DECOLONIZATION AND SELFHOOD: COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS ON IQBAL'S *KHUDI* AND FANON'S REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

Ammar Junaid Asghar /Professor Furrukh Khan

ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on the intellectual contributions of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Frantz Fanon in addressing the psychological, political, and social ramifications of colonialism. Through a comparative lens, the study examines Iqbal's *Shikwa-Jawab-e-Shikwa* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, focusing on their shared concern with decolonization and the awakening of the colonized subject. Both thinkers provide nuanced critiques of colonial exploitation, yet they diverge in their frameworks for emancipation—Fanon through Marxist revolutionary violence and Iqbal through the spiritual and philosophical concept of *khudi* (selfhood). The paper explores themes such as identity, the role of violence, pan-nationalism, and the colonization of the mind, positioning both thinkers within the broader discourse of anti-colonial thought. Ultimately, this analysis highlights how both Iqbal and Fanon offer distinct yet interconnected paths toward liberation, grounded in the specific historical and cultural contexts they navigated.

Iqbal represents a complex human entity. In his mortal frame, we find an assemblage of a philosopher, a poet, a reformer, a jurist, a politician and a leader. His poetry has no territorial limitations in view of being deeply inspiring and extremely spiritual. Throughout his all compilations of poetry, his focus was on awakening of the human consciousness and revitalizing of one's inner self. This fact appealed to everyone irrespective of religion, colour, language and creed.

Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal is in some sense South Asia's most perennial poet. Pakistan claims him as its national poet, many Indians claims him as their very own, observed vividly in the passion with which "Saarayjahansaiacha, Hindustan hamara" is sung on national holidays. Even the Iranians attribute his poetry to the wondrous wordplay that Farsi offers to poets. Writing in the 20th century, his poetry traverses between questions of Muslim nationalism, colonialism and its discontents, and perhaps most well-known, his philosophical ventures into the predicaments of an increasingly fragmented Muslim self-identity. 'Shikwa- Jawab-e-Shikwa' are possibly two of his most beloved nazms, incorporating a wide range of philosophical, psychoanalytic, theological and political questions that are worthy of academic attention when contextualizing the various responses to colonialism in the twentieth century. One such response is byFrantz Fanon, a Francophone academic who discusses at length both the ramifications of the colonial project on the colonial subject, but also much like Iqbal, provides his own theoretical framework for 'decolonization' in his magnum opus, 'The Wretched of the Earth'. Despite the different frame of references and the obviously variant inspirations they take, I will argue in this paper how the modalities of the colonial experience and decolonization are observed as focal points in the works of both authors, and it is hence fruitful to analyze them in conjunction. Particularly, I will deconstruct Iqbal's 'Shikwa-Jawab-e-Shikwa' as a manifestation of the frustrations of the colonial subject, and pinpoint questions of pan-identity as a responsive mechanism, and the colonization of the mind and erasure of these modes of identities. Furthermore, I will also look at violence and non-violence as the agents of change and finally, analyze the concept of 'khudi'as the quintessential tool of

emancipation, linking these ideals with Fanon's own 'Wretched of the Earth' and his specific answers to these pertinent questions that are posited against the colonized subaltern.

