

NIETZSCHE, IQBAL AND POST-MODERNISM

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German thinker and writer, Nietzsche, was a multi-faceted genius who initiated the idea of ontological post-modernism. His conception of Superman is a declaration of a post-modern age and the end of the era of Man. His theory of “will to power” influenced philosophers and writers such as Heidegger, Jasper, Jean-Paul Sartre and the poet Rilke. He was not only influential in Western culture; his impact is visible on Eastern culture as well.

Allama Iqbal was basically an Eastern poet-philosopher but he was inspired by the idea of Superman presented by Nietzsche.¹³ According to him, man is not the ultimate goal of history and his value cannot be determined without the meaning of Superman. Superman is a guiding star of the entire world. The centrality of Man was challenged by him and the highest achievement is Superman.

Iqbal’s conception of the perfect man was an idea of history and culture. He was inspired by Rumi and Nietzsche, and presented his idea of the perfect man. Iqbal was not satisfied by the status of Man. He was moving towards the idea of Superman and his idea was extremely limited. The transcendental element is absent from Nietzsche’s idea of Superman. Iqbal admires Nietzsche and his powerful Superman, but he adds spirituality to the idea.

In his famous book *Thus Spake Zarathustara*, Nietzsche says “Be faithful to Earth”. But Iqbal’s view is the unification of Eastern and Western values. In the East, Man’s spirituality is as important as his material being and Superman is Man plus the spiritual and transcendental elements. His

¹³ This assertion, often encountered in the facile writings in Iqbal Studies, can hardly stand the test of verification through Iqbal’s works and a deeper study of Nietzsche’s own ideas. Facing a similar objection, Iqbal himself dismissed the possibility by pointing out to the critic that he had not read Nietzsche when he wrote the verses that are usually interpreted as harbouring a concept of man that, apparently, resembled Nietzsche’s idea of the superman. (Editor’s Note)

Superman goes beyond the earthly bounds and touches the highest peak of perfection that is known as *Insan-i-Kamil*. Iqbal's famous line is as under:

اے سوار اشہب دوراں بیا
اے فروغ دیدہء امکان بیا

Iqbal's Superman is the realization of the highest possibility of being, and the spiritual elements make him the crown of the universe.

This very conception of Superman inspired Derrida, Heidegger and Foucault. The post-modern era is basically the era of the Superman. The centrality of Man was challenged by post-modernists and they presented a philosophy of the new cultural phenomena, Literature, anthropology, aesthetics and all other important disciplines deviated from the idea of Man. Post-modern's include other topics such as legendary figures, myth and other areas of imagination.

Insan-i-Kamil or perfect man is basically a concept of the Muslim thinker, Al-Jili, According to him, the perfect man revealed himself in prophetic grace and Iqbal's view of Superman was a combination of Nietzsche and Al-Jili, and according to Iqbal, the Prophet of Islam (Peace be upon him) was a complete and perfect being who inspired history, culture and the entire humanity. He is an exemplary perfect man for the entire humanity, as he writes:

آدمی یا جوہرے اندر وجود
آن کہ آید گاہے گاہے در وجود

Apart from his Islamic view of Man, Iqbal's Superman is the conqueror of time and space. The rider on the horse of time and the light of possibility who makes Iqbal conscious of his absolute necessity for the evolution of history and Man. It is omega point for the spiritual evolution of Man.

Post-modern thinkers such as Derrida and Foucault believe in the superiority of coming Man or post-modern Man, as he is the ultimate goal of history and culture, and post-modern culture is basically a culture of Superman. Iqbal's thought is partly post-modern, but he does not agree with

the post-modernists who deny the spiritual element and transcendental reality as the guiding star for humanity.

According to post-modern philosophers, the idea of Man presented by the Renaissance thinkers cannot be a model for historical development and the cultural evolutionary process. Man was their basic concern, and not the entire universe, including all beings. Iqbal and his philosophical message of selfhood or *khudi* is not limited to Man and his mode of existence. *Khudi* is universal and all the beings are moving towards perfect *khudi*, according to their different status of being, as Iqbal says:

خودی کی زد میں ہے ساری خدائی

Iqbal's post-modernism is basically spiritual, ontological and contains an idealistic element. The objectives of *khudi* are not limited. They are as infinite as the ideal Man who never realizes and does not take the objective form, but moving towards the infinity or the absolute being, as Iqbal says:

خودی کا سر نہاں لا الہ اللہ
خودی ہے تیغِ فساں لا الہ اللہ

According to Iqbal, the birth of *Khudi* is the first ontological event and this ontological process in the universe makes all things move. And this process does not terminate in the being of Man, but moves on and on. Life and death are just passing phases, and not the objectives of *Khudi*.

حیات و موت نہیں التفات کرے لائق
فقط خودی ہے خودی کی نگاہ کا مقصود

Idealism of the self is the shining star of the creation and is a permanent incentive to human imagination. The literary and creative process is inspired by his ideal of *Khudi*, and human imagination realizes the essence hidden in human imagination.

Note