

MODERN INDIAN MUSLIMS AND IQBAL

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The book *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* or the ‘Madras Lectures’ of Allama Iqbal, has been translated into Urdu under the title *Tashkeel-e-Jadid-e Ilahiyat-e Islamia*. In the light of this work I have chosen to speak on the topic: “Iqbal and the Concept of the Islamic State in Modern Times.” But before opening the discussion, it is necessary to throw some light on these lectures of Iqbal.

This book has remained the least noticed work of Iqbal, although it deserves a lot more attention. The main reason for this neglect is that these lectures were addressed to, and later published for, the Muslims of the new generation. Iqbal was aware that the new generation of Muslims could not remain aloof from the values of modern western culture. It was therefore necessary for them to remain Muslim and at the same time to become modern. Since this book discussed modernity in Islam, some of the Ulema were quite annoyed with it. For this very reason publication of Urdu translation was delayed. It was feared that the translation could provoke the wrath of the Ulema and they might consider it a manifesto of a new religion like Akbar’s *Din-e Ilahi* or a distortion of religion under the pretext of reinterpretation. Many objections were raised. For instance, the late Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadvi was reported to have said that it would have been better if he had published this book. Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, who reported these words, commented in these words:

I do not consider Iqbal an innocent and pious person or a religious guide or an Imam Mujtahid, nor do I cross the limits, as his staunch supporters do, while acknowledging and praising his works. I consider that Hakeem Sana’i, ‘Attar and Rumi were far ahead of him in respecting and following the Shari‘ah, uniformity in thought and deed, and harmony between precept and practice. Iqbal presented several interpretations of Islamic faith and philosophy, agreement with which seems very difficult. I am also not convinced, like some enthusiastic young men, that no one had a better understanding of Islam than him and that none could surpass him in the

knowledge of Islamic sciences and historical facts. On the contrary, the truth is that all his life he kept on benefiting from his distinguished contemporaries. There are some drawbacks in his unique personality which do not quite match with the sweep of his knowledge and the greatness of his message. Unfortunately he could not find an opportunity to get rid of them. There are many thoughts and views expressed in his Modern Lectures, the interpretation of which conflicts with the collective convictions of the Sunnis.... It would have been better if these Lectures had not been published.

The fact that emerges is that because of their conservatism the Ulema of the subcontinent are not yet ready to accept the change that has taken place in modern life. Even today they believe that the Madras Lectures are a great danger to the future of Islam. If the society which Iqbal dreamt of in these Lectures had come into existence, then the face of Islam, particularly in regard to worldly affairs (*Mu'aamalaat*), with which we are familiar, would have not remained unchanged. This is the reason why the Ulema strongly opposed this book of Iqbal. A few years ago a seminar was held in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) where some one asserted that his book contained nothing except heresies, and that the Muslims must not read it.

However, this is an extremely important book. Some eminent Muslim scholars whom I had the opportunity to meet in Istanbul, Damascus and Cairo feel that a book like this has not been written in the Islamic world for the past three hundred years, and that the importance of this book is increasing in the world of Islam with each passing day.

The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam has been translated into Urdu as *Fikr-e Islami ki Tashkeel-e Jadid*. This translation, in my opinion, is appropriate because what is meant by 'Reconstruction' is the process of 'correcting' or 'reforming'. You may call it either 'Modern Reconstruction' or 'Reformation'. But it is not the reconstruction of Islam or the Islamic faith, as was the movement of Martin Luther in Christianity. Martin Luther's movement is called the Reformation. What he meant by Reformation was a new interpretation of Christianity, which led to the establishment of a new school of thought or rather a new religion. But here the aim is not reconstruction of Islam but the reconstruction of the religious thought of

Islam. Now the question arises as to when is such reconstruction or reformation required? Obviously when decadence takes place, a revival or renaissance becomes essential; otherwise if the process of deterioration is allowed to continue nations and communities cease to exist. This is the era of Muslim cultural and ideological revival, and the book was written during this period, because Iqbal belonged to that period of the history of the subcontinent when the process of reformation had commenced even before his birth. Shah Waliullah, Syed Ahmed Shaheed, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Maulana Shibli Nomani were personalities who were senior to Iqbal, and had already started the process of the reconstruction of Islamic thought. Jamaluddin Afghani was also one of them. In 1882, when Afghani took refuge in Hyderabad Deccan, Iqbal was only twelve years old. So one can imagine that the work of reconstruction had started even before Iqbal was born. Thus, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Iqbal tried to study and apprise the Muslim community, and that too very courageously, as to what were the causes of decay in their society. It is very interesting to note that after one thousand years of the death of Imam Ghazali, Iqbal for the first time in the modern history of Islam disclosed that there were three negative forces against which Jihad should be waged, and that only through the extermination of these forces could the new Muslim Society be brought into being. According to Iqbal, these three negative forces are: Autocratic Monarchy, ignorant Mullaism (Islamic priesthood) and decadent Sufism. In this context he addresses the Muslims of India and says: *Ay Kushta-e Sultani-o Mullai-o Piri* (You are nothing but a crushed compound of autocratic Monarchy, ignorant Priesthood, and False Spiritual Guidance).

