

Critical Reflections on Western Democracy in Alama Iqbal's Thought

Sameer Ahmad Khanday¹

Sheikh Shazia Mehboob²

Email: Khandaysameer9@gmail.com

Abstract

Discourse on the nature and character of Islamic polity has generated a good amount of scholarly attention and has become one of the most contested debates both with Muslim and Western scholarship. The political linchpins of western liberal democracy including secularism, sovereignty and justice has often been criticized by Islamic scholars as infallible ideas; subject to human errors. Although the Muslim genealogy of critique of western democracy is as old as the concept of Western democracy itself, the present paper is an attempt to investigate political Islam and Western democracy in the light of Allama Iqbal, whose philosophical treatment, poetical style, and political interpretation of Islam mixed with little mysticism, has generated a critical debate on the character of political Islam and Western democracy. This political character of Islam, which has itself been subject to several contested interpretations, contrasts with Western version of democracy in several ways. Iqbal, as such vehemently criticized Western democracy by seeing the nature of advancement of modern civilization tested in the light of European knowledge and he was convinced that in the future world it was only the Islamic polity capable of absorbing all the cultures and societies of the world with due regard to local traditions and value systems. Moreover, to Iqbal the purpose of Islam is directed to build a highly civilized society wherein liberty of individual is not only nourished but maintained, preserved and internalized. For realization of this aim, Iqbal believed, state plays pivotal role. But at the same, he was neither satisfied with the pattern of European states nor he was glad with the totalitarian regimen states; controlling human societies of other parts of the globe. It is against this backdrop; present paper aims to visualise the extent of conflict and compatibility between Islamic polity and Western democracy in Iqbal's political discourse. The paper further explores the role of Allama Iqbal in formulating theocratic system on the basis of Quran. Also, it attempts to analyse how Iqbal considered Quran not only as a "legal code", but also the "primary source" of Islamic Law whose purpose is "to awaken in man the Higher consciousness" of his relation "with God and the Universe". As the states help in realization of human ideals "the Qur'an considers it necessary to unite religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation much in the same way as Plato does in his Republic".

Key words: Iqbal, Mystic, Islamic Law, Pivotal, Quran, Democracy, Revelation

Introduction

Democracy traces its lineage to the city states of Greece such as Classical Athens. With state undergoing radical transformations, democracy also evolved on rather gradual lines. In the modern sense, inspired by the idea of liberty, equality, and fraternity in revulsion against the inequalities of the French class society, the democratic republican states came to the fore in the post French

¹ Author is a Research Scholar in Political Science at Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

² Author is a Research Scholar in Political Science at University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

Revolution France.¹ Then, the same ideals travelled across the Europe. The popular sovereignty coupled with a divorce between state, and church was stressed as the cardinal principles. Monarchies, and other such systems ruling the roost singlehandedly were demonized, and belief in human liberty, and judgment was passionately upheld. The quest for more and more political emancipation ended up in the ‘Universal Adult Franchise’, the ornament of the contemporary democracy.²

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal fondly called Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) was a renowned poet, and the Muslim thinker of the sub-continent. The enviable place he catapulted to at the apex of human thought points vividly to his sublime stature. Whereas Allama is chiefly referred to as a poet extraordinaire, his thought underlying his poetic genre puts him on a par with some of the finest Muslim sages. As a matter of fact, his poetry, and philosophy complement each other. Dr Iqbal is affectionately hailed as Muffakir-e-Pakistan (architect of Pakistan), Shair-e-Mashriq (The Poet of the East), and Hakeem-ul-Ummat (The Sage of Ummah). Allama Muhammad Iqbal assumed on himself the mammoth task of the Muslims’ salvation from the monster let loose in the west in the form of trio: democracy, nationalism, and imperialism. Having drunk in profoundly the corpus of the western, and eastern philosophies, he began to pick apart the contemporary western civilization, and its various offshoots dubbing them rotten to their very core.³ He came squarely out in condemnation of the socio-political, and economic institutions of the west fashioned out of a civilization which was barren of an ethical, and spiritual foundation. He contented with his conviction that the Muslims would be doomed to disaster if they persisted in blinding aping the alien ways. He was very much perturbed to see his coreligionists bask in emulating the western civilization. Democracy was one of those ideals which had left a deep impression in the Muslim world. Iqbal studied democracy in good depth, and having dissected it, took to apprising the Muslims no to be fallen for this cult, as it was a hoax, and nothing else.⁴

