselves. As opposed to this, sovereignty in Allamah Iqbal's "spiritual democracy" befits God alone. The Muslims are its guardians by virtue of being God's Vicegerents. They are empowered to establish an institution, by mutual consultation, some form of election, or by vote, in the present day parlance, for the administration of their affairs in conformity with the dictates of God and His Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H). In this way. based on the Islamic concept of consultation, Iqbal strongly supports the establishment of a parliament or consultation, Iqbal strongly supports the establishment of a parliament or consultative assembly for the Muslim society, elected by the majority of Muslims. This assembly would produce new interpretations of ijihad in conformity with the demands of the present age, so as to bring justice and prosperity to the Muslim society and harmonise them with the demands of the present age. This is the basic point of the "spiritual democracy" of Allamah Iqbal. We explain below the basic concepts with reference to Allamah Muhammad Iqbal.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

In the commonly known Western sense democracy is a system of government in which sovereignty belongs to the people and the legislature is created by their majority opinion, which is obtained through votes. This legislature is the highest legislative organisation of the country. Maulana Muhammad Haneef Nadvi explains democracy thus:

“Democracy is composed of two Greek components; one means the people and the other means government and law.

Technically, it is applied to a system of government in which the greatest number of people participate.¹⁵⁴

The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy explains the concept of democracy thus:

"The correct meaning of democracy is that this is a form of government in which citizens have the direct collective right of political decisions, and the principle of the rule of the majority is accepted as the law. This is called direct democracy. Secondly, it is the system of government in which people do not exercise political rights individually but do so through elected representatives and the latter are responsible to them. This is called representative democracy. Thirdly, this is a form of government which is generally representative democracy but the powers and activities of the majority operate within a special institutional framework, which is constitutionally so framed as to allow people to enjoy their collective and individual rights. These rights relate to freedom of expression and religion. This is called balanced or constitutional democracy. Fourthly, the word democracy is also used for the political and social characteristics of a system which is not covered by the above mentioned three definitions of democracy, but which does aim eliminating economic and social distinctions, especially the distinctions resulting from the right of individual ownership and distribution of wealth. This is called social and economic democracy".¹⁵⁵

Dr. Khaleefah Abdul Hakeem in his book titled, *Fikr-i-Iqbal* (The Thoughts of Iqbal) considers democracy to be an ambiguous concept like many other social concepts. He says:

¹⁵⁴ Nadvi, Muhammad Haneef; *Asasiyat-i-Islam. Idara-i-Saqafat-i-Islamia*, Lahore: p. 205, 1973.

¹⁵⁵ The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol.2: pp. 77-78

"Democracy is also like those ambiguous concepts which have no meaning. In the present day world every nation desires for and strives to establish democracy, or claims to be the custodian of the correct democracy, and considers the claims to other forms of democracy baseless and imposterous¹⁵⁶".

However, notwithstanding the various ambiguities about democracy, it has the basic attribute that "The most common meaning of democracy, which appears to be acceptable to all, is that no individual or class rules over the people against their will¹⁵⁷". Further explaining this Hakeem says:

"Democracy is a system in which sovereignty should not belong to the king or the rich, the reins of the government should be controlled neither by the feudal lords nor the capitalists and industrialists. The people's representatives in the legislature should be persons of sound judgement freely elected by the people¹⁵⁸".

A brief definition of democracy would be, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "The government of the people, for the people, by the people". In other words democracy is a form of government in which people participate by expressing their opinion through votes. They have the feeling of participation in their affairs in a government established only for the common weal by the common consent of the people. This feeling of people's participation promoted Abraham Lincoln to call it "the last best hope of this world", and Jefferson, had called it "a respect for the people's opinion¹⁵⁹".

¹⁵⁶ Hakeem, Dr. Khaleefah Abdul Fikr-i-Iqbal. Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore, Fourth Edition p. 281, 1968

¹⁵⁷ Hakeem, Dr. Khaleefah Abdul Fikr-i-Iqbal. Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore, Fourth Edition p. 281, 1968

¹⁵⁸ Hakeem, Dr. Khaleefah Abdul Fikr-i-Iqbal. Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore, Fourth Edition p. 281, 1968

In short democracy is a system of government in which:

1. Sovereignty belongs to the people
2. The people establish the parliament or the country's highest legislature by their common votes, and the legislature is answerable to them.
3. The government is established for the common weal and prosperity.
4. It is also elected by the common vote.

In other words democracy per se is not the purpose or goal but is only an instrument of government of a country in which the country's people participate directly.