These are the three disintegrating forces which led to the decadence of Muslim society. This means that Iqbal felt the necessity for reforming these forces so that they could yield positive results for the reconstruction. For example, he wanted to bring about changes in the teaching of Islamic theology, and it was his desire to bring a new *Ilm-ul Kalaam* (Scholastic religious thought) into existence, because at the present time man had made tremendous progress in the empirical sciences, and in the light of this advancement in human knowledge, a new scholastic philosophy was needed. Without a new approach in theology, it was not possible to strengthen the faith of the new generation of Muslims. Similarly, he wished for a revolution in the sphere of Sufism. Consequently, when he wrote the Introduction to

the publication of his lectures, he specifically mentioned the need of this revolution. His third important point was to do away with autocratic monarchy in Islam and to proceed towards democracy, which according to him was to return to the original purity of Islam. After providing this background, I would like to bring to your notice that aspect of Iqbal's Philosophy which is known as *Khudi* (Self). Whether he talks in terms of the individual self or the collective self, the aim of Iqbal was that, through the development of the individual and the collective ego, a new Muslim society should be brought into being. In this respect his thought is founded on three basic concepts. These are: First, his concept of Muslim nationhood— i.e., the nationality of Muslims is to be based not on community, colour, race, language or territory but on a common spiritual aspiration. Second, Islam cannot be conceived without *Shaukat* (Power). In other words, according to Iqbal, the new Muslim society cannot be subjugated. It has to be free, and in a dominant position. Third, if 'Power' is the ultimate aim, then it is necessary to find a manifestation for it— and this manifestation is the realisation of a state for the new Muslim society. His writing and discourses prior to the famous Allahabad Address reveal that he always had these three things in mind— the concept of Muslim nationality, the concept of Islam with 'Power' translation, in my opinion, is appropriate because what is meant by 'Reconstruction' is the process of 'correcting' or 'reforming'. You may call it either 'Modern Reconstruction' or 'Reformation'. But it is not the reconstruction of Islam or the Islamic faith, as was the movement of Martin Luther in Christianity. Martin Luther's movement is called the Reformation. What he meant by Reformation was a new interpretation of Christianity, which led to the establishment of a new school of thought or rather a new religion. But here the aim is not reconstruction of Islam but the reconstruction of the religious thought of Islam. Now the question arises as to when is such reconstruction or reformation required? Obviously when decay takes place, a revival or renaissance becomes essential; otherwise if the process of deterioration is allowed to continue nations and communities cease to exist. This is the era of Muslim cultural and ideological revival, and the book was written during this period, because Iqbal belonged to that period of the history of the subcontinent when the process of reformation had commenced even before his birth. Shah Waliullah, Syed Ahmed Shaheed, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Maulana Shibli Nomani were personalities who were senior to Iqbal, and had already started the process of

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In this context, let us consider the discussion which took place between Iqbal and Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani. Maulana Madani's point of view was that of an Indian nationalist. On the other hand, Iqbal's view was that of a Muslim nationalist. Maulana held that as a nation Muslims were Indians, but as a community (Ummah/ Millah) they were Muslim. Whereas for Iqbal nation and community were one and the same thing. There was no difference between the two. It is surprising to note that most of the Ulema who opposed the Pakistan movement and also rejected Iqbal's thesis, were prepared to accept the Muslims as part of the Indian nation in the secular set-up of India but were not prepared to accept Iqbal's concept of the creation of a new Muslim society in a politically free modern Islamic state of

Pakistan. In other words, these Ulema were so attached to the conventional approach to Islam that they were willing to live under Indian secularism rather than agree to accept *ijtihad* or a new approach. In this connection I have always used three terms. What Iqbal called the Mullah's approach, I call the conventional or traditional approach to Islam. What Iqbal called *Piri-muridi*, I call populist approach to Islam; and those who were the founding fathers of Pakistan, including Iqbal, their approach to Islam, according to me, was reformist. The social struggle being waged in all Muslim societies today is between these three groups. The masses who represent 'Populist' Islam are passive in this struggle, but the conventionalists and reformists are fighting the battle as backward-looking-romantics and forward looking realists. Generally speaking, the masses of Islam can neither read the Qur'an nor understand it. It is difficult to say whether they even know their prayer. Therefore, a large majority of them depend on their spiritual guides, pirs and saints who they believe are able to intercede between them and God.

Because of ignorance, this belief holds firm ground in their minds. May be some time in the future, when education spreads enlightenment, the present shape of the common man's Islam will change. But until then this situation must be considered to prevail to the advantage of the politician and the protagonist of conventional Islam. Moreover, the group of educated and enlightened Muslims who subscribe to reformist Islam is too small, and some time is required for them to develop into a class which could command a position of influence and power.

