

THE PROBLEM OF IMPLEMENTING IQBAL'S IDEAS IN PAKISTAN

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Iqbal had a vision of a new Muslim Society. It was for realizing this objective that he advanced the concept of a separate Muslim state to be carved out from the territories in North West India where the Muslims constituted majorities. The separate Muslim state was created in the shape of Pakistan by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. But what are the possibilities of implementing some of Iqbal's ideas for bringing into being the new Muslim society in Pakistan.

IQBAL'S PERCEPTION OF ISLAM

Iqbal has not defined Islam as a theologian but as a philosopher. In his view:

Islam is not a religion in the ancient sense of the word. It is an attitude – an attitude, that is to say, of freedom and even of defiance of universe. It is really a protest against the entire outlook of the ancient world. Briefly, it is the discovery of man. (*Stray Reflections*, p. 139)

From the historical prospective, he argues that religion in the primitive times was national. Judaism affirmed that it was racial. Christianity preached that it was personal. But Islam teaches us that religion is neither national, nor racial, nor personal, but purely human.

Iqbal further points out that as a culture Islam has no specific country, no specific language, no specific script and no specific mode of dress. (*Statements and Speeches* ed. by A.R. Tariq, p.131)

In the light of these observations it is evident that Iqbal's perception of Islam was humanistic and egalitarian. Any interpretation of Islam which approved feudalism and discriminated between man and man, was not acceptable to him.

Iqbal's Concept of Islamic State

Like many other political scientists Iqbal has criticized democracy because of its defects as a political system. But since there was no other acceptable alternative to it, he regarded the establishment of popular legislative assemblies in some Muslim countries as a return to the original purity of Islam. According to him the Caliphate, Imamate or Sultanate were the outmoded Muslim forms of rulership of the past. He believed that the essence of *TauÁád* (Unity of God) as a working idea, was human equality, human solidarity and human freedom. For him the state, from the Islamic standpoint:

“is an endeavour to transform these ideal principles into space-time forces, an aspiration to realize them in a definite human organization.” (*Reconstruction*, Lectures p.154).

Treatment of Minorities

In his Allahabad Address of 1930 when he presented his concept of a Muslim state, Iqbal categorically proclaimed:

“I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities. Nay, it is my duty according to the teachings of the Qur’án, to defend their places of worship.” (*Statements and Speeches*, Ed. A.R. Tariq p.10)

This assertion of Iqbal respecting the responsibility of a Muslim state for safeguarding the rights of the minorities is based on Surah 20: Verse 40 of the Qur’án in which God commands:

“If Allah had not created the group (of Muslims) to ward off the others from aggression, then churches, synagogues, oratories and mosques where Allah is worshipped most, would have been destroyed.”

In the early stages of Islamic history this Quranic verse was interpreted as a legal provision for the protection of the places of worship of the “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians). But after the conquest of Iran this protection was extended by the jurists to the Zoroastrians who were considered as “like the people of the Book” (*Ka-mithl-Ahle-Kitab*) The same

protection was made available to the Hindu temples in the times of the Mughal emperors in India after Humayun.

IQBAL'S VIEW ON SEPARATE OR JOINT ELECTORATES

According to Iqbal the provision of separate electorates for the Muslims was necessary for the protection of the rights of the Muslim community before Partition. Otherwise the maintenance of separate electorates was not sacrosanct in the eyes of Iqbal. He stated:

The Muslims of India can have no objection to purely territorial electorates if provinces are so demarcated as to secure comparatively homogeneous communities possessing linguistic, racial, cultural and religious unity. (*Discourses of Iqbal*, ed by S. H. Razaqi, pp. 65-66).

Therefore Iqbal had no doubt in his mind that the maintenance of separate electorates was not a requirement or a religious obligation of Islam but merely a device for the protection of the Muslims' rights in undivided India. If in Pakistan the non-Muslims do not demand the provision of separate electorates and want joint or mixed electorates, then, according to Iqbal, the Muslims may have no objection to it.

