

# REFLECTIONS OF ALLAMAH DR. MUHAMMAD IQBAL ON PALESTINE

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## **Introduction**

Islam and the Muslim world constitute the central theme of all the works of Allamah Dr. Muhammad Iqbal. The defeat and dismemberment of the *Khilafat-i-Uthmaniya* hurt Allamah Iqbal's heart most severely. The problem of Palestine constitutes the greatest tragedy of this century for the Muslim world. This is a festering wound which has continued in the body politic of the Muslim world till today. It constituted the greatest stress to Allamah's heart and its evidence exists throughout his writings and lectures. As the Palestine problem is one of the most important problems of the present day Muslim world I felt it appropriate to present this topic to Muslim intelligentsia. Recently an article entitled "Iqbal awr Masa'alah-i-FilasṬān" written by Maulvi Shams Tabriz Khan passed my eyes. It has been included in a book entitled, *Nuqsh-i-Iqbal* by Sayyid Abul Āsan 'Alā Nadvā published by Majlis-e-Nashriyat-e-Islam, Karachi, Pakistan in 1975. This book is an Urdu translation of an earlier Arabic book entitled, *Rawṣ'ī' Iqbal* by the same author. Though the book *Rawṣ'ī' Iqbal*, was written to acquaint the Arab world with the thought of Allamah Iqbal it did not have any paper on Palestine. This grave omission was noticed by the translator of the book into Urdu and has been rectified by him which is a very valuable addition. An English translation of this paper is presented below for the benefit of English knowing Muslims.

Note. The material within parentheses in what follows has been inserted by me for clarification.

## **Translation**

Iqbal had a very deep personal interest in the problem and future of Palestine and Arabs. His personal letters, particularly those to Miss

Farquharson, show his heart-felt intense dismay concerning the Palestine problem. In a letter to Mr. (Muhammad Ali) Jinnah he writes.

The Palestine problem has long kept Muslims in mental distress. The Palestinian Arabs perhaps may attain some benefit through the Muslim League. Personally, I am prepared to go to jail for any issue influencing both India and Islam. The forcible establishment of a Western military cantonment at the gateway to Asia is fraught with dangers both to Islam and India.

He writes to Miss Farquharson:<sup>107</sup>

The Jews also have no right over Palestine. They had bid farewell to Palestine willingly long before its occupation by Arabs. Zionism also is not a religious movement in addition to the absence of any interest among religious Jews in Zionism. *The Palestine Report* has brought out this fact to broad daylight.

The advice and sympathies of Iqbal with Palestine were part and parcel of every Palestine conference held in India. The Allamah made a statement against *The Palestine Report* in the Muslim Conference held at Lahore in which he said:<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> This refers to the two letters of Allamah Iqbal to Miss Farquharson, dated July 30 and September 30, 1937 respectively, regarding Palestine, which are included in *Iqbal Nama* (Mak«tāb-i-Iqbal) Vol. 1, pp. 446-50. Miss Farquharson was the President of the National League of England. Perusal of these letters is urged to readers.

<sup>108</sup> Ditto, pp. 451-56 - Statement of Allamah Iqbal to the Lahore session of the Muslim Conference in 1937 to protest against the Palestine Report. Considering the context reference to "Peter the Hermit" in the statement of Allamah Iqbal in the reference cited and also appearing in the paper translated appears to be a printing error.. In the New Testament Peter is not referred to as "the Hermit". However, in the Book of Revelation St. John is referred to as "the Divine". Moreover, neither of the two Epistles of St. Peter deal with the subject of the text. The Book of Revelation does. In this book St. John describes his dream in which he states to have seen the shape of things to come at the end of the world. Chapter 21 describes the ascent of the Jews in which they are shown to be in full possession of Palestine and Jerusalem. Perhaps, this is also listed by Jews and their supporters as an act of the inevitable Divine Will of making Jews masters of Palestine.