What are the constituent elements of Muslim society according to Iqbal? A serious consideration would reveal that Muslims are still far away from the reformist approach to Islam. Although a section of the Muslims of the subcontinent have obtained Pakistan, it would take a long time to make it a modern Islamic state. We have talked about the difference between the approaches of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and Iqbal, and have also taken note of the views of Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi about Iqbal. Now I venture to present another interesting extract on Iqbal. This is form

Maulana Najmuddin who is one of the disciples of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani. He states:⁹²

We consider it a religious crime to grant the late Dr. Iqbal the status of more than that of a poet and a philosopher, as we have studied his writings carefully. It is no exaggeration to say that although hundreds and thousands of his verses are useful, there are many which openly strike at Islam and Islamic philosophy.

He further adds:

The work of law-making in Pakistan can certainly be undertaken in the light of Iqbal's thought because the Islam on the basis of which Pakistan has been founded is in fact another name for Iqbal's philosophy.

It is, therefore, evident that a group of Ulema have always said that Pakistan was created in the name of a specific kind of Islam which they consider as another name for Iqbal's philosophy.

Now let us examine the other dimension of the problem: What kind of sick society did Iqbal confront? He began formulating his thoughts in 1904. I would like to draw your attention towards his first article namely, "Qaumi Zindagi" (National life). It was written in 1904 and was published in *Makhzan*. Before presenting a quotation from this article, I would like to re-emphasise that Iqbal was very much influenced by the factor of change. I shall try to establish through this quotation that according to him it was this strange factor of change that distinguished the present from the past. Commenting upon the progress made by the other nations, Iqbal describes Muslim societies thus (and I would urge you to tell me whether or not today any change has been accomplished):

I am sorry to say that, seen from this angle, the condition of the Muslims appears to be most deplorable. This unfortunate community has lost its political power, lost its craftsmanship, lost its commerce and trade, and

⁹² Najmuddin Islahi, *Maktubaat-e Sheikh-ul Islam*, Lahore 1944, Third Volume p.141.

now, unconcerned with the disease of poverty, it is leaning on the useless staff of vain hope. Let alone other things, until now their religious differences have not been resolved. Every other day a new sect pops up, proclaiming itself as the sole heir of paradise, denouncing the rest of the human species as the fuel for hell. In short, this form of sectarianism has shattered the unity of the best of the communities in such a way that it is impossible to reunite it as a single community... The condition of our Maulvis (Preachers) is such that if two of them happen to be present in the same town, they would exchange messages to meet and hold a discussion on the life of Jesus Christ or the revelation and cancellation of the Quranic verses. And if the discussion commences, as it often does, it leads to the exchange of such abuses that one has to seek refuge in God. The vastness of knowledge, tolerance and understanding which were the characteristics of the old savants of Islam exist not even in name... There is however, a list of Muslim *Kafirs* (non-believers) which goes on increasing as more names are being added to it with the vicious hand of our preachers. The story of the decadent Muslim affluent class is different. By the Grace of God, he already has four daughters and two sons and yet the gentleman is in search of a third wife, and keeps on secretly sending word here and there, taking every care that the existing two wives should not come to know of it. Sometimes, if he gets a respite from domestic quarrels, he ventures to have a little fun with a prostitute in the street...to say nothing of the Muslim masses— some would spend their life's earnings on the ritual of a child's circumcision; another would withdraw his pampered child from school because of the fear of the teacher; yet another one would spend his day's earnings in one evening and console himself by saying that God will take care of tomorrow. Elsewhere, a fortune is being wasted on litigation over a petty matter, while properties are being destroyed in property-related quarrels... The portrait of Muslim culture briefly is that girls are uneducated, boys are ignorant and unemployed. They are afraid of industry and commerce, and are ashamed of learning crafts. Divorce litigation is on the increase every day, and incidents of crime are going up. This is a very desperate situation and there seems to be no way out except that the entire community should make an endeavour united to set their minds and hearts in the direction of reform. No great task in this world can be completed without great effort.

Even God does not change the condition of any community unless that community itself makes an effort for its betterment.

This is a very important quotation. It will give you some idea of the direction in which Iqbal's thought was moving since 1904. He was realising that the reformation of Muslim culture was necessary and this would be possible only if Islamic laws, were reinterpreted. Iqbal kept writing time and again on these topics. The extracts from his writings that I am reproducing were published during different periods, especially between 1904 and 1938. Let us examine the following quotation; but before I reproduce it I want to submit that an important aspect of Iqbal's thought is that he genuinely believed that the revival of Islam is not possible merely by the revival of religion unless it is accompanied by the revival of Muslim culture. I will explain what Iqbal meant by 'culture'. Let us first consider the quotation:

Among the Muslims, the question of reforming their culture is in fact a religious question, because Muslim culture actually is the practical form of the religion of Islam. There is no aspect of our cultural life which can be detached from our religion. It is not my intention to discuss this important matter from the religious standpoint. Nevertheless, I will not hesitate to point out that due to the great change in the condition of our lives, certain new cultural necessities have emerged, that the principles devised by our jurists (*Fuqaha*) the collection of which is generally known as Islamic Shari'ah, needs revision. It is not my contention that there is some inherent flaw in the basic principles of our religion due to which it is not possible for us to resolve our contemporary cultural problems. On the contrary, my contention is that most of the interpretations of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet) advanced by our jurists from time to time are such as were relevant and suitable for specific periods of time, but do not conform to the modern needs and requirements of the Muslims...Taking into consideration the modern needs and requirements of the Muslim community, we need not only to follow a new theological approach (*Ilm-ul Kalaam*) in support of the principles of religion, but need also a great jurist who could reinterpret Islamic law, and grant such breadth to the rules, through his logic and implication, that they would fulfil all the possible demands and requirements of the present day Muslims. So far as I know, to date no

such eminent jurist has been born in the Muslim world. If we are to consider the importance of this problem, it appears that more than one mind and a period of at least one century is required to complete this task.

In 1905, a revolution took place against the Shah of Iran. Iqbal carefully watched this period of Iranian history generally known as *Daur-e Istabdad-e Saghir* (The Era of Minor Tyranny). Mohammed Raza, who later became Raza Shah Pehlavi, was the leader of this revolution. In the early stages, he wanted to become the president of Iran following the Turkish example as he tried to convert Iran into a modern democratic state. But the Shi'a Ulema opposed this conversion and advised him to adopt the title of Shah (King). However, they retained the power of interpreting Islamic law as the successors of the Occult Imam (*Imam-e Gha'ib*). These moves made Iqbal arrive at the conclusion that gradually Iran was also heading towards elections, although according to the Shi'a theory of the Islamic state there exists a separation between the temporal power headed by the Shah and the spiritual (juridical) power assumed by the Shi'a Ulema Council.

The 'method' referred to here by Iqbal requires some attention. What he meant is that a Muslim child should be identified as a Muslim and also as a modern individual. The 'method' which he mentions repeatedly is that, unlike the old system of education, the Islamic Dar-ul Uloom (study centre) must constitute an integral part of a modern university. There should be the subjects in which our preachers and missionaries should be well-versed. Iqbal insists upon their acquiring command over national literature, economics and sociology. Thus it is evident that he wanted to see the Muslims remaining Muslims and at the same time accepting modernity. Generally speaking, the dreams of Iqbal have not been realised so far. I would add here that when Iqbal went to Madras to deliver these Lectures, his host too subscribed to the same views. Seth Jamal Mohammed used to spend a large amount of money every year on such lectures. Before Iqbal, he had invited Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, who delivered lectures on Islam. Iqbal was the third in the series who was asked to deliver his lectures. Seth Jamal Mohammed wanted to create an environment wherein Muslims could retain a strong faith and at the same time not hesitate to become modern.

The writings of Iqbal indicate that according to him the political order recommended by the Qur'an was based on elections, and the legal order was based on the interpretations of Islamic law advanced by the judges. The third important point is that he uses the expression 'Muslim Commonwealth' for the Islamic state.

Now we may turn to the question as to what Iqbal meant by the revival of Islamic culture? Why was it necessary and urgent? Iqbal felt that Muslim society, of which he was a member, was a sick society. He desired to bring about the creation of a new society and that is why he used to claim that his message or address was not meant for the intellectually disabled and the old because such people are incapable of changing. He called himself the 'poet of tomorrow'. For this reason he was more interested in, and directed his message to, the Muslim youth, who could create the new Muslim society of his dreams. In this context, carrying the discussion further, I would like to present another extract from his writings, particularly because whenever I have tried to express my views respecting Iqbal's thought, it has met with strong opposition from the conservative Ulema who now claim to own Iqbal and contend that I misrepresent him. This passage has been taken from Iqbal's lecture entitled 'Muslim Community'. This is his third important paper on the subject, and was translated into Urdu by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan as "Millat-e Bayza par ek Imrani Nazar", and read in the Strachey Hall of the Aligarh Muslim University in 1910. He states:⁹³

The establishment of a Muslim University in India is essential also for another reason. Who does not know that the task of giving moral education to the masses of our community is being performed by Ulema and preachers who are not competent to perform this task? The reason is that the quantum of their knowledge about Islamic history and Islamic sciences are very limited. For the teaching of the main principles and offshoots of religion and morality the preacher of today, besides having an understanding of history, economics and sociology, should also have a complete acquaintance with the literature and aspiration of his community. Al-Nadwa, Aligarh College, Madrasa Deoband and other

⁹³ Latif A. Sherwani, *Speeches, Statements and Writings of Iqbal*, 1974, pp 104-120.