IQBAL'S VIEW ON TERRITORIAL NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM

Despite Iqbal's criticism of territorial nationalism and patriotism in his poems on philosophical grounds, he was of the view that Islam had no quarrel with nationalism in Muslim majority countries. Similarly readiness to lay down one's life for his country was a part of a Muslim's faith. He maintained:

In Muslim majority countries Islam accommodates nationalism for there Islam and nationalism are practically identical; but in Muslim minority countries (if the community has majority in a viable territory) it is justified in seeking self-determination as a distinct cultural unit.Patriotism in the sense of love for one's country and even readiness to die for its honour is a part of the Muslim's faith. (*Statements and Speeches*, Ed. A.R. Tariq, p.136)

Thus according to Iqbal the development of Pakistani nationalism must not be considered as something in conflict with Islamic ideology.

Iqbal's View on Secularism

In the contemporary world the Western civilization has developed two types of "Secularism" as an essential part of its political philosophy. Secularism adopted in the capitalist democracies is based on the principle of "indifference towards religion." This thinking is the product of market societies which are mainly interested in the sale of their merchandise. Therefore, the type of secularism evolved by these societies is a means to serve their own materialistic ends.

The other variety of secularism was evolved by the socialist countries which meant the imposition of atheism as a state policy. However after the collapse of the Soviet Union this form of secularism has ceased to exist, and at present the Russian Federation and the other former socialist countries have adopted the capitalist version of this doctrine.

Iqbal, as a deeply religious man, advances the argument that the discoveries of modern physics, particularly respecting matter and nature, are very revealing for the materialists and the secularists. His argument proceeds like this:

The ultimate reality, according to the Qur'ān, is spiritual and its life consists in its temporal activities. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, material and the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being. The greatest service that modern thought has rendered to Islam and as a matter of fact to all religions, consists in its criticism of what we call material or natural, a criticism which discloses that the merely material has no substance until we discover it rooted in the spirit. There is no such thing as profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realization of the spirit. All is holy ground. (*Reconstruction, Lectures, p.155*)

In the light of the above analysis and in Iqbalian terms to consider secularism as profane is a Christian way of talking and not Islamic. Therefore, the Muslims are not justified to regard "secularism" as something bad, wicked, profane or anti-God.

Separation of the Department of Religion

Iqbal takes pains in explaining that the division of the religious and the political functions of the state in Islam must not be confounded with the Western idea of the separation of church and state. According to Iqbal in a Muslim state it is only a division of functions whereas in the other case the division is based on the metaphysical dualism of spirit and matter or sacred and profane. Since a separate religious organisation (as church organization) cannot be contemplated, Iqbal recommends the establishment of a separate Ministry of Religious Affairs which should, among other things, control the *madaris* (institutions of religious instruction) and mosques. It should appoint qualified Imams and Preachers (*KhaṢābs*) for them. He also recommends that no one should be permitted to preach in the mosque without holding a licence from the state. When a reform to that effect was implemented in modern Turkey by Kemal Atatürk, Iqbal hailed it in the following words:

As to licentiate the Ulema, I will certainly introduce it in Muslim India if I had the power to do so. The stupidity of the average Muslim is largely due to the inventions of the myth making Mullah. In excluding him from the religious life of the people, Atatürk has done what would have delighted the heart of an Ibn Taimiyah or Shah Waliullah. There is a tradition of the Holy Prophet reported in the *Mishkāt* to the effect that only the Amir of a Muslim state and the persons appointed by him are entitled to preach to the people. I do not know whether the Atatürk ever knew this tradition, yet it is striking how the light of his Islamic conscience has illuminated the zone of his actions in this important matter. (*Statements and Speeches*, Ed. A.R. Tariq, pp 131-132).

This contention is supported by the history of Islam. Even when the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad was at its lowest ebb, the Caliph retained the power of appointing the Qadis (Judges) and the Mosque Imams (preachers). As for the objection that the introduction of this measure in a modern Muslim state would amount to the control of thought, it should be realized that that was a method which the Islamic polity in the past had adopted for curbing those who were inclined to disseminate sectarian hatred among the Muslims. Therefore, the enforcement of such a provision today cannot violate any fundamental right.