THE COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST DEMOCRACY-

As stated earlier, the concept of democracy is of Greek origin. Consequently, the first proceedings against democracy were also initiated in Greece by Socrates. who was regarded as one of the seven wisest persons of his time. The criticism levelled by Socrates against democracy at that. time has always been repeated by its critics. In fact democracy's critics neither have any stronger argument than those of Socrates sub-consciously taking shelter behind fascism or dictatorship under some excuse. Socrates had said that:

"What would be more ridiculous than democracy which had been hamstrung by the mob, where emotions ran supreme, government was merely a debating society, and where the military commanders were selected, dismissed and killed without rhyme or reason when the simple minded farmers and merchants were selected in alphabetical order to work as members of the supreme court.¹⁶⁰

Later, criticizing the system again he says:

"Is it not naively superstitious to imagine that wisdom would be attained by mere majority? On the contrary, is it not universally experienced that the people participating in gatherings are very much more foolish, violent and cruel than those who prefer seclusion? How shameful is it that those orators should rule humanity who indulge in high sounding rhetoric which can be likened to empty brass vessels which keep sounding on being hit till somebody stops them by putting his hand over them."¹⁶¹

Socrates suggests the solution of this problem to be to "entrust government's leadership to the wisest person".¹⁶²

After condemning democracy up to the hilt the solution presented by Socrates in the form of "the wisest person" will be examined at the proper place. We should first identify Socrates' criticism, which is:-

1. This system of government is hamstrung by the mob, i.e. decisions are made by majority opinion, which means that the decision made by the majority opinion is considered sound.
2. This system of government is dominated by emotions.
3. Such a government is a debating society, i.e. every matter is decided after a debate in the parliament.

¹⁶⁰ Durant, Will (1885); History of Philosophy. Urdu Translation (Dastan-i-Falsafah) by Syed Abid Mi. Maktaba-i-Franklin, Lahore: p.44.

¹⁶¹ Durant, Will (1885); History of Philosophy. Urdu Translation (Dastan-i-Falsafah) by Syed Abid Mi. Maktaba-i-Franklin, Lahore: p.44.

¹⁶² Durant, Will (1885); History of Philosophy. Urdu Translation (Dastan-i-Falsafah) by Syed Abid Mi. Maktaba-i-Franklin, Lahore: p.44.

4. Simple minded farmers and businessmen are elected, or otherwise, power is captured by feudal lords and capitalists.
5. Rhetoricians gain power.
- 6 Those living in public are more violent and cruel than the ones who prefer seclusion.

These are the basic objections raised more or less by all. It would be better to point out the criticism of other critics of democracy before analysing Socrates' criticism, so that the objections against this system and the analysis of other systems in comparison may be explained in detail. Will Durant writes in his book. *The Story of Philosophy*, on the tragedy of Western democracy:¹⁶³

Will Durant has the same objections as Socrates. that the power of decision rests with the majority. Even Rousseau, who was among the founders of the new democratic system, also objected to the decision making by the majority. Consequently, he says:

"If we take the term in its strictest sense there never has existed, nor will ever exist. a true democracy. It is contrary to the nature of things that the many govern and the few he governed."¹⁶⁴

Professor Tahseen Firaqui in his book, *Maghribi Jamhooriyat Ahl-i-Maghrib Kee, Nazar Men, (Western Democracy in the View of the Westerners)* has assiduously assimilated the objections of very important Western thinkers and writers against democracy. They include Rousseau, Nietzsche, Carlyle, Belak, Donnelly, Agneish, Bernard Shaw, Laiky, Spengler, Mawrence, Eric Frum, Harold Laski, Rene Guenon, Joseph Schimpter, and

¹⁶³ Durant, Will (1885) *The Pleasures of Philosophy*. Urdu Translation (Nishat-i-Falsafah) by Dr. Muhammad Ajmal. Maktaba-i-Khawar, Lahore: p. 101, 1966

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau, Jean Jaques - *Le Contract Sociale*. Vol.III, Chapter IV; p. 762

Bertrand Russell. In addition, there must be many more who have raised objections against democracy. However, it must be admitted that of all their objections against democracy none are more worth mentioning than those of the first critic, i.e. Socrates. For example Carlyle also considers a wise man more important than many idiots. He is also in search of a wise man, and considers democracy to be the rule of the idiots. Belak, Donnelly and Bernard Shaw prefer a wise man over majority and consider democracy to be synonymous with the appointment of some unscrupulous people through elections organized by several incompetent persons. When Laski says that the creation of a conflict between the majority and the minority is the work of the election agent, he also supports the stand of Socrates. He has another objection, that is, voters do not have mature judgement needed for voting. That only a rich person can contest a democratic election, is an important objection against democracy which has been levelled by Laiky, Spengler, Russell, Eric Frum and Schimpter. They have said that poverty and democracy do not go together. As it were, election is an arena in which only the rich can enter, The American intellectual, Joseph A. Schimpter calls democracy ' a government stabled with the people's approval, and says that we cannot call it the people's government but the one established by their approval. In the same way the famous French intellectual, Rene Guenon, who later accepted Islam with the name of Abdul Wahid Yahya, raised the objection against democracy in his book, Crisis of the Modern World that the lower and backward classes of the populace form the majority and they are devoid of judgment and ability, while the classes with ability constitute a minority. Hence, the superior cannot emanate from the inferior, which is approximately what Socrates had said, namely that thick-headed farmers and businessmen acquire power in democracy and the dream of the government of the people becomes ridiculous¹⁶⁵. Professor Tahseen Firaqui has cited the whole of this objection of Rene Guenon in his above mentioned book. Consequently, this discussion of the critics of democracy is largely based on this book, where it has been put together to some extent. Guy Eaton (Islamic