similar institutions which are functioning separately cannot fulfil this great need. There should be established one central Dar-ul uloom of all these scattered educational entities where the members of the community should not only Madras Lectures reveal that so long as the Muslim intellectuals remained under the influence of Greek thinkers they paid more attention to speculative sciences. However, when they turned their attention to the Quranic teachings, they discovered that the Qur'an laid emphasis on experimental methods, because in the Qur'an, God repeatedly commands man to apply reason, to think, to use his eyes and ears, etc. This meant that through their sense perception, Muslims should evolve empirical sciences. According to Iqbal, it was against this background that the Muslims developed the experimental method and laid the foundations of empirical sciences. Europe took these empirical sciences from the Muslims and further developed what is today known as modern science and technology. Thus Iqbal believed that Muslims were the original founders of science, and if they were to learn it afresh from the West, it would not amount to adoption of the sciences of an alien culture, but to taking back from the West what they originally gave to it in their times of glory. In this belief, Iqbal desired that the broken link between the Islamic sciences and the modern sciences should be re-forged. He was convinced that this was also a very important aspect of the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam and that the new Muslim society could not be created unless the Islamic sciences were recombined with the modern sciences. It is needless to mention here that a study of the history of science would reveal that in the early stages of the development of empirical sciences, the names of Muslim scientists frequently occur. Even today some of these sciences are still acknowledged and retain their Arabic name. For instance, Algebra, a branch of Mathematics, which was a Muslim invention, still retains the same name. So is the term (alchemy) chemistry which is derived from the Arabic *Al-Kimiya*. There are numerous other terms, particularly in the science of optics and physics which have been derived from Arabic and which are still in use.

There is another fact that is worth mentioning, and it is that although Iqbal was a critic of the western civilisation, he was never opposed to modernity. He always distinguished between modernity and westernization.

To him westernization was imitating an alien culture, for which he criticised the Turks. But modernism to him was accepting the reality of change. According to Iqbal, the Qur'an commanded the acceptance of the reality of change for the progress of Muslims in all spheres and fields; otherwise they would be left behind. The Muslim could achieve *Shawkab* (Power) in the new Muslim society only when they re-established the link between Islamic and modern sciences; and recommenced the process of research, creativity, innovation and invention. You must have noted that Iqbal, in almost all his writings, particularly his poetry, is obsessed with 'the absolutely new'. He asks for a new world and a new universe because he is fed up with the old. Even his Satan pleads to God and begs for the creation of a new Adam since he is disgusted with the present one who cannot bear even his single flaw. He pleads that it is insulting for him that he is pitched against a very weak rival. So even Satan demands a new Adam.

Now what he means by a new man or a new Muslim society is that the creative potential of the Muslim community must be reviewed. In the context of creativity, Iqbal uses the expression 'innovation'. He regarded Hazrat Umar as the first innovator among the Muslims, because of the changes he had introduced, particularly his inclusion of *Istihsaan* (Equity) into the Islamic law of inheritance. Objections were raised against Hazrat Umar for introducing novelty into Islamic laws. But Hazrat Umar replied that 'novelty' is of two kinds— one is *Bid'at-e Hasna* (commendable novelty) and the other is *Bid'at -e saiyya* (condemnable novelty).⁹⁴ Iqbal endorsed the former and considered it positive, or commendable, innovation. Iqbal was of the view that the Muslims of today could progress only if they acquired the mentality of Hazrat Umar. He upheld that they should not become prisoners of the text of Qur'an; their interpretation must also be consistent with the spirit of the Qur'an. Thus according to him *Bid'at-e Hasna* or commendable innovation is worthy of consideration and should be adopted as a methodology for modern day *Ijtihad* or interpretation of Islamic law.

Now I turn to the topic 'Iqbal and the Concept of the Islamic State in the Modern Age'. I have already explained that Iqbal gives priority to the

⁹⁴ See Iqbal's poem "Nala-e Iblees", *Javid Nama, Kulliyat i Iqbal* (Persian), Lahore 1981, p 725.

principle of Muslim nationhood for the establishment of a modern Muslim society. His second principle is that Islam is unthinkable without 'power'. Without 'power' you may repeatedly claim to be Muslim but you would be Muslim only in name. Economic and technological freedom must be realised along with political freedom to constitute 'power'; otherwise you are nothing but a slave and in the state of slavery no task can be accomplished. Iqbal narrates that once a Turkish freedom-fighter accompanied him to offer prayers in the mosque and was perturbed to notice that the Indian Muslims while offering prayers remained for a long time in the position of prostration (*Sajda*). He asked Iqbal as to why it was so? Iqbal replied that there was no need to be surprised because the poor slaves have nothing else to do except 'prostration' (*Sajda*).⁹⁵

After interpreting the two major principles of "Muslim nationhood" and 'Power' Iqbal has presented his concept of a modern Islamic state in his sixth lecture, 'The Principle of Movement in the Social Structure of Islam'. This lecture is not only important, but also controversial, as most of the objections raised against the Madras Lectures pertain particularly to this lecture. Its topic is *Ijtihad* (effort, struggle). I will discuss only that part of the lecture which relates to the construction of a state or rather the question of how Iqbal thinks a modern Islamic state can be created. In this connection, the first thing to be kept in mind is that whenever Iqbal speaks of modern Islamic state, he has before his eyes those traditional models of the Islamic state with which you may also be familiar. They are Khilafat, Imamate, Amirate or Monarchy in different forms. These are the conventional types of states that we come across in the history of Islam. Iqbal does not recommend the revival of any of these models. His concept of modern Islamic state is based on three principles. But before discussing them, I would like to point out that Iqbal associates state with law-making. He wrote several letters to Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi and posed many questions in this regard. An examination of these questions, and the answers given by Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, provides very interesting and useful information. I have collected and studied these questions thoroughly, in order to find out what was in his mind. In fact, his questions are the same which disturb the mind of the Muslim youth of today, and I suppose no