Conceptualising Democracy in Islam

The relationship between Islam and democracy has long been a contested debate within Muslim scholarship as Islam has itself been subject to multiple interpretation, resulted in either complementary or contradictory relation between the two.⁵ Within the Muslim world, Islamic thinkers who believe that Islam and democracy are incompatible, generally argue on the Islamic concept of absolute sovereignty of Allah which is antithetical to the notion of popular sovereignty upon which the foundation of modern democracy rests. The principle of Allah being the supreme authority specified in Islam has only one and no other aim that only Allah’s writ must run the world.⁶ The other argument, among many others, is that democracy contradicts with the very notion of *tawheed* (God’s oneness), as democracy allows people to legislate which otherwise is the sole domain of God. Developing his argument on similar lines, Ayman Al- Zawahiri equated democracy with *shirk* (*Idolatry*) because it shifts the right to legislation from the hands of God to those of people. As a result, he considers members of parliaments idols, and those who elect them perpetrators in *shirk*.⁷ Kalim Siddiqui (1931-1996), a Pakistani British Islamic scholar, defined democracy as an ideology of political unbelief. To him, “the great political *kufir* (unbelief) of the modern world is nationalism, followed closely by democracy (sovereignty of the people), socialism

(dictatorship of the proletariat), capitalism and ‘free will.’ All political systems based on one or more of these ideas, emotions or philosophies are part and parcel of *kufr*.⁸

In fine, one side of the Islam-democracy debate on theological grounds presents a contradictory relation between Islam and democracy without any possible intersection. The above formulation, if accepted, is criticised on two main grounds. 1) Since Islamic law is thought to discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims and deny gender equality in certain cases, it doesn't provide equality which is the hallmark of any democracy, and 2) It denies the right of the governed to make their laws, and is thus against the basic principles of democracy. Injuncting these points of criticism, the very notion of Islamic democracy thus becomes a “self-contradiction.” Thus, the whole discussion on religion-democracy tension hinges on key issues: who is sovereign in political sense (God, Parliament or head of the state?).⁹

Several post-Islamists have sought to answer the question by developing alternative explanation to key Islamic concepts through new hermeneutic approach to Quranic text. According to modernist scholar, Fazlur Rahman, the Quranic verses on which Mawdudi based his notion of sovereignty, in reality, refer to the “rule of Allah in the heavens and the earth.”(35:5) Such verses convey the meaning of God's general power over the entire creation as creator, sustainer, guide and judge, but have nothing to do with specific concept of political sovereignty which is, indeed, a modern growth.”¹⁰ The concept of political sovereignty, according to Rahman's view refers to a “coercive power to ensure obedience to its laws.” Since God doesn't exercise coercive power over people, it is wrong to attribute the notion of political sovereignty to Him. Rachid Ghannouchi, the forerunner of post-Islamists, explains that *hakimiyat* (Divine Sovereignty), as he understands it “doesn't mean that God constantly intervenes in running the affairs of humans on the earth. He merely provides them with broad guidelines to help them to make the right choices. The exercise of *hakimiyat* is therefore a human endeavour that involves interpreting divine guidelines and coming up with a new *Ijtihad* whenever necessary.”¹¹ The entire debate on the sovereignty of God, therefore, loses its relevance in the post- Islamism discussion and hence provides a good compatibility between Islam and democracy. The other institutional arrangements and respect for democratic ideals of liberty, equality and justice in Islam further cements the harmony between Islam and democracy.

