

RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT: REVIEW ARTICLE

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In spite of the widely accepted importance of Allamah Iqbal's "Lectures" titled *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, in the field of Iqbal Studies, the works published on it are very limited. Only a few books have been written with reference to the "Lectures". This is due firstly to the fact that the "Lectures" are in English language and, secondly, they address profound literary and philosophical problems. The language of literary and philosophical problems is usually more difficult and delicate than the common language, which renders their comprehension difficult for the average reader. Consequently, the average researchers shy away from this serious responsibility. In addition, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* is a book which is one of the greatest importance among those written after the period of our downfall. It leads us to comprehension of the spirit of our cultural and civilizational progress and the basic causes of our decadence as well as points out to us the ways of understanding the requirements of the new age and the reconstruction of our present and future and shows us the principles on which our renaissance is possible. After studying the Western civilization and Phenomenon of our downfall with deep insight Iqbal has raised questions in this book, on the answer to which depends the shaping of our present and future collective well being. It is obvious that these basic questions and their answers are such delicate subjects that attempting their solution is very difficult. The new book of Professor Muhammad Uthman, *"Fikr-i-Islami kee Tashkil-i-Nau"* (*The Reorganization of Islamic Thought*) is a bold and thought-provoking book on the "Lectures" of Allamah Iqbal whose review is the subject of this paper.

Several other books are also available in Urdu about "The Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam". Included among these are: *"Khutubat-i-Iqbal per Eik Nazar"* If (*A Glance at Iqbal's "Lectures"*) by Muhammad Sharif Baqa, a book of the same name by the distinguished theologian Maulana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi and the "Muta' aliqat

Khutubat-i-Iqbal per Eik Nazar" (A Glance at the Matters Concerning Iqbal's lectures) by Dr. Saiyyid Muhammad Abd Allah. In addition to these Dr. Khalifah Abd al-Hakim, has given an abstract of these lectures at the end of his book "Fikr-i-Iqbal (Iqbal's Thought).

All This work, though admirable and conducive to a good comprehension of Iqbal, does not amount to much with reference to a book of the caliber of the "Lectures". The truth is that the work on Allamah Iqbal's "Lectures" does not at all equal in authenticity the work on his verse. Consequently, till now, despite its defects and shortcomings, the translation of the late Saiyyid Nazir Niazi "Tashkil-i Jadid Ilahiyat-i-Islamiyah" (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam) is the only available source for study of the "Lectures" to some extent for the Urdu readership. Mir Hasan al-Din had translated one or two lectures but that also could not be completed which restricts its utility. The abstracts of the "Lectures" prepared by Dr. Khalifah Abu al-Kakim is not very useful. It does not create anything except misunderstanding and confusion in the comprehension of Iqbal. It can only create a superficial understanding about the "Lectures" in students. It does not even create an interest for study of the "Lectures".

The book of Muhammad Sharif Baqa, Khutubat-i-Iqbal per Eik Nazar (A Glance at the "Lectures" of Iqbal) is a good introduction to the titles and subjects of the "Lectures". However, it has neither reached the depth of the "Lectures" nor has done justice to its subjects initiated by the Allamah. At best it can be regarded as a student's effort. In reality it must be admitted that even the utility of the "Lectures" has not been understood. These "Lectures" are spread over the vast canvas of the religious, intellectual, theological, political and practical problems created for the Muslims in the evolution of the new life in the Indian sub-continent and the Muslim world, and by the continuous struggle between them and the West. In the whole Islamic world the basic challenges faced by religion itself and by the Muslim Ummah for its existence and continuity have been addressed in the background of Islam and its relationship with the West by Iqbal in an unprecedented manner. This was due to the fact that in the Indian sub-continent the Ulama understood Islam only with the perception of a special traditional system. Most of the eminent Ulama were only good teachers in religious seminaries, but totally lacked the perception of the current thought and the political, social and economic

