

TRANSFORMATION OF IQBAL'S
THOUGHTS FROM WESTERN
NATIONALIST TO PAN-ISLAMIC
PHILOSOPHER

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ABSTRACT

Dr Muhammad Iqbal's Philosophical approach revolves around psychology, ethics, politics and religion. During his young age nationalism attracted most of the Iqbal's attention among other modern concepts and ideologies. In his poetry, speeches and letters he often expressed his opinion about the non-territorial based nationalism, as some of the poems in Bang-i-Dara show him an Indian Nationalist, while his later poems particularly after the European invasion into the Muslim World and the Nationalist Movements in the Middle East have a very striking Pan-Islamic touch. His approach on this particular subject matter was completely different from his contemporaries like Abul Kalam Azad and Hussain Ahmad Madni. According to the initial thinking of Iqbal, he was of the view that Islam is a strong binding force which binds all the Muslims living in different parts of the world regardless of geographical and territorial separation. When Iqbal in his famous presidential address of 1930 demanded a separate territorial homeland for the Muslims of India, it gave the critics a chance to spread misunderstanding about his transformation from an ardent nationalist of Western type to a universalist of the Islamic pattern. In order to grasp the transformation of Iqbal's thoughts, a brief account of historical circumstances and his stay in Europe 1905-1908 is very important. During this time Iqbal eye witnessed the international turmoil in world politics when European Powers had been involved in intensive rivalry to fulfill their nationalistic ambitions.

For students of Philosophy and History, it is intellectually stimulating to know the causes and circumstances which led to the transformation of Iqbal's thoughts. The problem apparently seems to be complex but a thorough study of Iqbal's poetry and other writings and an objective examination of the circumstances leaves no doubts about his perceptions about Quranic concept of Muslim universalism, when he had consistently advocated the unity of Islam as a world phenomenon but after his tour to Europe his attitude crystallized and took a more tangible shape.¹ The period of Iqbal's philosophy towards nationalism can be divided into two phases, before 1905 and after 1908. During 1910 to 1923 Iqbal had not actively participated in the political affairs as he many times asserted that politics is not my cup of tea, but on the other hand his primary concentration had been on poetic and philosophic works. He wrote stirring poetry which created political and religious awakening among the Muslim communities.²

In the esteem of Nationalism Iqbal was also helped by the Turkish experience. The abolition of Khilafat particularly convinced Iqbal that, "Islam is neither Nationalism nor imperialism but a league of nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinction for facility and reference only. " There can be no denying that Iqbal's intellectual formulation of the idea of a separate Muslim state influenced largely the thinking of Jinnah which had consequently led to Pakistan while Iqbal abhorrently rejected European Nationalism which was based on Material considerations. Moreover it is a matter of great interest to realize Iqbal's bent of mind towards Persian writing during his stay in European. On one hand he is considered 'Spiritual Father' of Pakistan. On the other his message of Eastern revivalism placed him in the ranks of twentieth century's major intellectuals. In his times Iqbal was praised as much as Tagore in the level of intellectual capacities. A man himself neither wrong nor inconsistent in his ideologies, but there might be some situation or external circumstances which convert his inner self. This was happened with Iqbal which changed Iqbal's political and philosophical thoughts and outlook. Therefore Muslim Nationalism was a heartfelt desire of Iqbal to secure the unity of religion and stat in Islam.³

The initial phase of Iqbal's thought proved temporary and vanished after having seeing the European expansion and their highly destructive policies for the realization of their nationalistic ambitions. European powers in the name of 'Nationalism' were using their influences to increase their hegemony over the weakened nations. And the basic scheme of Western imperialism was to dismember the unity of the Muslim World by popularizing the ideology of 'Territorial Nationalism' among Muslim Countries. European antagonistic ambition to scatter the unity of Muslim *Ummah* through these tactics had disillusioned Iqbal. This was the transitional phase of Iqbal.⁴

Iqbal as an Ardent Nationalists

A man living in a country must shows his patriotism, affiliation and devotion with his country, same was the case with Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Iqbal too was very patriotic in his early phase of his life. During these days his poems in praise of Ram Chandra and Nanak and Ram Tirath are just tributes to religious teachers of their communities, as our Islam teaches to respect the creeds of other communities living in the same state. As a young poet, Iqbal had never taken any interest in the political affairs but many of those his poems show that he was an ardent supporter of nationalism and rejected territorial based nationalism which had often led to war and hatred among the human being belonging to different cultures and religions. In a poem *Tarana-i- Hindi* of this period he said,

