

IQBAL'S GUIDELINES FOR REGENERATION OF MUSLIM MILLAT TO CONFRONT CONTEMPORARY WESTERN HEGEMONY

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The paper is an attempt to understand the present economic and political decline of the Muslim world, and how the Muslims can be lifted from this lowest state. It will begin with a short description of Iqbal's conception of *millat*, especially its constituents and scope. Later present sectarian aspect of the Muslim society, and the degree of danger it poses to the larger interests of international Islam will be discussed. It will follow a brief resume of the Muslim past in the present century, tracing the origin of various political problems facing the Muslim world. Those political and economic problems include scientific and technological advancement, acquiring of sophisticated nuclear technology for strengthening defence and economy, and elimination of the vestiges of colonialism. In the end, the Western attitude towards the Muslim world will be analysed.

The cardinal point of Allama Iqbal's political philosophy is *millat* – fraternity of believers. The bonds of this fraternity are above race, colour, region, proximity and matter. Its core is Islam, Ka'bah and the person of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The bonds of *millat* do not segregate the believers to a corner of mosque, aloof from all the decencies created by Allah. Rather they value a complete social order encompassing both spiritual and temporal life.⁹³ In fact individual's individuality shines in the multiplicity of *millat*. In the larger sense, it gives birth to a collective ego founded on the revealed word of Allah.

The sphere of *millat* in temporal affairs is well defined. It is not based on a utopia of Plato, or that of Marx – utopian communism and utopian

⁹³Iqbal, *Asrār-o-Rumīz*, Lahore, 1990, pp.85-86. Dr. M. Aziz Ahmad, "Iqbal's Political Theory", *Iqbal As A Thinker*, Lahore, 1944, pp.243-244.

socialism,⁹⁴ but on the person of Prophet (PBUH) who lived amongst the believers, and the practice that he left will continue until the doomsday.⁹⁵ The Islamic social system is valued by equality, independence and exploitation free economics. The essence of *Tawāḥūd* is equality, solidarity and freedom. The State thus founded on this bedrock “is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, (and) an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization”.⁹⁶ The institution of prophethood and finality of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH)⁹⁷ is the leverage of the entire socio-legal system of Islam, as also ordained in the Qur’ān. “This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion”.⁹⁸ According to Iqbal, it was a great divine favour retaining the symbolic honour and image of the Prophet (PBUH) for all times and all epochs.⁹⁹ The *millat* thus raised on these parameters will attain immortality. Similarly the doors of *ummats* were also closed as a corollary of this divine revelation.

The Islamic *millat*’s constituents are inseparable, and above sectarian attachments. The idea of nationalism founded on common ties of religion, race, colour, language, geography, history, customs, traditions and above all unique economic and political interests and a will to uphold it, are alien to Islam. Islam has no room for such compartmentalisations which could explode and wreck the entire humanely created edifice. Islam therefore, is neither “Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizons of its members”.¹⁰⁰ This viewpoint has been amply explained by the Allama in his poetry.

He says that our allegiance with China, India, Rome, Syria, Afghanistan and Turkey is insignificant and it must be noted that all Muslims are like

⁹⁴ This expression has also been used by Sabine. George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, Oxford, 1968, pp.479, 490.

⁹⁵ Iqbal, *Ibid.*, pp.93, 101.

⁹⁶ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1968, p.154. Here in after, *Lectures*

⁹⁷ Iqbal, *Asrār-o-Rumēz*, op. cit., p.102.

⁹⁸ *Holy Quran*, English tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Lahore. 1975, 5:3

⁹⁹ Iqbal, *Asrār-o-Rumēz*, op. cit., p.102.

¹⁰⁰ *Lectures*, p. 159

birds in a garden.¹⁰¹ It is with this yardstick that Allah has drawn a divider amongst the *ummat* of the lovers of the Prophet of Islam and those who are in the other camp.¹⁰² Allah is not only Creator and an object of worship, but also the law-giver. In Islam nobody is considered immune from the injunctions laid down in Qur'ān.¹⁰³ Qur'ān-based-polity therefore, has no room for an absolute ruler, over and above the limits prescribed by Allah.¹⁰⁴ Those bearing the torch of the love of Prophet symbolise a bud on the beautiful branch, and turning into fruit and foliage for the weal of the humanity.¹⁰⁵ In the nutshell, Islamic *millat* is required to possess a real collective ego to live, move and have its being as a single individual. The development of such a consciousness depends on the preservation of the history and traditions of the *millat*. Iqbal outlined the crux of the political system of Islam in a letter to his teacher R.A. Nicholson. He says, “The kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals presided over by the most unique individual possible on this earth”.¹⁰⁶