⁹⁵ "Ghulamoun ki Namaz," *Zarb -e Kaleem, Kulliyat i Iqbal* (Urdu), Lahore, 1984, pp 61-62.

satisfactory and convincing solution to these problems has been presented by our Ulema even today. For example a question asked by Iqbal to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi makes it abundantly clear why Iqbal gave so much importance to *Ijma'-i ummah*, (consensus of the community) and what its connection is with the democratic order of a modern Islamic state. He asks Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, "Can *Ijma'-i ummah* repeal *Nass-e Qur'ani* (text of the Qur'an having clear meaning)? For instance a mother can breast feed her child only for two years according to the *Nass-e Qur'ani*. Can this period be reduced or extended?" Then he asks: "Can consensus change the Quranic rules of inheritance? Some Hanafite and Mu'tazilite scholars (names of two schools of Islamic thought) believed that it was possible through *Ijma'-i ummah*. Does any such reference exist in the literature of *Fiqh* (Law)?" Such interesting questions could be asked only by Iqbal. He derives the principle of election in an Islamic state from the 38th verse of 42nd Surah of the Holy Qur'an in which it is stated that the Muslims are those who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation. In this verse, the word 'Shura' has been used which may either be interpreted as 'Advisory Assembly' or as 'Consultative Assembly'. If we take it as Advisory Body, then there will arise the problem of the absoluteness of the executive authority which would not be bound by the opinion of the Advisory Body. (And this is what had been happening during the history of Islam and led to the establishment of the most perverse form of autocracy). But if it is to be considered and interpreted as 'Consultative Body' then it would be identical to an elected Assembly for the purpose of law-making. Iqbal terms this law-interpreting Assembly as the modern form of *Ijma'*. In other words, the elected representatives are authorised to make or interpret law and their law-making process becomes a kind of *Ijma' i Ummah*. But this interpretation of Iqbal has not been accepted by the Ulema. You may note that Iqbal wants to take away the right of *Ijtihad* (Interpretation of law) from the individual jurists (*Mujtahidin*) and hand it over to the elected Muslim Assembly. This is a kind of revolution which our conservative Ulema are not prepared to accept.

Before talking about the three foundational principles propounded by Iqbal on which a modern Islamic state can be built, I would like to refer to

the last paragraph of his sixth lecture in which he defines the Islamic state as “spiritual democracy”. He states:⁹⁶

In view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we (Muslims) ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realise 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 hither partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.

It is evident from this quotation that according to Iqbal the ultimate aim of Islam i.e., the establishment of “spiritual democracy,” has not yet been realised and if at all, only partially.

Now I come to the three fundamental principles of a modern state from the Islamic standpoint propounded by Iqbal. They are: (1) human solidarity; (2) equality; and, (3) freedom. Iqbal is of the view that Muslims must aspire for and realise these great and ideal principles in space— time forces us to do this, as these very principles constitute the essence of *Tawhid* (unity of God).

The question that invariably follows is as to why Iqbal refers to “human solidarity” and not to “Muslim solidarity”? The answer is that he had a vision of a modern Islamic state as a spiritual democracy. As for religious tolerance in this state, Iqbal points out that the Qur’an commands the Muslims to protect the places of worship of non-Muslims implying that it is a religious obligation of the Muslims. In this background when Iqbal talks about human solidarity, he means Muslim unity based on common spiritual aspiration and solidarity with non-Muslim citizens. On this basis it is possible to realise the ideal of human solidarity. Iqbal cites verse 40, of surah 22 of the Qur’an, which contains the Qur’anic command to protect places of worship of the non-Muslims. It states:

⁹⁶ *Reconstruction*, pp 179-180.

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

In this verse, the term *masajid* (mosques) occurs at the end in a descending order. First the churches of the Christians are mentioned, then the synagogues of the Jews, followed by the monasteries or oratories of the hermits, and lastly the mosques of the Muslims. How did the jurists interpret this Qur'anic verse? The early *Fuqaha* (jurists) thought that only the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) came under this protective clause. But, when Iran was conquered, Parsis or Zoroastrians were also included under it based on the reasoning that they were *Kamithl-e abl-e Kitab* (similar to the people of the Book) and that this also bound the Mughal state to protect the places of worship and culture of their Hindu subjects.