The question of emancipatory politics and the necessary conditions and actions required for it to happen is at the heart of Fanon's work, seen most vividly in his borrowing of Marxist ideas of class-based struggle and the liberation of the proletariat not just from the colonial French power that oppresses the colonized, but also from the inevitability of the 'petit bourgeoisie' hijacking the decolonizing movement and its goals (Fhunsu and France 9). This Marxist framework also means that the concept of pan identity he endeavors to, is very much in line with the politics of Trotsky and Lenin. Emancipation is hence defined as freedom of the African proletariat from the shackles of not just French colonialism, but rather from the entire structure of capitalism that facilitates it, benefits the local bourgeoisie and essentially perpetuates violence against the colonized. This is where Fanondiffers from prior idealization of pan-Africanism which laid its foundations in "African-ness" and a universal African culture, with market features of nature, tribal faiths and rituals, and rather constructs this pan-African spirit through the lens of class politics (Young 147). The idea of transcending the temporal and spatial boundaries of the nation-state for any revolutionary struggle is not a unique idea. For Iqbal, the framework in very much in line with a lamentation of Western and colonial values and a need for Islamization of the collective. This 'pan-Islamism' occupies a unique place in the Jawab-e-Shikwa; the greatest testimony to its paramount importance is contained within the fact, that it is part of the answer that God gives to the cries of the disgruntled Muslim. He writes, "Somehow you are Sayyids, you are Mirzas too, Afghans too- You appear to be everything, but are you Muslims too?" (Pritchett). This necessary critique of internal divisions within the colonized subjects is particularly interesting; any solution to seek reconciliation and successfully decolonize requires the colonized to unite on the very basis of their identity, and it is only then, they can forge a path towards emancipation. For Iqbal, the basis of this collective consciousness is Islam, whilst for Fanonit is the united front of the African proletariat.

Yet, Iqbal, is not ignorant of the concerns of class, and is multi-faceted in his diagnosis of where any potentiality of change lied within the status quo; the Muslim proletariat can vanquish the totalitarian tendency of Western materialism. Again, he writes in

the 'Jawab', "The rich in their heed of wealth are useless to us- the pure community is alive through the poor" (Pritchett). Furthermore, Iqbalianthought regarding pan-Islamism has been vivaciously seen in his politics; he supported the Khilafat Movement and saw it as a specific response to the Muslim struggle against colonialism. But whilst both thinkers have grand ideas about the eventual emancipation, their framework in achieving tangible and immediate change is very much located within the limited space of a nation-state. Fanon was an integral part of the FLN for the nationalist struggle of liberation in Algeria, supporting the popular uprising against the French. He promotes 'national consciousness of the proletariat (Fanon 156) rather than 'nationalism' in its essential form, yet the process that he charts requires the formation of not only the postcolonial state, but also using it as a springboard for creating a government of the people and achieving egalitarianism (Sajed and Seidel 587). This reconciliation of pan-identity and immediate autonomy is also a marked feature of Iqbal's own evolution of political thought; asking for separate Muslim electorates and eventually for a Muslim state was only posited because the Muslim nation-state would serve as a trans-Muslim space for Muslim unity, and as a space for bringing political Islam into fruition (Mujahid 31). Hence, the struggles of pan-identity in contrast with European nationalism remains at the forefront of constructing a decolonizing process for both the thinkers.

Colonialism is of course not limited to the political and social avenues of exploitation, it has been explored at great length how the ideology of 'otherization' has consequences beyond political mobilization; the very consciousness is altered to the largest extent. Fanonargues for the versatility that accompanies the colonial project, to the extent that it alters the consciousness of the African colonial subject where he or she internalizes the notion of them as an 'inferior' race and accept the colonial premise of an inherent inferiority of affiliation with Africa (Marriott 168). Western 'rationality' hence becomes the relentless ideal for the colonized subject to reach, and remains simultaneously inaccessible because of how the African is placed as a subject in the first place. For Iqbalthe manifested reality of colonialism develops in a comparable albeit distinct way. He acknowledges how the 'dazzle' of European individualism and freedom places the Muslim in a quandary; embracing the 'dazzle' is an attractive proposition yet it displaces them from the elements of Islam. Much like Fanon, it leaves them in fragmented state where the 'push' from traditional thought and