Iqbal's Political Philosophy and Concept of State

In politics the art of government and the political affairs of life are discussed. But in the political philosophy all conceptual matters which govern the basics of state affairs including the government, legislature, judicial, and matters of law are focussed. Though Allama Iqbal has not gone into the details of politics and the concept of state, yet he touched the fundamental concepts of these aspects forming part of his political philosophy. The role of state in general and problem of legislation or evolving new laws in the light of Islamic philosophy are mentioned in general in his poetry, but seriously in his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.¹² Apart from this general description of the role of any Muslim state in the world of Islam, Iqbal has discussed in detail the demand, purpose and functioning of the Muslim state in South Asia not only in his famous Allahabad Presidential Address to 21st session of the All-India Muslim League (hereafter AIML) held on 29-30 December 1930, but in various speeches, interviews, letters, poetry and statements to the press

discussed in this article.¹³ Basic concern for Iqbal was how to revive Islam in the modern world? In this approach Iqbal was motivated not by any religious animosity towards other religions, but seeing the nature of advancement of modern civilization tested in the light of European knowledge he was convinced that in the future world it was only the Islamic polity capable of absorbing all the cultures and societies of the world with due regard to local traditions, ethics, needs and aspirations of humanity. The affairs of state and government could be best conducted to the entire satisfaction of humanity and without any sense of exploitation of poor by the rich nations if the men at the helm of state affairs exercise their authority keeping in view the conditions laid down in the Islamic Sharia. Iqbal was against the view that Islamic law was primarily stationary though he agreed that for the last five hundred years the Islamic law has not advanced. Originally, he believed, Islam stresses the progress of humanity which could not be realised without a process of change and continuity. The original idea of the dominance of the greatest reality of the self of God continues to dominate in the spiritual sense, but the exterior form of humanity continues to subscribe to the phenomenon of change stipulated by the natural forces exhibited in various parts of the globe and through the turn of times. At the same the basic spirit continues to live through all changes. In order to make the process of law a living organ of the Muslim state, Iqbal touched the basic sources of law from a new angle. His philosophical explanations of Qur'ān, Hadith, Ijma and Qiyas are a great contribution to the political and basic philosophy of Islam.¹⁴ It is basically for realizing “these political objectives that Iqbal has gone to the extent of asking the Muslim scholars even to re-construct the religious thought of Islam. The argument he presented for its need in the modern world are worthy of attention not only for the Muslim thinkers but for the thinkers of the world. During the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam.

The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture. Iqbal believed that “the younger generation of Islam in Asia and Africa demand a fresh orientation of their faith. With the reawakening of Islam, therefore, it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam.”¹⁵ With the same idea, Iqbal approached the political philosophy of Islam. God is considered by him as the greatest reality which lives through all the varieties of change. The future world of mankind should be constructed around the principle of oneness of God.

The new culture finds the foundation of world-unity in the principle of *Tauheed*. Islam as a polity is only a practical means of making this principle a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind. It demands loyalty to God, not to thrones. And since God is the ultimate spiritual basis of all life, loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature. The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, is eternal and reveals itself in variety

and change. A society based on such a conception of Reality must reconcile in its life, the categories of permanence and change.¹⁶ Without a good society a good state cannot be established. This is what Islam demands. Moreover, the purpose of Islam is directed to build a highly civilised society wherein liberty of individual person is not only nourished but maintained. For realization of this aim, Iqbal believed, state plays pivotal role. But at the same, he was neither too happy with the pattern of European states nor he was glad with the states controlling human societies of other parts of the globe. If he disliked the existence of kingship in the Muslim or other states, he equally disliked the moral degradation of human values in the “advanced states”. For that purpose, he wanted to transform the character of modern states around one objective, i.e., obedience to God. By making all the states to flourish in the same political direction, Iqbal wanted them to move towards a future wherein all human beings could be controlled by one international state. The international state was to function as an international association of states like the League of Nations, in the times of Iqbal, or, after him, the United Nations Organisation. This international association should help in the promotion of common human values through the agencies of different political states. This aspect was further required to be strengthened by him if the field of law is to be further developed. In the sphere of Law, he was gravely disappointed by the role of modern Muslim ulama/scholars. The original moving spirit of Islam was considered by him to have been lost for the last 500 years. This was a folly not in the basic religion of Islam, but on the part of ulama of the world of Islam for the last five centuries. Through his writings, Iqbal emphasised upon the Muslim scholars to learn from the Western experiences and to approach the study of Qur’ān, Hadith, Fiqh and Islamic history from a fresh angle. This approach would equip them not only to pave a new way but make them to return to the original spirit of Islam. For exciting a movement amongst the Muslim scholars, Iqbal suggested four basic approaches: Qur’ān, Hadith, Ijma and Qiyas.

