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PERMANENT VALUE OF IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem

IQBAL, one of the most distinguished and perceptive minds of 20th century, has touched upon almost all the major themes of philosophy and has left indelible marks of his own on these issues. For instance, he has discussed the problems of epistemology and has delineated various forms of knowledge, such as, knowledge through sense-experience, mystic experience and its contrast with prophetic experience, nature of moral and aesthetical experience, possibility of religious experience, etc. Iqbal insists that these diverse fields of human interest and inquiry and our claims to knowledge of them could be verified on the basis of their own respective criterion of knowledge.

All these fields, he underscores, cannot be lumped together and verified by one criterion (i.e. the principle of verification). And whatever falls outside the fold of this criterion cannot be dismissed as irrelevant and senseless either. Such an attitude, he contends, will be highly illogical, prejudicial and unacceptable to human mind.

NATURE OF GOD

LIKEWISE, Iqbal talks about the nature of God and evaluates various proofs of his existence. Like Hume and Kant, his illustrious predecessors, he too forcefully demolishes the traditional proofs (for the existence of God) as they suffer from logical inconsistencies and incoherence. After sweeping aside the traditional proofs, all three great minds offer their own respective proofs for the existence of God.

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For instance, Hume contends that just as we feel necessary connection in causal relationship: we feel the sentiments of good or bad on the contemplation of certain situation; we feel the sentiments of beauty and deformity in certain contexts; we feel the sense of self-and- self- identity, likewise we feel the presence of God when we contemplate, say on the structure and function of our eye or for that matter the Universe at large. In fact, if our mind is not deranged and corrupted, the "idea" of God flows in upon us with the force and violence of an "impression". In other words, the idea of God is similar to so many other foundational concepts that we are obliged to entertain on the basis of an "animal faith" that may not be justified on rational grounds, but is, somehow, indispensable on natural grounds and we refuse to surrender it to please the demands of so-called philosophy.

In a similar way Kant offers a moral proof for the existence of God. He contends that the concept of self and its freedom, immorality of self, rewards and punishment (i.e. Hell and Heaven) are essential ingredients of moral life and they necessitate the assumption of a Being (or God) who could satisfy the demands of full justice if not here at least in the hereafter. So while Kant is constrained to deny the existence of God on epistemic grounds, he is constrained to re-introduce Him on moral grounds—that there ought to be a God. Iqbal is also engaged in similar exercises. He refutes the traditional proofs and then offers his own, that is, the pragmatic proof for the existence of God. He contends that the problem of religious experience is not so much to "see" something as it is to "be" something. Iqbal underscores that faith in God offers us a metaphysical anchorage, transforms and integrates our beings whereas want of faith initially disintegrates and finally annihilates our being. He further holds that this crisis of identity could be seen both at individual and collective/national level. Inner faith, he maintains, manifests itself in our outer conduct or performance. Or conduct, so to say, is the fruit of our faith.

SELF AND SELF-IDENTITY

IQBAL DEVOTES considerable time and talent to the problem of self and self-identity or to borrow his own expression, the concept of *Khudi*. How our self gets strengthened and intensified, and how it gets dissipated and destroyed is indeed one of the central problems

of his thought and philosophy. Just as prophets have addressed their entire teachings to man and are keen to see him transformed, so is the case with Iqbal. Following *sunnahs* of the Prophet, he directs his philosophy to the transformation and well-being of man—the main focus of his thought. The Holy Quran says, God has infused his own spirit in man. It is this divinely element in man that is of paramount importance to Iqbal. He is anxious to preserve and promote this element. Like *Ibn Arabi*, Iqbal contends that the essence of moral and spiritual life lies in the fact, that man should bear witness that God is indeed present in him. Humanity, in his opinion, is united in divinity. If divinity and sanctity of man were denied and disgraced, mankind would fall apart and be divided.