"We are Indians and India is our motherland. "⁵ Between 1895 and 1905 he wrote poems in support of Indian Nationalism. He had made appeal for the union of different communities of India. He wanted to eradicate bigotry and fanaticism from India. He himself wrote,

"Very clearly from the writings of the European scholars I had come to know that the basic scheme of Western imperialism was to dismember the unity of the Muslim world by popularizing territorial nationalization among its various components".⁶ In his another poem, *Tasvir-i-Dard* Iqbal laments over the miserable condition of his countrymen and warns them about the danger ahead. Disunity among the various faction of the country tortures him he resolved this problem by putting the various religious groups in India in a string and denotes them like beads in rosary. In this stage of life Iqbal's perceptions largely resembled with the early political thoughts of Quaid-e-Azam. When Quaid-e-Azam was hailed as the ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity. Both leaders of the Indian-

Subcontinent were optimistic enough that by unity they can get rid from British rule in India.

Saare Jaban sa Acha ha Hindustan hamara

Hum bulbala ha is ka ya gulistan humara

Mazhab nabi sikhata apis ma ber rakna

Hindi ha hum watan ha Hindustan huamra

Younan-O-Misar Roman sab mit gaye jaban sa

*Ab tak mager ha baqi ha namonishan hamra.*⁷

Iqbal thus during these days was one of the preeminent Poet-Philosopher of the Subcontinent. The frequently used appellation as Poet-Philosopher is well deserved. Because his poetry and philosophy do not exist in isolation from each other both are deeply integrated with each other, rather his poetry serves as a vehicle for his philosophical approaches. It was during this period that he wrote many poems in support of Indian nationalism but side by side with this approach he has preceded the love for his religion and culture.⁸ Iqbal emphasized upon the unity of Muslim *Ummah* after having realized that European countries are jeopardizing the interests of Islam and Muslims. He said:

It is not only the unity of language culture or country or the identity of economic interest that constitutes the basic principles of one nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the universe, and participate in the same historical tradition that we are members of the Society founded by Prophet of Islam.⁹

He condemned the nationalism of the West as their territorial type of nationalism failed to appeal him. He found it unsatisfactory of deeper emotional and spiritual reason. He thus turned away from such concepts of nationalism. Loyalties to the nations have been replaced by the spiritual loyalties to the world of nation of Islam. He had gone to Europe as a nationalist and returned as an earnest Pan-Islamic.¹⁰ After his return to India he devoted himself for the true interpretation and message of Islam and the spiritual value for which it stood. Obviously it was Iqbal's love and passion for Islam as an ideal and sufficient for man's every want in this world and the world hereafter. His perspective was not limited to India, but had been extended to entire world of Islam.¹¹

The subsequent events compelled the Muslims to demand separate homeland for the Muslims of India. It was so, because maneuvering and manipulation of the Congress had transformed

their ideologies. Hence the demand for Pakistan was not made on the philosophy of hatred towards the Hindus but the Muslims wanted to safeguard their distinct Islamic culture and civilization and both communities failed to make a unanimous constitution, which would have been accepted for the minorities of India.¹²

Impacts of Prof. Arnold on Iqbal's Academic and Professional Life

Iqbal was largely impressed by Prof. Arnold as a student he had close association with him approximately for six years. During this period Iqbal attained country wide fame by his poems which he had presented in the annual sessions of Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam. Further Iqbal produced his first book in Urdu 'Political Economy' which was published in 1904. The dynamism and Persuasion behind this book was also Arnold. Prof Arnold made Iqbal realized to write this book.¹³ When Prof Arnold left India the best substitute for Prof. Arnold was no doubt Iqbal for the post of lectureship. It can be assumed that Prof. Arnold might have facilitated Iqbal in getting this job although Iqbal had good academic record but at that time too reference of an influential person for getting job might be needed. It was so because Prof. Arnold had been Dean of the Department of Philosophy in Government College Lahore, and Dean of the Oriental Faculty of Punjab University Lahore. It is undeniable fact that not only in academic but in professional life too Prof. Arnold paved the way to Iqbal and persuaded him to adopt teaching profession. Dr. Wahid Qureshi said, "Iqbal has appointed as Arabic reader in 1899 in Oriental College in the tutelary of his kind teacher Prof. Arnold. "So Prof. Arnold's motivation epitomized the courage of Iqbal's conviction."¹⁴

In Cambridge and London Iqbal was eager and highly spirited to keep him engage in scholarly discussion. He was also politely self-assertive. During 1907, in a picnic gathering in Cambridge in which apart from Iqbal every one was putting his arguments about the mystery of life and death. Iqbal kept himself silent, as many knowledgeable scholars were present. Meanwhile Prof. Arnold turned towards Iqbal and asked about the said theory. Iqbal said:

"Life is the beginning of death and death, the beginning of life".¹⁵

In June 1907, Prof Arnold informed that rare manuscript had been discovered in Germany that needed deciphering, that he considered Iqbal as the most appropriate scholar to examine the manuscript and convert into simple text, the conversation between

the student and teacher in their respective positions was as in these words:

Iqbal: You are my teacher and I am your student. What should I do?