The injustice meted out to Arabs has touched me intensively as it could touch any person who is conversant with the conditions prevailing in the Near East. This problem provides an opportunity to the world Muslims to declare with all the force at their command that the problem, the solution of which is the aim of the British politicians is not only the occupation of Palestine but is a problem which will lead to the creation of intense influence on the whole Islamic world. If the Palestine problem be viewed in its historical background it will be obvious that this is a problem which is purely Islamic. If viewed in the light of the history of Bani Israel, the Jewish problem in Israel had ceased to exist thirteen centuries before the entry of Hazrat Umar in Jerusalem. The forcible expulsion of Jews from Palestine never occurred (through) Muslims but, as is pointed out by Professor Hocking. Jews had spread out of Palestine voluntarily and intentionally and the larger part of their

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The authenticity and reliability of whole of the New Testament is held in doubt. Reference is invited to Appendix III of Allamah Abdullah Yusuf Ali's "Text, Translation and Commentary of the Holy Qur'an" in which he discusses this subject on the authority of world famous Christian scholars of Christianity. He says that, "about the Gospel of St. John, there is much controversy as to authorship, dates and even as to whether it was all written by one and the same person". The authenticity of the Book of Revelation by St. John, the Divine is even more seriously disputed than his Gospel. Allamah Yusuf Ali says, "The Apocalypse of St. John, which is the part of the present canon in the West, forms no part of the Peshita (Syriac) version of the Eastern Christians., which was produced in 411 C.E., and which was used by Nestorian Christians". The text of "Revelation" is so confusing that it verges on mythology. Perusal of the whole Appendix III is urged for a complete understanding of the subject. The readers are also urged to read *Tafhām-ul-Qur'an* by Maulana Abul A'ala Mawdoodi, the *Tafseer* of Surah A'âff, verse 6. This discussion is also based on world literature on Christianity. The 'New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English Language' describes the Book of Revelation as "the 27<sup>th</sup>". or the last book (late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century) of the New Testament of uncertain authorship. It contains apocalyptic visions of the victory of God over Satan and was apparently written, "to strengthen the persecuted Christians" (p. 851). This is a fallacious belief from the Islamic point of view. According to Islam, God reigns supreme from eternity to eternity. Satan has been given the power of misleading mankind temporarily, primarily to grant his desire of complete freedom to mislead and as a system by which people can be tested for different grades of their piety or lack of it. This is part of God's universal plan.

scriptures was written and organized outside Palestine. The Palestine problem was never a Christian problem. The recent historical discoveries have thrown a shroud of doubt over the existence of Peter the Hermit himself.

The most tragic result of the First World War was the infliction of severe damage on the Islamic world. On the one hand, the Islamic *Khilafah* of Turkey was disorganized and on the other, the allies again freely used their old stratagem of injudicious division of the booty. Consequently, the eastern part of Turkey was given over to Russia and the western provinces of Balkan, Hungary and Bulgaria etc. were declared completely independent. Iran and Syria were given over to France and Britain occupied Egypt and Iraq. In this way the Islamic world was dismembered and distributed among imperialist European nations. As the Palestine problem had international dimensions it was placed under the guardianship of Britain “to guide it to the path of progress and civilization”. Iqbal throws light on this state of affairs and exposes the cunning stratagem of Europe. He shows how Europe first makes the weak countries the target of its tyrannies, then sheds crocodile tears over their misfortunes and shows sympathy, so as to retain its acceptability in the world of Islam in addition to attaining its own ends

*All applause to your compassionate heart, as for the sake of thanaab*

*You have come to the funeral prayer of the one killed by your amorous glance*

Europe designates this diplomacy to be a combination of discipline and guardianship but it is nothing short of blood sucking.  
*Iqbal has no doubts in its apparent civility*

*Europe is the “guarantor” of every oppressed nation*

*However, Syria and Palestine break my heart*

*Prudence fails to uncover this complex enigma*

*After coming out of the influence of the “unjust Turks”*

***These poor countries are now engulfed in “the whirlpool of civilization***

Even at that time that the League of Nations (which was the predecessor of the present day United Nations) had perpetrated discriminatory treatment against Arabs and Asians which continues till today. This was due to the overpowering influence of Jews and Western countries over it. For this very reason Iqbal sometimes called the League of Nations “*D«sbta-i-pâarak-i-Afrang*” (a keep of the West) and sometimes presents it with the similitude of shroud thieves who wanted to designate the East as a grave yard whose graves they wanted to distribute among themselves for stealing their shrouds.