problems confronting Muslims. In fact the conduct of some of them proved detrimental to the Muslim independence movements by knowingly or unknowingly continuing to play in the hands of the powers operating against the Muslim interests. These Ulama were ignorant of the advancements of the western philosophy, western theology, new psychology and new technology. In contrast to them the new educated mind was adopting the western ways completely. The changes continuously created by the slow and insidious hold of the Western civilization on the cultural, political and ethical life of Muslims under the guise of new technology, seriously affected the collective life of Muslims. The greater number of our Ulama could not comprehend this state of affairs, and failed to understand the special nature of the problems facing the Muslims in the present day world. Consequently, the demands of life have continued to pull Muslims towards Western culture and have been consistently creating uncertainty and doubt against religion itself and particularly Islam even in the face of the preaching and edicts of the Ulama. The modern-minded class of Egypt, Turkey and the Indian sub-continent itself was offering such explanations of Islamic teachings as reflected the lack of ambition and indicated submission to the Western culture as well as ignorance of both Islam and Western culture. In these circumstances Iqbal formulated some basic questions with the background of Western philosophy and Islamic theology. In this way, with reference to the spirit of their times, the Muslim Ummah, particularly those of the Indian sub-continent became aware of these basic questions, the answers to which were essential for the organization of the Muslims' new social, cultural, political and economic life. Iqbal was the first to raise these questions in the Muslim society. In the history of philosophy the answers often have not been considered as important as the questions. This is so because the formulation of a question gives birth to new intellectual discussions which lead the human mind to new fields of knowledge and opens new dimensions of vision. It is these questions which lead to the rise and evolution of knowledge. Iqbal understood the spirit of his time and raised new intellectual questions with the background of the basic customs of his time. Even if Iqbal had not offered answers to these questions he would have enjoyed unique eminence. But the greatness of Iqbal lies in his not leaving these questions hanging in the air and tried to provide their answers with serious thought and deep insight. These "Lectures" of Iqbal are a mirror of our

national perceptions. Again, as Iqbal himself has said in the "Preface" to the "Lectures" that:

"It must, however, be remembered that there is no such thing as finality in Philosophical thinkings. As knowledge advances and fresh avenues of thought are opened, other view, and probably sounder views than those set forth in these lectures are possible".

We neither do nor should insist on the finality of the thoughts presented in the "Lectures". On the other hand, as said by Allamah Iqbal in the above reference:

"Our duty is carefully to watch the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it".

This means that just as the Allamah viewed the Islamic and Western knowledge with due regard to the growth and development of human thought in his own age we should also keep a careful eye on the growth and development of human thought of our own times, and should organize the perceptions of today in the light of ' Allamah Iqbal's scientific intellectual conclusions. The conclusions of the nineteenth century physics brought about the destruction of religion and old theories by attacking them in such a manner as created an intellectual stampede in the realm of old theories and religion. As religion was attacked and criticized by Freud through psychology, by Marx through economics, by the Vienna Circle through linguistics, by Darwin through biology and by Kant, Hume, Lock and Berkeley through experimentalism and was equated with mythology and evolution of Voodooism by George Fraser the whole world witnessed the insult of religion. This led to the concept that religion was nothing more than some blind beliefs, and an unintellectual and illogical labyrinth of some rituals, which might have been somewhat useful for man in the medieval times, but was only an obstacle on the road to progress and an instrument of oppression in the hands of the strong against the weak. The critics of religion used this self-made testimony of physics against religion. However, in the twentieth century, as physics itself started contradicting its own basic theories and affirmation of some fundamental axioms of religion Iqbal, arguing from

the fallacies of the claims of classical physics and support of the claims of religion through modern physics for the confirmation of the beliefs of religion, established the rationality and acceptability of the truths of religion on the basis of the existence of concordance between religion, physics and other sciences. thus, he took the stand that "by carefully watching the progress of human thought" we can create new angles of vision for the truth of religion.

By far and large our scholars have studied the "Lectures" without taking the trouble of understanding the basic problems by pondering over this basic stand and way of thought of Iqbal, and without identifying the basics of Iqbal's thought, the various subjects and problems of the "Lectures" have been viewed only in a cursory way.

A well-known book of the late Mawlana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi known as *Kbutubat-i-Iqbal per Eik Nazar* (A Glance at the "Lectures" of Iqbal) has been published by the Iqbal Institute, Srinagar, Kashmir. the erudition of the Mawlana is widely accepted but the conclusion is imperative that the method adopted by him in the explanation and appreciation of the "Lectures" of Allamah Iqbal stands on very weak ground. According to him Allamah Iqbal's "Lectures" amount to be the theology of the modern age and this theology is far superior, firmer and better promoter of faith and insight than the classical theology. Careful examination will show Allamah Iqbal's theology to be only an extension and continuation of the classical theology. Actually it must be said that it was the theology of Plotinus and his predecessor the Jewish philosopher Philo, whose theology provided the rational foundation for finding concordance between Islam and Greek philosophy to Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd and other Muslim theologians. Earlier Muslim theologians continued to establish concordance between Islam and Greek philosophy. Sir Saiyyid found concordance between Islam and naturalism which was the prominent thought of his time. the same concordance appears to us as a way of thought in the "Lectures" also. the requirements of every age call for the rationalization of old theories and thought. Confucius used to call this 'presenting old wine in new bottles'. By establishing concordance between the physics, science, technology, modern psychology, biology and sociology of his age with Islamic beliefs Iqbal established the rationale for religion. Iqbal's theology is not different form