Iqbal's perception of *millat* could not be translated into political reality, and after the first World War, the infighting of Muslims, fertilized by Western intrigues through their agents matured into the dismemberment of Ottoman Empire. It gave room to the Jewish state of Israel in Palestine usurping the first *Qibla* of the Muslim world. After the second *World War*, Kashmir was added to the agony of the *millat*. Fratricidal war in Lebanon, obstructing the formation of government in Algeria by the Islamic Salvation Front committed to Islam despite a clear victory in the 1991 polls, consistent interference in Iran's internal affairs by protecting the oppressive rule of the Shah were later added to the above role of Muslim sufferings at the hands of the West. Most recent machinations of the American led West to brand Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan and Pakistan (under observation for some time) as terrorist states, besides an all out campaign against the fundamentalist Muslims upholding their Islamic beliefs, represent the duplicity of the

¹⁰¹ Iqbal, *Asrār-o-Rumēz*, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 123

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid* p. 121, 125

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131

¹⁰⁶ M. Iqbal, *The Mystries of Selflessness*, tr. A. J. Arberry, London, 1953, p.xi. Mazharuddin Siddiqui, *The Image of the West in Iqbal*, Lahore, 1956, p.34.

Western democracy and republicanism by jeopardising the legitimate rights of the Muslim world.

The anti-Islam political stance of the West is also extended to the economic, scientific and technological spheres. The most important of them is the acquiring of nuclear technology for development and defence purposes. The worst target of this discrimination from amongst the Muslim world and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq. Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (hanged to death in a murder case) who did not yield to the "American pressure" to forego nuclear reprocessing plant agreement Pakistan signed to acquire from France was threatened to be made a "horrible example".¹⁰⁷

The Americans have been consistently pressing on successive governments in Pakistan to "cap", "roll back" and "zero nuclear facility". The idea behind the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains the same to maintain the monopoly of super powers in nuclear arsenal. The CTBT closes the portals of nuclear research on the new entrants, but protects the large nuclear arsenal of the five bigs, In the economic field the recently enacted World Trade Organisation guarantees the monopoly of European manufactures. Slashing tariff of the poor countries in the garb of liberalisation of international trade is the death warrant for their indigenous industries and economies. The European nations blackmail the borrowing countries through debts and compel them to follow their political policies. Contemporary Pakistan and Egypt are its examples. Political blackmailing of the oil producing (entire) Arabs, saving Iraq, to fund American defence presence in the Gulf is yet another exploitation by the leading democracies of the West and America. The question is that which aspect of the democracy values such civilised loot?

The above coercive policies involving protection of the Zionist aggression against Palestinians fighting for their national homeland, lukewarmness (at UN level) towards Indian crimes against Kashmiris fighting for the implementation of the UN promise for the right of self-determination, fomenting dissension, strife and war in Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan,

¹⁰⁷ Rao Rashid, *Jo Mein Ney Deykha*, Lahore, 1988, p.222. Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan*, New York, 1993, pp.273, 299. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *If I Am Assassinated*, Introduction by Pran Chopra, Ghopra, Ghaziabad, India, 1982, pp. 141-172, 176.

blackmailing the poor countries through tactics like trade liberalisation and commanding the controlling the economies of the borrowing nations through international monetary bodies and maintaining hegemony in the sophisticated weaponray, all enjoy the support of the Western democracies.

Iqbal thoroughly analysed the Western democracy. He severely criticised the Godless and secular nature of the Western democracy. He says in Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an action, however, secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. In Islam “it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another. It is not true to say that Church and State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalysable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies”.¹⁰⁸ He dubbed the Godless politics of the West as Satan’s maid *kaniâz-i-abraman*.¹⁰⁹ He viewed the number-oriented-democratic-system to be devoid of any wisdom.¹¹⁰ “Flee from the method of democracy because human thinking cannot emerge out the brains of two hundred asses”.¹¹¹ In *Armughān-â-Āijāz*, Iqbal comes up with the logic as to why he considers modern democracy and medieval monarchies as synonymous. The scene is entitled *Iblâs Kay Mushâr* – The Advisors of Iblâs. An advisor responds to the other on the rising tide of democratic feelings among the masses. The latter says:

I know, but my insight tells me that no danger is likely to me from what is merely a curtain placed upon kingship with democratic robes, as soon as man became a little self-conscious. The business of kingship does not depend upon the existence of princes and aristocrates. Whether it be the legislative assembly of a nation or the court of a Persian monarch, the king is he who casts his eyes upon the lands of others. Did you not see the democratic system of the West? A glowing bright face with the inside darker than that of a Changiz?¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *Lectures*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁹ Iqbal, *ġarb-e-Kalâm*, Lahore, 1984, p.152.