To conclude, when the Muslims had self-confidence and were powerful, their jurists could 'extend' a Qur'anic rule of law if the conditions so demanded, and when there was an apprehension that it could lead to some problem they 'restricted' its application by temporarily suspending it. These processes of 'extension' (*Tawsi*) and 'restriction' (*Tebdid*) are acknowledged principles in Islamic jurisprudence. Iqbal is of the view that in accordance with the needs and requirements of present times the Qur'anic rules of law pertaining to worldly affairs (*Mu'amalaat*) can be 'extended' or 'restricted' although this Power cannot be exercised by an individual or a dictator. He desires that this power be given to the elected representatives of the Muslims in the form of *Ijma'* (Consensus).

While discussing these principles, I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not arguing that a modern Islamic state can be regarded as a secular state. No, this is not my thesis, although I am inclined to put the word 'ideal' before it. If according to Iqbal the ultimate aim of Islam is to establish a spiritual democracy and not a theocracy, then how can it be defined, except as an ideal secular state? I do not call it a secular state because there exists no genuine secular state anywhere in the world. The existing so-called secular states are practically based on hypocrisy. Is the U.S. a secular state where there still exists discrimination between blacks and whites? Are Britain, France and Germany truly secular states? Is India, where the Muslims are

periodically massacred for one excuse or another, really a secular state? In reality no secular state exists anywhere in the world, but there are several types of hypocritical states. For example, the secular state of the former Soviet Russia was established on the basis of atheism. It was an anti-religious state. Similarly, Western capitalist secular democracies are indifferent to religion, as they are essentially market societies interested in selling their merchandise. But if there exists a state which respects every religion or whose aim is to establish a genuine spiritual democracy, what name could be given to such a state? I once met a Hindu scholar at a conference. He explained to me that a secular state does not mean a state which is indifferent to religion, in the sense in which it is called *la deen riyasat* or 'non-religious state'/secular state. He said that India is not such a secular state, but every religion is given full respect in it. I replied that if that was really followed then India would have been an Islamic state as contemplated by Iqbal. There would have been no periodic massacres of the Muslim minority and that in that case there would have been no need to make Pakistan.

Now let us turn to the second principle of Iqbal, i.e., the principle of equality in the modern Islamic state. To grasp it we have to consider Iqbal's social and economic ideas. For example, he believed that the Qur'an has prescribed the best remedy for all economic ills of mankind in general. He opposed capitalism with the same vigour with which he opposed socialism as economic systems. But he did not approve of the total expulsion of the forces of capital from the economic order, rather he wanted to confine it within certain specific limits. As for the Muslims, he recommended strict implementation of the Islamic Law of Inheritance and the taking of zakat, *'ushr* and *sadqa* (various taxes) by the state. Furthermore, through *ijtihad*, he desired the reinterpretation of other Qur'anic laws pertaining to taxation. For example, there is the Qur'anic command of *qul al-'afw*, i.e., give away all that you have earned above your needs for the benefit of the community. But no one will be inclined to give away his surplus wealth voluntarily for public benefit unless the state compels him to do so. In his poem on the Russian Revolution, Iqbal therefore insists, that the Muslims must delve deep into the Qur'an in an attempt to discover the Wisdom of Allah regarding *qul al-'afw*. On the basis of this Qur'anic command, he expects the modern Islamic state to improve taxation laws in order to make the state essentially a welfare state and thus realise the ideal of equality. In this connection he has also some

other suggestions pertaining to the distribution of land. According to him a landlord, under Islamic law, can only hold as much land as he is able to bring under self-cultivation and surrender the surplus to the state for distribution to the landless tenants. Iqbal also recommends the imposition of agricultural tax on land holdings in parity with the proportion of income tax. Moreover, he wants the implementation of other laws to prohibit the practice of hoarding wealth by ignoring collective rights, accumulating wealth through illegal and illegitimate economic sources, taking interest and indulging in gambling. Iqbal's concept of equality in a modern Islamic state is more or less identical to the economic ideal of a modern mixed economy. It implies that the state should invest in important industries in the public sector and at the same time accept free economy to a certain extent, by encouraging individual investment in the private sector. But the state must not nationalise industries.

Now, we can consider Iqbal's third principle of the Islamic state, i.e., the principle of 'freedom' (*Hurriyat*). I have already said that he regards 'elections' of legislative assemblies in Muslim states as a return to the original purity of Islam. So what does Iqbal mean by the term democracy? By democracy he obviously means representative or elected assemblies, because such assemblies came into existence through electoral contest among different political parties. Iqbal states that political parties emerged during the times of *Khulafa'-i-Rashidin* (Caliphs in the early period of Islam). One political group consisted of the Ansar whose candidate contested against Abu Bakr. Similarly, another political faction was that of the Muhajirin (immigrants) who, for the first time, advanced the argument that the Arabs should refuse to accept the leadership of any person who did not belong to the tribe of Quraish. This reasoning is said to have silenced the Ansar. The Ansar's claim to the leadership was that they had constituted the armies of Islam, therefore the Caliph should be elected from among them. The Muhajirin argued that their candidate would not be acceptable to all the tribes of the Arabs because they did not belong to the tribe of Quraish. Hence, the Caliph must be chosen from the Quraish tribe. The third political faction was that of Banu Hashim. They believed that the Caliph must hail only from the descendants of Prophet Muhammad and, therefore, strongly supported Ali. Thus, it is evident that there were three positions existing after the death of the Holy Prophet.

