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## UNITY OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

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### ABSTRACT

Islam wants to bring all humanity under the fundamental principles of Islam i.e. fraternity, equality and justice. It is possible when Muslims as followers of monotheism emerge as *millat* free from all ethnic, linguistic, territorial and sectarian differences. This *millat* is united by the fear of Allah and love for His messenger Muhammad (Peace be upon him). But today the Muslim world is divided into various territories, races and linguistic groups. Emphasizing need for Muslim unity Iqbal pointed out in his Presidential address in 1932, that peoples of Asia are bound to rise against the acquisitive economy the West has developed and imposed on the nations of the East. In view of the present state of the Muslim World, Iqbal suggests that for the present every Muslim nation must sink into her own deeper self. He endorses his view in his Presidential Address of 1930 that even the staunchest internationalist recognizes that without the fullest national autonomy it is extraordinarily difficult to create the international state. Iqbal says that Muslim world should learn to rise above all ethnic, sectarian and linguistic schisms till he reaches the level nothing short of humanity. This will be a model for the West to follow, and the Muslims will once again be the torch-bearers of those eternal and universal values which the world and humanity need today to live a life of mutual love, equality, justice.

Islam envisages a nation (millat) which is free from all ethnic, linguistic, territorial and sectarian differences. It envisages one single people which are united by the fear of Allah and love for His messenger Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and following one true religion which is Islamic monotheism. Its final goal is to bring all humanity under the fundamental principles of Islam which teaches fraternity, equality and justice and it is hoped that this ideal shall be achieved one day. However, the actual situation is the very reverse of it, for today the very Muslim world is divided into various territories, races and linguistic groups; i.e. the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks, etc. Not only this, the Muslims today have been divided into Sunnites, Ahl-i-Hadith, Ahl-i-Tashhi, and many other sects and sub-sects. It is pity that a religion which projects "tauhid" as its basic principle has been so divided and sub-divided, and are ready to wage war against each other any time, shedding the sacred blood of their brethren which has been strongly prohibited and condemned in Islam. This entails the very negation of "tauhid, which is the very spirit of Islam. Besides, the Muslim world is open to physical and cultural invasions from the non-Muslim world. It was in the light of this situation that Jamal-ud-Din Afghani advocated the concept of "Pan-Islamism" which unfortunately led to an unjust and unwarranted criticism in the West. One of the pioneers of this debate, Edward Thompson wrote to The Times, London (dated 03-10-1931) under the caption "Pan-Islamic Plotting", (quite an aggressive title), in which he expressed his misgivings regarding the term "Pan-Islamism" because he presented it as an intrigue against the Christian World, the centre of which was in Constantinople. The Muslims of the world were understood to be planning a kind of Union of all the Muslim States against the European States.<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of his departure for London to attend the Second Round Table Conference (17th September-December 31, 1931), Dr. Muhammad Iqbal gave an interview to The Bombay Chronicle in which he refuted the misgivings and fears of Thompson. Of Afghani Iqbal says, I do not know if he used the same expression, but he actually advised Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey to unite against the aggression of Europe. This was purely a defensive measure, .....<sup>2</sup> In this connection he refers to late Prof. Brown of the Cambridge University who has 'conclusively proved that Pan-Islamism in that sense never existed in Constantinople or anywhere else.'<sup>3</sup> Iqbal holds that there is another sense in which this term is in accordance with

the teachings of the Quran. In that sense, it is not a political project but a social experiment. Islam does not recognise caste or race or colour..... Pan-Islamism, thus interpreted, was taught by the Prophet and will live for ever. In this sense Pan- Islamism is only Pan-Humanism. In this sense, every Muslim is a Pan-Islamist and ought to be so<sup>4</sup> Iqbal rather suggests that, instead of Pan-Islamism, the term 'Islamism' is an expression which completely covers the meaning I have mentioned above<sup>5</sup> Here Iqbal has alluded to the last sermon of the Prophet (P.b.u.h.) which says in the simplest way, 'The Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab, and a non-Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam, and Adam was made of the dust of the earth.'<sup>6</sup> The above is the simplest and the greatest charter that humanity has ever conceived or received from any source.