¹⁶⁵ Guenon Rene; The Crisis of the Modern World, Urdu Translation (Nai Dunia Ka Bohran). Suhail Academy, Lahore: pp. 69-78 (cited in Professor Tahseen Firaqui by Maghribi Jamhooriat Ahl-i-Maghrib Kee Nazar Men; p. 45.

name Hasan Abdul Hakeem), who was a native of Switzerland, criticising the materialism of democracy and the misleading concept of majority, says:

As for the problem of the common people, the poor simpletons mark the ballot papers as voters in favour of the person who has promised them better houses and cheaper food.¹⁶⁶

Professor Muhammad Munawwar has also levelled some important and basic objections in one of his papers titled, Iqbal's Idea of Democracy on the complete absence of ethical values and destruction of the higher ethical principles in democracy. These objections point out misdemeanors of the candidates in obtaining votes and, of the voters in giving them, which influence the entire ethical structure of the society. The objections of the professor are obviously very important and correct. The Western democracy has bequeathed all these evils of the countries of its origin in their colonies, and has destroyed the ethical, social and political structures of the latter. However, the countries gaining independence from this colonial system did not organize this Western concept of democracy under their own cultural and social principles, for accepting the experiences of the West in a constructive spirit have blindly followed them. Consequently, the virtues of the West could not be established in our countries but we did adopt their vices. Perhaps virtue, its durability is slow, and vice, being apparently bright, is fast in its influence. Consequently, the scarceness of morality in democracy exposed by Professor Muhammad Munawwar cannot be denied, because ethical values are really alien to Western democracy. The professor writes.

"But the glaring drawback that transpires is the non-visibility of any moral fibre in the system. Rights are mentioned whereas the question of the right and wrong is ignored. what sort of people as human beings are to be elected? Certainly they must be, suitable individuals. But are they suitable morally as well? What sort of people as human beings are those who elect their representatives? Are they upholders of human values and hence they can elect those who have respect for what is good for humanity? Are they elected because they can spend lavishly on election campaigns can brow-beat

others into voting for them on account of their muscles or just due to their positive capabilities? Does, in the Western democracy, even legal equality prevail? Are there no racial or territorial prejudices at work? Does Western democracy stand for teaching man's respect for man and for trying to make human beings genuinely human? Does it create feelings of sympathy and sacrifice for others? It is quite obvious that Western democracy is not essentially for forming a government of good people, elected by good people and making people good."¹⁶⁷

In fact these objections can be raised against any system devoid of prophetic consciousness. However, in contrast with democracy-fascism imperialism and dictatorship are completely devoid of the very concept of ethics. People are at least counted in democracy, while they are driven like despicable wild beasts in systems other than democracy. Scrutiny of the methods of formation of the governmental structure of the systems other than democracy would show them to be much more cruel, vindictive, narrow minded and destructive to ethical values than democracy. The crimes committed by all the democrats of the world are for less than the cruelties and crimes of one dictator. Examples are available even in Islamic history of the way in which the neglect of the mechanism for the transfer of political power created moral evils. The non-observance of this mechanism for the transfer of political power created the dispute between Hadhrat Ali (R.A.) and Hadhrat Ameer Muawiya (R.A.) and brought Yazeed, Hadhrat Ameer Muawiya's (R.A.) son to political power after his death. During his reign several prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), and his grandson with his whole family was sacrificed at the altar of dictatorship by substitution of the voluntary ba'at (ba'at bil raza) with the ba'at by force (ba'at bil Jabr). If the system of the Ba'at of Hadhrat Abu Bakr and Faruque (R.A.) had been continued as an effective system for the transfer of political power, the pathetic tragedy of the martyrdom of the oppressed Imam would have been avoided and the would not have been changed to monarchy. The fundamental essence of democracy is the transfer of political power and establishment of the governmental structure by majority opinion. It is unrealistic to expect anything more than this from democracy. It can resist