Iqbal, therefore, is essentially opposed to every socio-political or economic or moral system that militates against the dignity and sanctity of man and is anxious to restructure it in a manner that may rehabilitate vicegerency of man in this world.

COMMUNITY AND ITS FUNCTION

NOTWITHSTANDING the foundational value of the self or the individual in Iqbal's philosophy, he is opposed to monasticism or suicidal individualism. Instead, the individual or self, in his opinion, grows in and through his relationship with others in the midst of society. Hence the community holds no less a significant place than self or individual in his thought/philosophy. Both are integrally related. In order to ensure the perfection of the individual, we have to ensure the perfection of the community. And in order to ensure the perfection of the community, we have to guarantee the perfection of the individual. Overriding objectives of both (the community and the individual) are the same, that is, eradication of evil and establishment of a just moral order in this world. There is, so to say, natural cooperation, rather than inimical confrontations between the community and the individual.

Notwithstanding his full emphasis on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the self or the individual, Iqbal contends, that it is ultimately the community—rather than any elite group or individual, which is responsible for the establishment of a just moral order in this world. According to Iqbal nations are flushed up for the fulfillment of this duty and are judged here and now, in and through history whilst individuals will be judged on the Day of Judgment.

Philosophy of history (as it deals with the life of nations or civilisations) therefore forms one of his main interests. In fact he carefully examines the philosophy of history offered by Spengler, Hegel, Karl Marx and others and then goes on to express his own views concerning the philosophy of history. It is really unfortunate that his philosophy of history, like so many other themes of his thoughts, is still awaiting proper examination and appreciation.

EDUCATION AND MORALS

HIS PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION and his theory of morals constitute the warp and woof of his entire philosophy. Knowledge, he observes, can be categorised in two kinds:

1. **Acquisitional knowledge** or observational and scientific knowledge—in Quranic diction it is called "*Ilm-ul-Asma*"; and
2. **Revelational knowledge** (*Ilm-ul-Kitab*).

For acquisitional knowledge, God has endowed man with eyes, ears, head and heart, the basic requisites of knowledge, and has asked man to apply these sensibilities towards the understanding of nature that surrounds him and make it serviceable to himself and to mankind at large.

Ilm-ul-Kitab, on the other hand, guides man towards the ends and ideals of life and the very purpose of his creation.

Following the Quran, Iqbal recommends that acquisitional knowledge (i.e. power gained through science and technology) should be exercised under the guidance of revelation because if power is divorced and detached from wisdom, it could be ruinous for mankind. In any case, it is through education that we prepare the succeeding generations for shouldering their responsibilities. If education is somehow shorn of moral contents, it will fail to serve its purpose—that is, to ensure success here and salvation in the hereafter. It may be underlined that from a value-free education, we can produce at best only a value-free generation that may be well versed in science and technology but may be highly dangerous for the future of mankind.

PHILOSOPHY OF AESTHETICS

MAN WITHOUT THE REFINEMENT of his aesthetic sense might remain harrowing at animal level but won't be able to understand and

appreciate the beauty writ large in nature that surrounds him. In fact, the study of self, the reflection on the nature that surrounds us, and the meditation on the rise and fall of civilisations, in Iqbal's views, are the three principal sources of wisdom envisioned by the Quran. They are pointers to something beyond themselves.

Viewed in this perspective, it should come as no surprise when we see Iqbal making a blood confession that in his early youth, it was Wordsworth's "naturalism" that saved him from outright "atheism". These and similar other themes naturally seize his mind and he tries to work out the philosophy behind them.

CONCLUSION

CONTRARY TO THE COMMON IMPRESSION that there is no system in Iqbal, his philosophy seems to present a highly well-knit and coherent system. In spite of that, it is really unfortunate that Iqbal has not received the attention that he deserves. It is a strange irony that not a single university of Pakistan has ever offered a graduate level exclusive course on Iqbal and his thought. This lamentable situation needs immediate redressal for his thoughts are as relevant to our national survival as they were to our national independence and freedom in the first instance.