The need for a unified Muslim World has always been very important, but it was perhaps, never so imperative as it is today. The Christian and Jewish world which once tried to subjugate Muslims through power, have now resorted to more sophisticated measures, i.e. social, economic and political measures. Iqbal had a deep, incisive insight that he pointed out in his Presidential address in 1932, 'The peoples of Asia are bound to rise against the acquisitive economy the West has developed and imposed on the nations of the East. Asia cannot comprehend modern Western capitalism with its undisciplined individualism.'<sup>7</sup> It is totally against the spirit of Islam which, Iqbal adds, recognises that worth of the individual, and disciplines him to give away his all to the service of God and man.'<sup>8</sup> Talking of the Islamic social and economic order he says that we are looking for a system where human society is founded not on the equality of stomachs but on the equality of spirits, where an Untouchable can marry the daughter of a king, where private ownership is a trust and where capital cannot be allowed to accumulate so as to dominate the real producer of wealth.'<sup>9</sup> Only such a set up can save the Muslims from the clutches of that harshly oppressive and exploiting economy which the West is out to impose on the Muslims with a view to subjugate them, and which every Muslim state is experiencing today through I.M.F. and the World Bank and such other agencies. But how to get rid of, and free ourselves from, such an oppressive situation which appears to be incorrigible and unshakable?

This is possible only through the unification of the Muslim World which is, at present, divided into ethnic, linguistic and political groups. In view of the present state of the Muslim World, Iqbal suggests that 'For the present every Muslim nation must sink into her

own deeper self, temporarily focus her vision on herself alone, until all are strong and powerful to form a living family of republics.<sup>10</sup> He endorses his view in his Presidential Address of 1930 that even the staunchest internationalist recognises that without the fullest national autonomy it is extraordinarily difficult to create the international state.<sup>11</sup> In his Lectures he emphasizes that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and for restricting the social horizon of its members.<sup>12</sup> Now, Iqbal's suggested programme may have a theoretical value, but it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, when practically considered. The Muslim World has bitterly faced the Iran-Iraq War which raged for eight years;<sup>13</sup> the Iraq-Kuwait War in early nineties in which the United States, with the consent of the U.N. Security Council, mercilessly attacked Iraq in order to crush her accumulated military prowess,<sup>14</sup> and the rest rest of the Muslim states had no option but just to look on. There has been a cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia for many years, and also a cold war between Pakistan and Afghanistan during the Daud regime (of course, maneuvered by India acting on their basic Hindu principle enmity with the immediate neighbour but friendship with her neighbour with a view to sandwich her). In the light of these terrible experiences, it is unthinkable that a Muslim state should independently fortify herself, using her own resources, before any confederation can be formed; for every time the West is there to play its role. However, we should not blame the West only for our ills and difficulties; for the leadership of the Muslim states is also to blame.

In my opinion, the greatest so far attempt to bring the Muslim World together was made at the Islamic Summits at Lahore<sup>15</sup> in which some very drastic decisions were taken which, if implemented, could have proved highly useful for the creation of the Muslim Block; but all went awry, unfortunately, due to the sinister role played by some of the members. All the decisions and resolutions made in camera were leaked to the Western masters, I am sorry to say, and the result was a complete massacre, starting with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia down to Idi Amin of Uganda. Of all that range of leadership, only Hafizul Asad of Syria, King Hussain of Jordan, Yaser Arafat of Palestine and, of course, President M. Qaddafi of Libya managed to survive the wrath of the West. Even Anwar-us-Sadat of Egypt, who helped in the Camp David talks and played a major role, could not save himself. I doubt that any such attempt shall ever be made in near future by the Muslim World rather they have been more estranged by the guile and cunning