the devastation of ethical values only with the help of other ethical ideals and cultural limitations. We will have to seek guidance from our deen for it and will have to fix the objectives and the modus operandi of democracy in the light of prophetic consciousness. After achieving it, this democracy will be a means of accomplishing ethical values instead of breaking them down, as in the present conditions when all systems are devoid of ethical values, work on the principle of 'might is right'. These are not even remotely concerned with the eminent status of humanity and dignity of man. In fact the very object of Islam is the reorganization of democracy in the light of Islamic principles and its application to Islamic society, through which alone it can gradually evolve into a government elected by pious people, for pious people, which would be instrumental in promoting virtue and endeavours in the pursuit of the common weal. Expecting this from any other system is self deception. If a good king or dictator in power per chance takes interest in the common weal it would be considered only fortuitous. The dictatorial, fascist and monarchical systems cannot be expected to do that.

In the same way the gist of the objections of Laski, Repairedfi, Eric Frum and Russell on democracy is also that it is a trick of the capitalist class, which brings incompetent people to political power through press, specious language and wealth. Lord Russell says the same things in various ways. So, an analysis of all the objections against democracy compels us to admit that the critics of democracy have not gone beyond its first critic, Socrates, while this democratic system has laboured its way to a mighty system in spite of all these criticisms. Democracy's being a controversial system is a criticism levelled by various classes. Directly or indirectly it has been entangled in various h' confusing concepts such as social democracy, economic democracy, constitutional democracy, noble democracy and people's democracy. It has no clear and identifiable form. The different forms of democracy, appearing in different circumstances prevailing in different societies and resulting from centuries of experimenting are in themselves in need of definition, so that a society may be able to adopt any of the forms it prefers to suite its own circumstances. It would be better to review Allamah Iqbal's criticism also before discussing these criticisms.

ALLAMAH IQBAL'S CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY-

The basic objections raised by Allama Iqbal against democracy in his works are not different from those raised by Socrates. Allama Iqbal expressed the following thoughts about democracy:

جس کے پردوں میں نہیں غیر	ہے وہی سازِ کہن مغرب کا جمہوری نظام از نوائے قیصری
تو سمجھتا ہے یہ آزادی	دیو استبداد جمہوری قبا لیں پائے کوب کی ہے نیلام پری
طب مغرب میں مزے	مجلس آئین و اصلاح و رعایات و حقوق میٹھے اثر خواب آوری
یہ بھی اک سرمایہ	گرمی گفتار اعضائے مجالس الاماں! داروں کی ہے جنگ زرگری

The Western democratic system is the same old orchestra
 Its notes have nothing but the melodies of Caesar
 The demon of despotism is treading the path of democracy
 Thou considereth it to be the fairy of freedom
 The constituent assembly reforms grant concessions and rights
 In the Western medical system tastes are
 sweet but the effects are sporadic
 The heat of the debates of assemblies! May God protect us!
 This too is a sham quarrel to deceive others
 Thou considereth this mirage of attractions to be a garden
 O simpleton! thou considereth the cage to be the nest"¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Iqbal. Dr. Sir Muhammad Bang-i-Dara. Shaikh Mubarak Ali, Lahore, Pakistan, Third Edition (1924). p. 296.

متاع معنی بیگانہ از دوں فطرتاں جوئی
ز موران شوخی طبع سلمانی نمی آید
گریز از طرز جمہوری، غلام پختہ کارے شو
کہ از معز دو صد خر فکر انسا نی نمی آید

Thou seekest the treasures of unfathomed wisdom from people of mean nature

Surely, ants cannot attain the wisdom of a Sulaiman

Flee from the Mechanisations of democracy, follow an experienced sage

For the brains of two hundred donkeys cannot produce the wisdom of one man.¹⁶⁹

فرنگ آئین جمہوری نہادست
رسن از گردن دیوی کشادست
گروپی را گر وہی در کمین است
خدا یش یار اگر کاوش چنین است
زمن و ہ اہل مغرب راہ پیامی
کہ جمہور است تیغ بی نیامی

The West has founded the democratic system

It has loosened the rope from the demon's neck

A host of people are running like robbers

While many hungry mouths are running for a loaf of bread

¹⁶⁹

One group lies in ambush for another one May God help it if these are
its ways Convey the message from me to the West

That the populace is an unsheathed sword.¹⁷⁰

اس راز کو اک مردِ فرنگی نے کیا فاش
بر چند کہ دانا اسے کھولا نہیں
کرتے

جمہوریت اک طرزِ حکومت ہے کہ جس میں
بندوں کو گنا کرتے ہیں تو لا نہیں
کرتے

Some European sage has unveiled this secret

Though wise men keep these secrets concealed

Democracy is a form of government in which

People are counted but their worth is not assessed.¹⁷¹

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا جمہوری نظام
چہرہ روشن اندروں چنگیز سے
تاریک تر

Hast thou not seen the Western democratic system

Whose face is bright but the inside is dark; darker than Changiz?"¹⁷²

ہم نے خود شاہی کو پہنایا ہے جمہوری لباس
جب ذرا آدم ہوا ہے خود شناس و
خود نگر

We have ourselves bestowed democratic role on monarchy

Then has man become somewhat self conscious and self cognizant¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad; Zaboar-i Ajam (Gulshan-i-Raz Jadeed. Ninth Edition, 1970, p. 233.