*I do not know more than this that some shroud thieves)*

***Have formed an association for distributing the graves among themselves***

Iqbal had understood the growing influence of Jews over Western politics. He had considered it inevitable that Europe would some day fall a victim to their snare of fraud.

*The usurious Jews are waiting since long*

*To whose deceit the prowess of the tiger is no match*

*The West is bound to fall by itself like a ripe fruit*

*Let us see in whose lap the West falls*

He expresses the same thought in another poem titled, “Europe and Jews”

This prematurely dying civilization is in the agony of death

The Jews will perhaps be the trustees of the Church

Since the Arab-Israeli war of June 5, 1967 opinion has been expressed by Jews and their supporters that because Arabs had expelled Jews from their homeland Jews are not to blame if they have wrested their homeland again

and that this land is the “Promised Land” where their return is inevitable, as the Zionists say.

Iqbal had responded to this to the effect that Jews had emigrated from Palestine voluntarily and that this “Diaspora” had occurred even before the Arab conquest of Palestine. Accepting this claim of Jews, Iqbal raised a pertinent but unwelcome question. This was that if Jews had their rights over Palestine why could not Arabs have their rights over Spain, Sicily and other European lands previously owned by them? This claim of Jews is equivalent to the launching of their claim by the Red Indians over North America and that of the Hun, Goth and Gaul nations over Britain or of the Aryans of India against Iran and Russia that their homelands be returned to them.

In Iqbal’s view this is an outrage and a joke on history and is a ridiculous attempt at its wilful distortion. If Jews have to be rewarded with a homeland at all this should be conferred upon them in Germany from where they have been really expelled. This new claim of Jews over Palestine after a lapse of a thousand years of its relinquishment, followed by silence about it is totally baseless and is only the result of prompting by the West.

### **If the Jew has the right over the land of Palestine**

*Why is there no right of Arabs over Spain*

*The object of British imperialism is something very different*

### ***It is not concerned with orange orchards or “the Land of Milk and Honey***

Allamah Iqbal is aware of the conceptions and potential of Palestinian Arabs as well as with their capabilities. Consequently, he wants to stir them up for the development of *Khudâ* and excitement to the desire of being counted, and reminds them of their spiritual elegance from which the world is still benefiting. It is well known that in Iqbal’s message of *Khudâ* the feelings of Arabs, their Islamic sentiments, the pleasures of *ʿImān* and Belief, spiritual potentials and a stable determination alone are the basic

components. Inviting Arabs to the war of independence, after furnishing themselves with these very arms, Iqbal says beside Faith in God and in *Khudâ* any trust in Europe and the League of Nations (or the United Nations) is nothing short of vain imagination and self-deception.

*I know that your existence still has the fire*

*From the warmth of which the world is still benefiting*

*Your cure lies neither in Geneva nor in London*

*The jugular vein of the West is in the clutches of Jews*

*I have heard that freedom of nations from slavery*

*Lies in the development of Khudâ and the joy for rising up so as to be counted*

#### *Discussion*

Some discussion of “the Promised Land” in the light of Jewish history appears necessary here. For a complete understanding of the concept of “the Promised Land” and the behaviour of Jews regarding it I shall restrict myself only to the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible. The teachings of the Holy Qur’an on this subject are well known to its readers and will not be included in this discussion for brevity. According to the Holy Bible God promised “the Promised Land” of Canaan to Abraham and his progeny in 1900 B.C. (Genesis 12:1-7). This land roughly corresponds to the present day Palestine and Jordan. The progeny of Abraham includes Banë Isrâ‘âl (Jews) as well as Banë Ismâ‘âl (Arabs). So, both branches of Abraham’s progeny have equal rights to “the Promised land”. This promise is conditioned with the obligation of piety, as is general with every promise of God. From 1900 B.C. to 1000 B.C. i.e. for a period of 800 years this land was ruled by Egypt and Philistines, which gave it the name of Philistine, now anglicised to Palestine. Moses brought Banë Isrâ‘âl to Palestine in about 1100 B.C. after their Exodus from Egypt and wandering about in the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years. In spite of the promise of God, which should have given strength to

Banë Isrꞗ'âl they refused to face the travails of a war with Philistines (Numbers Chapters 13-15). A summary of the history of Jews follows

721 B.C. - 715 B.C. - Assyrians, followed by Babylonians conquered Palestine with complete destruction of Banë Isrꞗ'âl and their cities.