Qur’ān

Iqbal considered Qur’ān not as a “legal code”, but the “primary source” of Islamic Law whose purpose is “to awaken in man the higher consciousness” of his relation “with God and the Universe”. As the states help in realization of human ideals “the Qur’ān considers it necessary to unite religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation much in the same way as Plato does in his Republic”.¹⁷ But at the same time Iqbal considers the Qur’ān as a book which is not “inimical to the idea of evolution”. This subscribes to Iqbal’s following observation:

The spirit of man in its toward movement is restrained by forces which seem to be working in the opposite direction. This is only another way of saying that life moves with the weight of its own past on its back, and that in any view of social change the value and function of the forces of conservation cannot be lost sight of. It is with this organic insight into the essential teachings of the Qur’ān that modern Rationalism ought to approach our existing institutions.¹⁸

Therefore, Iqbal believes that “Qur’ān is a living Book”.¹⁹ Why did he say so? Because the teachings of this Book are more effective on human life and to make future better than before. Another view which Iqbal expresses is that the Qur’ān emphasises the continuity of life²⁰ and that continuity means

spiritual continuity. We cannot get such thing unless we make an effort to acquire them. So, Iqbal has laid great emphasis on them value of effort and struggle.²¹ Iqbal says that Muslims believe that God's revealed teaching and guidance became perfect in the form of the Holy Qur'ān which bears testimony to the truth of all previously revealed Books and represents them all with much more to add. Similarly, the Holy Qur'ān represents all Prophets of God and is the embodiment of the perfection of Prophecy. In this regard, Iqbal says: In Islam Prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition.²² In spite of all the teachings of the Qur'ān which Iqbal explains, we should also observe the words of the Qur'ān in the light of Iqbal's views. For him, the words of the Qur'ān were also eternal and beyond any shadow of doubt. They being words of Allah could not entertain any change, doubt or falsehood.

There is no doubt about the meaning of its words. Nor can they be changed. It does not allow misinterpretation of its verses.²⁶ The Qur'ān contains clear injunctions and prohibitions besides legends. Legends have their own specific import. Allama Iqbal explains:

The Qur'ānic method of complete or partial transformation of legends in order to be soul them with new ideas, and adopt them to the advancing spirit of time, is an important point which has nearly always been overlooked both by Muslim and non-Muslim students of Islam. The object of the Qur'ān in dealing with these legends is seldom historical; it nearly always aims at giving them a universal moral or philosophical import.²⁷ Therefore, Iqbal came to the conclusion that Qur'ānic verses should be re-interpreted in the light of "altered conditions of modern life."²³

The Hadith

The traditions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) are considered by Iqbal as "the second great source" of Islamic law. Iqbal agrees with Shah Waliullah that the Prophet's "method is to train one particular people, and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal Shariat". Keeping in view the principle of change and continuity and the example of Imam Abu Hanifa, one of the greatest exponents of Islamic jurisprudence, Iqbal goes to the extent of saying, "And a further intelligent study of the literature of traditions, if used as indicative of the spirit in which the Prophet himself interpreted his Revelation, may still be of great help in understanding the life value of the legal principles enunciated in the Qur'ān. A complete grasp of their life value alone can equip us in our endeavour to re-interpret the foundational principles."²⁴