¹⁷¹ Iqbal. Dr. Sir Muhammad; Zarb-i-Kaleem. Maktaba-G Jamia, Delhi, India. First Edition., 1941, p. 150

¹⁷² Iqbal, Dr. Sir Muhammad; Armaghan-i-Hijaz, Published by Kapoor Arts Printing Works, Lahore, Pakistan, First Edition, p. 218, 1938.

نئی تہذیب کے انڈے ہیں گندے
بنائے خوب آزادی نے پھندے
نہایت تیز ہیں یورپ کے رندے

اٹھا کے پھینک دو باہر گلی میں
الکشن، ممبری، کونسل، صدارت
میاں نجار بھی چھیلے گئے ساتھ

Cast them away into the street

The eggs of the new civilization are rotten

Elections, membership, council, presidency

Sham freedom has invented strange noozes

The carpenter has also been scraped

Very sharp are the Europe's planes.¹⁷⁴

یہاں مرض کا سبب ہے غلامی و تقلید

وہاں مرض کا سبب جمہوری نظام

In the East bondage and mimicry has caused the malady

In the West the democratic rule causes the disease¹⁷⁵

We have assembled some verses from Iqbal's Persian and Urdu works containing some criticism of democracy so that a consolidated comprehension may be acquired of the Allamah's' criticism of democracy, free from emotional and humorous diction. Consequently, the following objections arise from the background of the verses.

173 Reference 19: p. 217

174. Reference 15: p. 335

175 Reference 18:p. 164

1. The Western democratic system is the same old European Caesarism or imperialism, and the old capitalistic despotism of Europe is operative behind the smoke screen of democracy. Hence, the system bears only a deceptive resemblance to freedom.

2. Parliament or legislative assembly is only a debating society and an institution established by capitalists for the protection of their own interests.

3. Just as the assembling of two hundred donkey's brains cannot produce a human brain the majority of the common people cannot produce a wise man, or in the Allamah's words "a man of attested intelligence" We should avoid a democratic system which makes decisions by simple majority and does not seek the guidance of a wise man or a man of Faith. Democracy is a system in which the simple majority of persons makes decisions without considering the ability of these persons, whereas one wise man is better and more effective than thousands of simpletons.

4. Though the Western democracy has a bright face. its interior is darker than that of Changiz. Due to the general awakening of the common people (brought about by the influence of the awakening created by the Muslims in Spain and Baghdad) Europe has presented imperialism in the wrappers of democracy. The democratic institutions such as election, membership, council and presidentship etc. are the rotten eggs of the new civilization. Europe has invented these in the name of democracy.

5. The Allama says that the bane of the Eastern people is their, enchantment with blind following of the ways of their ancestors and the root of all ills of the West is this democracy in which the numbers of persons are considered instead of their intellectual worth.

Reflection on the Allamah's criticism of democracy would give the feeling that his criticism of democracy is the same as that levelled by Socrates or other critics of democracy. We want to present a fundamental matter about Allamah Iqbal's criticism of democracy before analysing it. This fundamental matter is the Allamah's foresight which discerned the psychological problem constituting the background of his criticism of democracy and this was interconnected with the special political atmosphere of that time.

THE BACKGROUND OF ALLAMAH IQBAL'S

CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY

During Allamah Iqbal's time the concepts of democracy and democratic thinking, like one person one vote, right of representation, joint and separate electorates were moving fast from the West to the East and were increasingly becoming popular. Under the conditions prevailing in the Indian sub-continent, resulting from the British terminology, all big and small nations there, had been designated Hindus. Thus the Hindus were elevated, to the status of majority by herding together all the different nations of the sub-continent, although the real Hindus were a minority. This catapulted the Hindus into a majority and relegated all other nations to the status of a minority. The latter included the nation which had formerly ruled the sub-continent. i.e. the Muslims. The relegation of Muslims to minority status meant that in the event of the subcontinent gaining independence under the concept of one person one vote, the political power in India would have been transferred to the Hindu majority, and the Muslims being a minority would have become subservient. Consequently, Allamah Iqbal supported the right of ijthihad for the consultative assembly or parliament of an Islamic State, but did not support this right for the parliament composed of the non-Muslim majority which would have been established in united India. He plainly said:

“In my opinion this (ijthihad by parliament) is the only way by which we can stir into activity the spirit of life in our legal system, and give it an evolutionary outlook. In India, however, (with Hindu majority and Muslim minority) difficulties are likely to arise, for, it is doubtful whether a non-Muslim legislative assembly can exercise the power of ijthihad”¹⁷⁶.