Iqbal, *Armughān-i-Āijāz*, Lahore, 1970, p.203.

¹¹⁰ Iqbal, *ġarb-e-Kalâm*, p. 149.

¹¹¹ Iqbal, *Payām-i-Mashriq*, Lahore, 1948, p.158

¹¹² Iqbal, *Armughān-i-Āijāz*, pp.216-218. Siddiqui, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

A similar account of the Allama is available in poem *Khizr-i-Rāb*.

There are edifying dissertations on the Rights
Of Men: impassioned speeches from the Forum
On the sacred Duties of citizenship; and stormy
Debates in the Houses. But all these are no more
Than so many subterfuges to get hold of the world's wealth
Just a series of gigantic frauds, worked by old adepts
At the game, who privately agree among themselves
To the share of each in the common spoils¹¹³

A Western scholar Freeland Abbott has come with an interesting logic to reject Iqbal's philosophy about the West and its democracy. He says that Iqbal "knew the Europe of 1905 to 1908, not a period in which democracy, as we envision it today, had made a great deal of progress"¹¹⁴ And that like democracy, Iqbal's view of the "West was also imperfect". At another place he defends secularism as "an extension of religion".¹¹⁵ Abbott's comments represent his ignorance about history, philosophy and Islam in toto. He does not follow Urdu and Persian, and not even proper transliteration methodology, but he selects to write on Iqbal's philosophy and passes a sweeping verdict on Iqbal's intellect. As regards secularism *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Political Thought*,¹¹⁶ as well as Western philosophers like Sabine¹¹⁷ and Will Durant¹¹⁸ and many others agree on the definition of secularism as "negation of religion".

Iqbal's view of exploitative culture of the West is also shared by the renowned revolutionary scholar Dr. Ali Sharâ'atâ. Sharâ'atâ regards the West to be cherishing an 'economy-worshipping-structure' founded on "exploitation". It is based on "philosophy of consumerism" and "civilized

¹¹³ Siddiqui, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁴ Freeland Abbott, "View of Democracy and the West", Hafeez Malik, *Iqbal, Poet & Philosopher of Pakistan*, New York, 1971, p. 176.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹¹⁶ *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Political Thought*, London, 1977, p.564.

¹¹⁷ George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, New York, 1950, pp. 331-336.

¹¹⁸ Will Durant, *The Pleasures of Philosophy*, Lahore, 1981, p. 383.

barbarism” with the principal object of “looting”.¹¹⁹ The spiritual mentor of Islamic Iran Ayatullah Khomeinî was also critical of the Western political system. In a message to the pilgrims he said that owing to “apathy and negligence of the Muslim peoples, the foul claws of imperialism have clutched at the heart of the lands of the people of Qur’ân”. Our national wealth and resources are being devoured by imperialism despite our supposed ownership of them. He said the poisonous culture of imperialism is penetrating to the depths of towns and villages throughout the Muslim world. It is “displacing the culture of the Qur’ân”. Our youth are being enlisted en masse to the service of “foreigners and imperialists”; and they are corrupting them day by day with new tunes and new deceptions.¹²⁰

CONCLUSION

The overview of the Western society according to Iqbal is its *fasâd-i-qalb-o-naïar*¹²¹ – i.e. double standard or hypocrisy. Murad Hofmann, a German Muslim who served as a senior diplomat has examined this question in an article in *Islamic Studies*. He says that permission to raise high cement factories and gas kettles but wrangling for a mosque minaret, America’s nuclear crime through “Christian” bomb in Nagasaki and Hiroshima but curbs on Iraq, and Pakistan not to develop “Islamic bomb”, calumnious propaganda against the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), encouraging and protecting Salman Rushdi, the author of agonising book *Satanic Verses*, castigating Professor Annamarie Schimmel who pointed out that “Rushdi had hurt the sentiments of millions of Muslims”, disseminating the views of scholars like Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington that “the Muslim world, sooner or later, will either disappear or become fully marginalised, ridiculing Islam, Muslim prayers, pilgrimage and fasting and tagging it with the immorality of oil-rich

¹¹⁹ Dr. Ali Shari’ati, *What Is To Be Done*, Ed. Farhang Rajaei; Foreword John L. Esposito, Texas, 1986, p. 29-30.