Legislation of Islamic Laws

Iqbal is of the considered view that *Ijtihād* should be adopted as legislative process in modern times in the elected Assemblies. This is the form which *Ijmāʿ* (Consensus of the Community) can take in a modern democratic Muslim state. It is interesting to note that according to Maulana Shibli Naumānâ,s decision in *Ijmāʿ* on the majority principle was recognized as correct during the times of Caliph Umar.

Iqbal also held that the claim of the modern Muslim liberals to re-interpret that foundational legal principles of Islam, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life, was perfectly justified. He was convinced that the world of Islam was confronted and effected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human knowledge in all its directions. Therefore, he suggested that each and every generation of Muslims, guided but unhampered, by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems. He maintains:

The growth of a republican spirit and the gradual formation of legislative assemblies in Muslim lands constitutes a great step forward to transfer the power of *Ijtihād* from individual representatives of Schools to a Muslim legislative assembly. This is the only possible form which *Ijmāʿ* can take in modern times. It will secure contributions to legal discussion from laymen who happened to possess a keen insight into affairs. In this way alone we can stir into activity the dormant spirit of life in our legal system and give it an evolutionary outlook (*Reconstruction*, Lectures, pp 163, 173-176).

In answer to the question as to how the present legislators, with no knowledge of Islamic law, would interpret and make laws without committing grave mistakes, Iqbal recommended that a Board of Ulema should be nominated to form part of the Muslim legislative assembly, helping and guiding free discussion on questions of law-making, but without any power to vote. This measure can be adopted only temporarily. The effective remedy for the safeguard against erroneous interpretation was to reform the present system of legal instruction, to extend its sphere and to study the conventional Islamic *Fiqh* in the light of modern jurisprudence.

It is unfortunate that the bulk of the so-called Islamic provisions have been enforced in Pakistan arbitrarily by the military dictator and without a

discussion in any legislative assembly. The crux of Iqbal's message on this point is that Islamic law is to be interpreted and legislated by each generation of the Muslims in the light of their own needs and requirements and the changed conditions of modern life. Thus it is evident that the prevalent islamization of laws in Pakistan which the democratic assembly was coerced to adopt is not what Iqbal would have liked to see.

The Ultimate Aim of Iqbal's Islamic State

Iqbal maintains that the real object of Islam is to establish a "spiritual democracy". He talks of "spiritual slavery" and also of "spiritual emancipation". He was the first Muslim in the subcontinent to define the state in Islam as a spiritual democracy. It is a pity that no indepth study has been undertaken on Iqbal in Pakistan and no Iqbal scholar has attempted to explain as to what he meant by these terms. The contention of Iqbal is as follows:

In view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated people on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize the true significance of this basic idea. Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles and evolve out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam." (*Reconstruction, Lectures*, pp. 179-180).

It is a passage of Iqbal which requires careful examination as it is apparently based on an unconventional approach to Islam. An orthodox Muslim may not readily accept this contention of Iqbal. From where did Iqbal pick up this idea? Would it be correct to say that he picked up the idea of "spiritual democracy as the ultimate aim of Islam" from Surah 5 Verse 58 of the Qur'an? He does not say so. In the said verse Allah addressing mankind commands:

For each of you We have given a law and a way (of life) and if Allah hath willed He would have made you one religious community. But (He hath willed it otherwise) so that He may put you to the test in what He hath given you. Therefore compete with one another in

good works. To Allah will ye be brought back. And He will inform you about that wherein ye differed.

If this verse of the Qur'ān was in the mind of Iqbal when he advanced the idea of "spiritual democracy" then the question arises as to how should it be established in practical terms? He probably contemplated that state as genuinely Islamic in which all religions were equally free, authentically tolerated, respected and accepted. Such an ideal state would certainly be superior to the two known varieties of secularism.

Fifty years have passed since Pakistan came into being, but owing to the dearth of intellectually imaginative and actively courageous leadership, the ideas of Iqbal have not been implemented. The result is that Iqbal's dream of the creation of a new Muslim society in this country remains unfulfilled and we continue to drift as an "undisciplined mass of believers" (*Hujüm-i-Mominân*).