This extract reflects Allamah Iqbal's thinking that he did not like any system or state of affairs in united India . which would enable the Hindu

¹⁷⁶ Iqbal. Dr Sir Muhammad (1930); *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, Pakistan, p. 174, 1982

majority to influence the interests of the Muslim minority. This is the reason for which democracy was not acceptable to Allamah Iqbal in any form in the united India. Not only to Allamah Iqbal, this state of affairs could not be acceptable to any Muslim. This was so because the Hindus dream of their renaissance included the annihilation of Muslims from the sub-continent on the pattern of Spain. In these circumstances Allamah Iqbal's support of democracy in united India would have amounted to his recommendation of slavery for Muslims. This is the social psyche which made the Allamah a critic of democracy in united India. But was the Allamah an opponent of democracy even in an Islamic State and was he not prepared to accept any form of democracy? Judgement. should be passed on this, only with much caution. To prove the Allamah to be an all out rejector of democracy. on the basis of a few of his verses, would be against the truth, because the Allamah was a supporter and friend of democracy in an Islamic State where political power would be in the hands of the Muslims.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY

The objections resulting from the above mentioned verses of Allamah Iqbal have been levelled even by democracy's supporters. These are the defects of democracy and it is desirable to remove them, but- the outright rejection of the system is not at all right. This is so because comparison of these defects with other non-democratic systems leaves no choice but to adopt democracy. The systems presented in contrast with democracy are the worst examples of despotic dictatorship in which the individual is not even counted, leave alone assessing his worth. The individuals in the democratic society are at least consulted, whereas in other systems every dictator, acquiring power by force, considers himself to be the Angel Gabriel, the man of Faith and the perfect Man. Consequently, the gleaners of power convince such a dictator that the world has never produced a wiser and more intelligent person than him. Searching for a wiser person is even more difficult than obtaining the moon. Nobody has an instrument which can search for such a person. Moreover, having found such a person it is neither always possible to obtain people's consensus in his support, nor is it necessary that he would be able to comprehend the affairs of the State. In these circumstances the power for enforcing his decisions would not be the common consent but the power of the bullet, and he would appear in the

form of an absolute dictator on the strength of this power. The question is as to who beside his own claim, would decide that he is a man of Faith and proven truthfulness. In social environment finding such a person in every election may be possible for a village council, but is impossible in the present day State comprising millions of people. Insistence on or support of such concepts is equivalent to establishing and maintaining a State on perpetually shaky foundations. This is an abstraction with which the present day State cannot be bracketed. How many such wise men has any State been lucky enough to acquire since the time of Socrates? Surely, those acquiring political power by force have compelled people to call them wise men and men of steel. In the present day world, talking of such concepts cannot be considered short of knowingly or unknowingly gaining favours from dictators. Lastly, it cannot be ensured that such a wise and righteous man also has the ability of operating the political system of a country.

The second objection levelled against democracy is even more meaningless than this, i.e. only capitalists and - rich people can acquire political power through democracy. The question is whether the poor people and labourers acquire political power in monarchy and dictatorship? Such a thought is no less than folly, Surely some slaves became kings and some poor and middle class people became dictators. But poverty was not instrumental in their becoming kings and dictators, in that somebody conferred political power on them on the basis of their poverty and excellent ability. In actual fact the internal wire pulling and intrigue provided such military power to these kings and dictators which enabled them, not only to ascend the pedestal of political power but also to join the ranks of capitalists. Also, a labourer does not remain a labourer after ascending the pedestal of political power. His mental and political approach acquire the character of those of the capitalists. Hence, it is a pure fallacy that only capitalists acquire political power in democracy. On the contrary these people acquire political power under every system. The people of the _labouring and poor classes who acquired political power through democracy outnumber those who did so by force. Hence this objection is a mere jugglery of words.