'pull' from the West acts a catalyst of a new type of identification; the incomplete Muslim (Sevea 1378). In 'Jawab',Iqbal lambasts the thought processes induced by the colonizer, criticizing the pleasure-seeking and docile attitudes of the Muslim in becoming passive to the array of the problems that the Muslim collective or the 'Ummah' faces. Interestingly, and taking a different tangent to Fanon's perspective on collective exploitation; Iqbal seeks to invigorate Muslim consciousness through going back in history. He describes at length the bravery of H.Ali and the indestructible love of Majnunto add the element of 'pathos' and wishes to inspire the lost Muslim to find his or her way through the path of their ancestors (Pritchett). This is important because it not only contextualizes an 'Islamic consciousness' in opposition to the materialistic and selfish desires of the West, but also gives room to self-discovery and exploration as means to emancipation from the colonization of the mind. So whilst Fanon crucially paints the picture of the emasculated African and transfixes their struggle in their socioeconomic exploitation, it limits their agency only to a class uprising and revolutionary struggle (Marriott 168), isolating it from more intimate questions of belief and self-discovery as means to weaken the effect of the European modality if not to make it completely redundant. By going back to Islamic historicity, Iqbalquestions the very basis of the split between European dualism and Eastern religiosity, reconciling the inadvertent query by locating it within wider Islamic thought and action (Sevea 1385) and offering this misrain the 'Jawab'to illustrate this reconciliation, "Wisdom is your shield, passion is your sword" (Pritchett).

Yet, the theoretical frameworks of both Iqbal and Fanon not only dissect the discontent facing the colonized consciousness but also provide remedies to the desired course of action that must be simultaneously taken to achieve any form of emancipation. Of course, the questions of emancipation remain grounded in sociopolitical concerns, raising the age-old question: is violence of any utility and perhaps more critically, is taking up arms even justified against a regime that propagates the same mechanism of oppression? Can violent reaction break the cyclical nature of oppression, and if it can, how does the disjointed subject possibly fathom to go about this? It is on this question that Iqbal and Fanon opt for different paths to their discourse which is in turn predicated upon their political thought. Fanon is inspired heavily from Marxist ideals on the violent vanguard revolution that is deemed necessary by Marx himself, who saw it akin to the role of a midwife in birthing the socialist state (Arendt 274). However, Fanon's

discourse on violence incorporates a further tangent, in what he deems as 'therapeutic violence'. Here the argument differs from justifying violence as merely self-defense; quite on the contrary, the colonized consciousness has internalized violence, and it is only through violent 'performances' (Kebede 539) that the colonized subject can regain their consciousness. This is because it is imperative for the colonized subject to form their consciousness outside of the normative and discursive ideals that were imposed by the colonizers, with far reaching consequences of altering the mind of the colonized. Contextualized within Marxist and psychoanalytic thought, Fanon promotes this collective violence as means to an end, and raises important considerations of how this violence needs to manifest itself. It can only be a collective response, and most pertinently, must not be hijacked by the 'national bourgeoisie' for their vested interests lie firmly in gaining access to power within the post-colonial state, and not of regaining lost African consciousness (Fanon 100).

In the pursuit of answering the same questions, Iqbal's 'Shikwa' and 'Jawab-e-Shikwa' discusses at length the problem of violence. And whilst a number of shayrspaint distinctively violent imagery affiliated with fighting the shackles of oppression, it is only in the 'Jawab' that the description of violence takes more nuance and the colonized subject is asked to seek meaning and purpose elsewhere. Beginning with the points raised in the 'Shikwa', in whichthe colonized and disgruntled Muslim complains to God, there are a number of references to medieval Islamic conquests and the power of the 'sword'. Again, one can see the importance of historicity in portraying the parallels between the 'glorious' past and the 'pitiful' present. In 'Shikwa', Iqbal argues, "The strength of the Muslim's arm did Your (God's) work!" (Pritchett). The strength of the Muslim's arm or "qouwat-e-bazoo-e-Muslim" is used to evoke the necessarily violent struggle of the medieval Muslim warrior, fighting for God's name and hence, for their own emancipation from worldly struggle. Unlike Fanon's cathartic violence, Iqbal's imagery of violence is overtly religious but at the same time points towards similar predicaments of achieving emancipation through the 'sword', and the lamentation of the disgruntled Muslim is very much seen in the failure to achieve emancipation through violent struggle in Iqbal's status quo. Interestingly, seeing violent conquest in its desired effect of material emancipation is precisely what 'the 'Jawab' vehemently rejects, instead locating violence and struggle within wider ideas of self-enlightenment or 'khudi' as will be discussed soon.