that of his predecessors in spirit. The Mawlana has presented three arguments for distinguishing Iqbal's theology from that of his predecessors however, he does not support his hypothesis, but attests that this hypothesis has been advanced in poetic high sounding language in a hurry without rationality. Iqbal himself neither claimed this nor this eminence needed such irrational claims. In addition, the discussions on the various subjects of the "Lectures" are so short, ambiguous and in-comprehensive that it could not do justice to Iqbal. These important and serious discussions could not be conducted in such a cursory manner. In fact, on reading this book mind becomes confused about Iqbal's "Lectures". The attitude of Mawlana Saeed Ahmad Akbarabadi is unnecessary praise of the Allamah at some places and is apologetic at others. Would that he had viewed the Allamah's discussions within the vast expanse of Islamic theology and had pointed out these discussions in the history of Islamic theology, which would have facilitated the understanding of Iqbal's discussions with reference to the traditions of Muslims theology. Like Dr. Muhammad Alba'hi of Egypt the Mawlana has also shown some differences with Iqbal. Though a detailed discussion of these is not possible here the objections of Muhammad Alba'hi betray lack of comprehension of Iqbal. The support which the Allamah provided to every movement created in the Islamic world was a demand of the times, because the start and growth of any movement anywhere in the down-trodden and suppressed Muslim world was in itself a great matter. Every action which could motivate Muslims was laudable to Iqbal. Its being appropriate or otherwise was of less importance at that time. Later, if this movement started drifting from its path Iqbal would point out that also the objection of Muhammad Alba'hi had resulted from a lack of understanding of the state of affairs created by colonialism. Instead of clarifying the correct position of Iqbal the Mawlana has thrown his weight also in favor of Muhammad Albahi. Thus, this book is the result of an incomplete effort.

With reference to the "Lectures" of Iqbal the book compiled by Dr. Saiyyid Abd Allah, titled *Muta'allaqat-i-Khutabat-i-Iqbal* (About Iqbal) is also a very well-known book. Included in this book are "Iqbal aur Dini tajrubah" (Iqbal and Religious Experience) by 'Abd al-Hafiz Karadar, "Allamah Iqbal ka Junubi Hind ka Safar" (The Trip of Allamah Iqbal to South India) by Dr. 'Abd Allah Chughtai, "A'alam-i-Khutabat-i-Iqbal" By Dr. Ghulam Husain Zulfiqar, "Allamah Iqbal ka Tasawwur-i-Taqdir" (Allamah Iqbal's Concept of

Destiny) by Professor Muhammad Munawwar, (Iqbal ka Tasawwur-i.-Baqa-i-Dwam" (Iqbal's Concept of Eternity) by Muzaffar Husain, "Khutubat. Main Ulamah-i-Islam kay Havalay" (References to the Philosophers of Islam in the "Lectures"), "Iqbal aur Fakhr al-Din Razi" (Iqbal and Fakhr al Razi) by Dr. Amin Allah Wasir, the "New Gulshan-i-Raz Jadid Khutubat kay Aienay Main" (The New Secret Rose-garden in the Mirror of the "Lectures"), and "Iqbal aur Shabistari" (Iqbal and Shabistari) by Dr. Saiyyid 'Abd Allah. The papers of Professor Muhammad Munawwar, Muzaffar Husain Chudhry and Abd al-Hafiz Kardar are important with reference to the subject matter of Iqbal's "Lectures", while those of Saiyyid Abd Allah, Abd Allah Qureshi, Amin Allah Wasir and Dr. Ghulam Husain Zulfikar cover the introductions to and histories of the personalities of the "Lectures". Some discussions in this book are admirable. Though the purpose of the "Lectures" that can be discerned in this book its effect is blurred and unclear on account of the book having been written and compiled without any solid theme. It does not provide satisfactory guidance for the comprehension of the "Lectures". In the background of all this work we want to review Professor Muhammad Uthman's book Fikr-i-Islami ke Tashkil-i-Naw (The Restatement of Islamic Thought) and study its special features.