(which they choose to call 'diplomacy) of the Western, nay, rather Jewish and Christian block. One big drawback is that the Muslim World yet lacks any permanent cohering body. Iqbal floated a stray, but very important idea, in his Urdu collection *Derb-I-Kaleem* (1936):

If Tehran were to be Geneva of the East, It perchance may alter the destiny of the World.<sup>16</sup>

Why Iqbal talked of Tehran in 1936 is difficult to understand, but he was, in fact, laying stress on the need for a permanent centre of the Muslim world. However, the Persians, under the inspiring leadership of Imaam Khomeini, have proved that they have the prowess and dare to face the West by humiliating the pride of one very big power. The Muslim world needs such a leadership today. When Imaam Khomeini led the Persians to salvation from the oppression and exploitation of the monarch and it was feared in the Western camp that he might become the leader of the Muslim world, the sectarian feeling was instilled and fanned in the Muslim world, including Pakistan. Thus, the Muslim leadership was forced to think again how to resolve this situation which is by no means irretrievable?

The above situation is the result of one-sidedness and a partial approach. As Iqbal has very rightly pointed out, the West is exclusively relying on empiricism and excessive rationalism which has given it unprecedented mastery over the physical world. The present situation has arisen because the West has totally ignored the spiritual and moral aspects of human life. The West is today proud of its empirical science and technology through which it aspires to control, not only this world, but the whole universe; but it has totally overlooked the spiritual side of life, the result being that the human element is completely put aside. The Western approach to the world problems, being one-sided and "selfish", it fails to offer a complete salvation for mankind; this salvation can be ensured only through a proper amalgamation of reason and intuition, the physical and the spiritual, without which no full vision of the real is thinkable. As Iqbal says in his Lectures:

'Vision without power does bring moral elevation but cannot give a lasting culture. Power without vision tends to become destructive and inhuman. Both must combine for the spiritual expansion of humanity.<sup>17</sup>

Now, it is in Islam that the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains,<sup>18</sup> "The ultimate reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity."<sup>19</sup> In the words of the Quran, 'He (Allah) is the First and the Last, the Manifest and

the Hidden.<sup>20</sup> Thus, only Islam can teach humanity a balanced unification of the spiritual and the physical which is the only remedy for the present-day ills. Thus, on the one hand, the Muslim world needs technologies to match with the West; but, on the other hand, and this is more important, it can teach humanity the most important moral principle of co-existence - i.e. living and letting others live at the same level - a principle which the West sadly lacks. Only this can blunt the aggressive stance of the West and mild them down to a level where they can live amicably with other, less privileged, nations simply on the basis of humanity. But this will be possible only after the Muslim states have acquired a matching technological skill and acumen themselves else the West is not going to pay heed to the admonition of the Muslims. So the Muslims should concentrate on this important aspect of life in order to make the West listen to them.

The history reveals that it was the Muslim scientists who taught the West science and technology centuries ago in the universities of Spain; and it is the Muslims again who can teach them ethical and moral principles of life today; but it will be possible only after we have acquired that knowledge ourselves and are able to make it alluring for the Western world. Of course, there are serious difficulties in this project, but it is not quite impossible, as some may think. If the Western scholars could go to the Spanish universities to learn empirical science and scientific method centuries ago,<sup>21</sup> why cannot they come to the Muslim seats of learning once again to acquire the knowledge of the immense significance of the spiritual aspects of life today? The West, I am sure, will come to the Muslim world to acquire insight in this field once it realizes its great significance. But, for this the Muslims will have to acquire knowledge in this field first. While talking of the ills of the present world Iqbal says, 'Humanity needs three things today - a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on spiritual basis.'<sup>22</sup> These are the basic teachings of the Quran and for them we shall have to delve deep into its meanings and spirit. The Western civilization, through its modern science has emphasized the materialistic aspect of Reality which has led to a haughty, proud and over-dominating attitude of the Western Big Powers. As a result, they are pursuing only one value, that is "Power" which that great German genius Nietzsche predicted in the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Today, the world is following the Nietzschean and the Machiavellian<sup>24</sup> philosophies which teach them nothing but a lesson of oppression, exploitation of many by man, and suppression

