

RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION SYSTEM
IN THE LIGHT OF PHILOSOPHY OF
DR. MUHAMMAD IQBAL

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ABSTRACT

It is an exploratory study following qualitative approach to trace the philosophical conceptions of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal scattered in his poetic and prose works relating to Islamic values and education. Method of content analysis was supported by the informal discussion with the scholars on Iqbal working in the Universities of Pakistan. Emerging themes from the teachings of Iqbal may guide the policy makers to revisit the education policy in the light of teachings of great poet-philosopher. It may help to eradicate misconceptions about Islamic ideology and Pakistani nation. It may also guide the policy makers to formulate an education policy that may solve the social, economic, educational and security related problems of the Pakistani nation and a step-forward to present a true image of the ideology of Islam and of Pakistani nation to the world.

Introduction

History is nothing else but a record of the lives of great human beings who leave indelible impression on the Earth planet, and so is the case of Dr. Allama Mohammad Iqbal. His message in the form of poetry is not only inspiration and guidance for the Muslims of Pakistan but also for the entire world. In spite of doing momentous progress in different fields, human beings are still in search of peace, tranquility, harmony and goodwill for one another. It is well said that human beings have learnt how to fly like a bird in the sky, dive like a fish in the depth of sea, but they have yet to learn how to live like human beings on the planet earth. Education is only panacea to solve the problems faced in today world, and our religion has laid great importance on education, the Quran says: *Read in the name of thy Lord Who created man from the clot of blood; Are those who know, equal to those who know not?* The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, *“To get education is compulsory for every male and female.”* It is a great tragedy of today that the Muslims are the most illiterate people on the planet Earth and far behind as compared to other nations in the field of Science and Technology. Some part of the Western world by and large looks at them as uncivilized, terrorist, inhuman and indoctrinated to force their faith on the entire world. This paper is an attempt to revisit the teaching of the great poet-philosopher to collect some guidelines for the education of the youth of today’s world. It will help us not only to eradicate the misconceptions about Islam and Pakistan but also guide us to formulate education policy that really arouse, sustain and perpetuate *desire* among the Muslim youth to actualize their full potential to lead a life of respectable, responsible and productive members of the international community.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the viewpoint of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal about the education based on Islamic world view in the light of his poetic and prose work
2. To correct certain misconceptions about the education system based on Islamic perspective

The current exploratory study using qualitative approach focused to trace the philosophical conceptions of Dr. Mohammad Iqbal

relating to education found in his books: *Zarb-i-Kaleem*, *Armaghan-i-Hajaz*, *Javed Nama*, *Israr-i-Kuddi*, *Bangi Dara*, *Bal-e-Jibreel*, *Reconstruction of Religious thoughts in Islam*. The method of Content Analyses was supported through informal discussion with the eminent scholars on Iqbal working in the different universities of Pakistan. The topics for informal discussion were *message of Iqbal for Muslim youth*, *Iqbal as an educationist*, *concept of knowledge and concept of struggle*. The emerging themes from the content analyses and informal discussion were categorized as conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Content Analyses

Philosophical teachings of the great poet have many important lessons for the education system of the world and likewise for Pakistan. Iqbal teaches to the Muslim youth, not the life of passive contemplation but a life of action. He believes that this universe is in the process of evolution. It is not complete in itself and matter is continuously changing and moving towards its perfection. Those things that are without movement, they do not survive. The survival of life depends on continuous actions on the part of human beings. The progress of the Western world is solely dependent on this basic principle. Those things that stop movement become useless and die away before time. Iqbal advises the Muslim youth to lead the life of action which is a continuous process of self-actualization. In this respect, the education system of Pakistan may arouse, sustain and perpetuate sense of desire that consequently demands actions and work on the part of people. It is the clear message of Islam that only belief without action is not sufficient for the success in this world as well as in the coming world. Iqbal demands such actions on the part of the Muslim youth that are not temporary, superficial but have lasting impression on life. According to Iqbal:

زندگی در جستجو پوشیدہ است
اصل او در آرزو پوشیدہ است^۱
تو اپنی سر نوشت اب اپنے قلم سے لکھ
خالی رکھی ہے خامہ حق نے تیری جبین^۲
خورشید جہاں تاب کی ضو تیرے شرر سے
آباد ہے اک تازہ جہاں تیرے ہنر سے^۳