Professor Muhammad Uthman is a well -known specialist of Iqbal Studies. The Hayat-i-Iqbal ka Jazbati Dawr (The Emotional Phase of Iqbal's Life) and Asrar-u-Ramuz per eik Nazar (A Glance at the Asrar-u-Ramuz) or Iqbal's philosophy of "Khudi" are admirable works. His point of view in the study of Iqbal is not abstract but practical and applied. He has always seen and shown Iqbal as a man down to earth, living, having feelings and a real life. He is shown as man of life and blood who becomes a victim of disappointments in adversity and is happy in prosperity. The Iqbal of Professor Muhammad Uthman is an Iqbal full of life and away form the limitations of creeds.

Two characteristics of Fikr-i-Islami,... are very prominent. Though it is not lacking in errors of proof-reading and existence of unfilled blank spaces left for the English equivalents at some places this book is an example of its good calligraphy and beautiful printing on high quality paper. The efforts of both the author and the publisher in this direction are admirable. The second quality of this book is its simple and easy language. Professor Muhammadn

Uthman by presenting elegant subjects and discussions in extremely easy and simple language has brought the lovers of Iqbal studies so close to these "Lecture" that even a person of average education can read and understand very easily the subjects and discussions of the "Lectures". Now these "Lectures" of Iqbal are no longer the 'prohibited tree' for the average person. This work is so basic that Professor Muhammad Uthman deserves all praise. The title of each lecture is on the lines of the titles established by Allamah Iqbal. He has offered elucidation of each lecture separately. In this way the Professor has adopted the style of interpretation instead of translation. It can be said with confidence that Professor Muhammad Uthman has first pondered over each lecture, has fixed its contents and has then briefly described the contents of each lecture. In such works the author usually interjects his own opinions freely, but Professor Muhammad Uthman has explained and interpreted' the lectures objectively rather than subjectively, in which he has been successful. Thus, this book deserves the best attention out of those written for understanding the "Lectures". At several places Professor Muhammad Uthman has also made an effort to describe the purport of Iqbal in detail and in conformity with the modern style and methods. Here also the style of the Professor is one of understanding and explaining Iqbal. Professor Muhammad Uthman has also written a comprehensive preface himself before writing the interpretation, which is very important in itself. It shows the depth of the Professor on these "Lectures."

Simultaneously with these qualities one cannot help noting shortcomings at some places and feeling that in each lecture there is need for some more discussion of some subjects. Though such feeling is possible for any book but it is felt this book for more than one reason and in more than one way. This is so because if, rendering of the "Lectures" in easy language was aimed at that aim has been achieved but if the understanding of the "Lectures" was the object it leaves scope for more explanation on many subjects which appear during the study of these "Lectures" and no work on them has appeared so far. It will also be appropriate to mention here parenthetically that in the beginning of the first Lecture the occult incident related by him about his early life does not find a solid reference. This is so because it neither resembles a prophet's spiritual experience nor - has any relationship

with a saint's inner events. The basic question raised by Iqbal in this first lecture itself needs attention and explanation. Merely saying that "Yet it cannot be denied that faith is more than mere feeling. It has something like a cognitive content" is an incomplete assertion till, by establishing the nature of intellect in religion, we bring into human understanding an entity which would make spiritual experience verifiable like other experiences. of science and social learning? How can an experience which cannot be verified and tested objectively be molded into the form of a science? In any case, the reason for this ambiguity appears to be that the true nature of spiritual experience could not be defined as to the sense in which it is objective. It was necessary to explain the concept of the component of intellect in religion. In the same way Allamah Iqbal has adjudged Islam as the expression of the inductive reason but nothing is known about the state of inductive reason in Islam. Also, the question arises as to why Islam is against deductive intellect when the source of knowledge is not entirely induction but is composed of both the ways, i.e. deductive and inductive knowledge.

Again, calling only deduction to be the cause of Islam's decline and basing all hopes on induction for the renaissance of Islam betrays undue criticism of deduction and unnecessary dependence on induction which is a dilemma which can give birth to many new confusions.