The third objection also deserves little attention, because the opinion of two hundred persons should be considered more reliable than that of one, as one person is more liable to err than two hundred persons. A solitary person

dispensing political power, surrounded by flatterers and over loaded with problems cannot make a better decision than two hundred people elected by a social unit. These people have the common will as well as the power of validation, whereas the dictator has no power of decision except that of his own egotism. The people of Pakistan, who have a twenty to twenty five years experience of dictators climbing the pedestal of political power through the bullet instead of the ballot, know well the game played by these "men of Faith", "men of God", and "men of iron will". They know that these men have used every cunningness to frustrate the democratic ambitions of the people. Certainly, one human brain cannot evolve out of the brains of two hundred donkeys. However, are the two hundred persons always idiots? Besides, how can it be ensured that the one individual preferred over two hundred persons would measure up to the desired standards required by these critics of democracy? In fact every dictator regards himself as the Universal Spirit and others as donkeys. This is the psyche which also exists in the subconscious of the opponents of democracy. Considering the common people to be donkeys and the dictator as the Universal Spirit is nothing short of insulting the populace and flattery of the dictators. These attitudes result only in strengthening the hands of the dictators. The establishment of Pakistan, which has resulted from the common vote, testifies to the appropriateness of the collective decision of the Muslim Ummah. They are worthy of trust, whereas the decisions of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, Jama'at-i-Islami, Majlis-i-Ahrari-Islam, Khaksar Organization and many others righteous people were in conflict with Muslim interests, indifferent to the future of Islam in the sub-continent, fostered by false personal egotism and completely against the interests of Islam. If the right of final vote had been in the hands of these righteous people Pakistan would not have come into existence. The establishment of Pakistan is a masterpiece of the sound judgement of the common people of Pakistan.

The majority of democracy's opponents in Pakistan, by depriving the people of Pakistan of their voting rights, wants to chastise them for their decision in favour of the establishment of Pakistan theocracy in the name of religion wants to thrust on them their own self made theocracy of the righteous. This will be an oligarchy in which the power of decision would be in the hands of these righteous persons. Consequently, it is only proper for

Muslims to beware of the advocates of dictatorship in preference to democracy. Dr. Khaleefa Abdul Hakeem writes:

There appears to be no course open to Muslims except to abstain from looking up to dictatorship in opposition to democracy, and to use their intelligence and practical sagacity combined with sacrifice, for slowly reforming the democratic system so as to make its virtues more prominent than its defects.¹⁷⁷

The correct approach is that in the matters of decision making on concepts and articles of faith nobody except God, His ordained Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) or His Book has the right to make even the most infinitesimal alteration. In these matters it is more useful and effective to assess the worth of people than merely counting them, so much so that even in the interpretation of the deen people would be assessed. At the time of ijthad in deen both the opinion and the worth of the mujtahid would be kept in view. Still the worth of the mujtahid would be assessed more rigorously than his opinion. In other words the worth of people would have to be assessed in matters pertaining to deen and doctrine, but in matters of State administration participation of the greatest number of people in this decision making is more appropriate than their personality precedents. For this is available in the immaculate life of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) Himself. He was bound by God and the Holy Book in matters of deen and at the time of the Battle of the Trench and on several other occasions concerning State administration, He asked for and accepted counsel in spite of having full authority. We cannot adjudge the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) to be bound by consultations but other sovereigns certainly do not enjoy the same status. A Prophet P.B.U.H is appointed by God whereas other sovereigns do not have the same status. Hence, it is only proper to compel them to consultation and to abide by it, so, that they do not become autocratic. Maulana Muhammad Haneef Nadvi has explained this matter to some extent in his book, "Asasiyat-i-Islam (The Basics of Islam):

The distinction between right and wrong in matters of deen and doctrine is doubtlessly not bound by majority opinion. The Truth is the Truth even if it may be accepted only by one person and opposed by the whole society. However, when considering matters of State administration the criterion for making a decision would be the suitability of the course of action instead of arguments.¹⁷⁸

This is so because application and not experience is important in democracy¹⁷⁹. Here, considering the majority opinion alone as decisive is proper. Maximum participation of the people makes it more acceptable the people, and if some decision enjoys common acceptance it is conducive to the increased stability of society.

The fourth objection to democracy becomes meaningless when we compare democracy with other systems and see that the heart of dictators is much darker than that of Changiz, compared with that of democratic rulers. Every ruler from Oliver Cromwell to those of the present day are the worst examples of oppression and fascism. They do not want to hear anybody's opinion, leave alone accept it. All their powers are wasted in suppressing their opponents, and psychologically they suffer from the complex of non-acceptance of the views of the people. They are permanently paranoid, which makes them psychologically suffocated, leading them to hardheartedness and cruelty. They become bent on suppressing every opposing thought and its expression. If the silence of the graveyard can be called peace it abounds in dictatorship. If the expression of the differences of opinion and views, listening to others and the acceptance or rejection of each other's views after their consideration is regarded instability then it certainly exists in democracies. A little reflection would show that this right of decision making is also a product of democratic disposition. Dictatorship forces decisions by power, force and fear. There cannot be, two opinions about considering dictators darker than Changiz.