It is interesting to note that during the electoral confrontation (or rather competition) no party sought the support of the Qur'an or the Hadith (Traditions of the Holy Prophet). The appointment of a successor (Caliph) of the Holy Prophet was a political matter, to be resolved in a political manner. Their approach was pragmatic and republican as well as flexible, since it did not rigidly follow any set precedent. It is against this background that Iqbal gives priority to *Ijma'* (consensus), the present form of which is an elected Muslim Assembly. *Ijma'* is one of the fundamental principles of *Ijtihad*, the others being the Qur'an, Hadith and *Qiyas*. Iqbal opines that the right to reinterpretation of Islamic laws and giving them the shape of modern legislation must be vested in the elected Muslim Assembly. He is also of the view that a body of Ulema could also be nominated to assist the Assembly as the Assembly may face difficulties in understanding the intricate points of Fiqh. However, he does not give the right of veto to the Ulema considering that their mutual differences could lead to a legislative crisis. His solution to the problem is that members of the Assembly should be acquainted with *Fiqh* and modern jurisprudence. In other words, the candidates for the Assembly in a modern Islamic state must preferably be lawyers and jurists with a command over *Fiqh*, because only such a person can perform the task of reinterpreting Islamic laws and their legislation.

Iqbal's concept of legislation is based on his philosophy of "permanence-in-change". He explains that only *Ibadaat* (religious obligations) are permanent and cannot be changed. On the other hand, *Mu'amalaat* (worldly affairs) are subject to the law of change. For instance, the timings of prayer cannot be changed, nor can the fasting period of Ramadan. But all laws pertaining to *Mu'amalaat* (civil and criminal matters) which fall into the category of worldly *Mu'amalaat* can be subjected to the law of change and may be reinterpreted in accordance with changed condition and needs, as well as with the requirements of the Muslim community. Iqbal wants to give this right to the popularly elected Assembly, Parliament or Majlis-e Shura. The task of this new Majlis-e Shura is not to advise the ruler, but to rule. It may make laws in three fields:

1. To amend existing laws so that these should conform to the injunctions of Islam.

2. To implement those Islamic laws which have not yet been enforced and

3. To legislate those laws which are not repugnant to the injunctions of Islam.

The third field is the most important because it is most extensive. Iqbal contends that the Muslims of today ought to follow Hazrat Umar in achieving their objectives of comprehending the spirit of the Qur'an and the real message of Islam for humanity.

Although Iqbal insists on transferring the right of Ijtihad from an individual Ulema to an elected Assembly which should be the sole law-making body, he notes that in spite of the conservativeness of the Ulema, the Muslims of the subcontinent are moving forward and it is the Shari'ah which has been made static or is lagging behind. What he meant to highlight is that whenever the Muslims have raised their voices for reconstruction or reinterpretation of Islamic law to suit the needs and requirements of the community, the Ulema opposed them tooth and nail. As a result, despite their opposition, Muslims have proceeded ahead whereas the Ulema have been left behind. Here I want to point out that whenever Iqbal proclaims that we are marching forward while the Shari'ah is static, he means that we are not taking the Shari'ah along with us.

Iqbal is convinced that Islam contains a dynamic spirit within itself and no one can hinder its progress with artificially imposed restrictions. He, therefore, categorically points out:

The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to re-interpret the fundamental legal principles in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life is, in my opinion, perfectly justified. The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the works of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems. (Reconstruction Lectures, p.168)

Who are the 'Muslim Liberals'? It appears that according to Iqbal these are those Muslims who have a 'reformist' approach towards the evolution of

Islamic law. Anyway, all that Iqbal has stated in this passage is unacceptable to any Alim who has a conventional approach towards Islamic law. Therefore, the way Iqbal is showing to us for the freedom of *Ijtihad* in the form of *Ijma'* and the dissemination of an enlightened or dynamic outlook in our legislative assemblies is neither acceptable to our Ulema at this stage, nor to the members of our law-making bodies, nor to the Muslim masses. The Muslims of the subcontinent may have attained political freedom but their mentalities are still enslaved by their past. They are hostages of the needs and requirements of the Muslim community of bygone centuries. When I proclaim that Imam Abu Hanifa has stated thus regarding a legal issue, it means that I need not think any further as he had already pondered the matter for all of us and for all times. But if we assert that we must exert ourselves, reconsider and reinterpret a law because it is a problem specific to our age, we are confronted with a deluge of objections. Although we claim that we are devoted to Islam, our community is surviving on double standards, the reason being that we are not courageous enough to pull ourselves out of the pit into which we have fallen, yet, at the same time we do not like to be considered cowards. Nations do not achieve emancipation through merely attaining political freedom. Real emancipation is achieved through freedom of the mind and that is the secret behind the progress of nations.