Arnold: you are the right man for this responsible task. Sometimes a student excels his teacher, in your case the student will surpass his teacher.

Iqbal: As a teacher you know better than me, if this is your wish, I shall obey it.¹⁶

Iqbal's Close Association with his teachers Dr. J. M. E. McTaggart

Iqbal was greatly influenced by the teaching methods of Dr. J. M. E. McTaggart. As an obliged student Iqbal admired his teachers but side by side tried to find out mysteries that often came in his subconscious. He was absorbing new ideas which were antitheses of his earlier political philosophy.¹⁷ Iqbal did not borrow the philosophical system and definition of Western philosopher. He had used their techniques and methods of researches to make comparative analyses and study various phenomena of society and nature.

External Factors led to internal change.

Iqbal's poetry was direct response to his immediate circumstances. For Iqbal value of human life and against pacifism, materialism and expansionism. Idealization of European culture and civilization was now a nightmare for Iqbal. Since he has been an eye-witnessed of Western violence to shatter the unity of Muslim *Ummah*, just to break them in smaller units and to play with them as pawns. He explained the prevailed situation in these words in Babg-gDara II, a poem which he wrote between 1905-1907,

Iqam-e-Jahan Ma Raqabat To Isi Sa

Taskbeer Ha Maqsood Tijarat To Isi Sa

Khali Ha Sadaqat Sa Siyasat To Isi Sa

*Kamzor Ka Ghar Hota Ha Garat To Isi Sa*¹⁸

Another vital reason which has changed Iqbal's perceptions were the evil designs of Western powers against Middle East and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire which held suzerainty over these areas was in a state of complete decay and disintegration. Various territorial units of the empire under Western influence were imbibing a pattern of Western nationalism. Due to the backwardness, lack of religious education and stagnation the hold of Islam in the life of an

average Muslim was very weak and the Muslims in these areas were filling the vacuum by blind emulation of the West.¹⁹

Italy attack on Tripoli (1911) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) were a great setback for the Muslim world which had change their superior status and unity in the whole world. Consequently the Muslims of India too were deeply resented the policies of the British Government in the Middle East which had led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The main objective of this disintegration was to breakdown the strength of Muslim *Ummah* which in future they would be able to use as pawns in the game of European imperialism. Hence it is universally believed that Iqbal formulated his social, economic and political thought only after his first hand contact with Europe.²⁰ Iqbal has explained and largely condemned Western nationalism in these words:

Very early from the writings of European scholars, I had come know that the basic scheme of Western imperialism was to dismember the unity of Muslim world by popularizing territorial nationalism among its different parts. This kind of nationalism is poisonous for the modern civilization of man and it is particularly so in the case of Muslims because it is contrary to the fundamentals of their faith.²¹

Ro La Ab Dil Khol K Ai Dida'e Khoon'na Ba Baar
Wo Nazar Ata Ha Tabzibe Hijazi Ka Mazaar
Tha Jahan Hungama In Sebra Nashinno Ka Kabi
Behar Bazji Gha Tha Jin K Safeeno Ka Kabi
Zalzle Jin Sa ShabnShabo K Darbaro Ma Tha
*Bijliyo K Ashiyana Jin Ki Tahvaro Ma Tha*²²

It is also very important to discuss the historical circumstances to grasp fully the development of Iqbal's concepts of Muslim Nationalism or *Millat*. Muslims were entered into the Subcontinent as conquerors and scattered in different parts along with their specific culture and heritage. With the passage of time one dynasty changed by another bit after the death of great Mughal Emperor Aurengzeb, Muslims had to suffer due to the absent of an effective ruler. The whole of the Subcontinent was divided and subdivided into smaller states or independent units on behalf of titular authority of the King at Dehli. So the British fully exploited the differences and used for their own benefit. Hence Iqbal after considering historical facts tried to find out a prestigious place for the Muslims of India.²³

Islam as a complete code of conduct

Islam by nature cannot be merged with the other creed. It has its distinct social, economic, and political structure. As soon as it is amalgamated into another system, Islam is tarnished out of shape. In

view Iqbal there is no harm to create relationships with other religious communities, to praise their good things, writing patriotic songs, desiring freedom for the whole of India and the same time due rights for the Muslims of India. Iqbal after his voyage to Europe warned the Muslims Poet-Philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal has left a legacy to be followed by other scholars. His own reconciliatory approach between the West and Islamic World gave insight to make comprehensive comparative analyses.²⁴ He explained the concept of Muslim society in these words:

The point which I wish to stress is that Islam has a far deeper significance for us than merely religion. It has a peculiar national meaning so that our communal life is unthinkable without a firm grasp of the Islamic Principle. The Idea of Islam is, so to speak our eternal home or country in which we live, move and have our beings. To us it is above everything else as England is above all to the Englishman and 'Deutschland Uber Alles' to the German.²⁵

Throughout his stay in Europe Iqbal used to meet with the Western philosopher to discuss the matters pertaining to education and philosophy. This was the period when Muslim scholars were lagging behind in the field of education, but it was Iqbal who was invited by the Western philosopher to deliver lectures at Caxton Hall. After that he delivered a series of lectures in UK in which he highlighted the shortcoming of the western Culture which caught the attention of his many contemporary philosophers and statesmen.²⁶ To Iqbal Islamic moral values are dearer to him but these had been overshadowed by Western values and way of Islam. Iqbal got disillusioned during his stay in Europe when he saw their extremist approaches for Reason and Matter, while Eastern societies are more concerned with spirit and mysticism. But Iqbal belief was based upon harmony for these both realities.²⁷

Spirit of Change

There is universal acceptance of Iqbal's greatness as a poet and philosopher. The Western scene forced Iqbal to reconstruct his thought by coming face to face with a society which was different from his own society. But Iqbal remain rooted in Islam before and after his voyage to Europe, as he belonged to a religious family. But the Western interaction had been helpful for him in developing rational bases for his beliefs.²⁸

Iqbal was witness by the tragic event of World War I and the disaster through which the Muslims had to suffer. Iqbal as a leading exponent of Islamic thought and institutions believed in a

progressive spiritual universe and spiritual being with their distinct individualities realizing their destiny by mastering their environment under a universal structure founded on divine law and organization.²⁹ Allama Iqbal's personality has been nourished upon a concrete and well-integrated religious historic and Islamic culture and history was in his blood. But the irony of the situation is that the world in which he is living was antagonistic to whatever Islam stood for. Islam advocates freedom but Muslim *Ummah* was suffering from subjugation and deprivation from their basic rights. There was a sharp difference between what he believes and what is happening around him. In Europe he saw first time that the acceptance of Western Nationalism was the negation of Islamic values. As Islamic values cover all human territories that are free from race and language differences.³⁰ He said:

Islam is a principle of social action. So Islam itself accommodates nationalism. But its nationalism is not territory, race and linguistic nationalism it is free from these restrictions. As Islam accepts sovereignty of God not sovereignty of man. So Islam has no quarrel with International Nationalism.³¹

Mystical and Territorial Aspects of Nationalization.

The basic difference between Iqbal's Nationalism and other nationalism was that he has based his nationalism on religion rather than material and rivalry with other nationalists. It is much more spiritual and humanitarian type of nationalism which is far beyond from cruelty and territorial based nationalism.³² Nationalism became an ideology during nineteenth century although having all disadvantages it had been a potent factor in the political, social and religious affairs of the civilizations. It was surprising that it became a universal phenomenon but no one could define it comprehensively and its definition remained more or less elusive. Nationalism demands same loyalty and sacrifices perhaps more than religion as Herbert Luthy Said about nationalization,

Every Attempted definition of the 'Nation' and 'National Idea' or 'National feeling' ends in mysticism. It can only be expressed in images, and symbols, flags, myths, totems, folklores, cults, rites. Representing a sense of belonging to one collective body of individuals essentially different from individuals of any other collective body which is rationally inexpressible.³³

In Taza Khudao Ma Sab Sa Bara Watan Ha

*Jo Parhan IS Ka Ha Wo Mazahab Ka Kaffan ha*³⁴

Factors Weakening Muslim Nationalism.

After the upheaval of 1857, British Government settled their own political and educational system. Even the Europe benefitted from the Muslims endeavors. But the contemporary young man instead of endeavoring to make their own contribution, take pride in the achievement of their ancestors. Because national progress is a dynamic process. Among the political institutions which decisively weakened Muslim Nationalism in India was the Caliphate.