Iqbal gave great importance to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.). He says that the Prophet of Islam had one mission, vis-à-vis to knit together in a chord of equality the various peoples and cultures of the world on the basis of true principles. Not only was he opposed to all sectarianism in religion; he was even against all distinctions between man and man, no matter under what name they might go. The teachings of the Holy Prophet were intended to weld the whole of mankind in a bond of fellowship and goodwill. The religion, he preached, was not the monopoly of a particular race or class. It was the common property of all mankind.²⁵

The Ijma

This is considered as the "third source" of Islamic law which, according to Iqbal, despite "invoking great academic discussion in early Islam, remained practically a mere idea and rarely assumed the

form of a permanent institution in any Mohammadan country".²⁶ He saw a hope of arise of this principle in "the gradual formation of legislative assemblies in Muslim lands" as "a great step" in the right direction. The strengthening of Muslim legislative assemblies as the one in modern Turkey or that of Iranian Majlis seemed to him to be the only way to give permanent character to the principle of Ijma. He, however, differed from the Iranian model that there should be a separate ecclesiastical committee of ulema supervising "the legislative activity of the Majlis", a matter which he considered a "dangerous arrangement". In this regard Iqbal observed:

The ulama should form a vital part of Muslim legislative assembly helping and guiding free discussion on questions relating to law. The only effective remedy for the possibilities of erroneous interpretations is to reform the present system of legal education in Mohammadan countries, to extend its spheres and to combine it with an intelligent study of modern jurisprudence.²⁷

The Qiyas

Iqbal considers the Qiyas as the "fourth basis of Islamic jurisprudence". The Qiyas is a method by which "the use of analogical reasoning in legislation" is done. In this regard Iqbal learnt a lot from the method of interpretation of Islamic law adopted by Imam Abu Hanifa. The latter, he believed, was more guided by the "different social and agricultural conditions prevailing in the countries conquered by Islam" and less "from the precedents recorded in the literature of traditions". Keeping in view their environment, the Hanfi fiqh resorted "to speculate reason in their interpretations" by which they "tended to ignore the creative freedom and arbitrariness of life, and hoped to build a logically perfect legal system on the line of pure reason".²⁸ By citing this example of the school of Abu Hanifa, Iqbal concluded; "Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principle, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purposes of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam".²⁹

The realities of modern social and political life should be ascertained with the highest sense of originality. A Muslim scholar should fully understand these modern realities. Thus with full knowledge of modern realities the scholar of Islam should approach to frame laws for human beings. The same should apply to polity. Advance principles of politics should be discovered in the light of the Qur'an and Hadith by following the aforementioned methods. A political system should be evolved by which man's obedience to Almighty Allah being the greatest reality at the world level should be ensured by dispensing with all kinds of other loyalties.

Iqbal's concept of state is twofold. It applies to both the Muslim and non-Muslim lands. In ease of Muslim areas the modern Muslim state is desired to work for social, economic, industrial, technological and educational advancement of its people. These states are also required by him to develop Islamic law in the light of ideas discussed in this chapter. For the non-Muslim states also Iqbal showed his respect and desired their development according to their own culture, economic, social and religious aspects. This kind of respect was shown by him in his Allahbad Address: "I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religions and social institutions of other communities. Nay, it's my duty, according to the teaching of the Qur'an, even to defend their places of worship if need be"³⁰

But still he invited them to accept the concept of *Tawheed* being the only course to solve all social and political problems of humanity. Both kinds of states are required by Iqbal to co-operate with each other under an international organisation of the kind of United Nations organisation, so that problems of all-humanity could be properly and fairly solved. Thus, he seems in favour of strengthening the hands of international organisation so as to create unity between nation states and humanity of the whole world.

