

THE UNIVERSALITY OF IQBAL *

Dr. Javid Iqbal

Iqbal's thought is multi-dimensional. Its most important dimension is his cosmic view, which is tied up with his fundamental concept of individual and collective ego. Through this concept he elevates man and makes him stand side by side with God as co-worker and co-creator in the construction of a better universe and a more perfect world order. The universe, according to Iqbal, is not a block universe or a finished product, incapable of change. But it is a growing universe as God keeps on adding to it in the process of progressive change. Iqbal's God is a living God because of His continuous creative activity. Man as a spiritual being, realizing himself in space-time, can also become eternal like God if he takes the initiative, by regarding life as a struggle or a challenge, and by constantly creating or inventing for the betterment of the world and the universe.

However, the cosmic view of Iqbal cannot be properly comprehended, unless and until one grasps his worldview. He has a message for the Third World as well as a warning for the rich and affluent nations. For the nations of the Third World his message is that they must constantly endeavour to realise their collective ego, exploit their own resources, control their populations, learn to depend on themselves alone, build up their own industries and commerce, establish such politico-economic orders which are founded on their own tradition, help one another in reconstruction, resolve their disputes through bilateral negotiations, and must not go about with a begging bowl to the affluent nations. To the affluent nations his warning is that so long as they remain attached to fabricated dualism, such as distinction between white and black, coloniser and colonized, exploiter and exploited, capitalist and communist, underdeveloped and developed, they would not become aware of the moral implications of dignity of man and consequently shall perish or be obliterated from the face of the earth.

It is interesting to note that whatever Iqbal said 50 years ago, is now being reflected in the writings of the liberal thinkers of West. In the light of the

* Text of the speech delivered at New Delhi on December 26, 1977.

findings of the Reports of the Club of Rome, it is generally felt that capitalism as well as communism have failed to cope with under-development on a global scale and that at present the most highly developed countries cannot, possibly offer any such social order which provokes the enthusiasm of man. In the opinion of the liberal thinkers, the false distinctions and values created by the West have harmed mankind. In their view, if humanity is to survive in the 21st century, it must consider itself as one because all of us are under-developed in the sense that we are economically inter dependent on each other. It has been suggested that multi-national corporations be established in order to keep a watch on such destructive economic forces as inflation and take appropriate measures before they strike mankind. Iqbal has pointed out to the nations of the Third World that their collective ego cannot be realised merely by getting political independence. They must at the same time endeavour to achieve economic autonomy and technological emancipation. Iqbal's relevance to the present context is that his world view be properly understood, not only by the nations of the Third World, but also by the rich and affluent nations. It is only through this under standing that modern man may succeed in establishing an international economic order founded on the universally accepted norms of politico economic ethics, justice and equity.