Answering directly the complaint of the disgruntled Muslim, Iqbal replies in the 'Jawab', "Yes, they were your ancestors, but who are you" (Pritchett). Hence, Iqbal points towards the failure of the present Muslim in conflating past Muslim conquerors, who struggled merely to evoke God's name with the absence of any selfish interests, with the struggles of the present Muslim. The present Muslim is deemed inadequate in their struggle, for it is seen as either to be contingent upon immediate emancipation from the colonizer, or future gratification, particularly in the selfishly placed desire in the "Houris" of Paradise. As Fanon constructs his imagined "therapeutic violence" as essentially narcissistic to reinvigorate African consciousness, the same ideals are lambasted in the Muslim collective. Yet the Muslim "Ummah" is evoked nevertheless, and again violence is criticized, in this instance, for causing divisions within the "Ummah", pointing towards the tendency of the colonized to resort to creating enemies within themselves (Qazi). Here one can argue for similarities between the two thinkers in relaying the concern of violence as part of the colonizer's agenda of 'divide and rule'. But similarities remain limited to this, as the imagery in 'Jawab' clearly places violence as contingent not just upon sociopolitical concerns but also in the religious ethic that accompanies this violence. On this crucial question, the concept of 'khudi' emerges as a mechanism of the 'self', and qualifies emancipation through a vastly different lens compared to Fanon's politics of the African proletariat.

In its essence, 'khudi' is a tremendously creative philosophy. It questions the very basis of power structures as the mode of oppression and emancipation, and rather relegates the 'self' to similar if not the same autonomy of creating discourse and exercising agency. The 'self' for Iqbal is the major locus of action, and it is only through purifying the 'self' that one can achieve true emancipation. But it is the colonial background that influences Iqbal and the transcendence of the 'self' is located within questions of what it means to be a colonized subject. Hence, 'khudi' becomes an anti-colonial praxis within itself, pointing towards the need of the 'self' to struggle, but crucially struggle for Divine Love as a relentless ideal, simultaneously lifting the ego from the cage of materialism to a visibly transcendent being (Zainub 3). The pathway towards 'khudi' is intricate, and requires self-discipline; noticeably from the ravages of the colonizer's materialism, but also from the conflation of the ego with pride, which is exactly what the 'Jawab'rejects in the cries of the disgruntled Muslim. Reconciliation is sought between the mystical isolation of the Sufi and the heroic

conquests of the 'mujahid' (Zainub 7), yet the key remains contingent upon the 'self' and its ability to explore itself in relation to the Muslim collective. Synthesizing the concept of 'khudi' remains an exercise in opposition to the colonizer. Whilst Fanon's discourse remains located within the collective, by articulating 'khudi', Western individualism is directly contrasted with the ethereal 'self', which serves as an important gateway to eventual mobilization of the Muslim 'Ummah' against the colonizer and energizing the Muslim consciousness towards emancipation. Through this blend of faith and self-introspection, the concluding 'misra' of the 'Jawab' masterfully sums up transcendence and the limitless potential of the transcendent subject as, "What is this World? The decrees of destiny are yours!" (Pritchett).

The 20th century remains a critical junction in history with major world events profoundly altering the course of the human endeavor. It was in the 20th century that the very morality of the colonial project was rejected by many, partly due to the colonized articulating the multifaceted experience of being colonized, discarding European idealism and synthesizing new discourses. Both Iqbal andFanon contribute tremendously to voice the concerns of the colonized subject, and it is in their widely different approaches in answering the same questions of the fragmented community, that one finds answers. Iqbal keeps Islamicate tradition close by, and Fanon borrows heavily from his Marxist predecessors. Yet, Iqbal's 'khudi'and Fanon's 'revolutionary consciousness' are products of the times and spaces they occupied, and it is through these unique frameworks that the colonized subject is imagined. It is for this reason that despite the years and kilometers that separate the two thinkers, the Global South remembers them as valiant intellectuals with a penchant for changing the world.

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