of all those ideas which are alien to the Western mind. However, we, the Muslims, have to teach them that materialism is not the only truth; that there is also a spiritual side which is more important, and has a more permanent and eternal significance. This only the Muslims can do who are the torch-bearers of the spiritual and moral values, which can save humanity from an imminent catastrophe and complete annihilation. But this will be possible after we have incited in the Western mind a need for such values; only then their scholars will throng to our seats of learning as they did centuries ago in the universities of Spain. It was the Muslims who could deliver goods then, and it is again the Muslims who can deliver goods today, as no other nation is bearer of such eternal and universal values as we, the bearers of the Quran. Iqbal says in his *Darb-i-Kaleem* (The Rod of Moses, 1936).

'Delve deep into the Quran, O Muslim. Allah may bestow on you the earnestness of character.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Iqbal has enjoined on the Muslims to acquire the "purest" knowledge of the Quran, moulding his conduct, individual and collective, accordingly; to conduct all his affairs in the light of that teaching. He should learn to rise above all ethnic, sectarian and linguistic schisms till he reaches the level nothing short of humanity. This will be a model for the West to follow, and the Muslims will once again be the torch-bearers of those eternal and universal values which the world and humanity need today to live a life of mutual love, equality, justice in short, a life "drenched" deep in 'tauhid' which is fundamental principle of Islam. This will be great revolution in the life of mankind which it has been searching for centuries, and which Islam laid down over fourteen centuries ago. It is, no doubt, a very difficult project requiring pains-taking labour, patient perseverance and tolerance, and may take decades to implement it; but this is the main task assigned to a Muslim by the Quran and is, therefore, his bounden duty to fulfil it however tedious and painful.

## Notes and References

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- <sup>1</sup> Dar B.A. (ed.), *Letters and Writings of Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy, Karachi, 1967, p. 56.
  - <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-56
  - <sup>6</sup> The last sermon of the Holy Prophet (P.b.u.h.) which was delivered on March 7,632 A.D.

- <sup>7</sup> Wahid S. Abdul, (ed.), *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, Iqbal's Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim Conference at Lahore on 21st, March 1932, Sh. Ashraf, rep., Lahore, 1973, p. 212.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 213.
- <sup>10</sup> Iqbal Dr. Muhammad, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Sh. Ashraf, rep., Lahore, 1977, p. 159.
- <sup>11</sup> Op. cit. *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, p. 170.
- <sup>12</sup> Op. cit. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 159.
- <sup>13</sup> The Iran-Iraq War was fought between 1980-1988.
- <sup>14</sup> Iraq attacked Kuwait on August 2, 1990 and the forces of the United States attacked Iraq on January 17, 1991.
- <sup>15</sup> The four-day Islamic Summits were held in February, 1974 at Lahore in which over 40 Islamic countries participated.
- <sup>16</sup> Ahsan Brothers, rep., Lahore, 1959, p. 149. (Eng. tr. my own).
- <sup>17</sup> Op. cit. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 92.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 154.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 155.
- <sup>20</sup> The Quran, LVII: 3.
- <sup>21</sup> Briffault Robert, *The Making of Humanity*, George Allan & Unwin, London, 1919, rep., 1928, p. 188ff. E.g., he writes, 'For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory-natural science and the scientific spirit', p. 190.
- <sup>22</sup> Op. cit. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 179.
- <sup>23</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), renowned German thinker who wrote Thus Spake Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil. He was known for his concept of Superman.
- <sup>24</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli (1467 1527), an Italian Statesman and Political Philosopher.
- <sup>25</sup> Op. cit. *Darb-i-Kaleem*, poem, "Russian Communism", p. 138. (Eng. tr. my own).