¹²⁰ Hamid Algar, tr. *Imam Khomeini: Islam and Revolution*, London, 1985, p. 195.

¹²¹ Iqbal, *zarb-e-Kalim*, p. 71.

Ibid, p.102.

Ibid, p. 139.

Ibid, p.153.

Arabs and dubbing Qur'ān as a “complete Turkish code of law”, or “Turkish Bible”, all speak of the inner core of the Western hypocrisy.¹²²

To face this unethical, hypocrite and immoral West, Iqbal comes up with a proposal to strengthen ego. In his lectures, the Allama quotes the first philosopher historian of Islam, Ibn Khaldën and the noted theologian of Iraq, Qazi Abë Bakr Bāqillānâ “to accept the most powerful man as Imam in the country where he happens to be powerful”. This idea could be the “first dim vision of an International Islam”,¹²³ in the contemporary world. Later Iqbal quotes from nationalist poet of Turkey, Zia. The crux of his suggestion is that for creating “a really effective political unity of Islam, all Moslem countries must first become independent and then in their totality they should rang themselves under the Caliph”. He considered it to be the only source of strength because in “the International world the weak find no sympathy; (and) power alone deserves respect”.¹²⁴ In the opinion of Iqbal, the Muslims should turn themselves as “strong and powerful to form a living family of republics” and that is interwoven in a “League of Nations (of Islam)” which “recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only and not for restricting the social horizon of its members”.¹²⁵ With this the ultimate aim of Islam, the “spiritual democracy”¹²⁶ will be achieved.

Iqbal proposes that Tehran should be the centre of the Muslim world:¹²⁷

ñehrān hogar ‘ālam-i-mashriq kâ Janivā

Shāyad kura-i-arī kâ tarākeh badal jā’ū

One of the reasons for the decline of Muslims ever since the first World War, has been the Western complexion of the political leadership of the Muslim countries. That secular leadership has been selling the interests of the Muslims in return to skin-deep-beauty of the West coupled with other

¹²² Murad Hofmann, “The European Mentality and Islam”, *Islamic Studies*, Journal of Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Vol 35, Spring 1996, Number 1, pp. 87-97.

¹²³ *Lectures*, p.158.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 159

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 180.

¹²⁷ Iqbal, *ġarb-e-Kalim*, p. 147.

ancillary sicknesses of the Western culture. The Islamic revolution of Iran is, therefore, focus of both the Muslim world and also the West. There are frequent references to the Khomeini revolution in the Muslim countries. It is because of this reason that the Western society feels frightened from Islamic Iran whose ideological mentor died as a poor man while living in his two room ancestral abode in Qum. The West, therefore, is applying its entire resources to trounce the Islamic Iran. As regards the Muslims, for enlarging the scope of the revolution, or more precisely exporting the revolution, Iran has to dispel the valid impression that the objective of Khomeini was to uphold a Shi'ah version of Islam only, and to root out the Sunni Islam. I do not want to start a debate here, but would to a few realities. These include *bay'at* of fearless Amâr ul Mu'minân 'Ali at the hands of the three Caliphs, his association with their governments in the capacity of a Mufti, and demonstration of his high love for those Caliphs by naming his sons after them as Abë Bakr, 'Umar and Uthmân, and finally his affection for Mu'ammad bin Abë Bakr and his marriage with the widow of Caliph Abë Bakr. These facts have been recorded in *Nahjul Balaghah*.¹²⁸ I think if this impression is eliminated, the common Muslim from across the world will warmly embrace the idea to make Tehran as the centre of *millat* and universal *Imâmat* referred to by Iqbal. Only the character-oriented-leadership imbued with the spirit of Islam can only the face the Western hegemony in the Muslim world. I hope Muslim intellectuals will come forward to work on closing the ranks of Shâ'ah and Sunni Muslims by developing a consensus like *Ijtihâd* on the acceptability of at least pious caliphate as a symbol of Islamic polity, to confront the Western hegemonic designs.

¹²⁸ *Nahjul Balaghah*, tr. Sayyid Rais Ahmad Ja'fari Nadvi, Maulana Murta'ia Husain, Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi Nadvi, Lahore, 1957, pp. 33, 247-248.