Allama Iqbal's Critique of Western Democracy

Allama Iqbal was a philosopher of an outstanding stature. He chewed over all the contemporary ideologies emanating from the West. His belief in the human dignity was so strong that any impingement on the same in any corner of the world distressed him. He resented the Western pursuits due to which the mankind was teetering on the verge of spiritual and economic bankruptcy. His criticism was not flimsy. Rather in berating the West for letting loose a monster in the form of democracy he had some finest arguments based on pragmatism, and philosophical insight. His criticism of democracy held good even during his life time at the onset of one of the bloodiest episodes of the last century, World War First. He vehemently cried that under the mask of democracy in every nook and corner of the earth, the essence of human dignity, and liberty were being trampled underfoot. The so call advocates of human rights, and statesmen to whom was entrusted the state of affairs of the people proved Satan's of blood bath and oppression.

Allama was highly scathing about the so-called democracies which shackled the disadvantaged peoples politically and economically within and outside themselves. The exploitation of man at the hands of those democrats was unprecedented. Nevertheless, he never loses faith in the essence of democracy that something integral to Islam.

Iqbal's revulsion at democracy to have been induced by a multitude of factors. What is more, his views on democracy remain scattered over a multiplicity of sources both in poetry and prose. Therefore, more often than not what happens predicating their conclusions upon a specific theme drawn from some of the verses of Iqbal, scholars happen to clog up the formation of a realist picture, and screw up the texture of his thought. Allama's outlook in every aspect of life was entirely Quranic. He never sat in defeatist acquiescence to objugate any creed nurtured beyond the lap of Islam. However, it was not at all that he sat on his hands to praise the positive aspects of ideology even if coming from the West. Obviously, his faith must wield a powerful impact on his thought but he was ever up-to embrace those of the aspects of democracy he found wholly in line with the tenants of Islam, and canons of rationality.

Devoid of a spiritual and ethical orientation

Democracy of the West has stripped both spiritual and ethical foundation. Rooted in materialistic mold, it provides a royal road for the unscrupulous and dishonest politicians to cling onto the ladder of power in the cringe-worthy way. The absence of a moral and spiritual renders democracy repulsive. This was the fundamental objection Iqbal levelled against it. In *Bal e Jibriel*, Alama writes that enough of devils inhabit the earth in the person of politicians that Satan's presence is no longer needed.

Jamhoor kay Iblees hai arbaab e siyasat

Baaqi nai ab zaroorat te aflaaq

(In democracy are enough devils in the form of politicians. That Satan's presence not needed on earth (Iqbal in Bal e Jabriel)

Uncurbed Democracy: A Bane

Iqbal had a very low opinion of the uncouth masses. He was of the belief that masses are not fully equipped with sense of intellect and rationality, they lacked proper training and education. Masses wanting intellect is the recurring theme of Iqbal's thesis on democracy. He had deep qualms about the unbridled importation of the western liberal ideas, for politics it left to the vagaries of every tom, dick and harry would prove suicidal.

In Payam e Mashriq, Alama sarcastically puts the illiterate and ignorant masses to his poetic shafts saying that two hundred donkeys can not match the wisdom of a wise man. Needles to say what farce takes place in democracy is skilfully depicted by Iqbal in the following verse of zarb-e-kaleem underlining one of major defects in this creed. There is always a looming possibility that a man of insight may be overshadowed owing to a number of reasons to make it to top notch position, and get superseded by a bunch of illiterate, and coarse people. The same opinion was reflected by Winston Churchill in quite a witty quip that the best argument against democracy was a five minute conversation with an average voter.

*Iss raaz ko ek mard e farhangi nai kiya faash
Har chand ki daana issay khola nahi kartay
Jamhooriyat ek tarz e hakoomat hain ki jismay
Bandoon ko gina kartay hai, tola nahi kartay*

(By some European sage this secret has been disclosed, even though the man of wisdom tend not to reveal it. Democracy is a form of government wherein man are counted but not weighed (Iqbal Zarb e kaleem)

Instrument of Secularism

Allama Iqbal's adverse views on democracy were shaped by atheistic nourishment of the latter. An ideology born out of womb of atheism could never refine, and elevate the human thought. He came to discern in the western democracy the deep rooted seed of secularism and atheism. Secularism involves a dichotomy between state and religion-something that Iqbal could never digest. An order which reduced the religion to an immaterial state of personal life teeters on the edge of the social, and moral decay. In addition, such a nation is doomed to be a perpetual disgrace. Iqbal could never reconcile himself with such a creed. In Bal e Jiberiel, p. 373, 2015, he cogently decries such an order divorced from religion as no better than the worst tyranny.