Ro La Ab Dil Khol K Ai DiDai KhonanaBa Baar

Wo Nazar Ata Ha Tahzib Hijazi Ka Miẓaar

Tha Jaban Hungama In Sebra Nashino ka Kabi

Kept in mind all these factors Allama Muhammad Iqbal has tried to mould Muslim thought. Infect national solidarity and the urge for mutual help distinguished man from animal. Qur'an has explicitly enunciate the doctrine of Muslim brotherhood, "*Innama al-Muminun akhawatu fasalhabu bayna a akhawiykum waataqu Allah-alkum tarhamun*",

The believers are but, a single brotherhood:

So make peace and reconciliation between your two contending brothers;

And fear God, that yet, May receive mercy.³⁵

The ideal of Muslim community as a universal brotherhood of believers depends upon their faith, but in real life the Muslims living in different countries persuade their cultural values rather than Islam, which is indeed a greatest binding factor to amalgamate multiple ethnic and linguistic groups into one *Ummah* of believers.³⁶

Today we have lost our national rights which ancestors gained with their blood. While the Islamic nations used to be the ruling nation, it is bereft of this sacred right. This is a day of tears and mourning for the Muslims brethren.³⁷

Jamaat ki Izzat Ma sab ki Izzat Ha

*Jamaat ki Zillat ma sab ki Zillat*³⁸

The thoughts of Iqbal were blending of East and West traditions. Because Western Philosophers themselves used to evaluate and study the philosophic systems of earlier Muslims. So to some extent the origin of their syntheses to some extent was Islam. As Islam itself is the origin of all social and medical sciences, all sources of knowledge have been originated from Quran. In Europe Iqbal found a pathway

to examine Eastern and Western thoughts to reach on a definite conclusion.

Apni Millat Par Qiyas Iqwan-e-Magrib Sa Na Ker

Khas Ha Tarkeeb Ma Qoum Rasool-e-Hashmi

In Ki Jma'at Ma Ha Mulke0o-NAsb Per Inhisar

Qoowat Mazhab Sa Mustabkam Ha Jamiyat Teri

DAmin-e-Din Hath Sa Choota to Janiyat Kaha

*Aur Jamiyat Hoi Rubsat To Millat Bi Gai.*³⁹

In Europe he found, that the idea of nationalism is inadequate to solve the problems of humanity. Atheism and secularism approaches of the Western culture along with the materialistic preferences awakened Iqbal to rethink about his earlier approach. Competition of man with another man and one nation with the other nation could not be the bases of his idealistic society. He composed following lines in 1907:

Oh residence of the earth God' earth is not your shop;

The gold which you are thinking to be genuine will now prove to be of low value;

Your civilization is going to commit suicide with her own dagger;

The nest which is made on a frail bought cannot but the insecure.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Nationalism in the light of Muslim thought is distinguished from Western political thought. If the word is used in Muslim Political thought it has entirely different meanings from what it means in the West. In Muslim thought it means universal oneness of the Muslims irrespective of geographical distances and racial disparities . At one stage of Islamic history it meant for both political and religious unity. According to him Islam is not merely a religion but a complete social order which has provided complete code of conduct through Quran and practical examples of Prophet (PBUH) and his followers. The demand of a separate state was an outcome of his philosophical approach that the Muslims belong to worldwide spiritual fraternity, and not on the philosophy of hatred towards the Hindus. The approach of Iqbal was positive in the demand of separate territory for the Muslims of India. It was a crowning achievement of his life, a practical vindication of his philosophy, the power and glory of God on this earth.

During initial phase of Iqbal's professional career it is no doubt that the role of Prof. Arnold had been dominant and quite convincing. If Iqbal did not get aspiration from his teacher he might not have been influenced by the Western Education. His urge for Western education brought him in Europe and here he saw the other side of the same coin. The change in Iqbal's outlook about the Western culture and civilization would have never been changed if he would not have seen it during his stay at Europe for three years. Western culture does not rely on social, moral and religious values. It is based upon expediency and materialism.

A new Iqbal emerged after 1908 with typically new dimension and enthusiasm. A teacher can transform a person's whole life, behavior and even a student's ideology. This is clearly evident from Iqbal's life and his aspiration which he got from his teacher who led him to Europe for advance studies. In the subsequent years a poet with new vision and zeal appeared in the political and social arena of the Indian Subcontinent. The ideology, outlook and way of thinking can be changed with the passage of time. Two factors are responsible for this change, first his experience which a man gets through the interaction with the outer world and, second the circumstances (political, social or domestic). Here Iqbal has resemblance with Jinnah's case in which for many years he had been advocating Hindu Muslim unity but Congress's policies of political maneuvering and atrocities during Congress rule led him to a new dimension. So it is a logical phenomenon that the various factors lead to inner change, as happened with Iqbal and Jinnah. Hence we can conclude that, Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a league of Muslim Nations. Iqbal has used the word *Ummah* and *Millat* to describe this concept.

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