178 Reference 1:p. 212.

179 Reference 1:p. 212.

In, the fifth objection the Allamah says that the charm of ritualism is the bane of the Easterners, and being ensnared by democracy, that of the Westerners. The Allamah has very rightly diagnosed the malady of the East. He wants the East to abandon blind ritualism and to be the architect of its own destiny, making use of the experience of the West but with due regard to the environments and the problems of the East when applying those experiences. He goes to the extent of advising them against blindly following the west even in the matter of democracy. On the contrary, the East should reorganize democracy according to its own conditions and goals. When the Allamah adjudges democracy to be the bane of the West he has in view the unbridled democracy adopted by the West, which is harmful even to its own civilisation. By adjudging the Western civilization as being devoid of prophetic consciousness and being enamoured by the visible, i.e. materialism, the Allamah means that if it were to reorganize itself in the light of prophetic consciousness it can avoid the problems which are leading to its decline. The absence of prophetic consciousness alone has brought about the decline of ethical values in the Western-style democracy. If we organize democracy in the light of our concept of sovereignty and Islamic ethical values democracy can help in the enlightenment and glory of ethical values also. It has the potential of being cast into a system in which good people may be elected for parliament in order to enlighten and glorify the higher ethical values, and participate in the progress of virtue. This also can be expected only from democracy because in other systems even a good hearted person cannot protect himself, on account of being caught in the web of the struggle for political power.

TWO BASIC ATTRIBUTES OF DEMOCRACY-

All definitions of democracy have two basic points. One is making some arrangements for participation of public opinion in the framing of a country's or nation's councils of executive and legal administrations. At the time of shaping the country's administration, conducting political affairs and enforcing administrative decisions it is necessary to keep in view the opinions of the people on whom these decisions would be enforced, so that their acceptance of these decisions may be obtained through their own free will rather than under any force of authority. Now, compare this attribute of democracy with other systems. In theocracy decision making on country's

affairs and administrative matters is the prerogative of the select ecclesiastical group. They play with the people's destinies as they please, and claim this right under religion, i.e. the power of the Church. Following in their footsteps the kings started designating themselves as the "Shadow of God", implying that their power was bestowed upon them by God. Consequently, they presented themselves as protectors of God's people and co-sharers in the will and intentions of God. The clergy derived their power and authority from the institution of the Church, but the powers of kings resided in their inheritance, their own military strength and the divine right to rule. The same applies to the dictators of the old as well as the present age, who acquire their right to rule over their people by the sword or the bullet. Decide for yourself whether these dictatorships and monarchies are not the products of the law of the jungle in which "might is right"? What can be a bigger insult to human conscience and dignity than these monarchies and dictatorships which are born of the power of the sword or the gun. Supporting them is tantamount to crime against human dignity, and all those who support these dictatorships and monarchies are criminals against humanity, because support to them resembles the support of the law of the jungle. When offered the choice between the ballot and the bullet the present day conscientious man would select the ballot in preference to the bullet. The ballot is the expression of respect for man's rights and opinion in the affairs of the State and the bullet is the emblem of the use of ruthless power and force for subduing him.

Peaceful transfer of political power is the other attribute of democracy. It is a means of transfer of political power from one hand to the other, a better formula than that which has not been established by the human race. There are only three ways for the transfer of political power. One is the method of inheritance by the son on the death of the ruler. The second method is the snatching of political power by force. The third one is this democratic way in which those to be ruled elect their own rulers by their own votes. The first or the second method is current in monarchies. After the death of a king either his son ascends to the throne or some other person usurps political power by his military might. In dictatorships military power is the only way for transfer of political authority. Now consider both these methods of transfer of political power and also view the method of the transfer by common vote and decide which one is safer, easier and more peaceful and has human dignity, honour and magnificence, It is a fact that

there is less than one percent possibility of a man of Faith acquiring political power by the first method of inheritance. In the Muslim history of the Indian subcontinent a good ruler has seldom acquired political power in this way except Aurangzeb. Tipu Sultan and a few others. Among these also, the former had to use the sword to ascend to political power and even a pious person like Aurangzeb could not escape the ignominy of shedding the blood of his brothers and his father. If such a pious ruler could not avoid being implicated in this wrong way to political power the less said the better about other rulers. The whole human history is a tale of woe resulting from the atrocities of kings and dictators. In these circumstances change in government or transfer of political power by common vote alone is proper for human dignity and humane perceptions. In human history the number of people killed in connection with transfer of power in the democratic way bears no comparison to those killed at the time of such a transfer in monarchies and dictatorships. Hence, there is no alternative to adopting the method designed by democracy for transfer of political power. All monarches and dictatorships fail in comparison to it.

Democracy comprises of only these two basic concepts, i.e. participation of the people in the affairs of the State and transfer of political power through the ballot. All other aspects and definitions of democracy are only explanations and clarifications of these two basic concepts, and these explanation and clarifications can be modified by every country and nation according to its own ideologies and conceptions.

(To be continued)