*Jalal e baadshai ho ki jamhoori tamasha ho
Juda ho deen siyasat se to rah jati hai Changezi*

(Statecraft in which faith cuts off from politics to reign of terror leads, though it be a monarch's regime, or farce of a democracy).

A society built upon the bricks of secular order is destined to crumble. Iqbal has firmly resolved in his conviction that such societies never take root, and it was this secular democracy which unleashed

unto the world a torrent of damage. The creed perpetuates infidelity and has brazenly met a total fiasco to mitigate the sufferings of the people no matter where it has been espoused. According to Iqbal, secular politics which the Europe has introduced is pestered with countless ills by it the West has unchained a monster to eat away all the fabric of the world.

Tu ne kya dekha nahi magrib ka jamhori nizam

Chehra roshan, androon Changiz se tareek tar

(Have not you observed the face of the democratic system of the West? Where they have brilliant faces but darker interior than Changiz)

Playing Field of Conflicting Ambitions

Iqbal's another charge against democracy that it breeds a dog-eat-dog competition for a bunch of unscrupulous scoundrels to dabble in politics with a view to gaining reins of powers only to maximise their vested interests holds true given the realities of the real politics. A country morphs into a theatre of war for the dishonest and incompetent rogues to plot against each other for getting into the corridors of power dividing the entire nation into parties and factions. To Iqbal, such a system creates deep schisms among the ummah on false and fragile lines. It breeds moral corruption and vitiates the soul and takes away the conscience of men striving for power. Unimaginable evils are legitimised in the garb of the liberal principles of democracy. A passage from 'Speeches and Statements of Iqbal 1948' sheds light on the underlying motive for rejection of the creed: "Democracy means rows. If anybody thinks the approach to democracy means sailing into a kind of lotus land, he has not read a word of history. The truth is exactly the opposite. Democracy let lose all aspects of aspirations, and grievances and arouses hopes and ambitions often quite unpractical"³⁶

Imbalanced Character of Western Democracy

Iqbal believed that the cult of democracy had nothing new to give to the humanity. It was the same old system of tyranny, and exploitation presented as Messiah. At its best, it only served old wine in new bottles. It didn't cure, instead, it afflicted both body and soul. It plunged the mankind into the appalling deprivation even further; instead of alleviating their sufferings. In 1926, he contested election to the Punjab legislative council, and made it there. It provided him an opportunity to gain a first hand experience of the working dynamics of democracy. It is asserted by many that getting into the assembly was below his dignity. They seem to lose the light of the fact that he himself did not cover for it. Second, he knocked even the policies of the party on whose seat he entered the house. Third, had he not been in the assembly, he would not have observed the divisive, and the deceptive nature of democracy at close quarters.

Conclusion

While pointing out the inherent flaws of Western democracy, Iqbal had in mind the vision of an ideal Islamic polity, unpolluted by the banes which characterise the former and which was free from all the fallacies of the contemporary democracy. He deemed it the end point of human quest for a durable efficacious political order. The west would someday realize the impracticality and the fragility of

democracy and would not be sitting on its hand to appreciate the unique framework for governance provided by Islam.

Allama Iqbal stood for a polity deriving inspiration from the canons of Sharia and guidance from Sunna of Prophet (pbuh) His was a democracy on impeded by petty tumultuous party politics, and strove for nothing else but bringing to the rules the good of this world and hereafter. It was partisan to none and trampled none's right. Justice under it is accessible to everyone. Rule of law flourished as per the doctrines of Islamic teachings as applicable to modern times. Allama Iqbal attempted to make a case for the Quranic democracy, the spirit of which had been visualised in the Quran. However, its structure and form might be styled in view of the requirements of the contemporary political realities.