The life of actions and struggle is not without hardships, obstacles and challenges. It is for us to take up the challenges and overcome them. These obstacles in the way of great human beings polish their

abilities and support them to move forward. Life is not a garden where there are no snares, and these snares may not frighten us. Snares of today, we see in the form of terrorism, corruption, accumulation of power and wealth into few hands, exploitation from the fittest. But we need not be worry about them and try to face and overcome these challenges bravely and wisely. We may overcome these problems by developing the capabilities of *Qalb-o- nazār* (heart and insight), *zowq-o showk* (delight and curiosity), *dardī-o- souz* (quest and serach), *janoon-o Ishq* (love and excitement). The education of today must inculcate these qualities in human beings. The *Qalb-o Nazār* is a characteristic or quality of higher intellectual nature that enables us to look into the life of the things. It is an intellectual capacity not to take things on their face value but to look at the actual purposes of things. This intellectual insight can be learnt/developed through the medium of education. For a manager, teacher, engineer, social worker, this *potential* helps them to perform the activity to its perfection. *Janoon and Ishq* are the higher forces of motivation that lead or guide a person to put life and soul into the work. This intellectual potential along with the power of motivational force of *Ishq and Janoon* may perform miracle in this world. They may transform the forest into garden, pain into love, heat into coldness. Here are some of the examples from the poetry of Iqbal that endorses his claim:

ہیں تیرے تصرف میں یہ بادل یہ گھٹائیں
یہ گنبدِ افلاک، یہ خاموش فضا میں

The concept of perfect man delineated by Neitzsche is opposed to the *Kamil Man* of Iqbal. The perfect man of Iqbal is divinely inspired, sympathetic, loving and caring for other human beings. While on the other hand, the picture of ideal man is one who spreads terror, free of accountability and operate according to his her own free will. He is the product of biological forces not of the spiritual forces. The sketch of the ideal man (*Mardi Momin*) according to Iqbal is all round developed personality: God fearing, equipped with aesthetic taste, courageous, innovative, risk taker. He used the term of “*Faqr*” to describe the characteristics of the ideal person.

جو فقر ہوا تلخیِ دوراں کا گلہ مند
اس فقر میں باقی ہے ابھی بوئے گدائی

The concept of *Faqr* is different and opposed to the renunciation of activities of life. Renunciation is to give up the worldly things and to take refuge in the world of seclusion. But, in the eyes of Iqbal, it is

not a flight from the realities of world rather use of the world in a balanced, justified and appropriate way. It is not running after the worldly things without following any ethical principles. *Faqr* is the condition of self-satisfaction amidst worldly temptations. Iqbal has explained this concept using the metaphor of Falcon that flies high in the sky and knows no idleness; which is an active and courageous bird that earns its own food by its own labour. Iqbal thinks that the man of *Faqr* considers his personality and self-concept above each and every thing. He tries to preserve his personality on each and every cost. The man of this temperament cannot be tempted, subdued, purchased or defeated. It is this characteristic that makes an individual to do favour to others but he does not expect in return of it. It is not seclusion from the society and leading hermit life rather participation in life without becoming slave of them. The translation of one of the verses of Iqbal tells us that this universe is created for human beings, and human beings are not created for the universe. It stops us for running after the worldly things without any rational thinking such as gathering wealth, building houses without need, inordinate ambitions for power.

تو شب آفریدی چراغ آفریدم
سفال آفریدی ایغ آفریدم
بیابان و کہسار و راغ آفریدی
خیابان و گلزار و باغ آفریدم^۶

Iqbal divided knowledge into two branches: rational sciences and intuitive sciences. The rational sciences break the things into parts, try to understand them whereas the intuitive sciences look at the things as a whole. He does not agree with the views of some of the scholars that intuitive knowledge is obscure, incomprehensible and supernatural. The intuitive branch gives extraordinary weightage to eternal aspects of things. He also emphasizes on the importance of senses in getting knowledge. They are the gateways to perceive the things. The Quranic teachings lay repeated stress on the use of senses that may lead the individual to approach the reality.

“Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasp the reality in piecemeal, other grasp in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspects of reality. The one is present in enjoyment of the whole of reality, the other aims at traversing the whole by slowly specifying and closing up the various regions of the whole for exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual

rejuvenation. Both seek vision of the same reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their functions in life. In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellect”⁷

This universe is not haphazard phenomena rather perfectly organized. It is moving according to the set routine. It is logical, systematic and full of treasures. Human beings are not created for this universe rather this universe is created for them. It is useless to run after the things in the universe such as amassing wealth, sacrificing life for worldly objects. Everything that is created in the universe is for the benefit of mankind. It exists for human beings and human beings do not exist for it. It is the duty of human beings to conquer this Universe. This conquest means discovering the treasures that are buried under the earth and are scattered in the sky. Iqbal’s philosophical ideas about education are based on the teaching of Islam that does not tally with the teaching of Plato and other Greek philosophers. He does not agree with Plato that reality exists in the ideas and this world is the copy of it. As a result, Plato, the Greek philosopher, denies the importance of senses in getting knowledge. On the other hand, the Quran lays down great stress on use of senses that may lead us to know the truth and reality. In this field, the western nations have worked very hard and resultantly they have not only conquered the heights of the sky but also) the depths of sea. In this respect, Iqbal is not against the education of Science rather it is obligatory for every Muslim male and female to go for the conquest of this universe for the benefit of the mankind. In one of his lecture: he says:

“It is the lot of man to shape in the deeper inspiration of the universe around him and to shape his destiny as well as that of Universe, now by adjusting himself to himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own end and purposes. And in this process of progressive change God becomes co-worker with him, provided man takes initiative”⁸

Iqbal has criticized the western concept of education without developing the sense of humanism and morality. He is not against the scientific education, but the power gathered without any sense of morality is the destruction of the society. It has resulted and may result in destruction of society. (He emphasized that making religion as a personal affairs and setting it aside from the social, political and economic sphere of life is a big mistake on the part of Western education system/He criticized the Western Education System on declaring the religion a private affair and ousting it from the social, political and economic spheres of life). Education institutions are the factories of human engineering. They make a man really a man. They

shape and humanize the humans. The criticism on the Western education system is expressed in the following verses:

اور یہ اہل کلیسا کا نظام تعلیم
اک سازش ہے فقط دین و مروت کے خلاف^۹

Iqbal has presented very balanced views about the madrassa education. He has criticized the weaknesses of Madrassa System of Education and recognized its contributions for the Muslims of the sub-continent. He criticized the traditional and stagnant education system run by the theologians that lack the capacity to make adjustments with the pace of time. On the other hand, he criticized the unscrupulous changes in the western education system. Power of the western world does not springs from music or the naked dance of their daughters rather it lies in knowledge of arts and sciences. Iqbal also criticized the Madrassa education that is not developing the farsightedness, passion of continuous struggle, *Mard-e-Hur*, *Banda-e-Momin* like individuals in the society. He criticized the stagnant curriculum of Madrassa education system that really lacks the capacity to adjust itself with the changing realities of life. The problem of sectarianism is destroying the fabric of the Muslim society not only during the days of Iqbal but also for today. There is no distinction/alienation between religious and scientific education. They are the two sides of the same coin. To get knowledge of science and to discover the mysteries of this universe is also the responsibility of the Muslim scholar. But Iqbal complains against the deteriorating condition of the teachers and the system of education in Madrassa in the following verses:

گلا تو گھونٹ دیا اہل مدرسہ نے تیرا
پھر کہاں سے آئے صدا لا الہ الا اللہ^{۱۰}
ہے ازل سے ان غریبوں کے مقدر میں سجد
ان کی فطرت کا تقاضا ہے نماز بے قیام"
کر سکتی ہے بے معرکہ جینے کی تلافی
اے پیر حرم تیری مناجات سحر کیا"
وہ علم نہیں زہر ہے احرار کے حق میں
جس علم کا حاصل ہے جہاں میں دو کف جو^{۱۱}

حاصل کسی کامل سے یہ پوشیدہ ہنر کر
کہتے ہیں کہ شیشے کو بنا سکتے ہیں خارا^{۱۳}
ضمیر مغرب ہے تاجرانہ، ضمیر مشرق ہے راہبانہ
وہاں درگرگوں ہے لحظہ لحظہ یہاں بدلتا نہیں زمانہ^{۱۵}