530 B.C. - Return of Banë Isrꞗ'âl to Palestine with the help of the Persian king Cyrus II.

332 B.C. - Palestine conquered by Greeks under Alexander.

63 B.C. - Conquest of Palestine by Romans.

135 C.E. - Revolt of Banë Isrꞗ'âl and its suppression by Romans with extremely heavy losses to Banë Isrꞗ'âl and destruction of the Temple of Solomon.

About 650 C.E. - Muslim conquest and rule arrived, which continued till the end of World War 1. in 1918.

Thus, “the promised Land” was not given to Banë Isrꞗ'âl for a period of 800 years from 1900 B.C. to 1100 B.C. During the Exodus when Moses, on command from God, planned to invade Cana'æn, Banë Isrꞗ'âl flatly refused to go with him. (Numbers Chapters 13-15).

The Muslims remained rulers in Palestine for about 1270 years which is four times longer than the rule of Banë Isrꞗ'âl. The expulsion of Banë Isrꞗ'âl from Palestine was completed in 715 B.C. after its conquest by Babylonia and continued off and on for about 1400 years when the Muslims arrived in 650 C.E. The emigration of Banë Isrꞗ'âl since 715 B.C., technically known as “Diaspora”, was either due to the atrocities of Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans or occurred voluntarily in search of ‘greener pastures’ elsewhere. It was not brought about by Muslims (or Arabs). In fact Banë Isrꞗ'âl were rehabilitated in Palestine by the Uthmanian *Khalifah* in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century and early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, when they were expelled by the Christian



kings of Spain during the infamous “Inquisition”. These disasters were not brought on to Banë Isræ’âl by Muslims but by their own backsliding from the Covenants with God on Mount Sinai after the Exodus, followed by abandoning the straight path shown to them by their own prophets and scriptures, which brought the wrath of God over them. There are innumerable references to this in the scriptures of Banë Isræ’âl, Christians and Muslims. The following is a very short list of such references in the Old and New Testaments. References in the Holy Qur’an are omitted because they are well known.

The Old Testament: Psalms 106: 34-43:

34. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them.

35. But were mingled among the heathen and learned their works.

36. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.

38. And shed innocent blood even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan and the land was polluted with blood.

39. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, in so much that he abhorred his own inheritance.

41. And he gave them into the hands of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them.

42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

43. Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Isaiah 1: 3-5 and 21-24, and 3:16-26;

Chapter 1: 3. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass master's crib: but Israel doth not know: my people doth not consider.

4. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the holy one of Israel into anger, they have gone away backward.

5. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

21. How is the faithful city become as harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

22. Thy silver has become dross, thy wine mixed with water.

23. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

24. Therefore, saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge of mine enemies.

Chapter 3:16-26

16. Moreover the LORD saith Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.

17. Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion; and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

18. In that day the LORD will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments about *their feet* and their cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon.

19. The chains and the bracelets and the mufflers.

20. The bonnets and the ornaments of their legs, and the headbands and the tablets, and the earrings.

21. The rings and nose jewels.

22. The changeable suits of apparel and the mantles and the wimples, and the chipping pins

23. The glasses and the fine linen, and the hoods and the Vail.

24. And it shall come to pass *that* instead of sweet smells there shall be stink; and instead of girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girdling of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

26. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit on the ground.

### Jeremiah, Chapter 3:

6. The LORD also said unto me in the days of Joshua the king. Hast thou seen *that* backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there had played the harlot.

7. And I said after she had done all those *things*, Turn thou unto me But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away and had given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

St. Mathew, Chapter 23:

35. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zachariah son of Batrachia, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

36. Verily, I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that calloused the prophets, and steepest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.

38. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.