Iqbal believed that God Himself is the repository of absolute sovereignty nevertheless as enjoined by Allah, a limited sovereignty for accountability mechanism has been approved of. Dismissing the parliaments as talking shops which yielded but follies only, he proposed the constitution of an assembly of enlightened men well versed in modern scholarship, and Islamic Jurisprudence. The same may be equipped with the authority to exercise *Ijtihad*, to find a way out to the quandaries tormenting the modern world. Alama Iqbal favoured a limited franchise, idealising a government by the men of expertise and veritable integrity.

It is pertinent to mention here that his ideal government was Caliphate. He turned to the Sunnite concept of Caliphate to illustrate his ideal of a perfect democracy. Drawing inspiration from the period of Khilafat e Rashida, he held democracy was put in place in letter and spirit. Dr Hassan (2010) notes "yet, regardless of the fact that he underscored the gross limitation of democracy he didn't altogether abandon his hope in it, based on his sharp observation believing that democracy had some concomitant handicaps which however could be best surmounted.

References

¹ Acemoglu and Robinson. (2006). *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.18.

² Bassette. (1935). *The Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*. London: pp.112-113.

³ Hassan, R. (2010). Iqbal's views of Democracy. *Dawn*

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll (2001), *Islam and Democracy*, Humanities, Nov./Dec. 2001, Vol 22, No.

⁶ S. Abul A'la Maududi (1997), *Khutbaat (Fundamentals of Islam)*, 1997, 2nd edn., Chicago: Kazi publications, pp 258-259.

- ⁷ Azzam S. Tamimi (2001), Rachid Ghannouchi, *A Democrat within Islamism*, New York, Oxford University Press, p.182-183.
- ⁸ Kalim Siddiqui (1983), *Primary Goals and Achievements of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. In issues in the Islamic Movements. 1983-1984, ed. Kalim Siddique, 1985, London, Open Press, p.13.
- ⁹ Husnul Amin (2012), *Post-Islamist Intellectual Trends in Pakistan: Javid Ahmad Ghamdi and his Discourse on Islam and Democracy*, Islamic Studies, Summer 2012, Vol 51, No. 2.p 173.
- ¹⁰ Fazlur Rahman, "A Recent controversy over the Interpretation of *Shura*, *History of Religions*, 1981, pp. 291-301.
- ¹¹ Fazlur Rahman, "A Recent controversy over the Interpretation of *Shura*, *History of Religions*, 1981, pp. 291-301.
- ¹² Muhammad Iqbal (1934), *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1934).
- ¹³ Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed), *Foundations of Pakistan* vol.II, (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1969), pp.153-171.
- ¹⁴ 14 For his speeches and statements see A.R.Tariq (ed), *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali, 1973).
- ¹⁵ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, p.7.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p.144
- ¹⁷ Ibid. 167
- ¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 167-167
- ¹⁹ Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi (ed) *Allama Iqbal Aur Kitab-e Zinda* (Lahore: n.p., n.d.) pp.27-29.
- ²⁰ *Kulyat-e Iqbal*, (Farsi), pp.121-22.
- ²¹ M.A.M. Dar (Trans), *Introduction to the Thought of Iqbal* (Lahore: n.p., 1978), p.18
- ²² M. Munawwar (1981). *Iqbal's Qur'anic Wisdom* (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1981), p.23.
- ²³ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*
- ²⁴ Ibid, p. 173
- ²⁵ Masud-ul-Hasan (1978), *Life of Iqbal: General Account of His Life* (Lahore: n.p., 1978), p.328.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.173

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.196

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.176-77.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.180

³⁰ Muhammad Iqbal. (2015). Zarb-e-Kaleem, 34- Mashriq O Maghrib.In *Kuliyat-e-Iqbal* (p.672). Islamabad: National Book Foundation.