The purpose of the creation of man is recognition of Allah and conquest of universe. On the way to the conquest of universe human beings do not follow the routine actions rather they go for the innovative actions. All the other creatures living on the planet earth have the capacity to follow the routine action only. Man is gifted with the force of action, appreciation and intelligence. The moons and the stars follow the routine activities whereas the being of this clay has the capabilities to go for fresh activities. These activities have transformed the deserts into garden, stone into gem, dark into light and lots of blessings for humanity. Man himself is the architect of his own destiny that is not the subject of stars or the operation of any other external factor/stars and zodaic signs don't control or rule it. It is not a defeatable or helpless creature who/which is/plays like a puppet in the hands of destiny. He states this fact in the following verses:

خبر نہیں کیا ہے نام اس کا خدا فریبی کہ خود فریبی
عمل سے فارغ ہوا مسلمان بنا کہ تقدیر کا بہانہ^{۱۶}
نشاں یہی ہے زمانے میں زندہ قوموں کا
کہ صبح و شام بدلتی ہیں ان کی تقدیریں^{۱۷}
مشرق سے ہو بیزار نہ مغرب سے حذر کر
فطرت کا اشارہ ہے کہ ہر شب کو سحر کر^{۱۸}
جس سے جگر لالہ میں ٹھنڈک ہو وہ شبنم
دریاؤں کے دل جس سے دہل جائیں وہ طوفان^{۱۹}
عبث ہے شکوہ تقدیر یزداں
تو خود تقدیر یزداں کیوں نہیں ہے؟^{۲۰}

غیرت ہے بڑی چیز جہان ننگ و دو میں
پہناتی ہے درویش کو تاج سردارا^{۲۱}
وہ مذہب مردان خود آگاہ و خدا مست
یہ مذہب مُلاً و جمادات و نباتات^{۲۲}
اے اہل نظر ذوق نظر خوب ہے لیکن
جو شے کی حقیقت کو نہ دیکھے وہ نظر کیا^{۲۳}
اس دور میں بھی مرد خدا کو ہے میسر
جو معجزہ پر بت کو بنا سکتا ہے رائی^{۲۴}
جو سختی منزل کو سامان سفر سمجھے
اے وائے تن آسانی! ناپید ہے وہ راہی^{۲۵}
کنار دریا خضر نے مجھ سے کہا بہ انداز مخرمانہ
سکندری ہو قلندری ہو یہ سب طریقے ہیں ساحرانہ^{۲۶}
ہر اک مقام سے آگے مقام ہے تیرا
حیات ذوق سفر کے سوا کچھ اور نہیں^{۲۷}
خون دل و جگر سے ہے سرمایہ حیات
فطرت، لہو ترنگ، ہے غافل! نہ، جل ترنگ^{۲۸}
یہ فیضان نظر تھا یا کہ مکتب کی کرامت تھی
سکھائے کس نے اسمعیل کو آدابِ فرزند^{۲۹}
تقدیر کے پابند ہیں نباتات و جمادات
مومن فقط احکام الہی کا ہے پابند^{۳۰}

Conclusions

From the above discussion, following conclusions may be drawn for the sound basis of the education system of Pakistan and likewise for the Muslim world.

1. The focus of the education system is the cognizance of ALLAH and development of the whole personality of child that may also

include the spiritual development. This spiritual development is not possible without including the philosophical basis of the nation. The philosophical basis lies in the ideology of Islam that may work as a bedrock of the education system. Power gained through education without the touch of morality will be destruction of the society.

2. Rational and intuitive knowledge is not opposite to each other rather they complement each other. They only vary in the methods of approaching reality. The targets and destination is the same.
3. The goal of education is not the slavish copying of reality rather reshaping, changing, adjusting and consequently creating reality that may lead to the benefits and prosperity of human race. It is only possible through scientific thinking and empirical knowledge. Islamic philosophy of life does support and inspires a person to conquer this Universe by using the power of senses and scientific method.
4. Vocational education has great significance according to the philosophy of Iqbal. The life of *perfect man* is not possible without economic independence. The self-actualization needs the availability of the basic needs of life.
5. Education system may inculcate the ideals in the minds and hearts of the people such as characteristics of *Faqr, Ishq, zuoq, shaheen, mardimomin*.

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