How deduction has weakened Islam and the reason for its being not in concordance with the disposition of Islam are important question. The majority of Muslim theologians were not independent in their intellectual conclusions form the Greek deduction. Is it not an intellectual fallacy to base the foundation of knowledge on induction? The Holy Qur'an stresses the need for the study of the universe on the basis of both induction and deduction. Many examples of this can be presented form the Holy Qur'an. To adjudge pure induction as the source of knowledge is itself only half truth. The other half truth is that ignoring deduction amounts to repetition of the same delusion as that of the supporters of deduction about induction. It is also not permissible to adjudge pure induction as the foundation: of modern knowledge and science. Both modern knowledge and science use deduction as well as induction in arriving at intellectual inferences. However, this subject will be discussed in detail at some other place as to the results of this logical delusion in the "Lectures". The same kind of logical delusion has

been created by the supposition that if the Islamic education had evolved and developed on the path of induction it would have taken the place of the new European civilization. The first point has been explained above that the Islamic civilization would not have reached its climax merely by induction. Secondly, it has also been supposed that the modern European civilization has reached some climax. If mere acquisition of technology is considered as civilization Muslims can reach the stage of the Western civilization with mere technology. But is not technology only a part of civilization? Also, is acquiring technology the climax of civilization even in spite of the havoc created by it? Technology has imprisoned man in conditions of fear, terror, starvation, disease and war to a much greater extent than the services it has rendered to him. This is due - to the fact that technology, which we are adopting, considering it the climax of European civilization, being deprived of balance is under the influence of blind mechanization, and man is standing on the pyramid of these destructive armaments. Would the Islamic civilization have reached' the same climax with induction? To adjudge the Western civilization as an evolved form of Islamic civilization is also a notional delusion and a very dangerous one, because it has given birth to the thinking in the Islamic world that adoption of the European civilization, together with faith in God and the Holy Prophet will attain the objectives of the Islamic civilization. This notional delusion has made the Muslim intellect a victim of Western civilization. The intellect based on induction will arrive at the same conclusion when passing through more stages of evolution. This one sidedness of thought will lead to similar inferences. Professor Muhammad Uthman has missed this and several similar problems and questions. He has not brought his intellect into play to express any opinion on several such subjects emanating from the back-ground and fore-ground of the "Lecture? These controversies have been presented as a sample, otherwise Iqbal's "Lectures" is an ocean concerning which such questions have arisen and can be raised with reference to the identification of our cultural and civilizational identity which can create a new insight.

Similarly, the standard of attaining results for prophets set by Iqbal may be somewhat comprehensible if considered with the interpretation that Iqbal has set ' this standard only for the prophets with a book. If the standard of results be applied as proof for every prophet's prophethood it will be impossible for every prophet to measure up to such a standard. This is so

because innumerable prophets were killed immediately on claiming prophethood without the results of their prophethood making appearance. Their prophethood has been attested by some prophet 'succeeding them. Here the question rises whether prophethood itself has been attested by some prophet succeeding them. Here the question rises whether prophethood itself has ever proposed this standard for its attestation. It is difficult to answer this question in the affirmative. In the same way in the matter of the "Termination of Prophethood" the question remains unanswered whether the human intellect has reached the stage at which it can fix its own path and whether this argument is sufficient for "Termination of Prophethood"? The other question is about the nature of the principle established by Iqbal about spiritual democracy and spiritual purification of the individual. What is the form of this spiritual democracy? In the same way the question of conferring the right of Ijtihad on the parliament following the example of Turkey deserves consideration. This is so because extinguishing the individual's rights of Ijtihad and conferring it on parliament raises the question about the parliament's capability. The question also rises whether parliament can bridle the selfish motives of the ruling classes. In view of all this what is the assurance for the correct use of the right of Ijtihad by the parliament it is appropriate not to extinguish the individual's right of Ijtihad this is so because often such eminent personalities can have the compelling power of keeping the ruling classes on the right track. Also making parliament the law-giver will create a form of theocracy whose eradication has always remained the distinctive feature of Islam. Similarly, Professor Muhammad Uthman could bring under of discussion such and several other questions in the interpretation of the Lectures. However, as the impossibility of discussing all subjects in one book is well known some very important questions have been left undiscussed in his book also. Professor Muhammad Uthman could be expected to bring under discussion numerous questions of this nature. It is quite possible that he will include these matters in some other forth-coming book of his. Still, notwithstanding the serious feeling of incompleteness the present book can be regarded a good effort and a helpful guide in the comprehension of Iqbal.