

Human Dignity: A Primordial Theme In The Poetic Works Of Allama Muhammad Iqbal

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Abstract:

Allama Muhammad Iqbal is a great poet-philosopher of recent history who gave the idea of Pakistan. He is one of the poets of the world who have a complete ideology in their poetry. Iqbal considers Maulana Rumi as his mentor and "Peer". Iqbal in his poetry dignifies man as the most important creature of the universe. He urges the man to improve his Self (Khudi) in order to meet the universal needs of a complete human being and for this improvement, he suggests different stages of training of the Self. He strongly condemns slavery and the nations who exploit other nations' rights. In this article, Iqbal's ideology of the human dignity is briefly reviewed.

Keyword: Iqbal, Pakistan, Rumi, Self (Khudi), philosophy, improvement, strongly condemns, briefly reviewed.

Iqbal- poet, philosopher, educator, lawyer, political activist, social reformer – is peerless in his skilfulness and breadth of knowledge and imagination. He was the last and greatest thinker of the historic 'Aligarh Movement' that singularly introduced a paradigm shift in the consciousness of Indian Muslims and changed their path of life. However, Iqbal's place in history is not limited to his role as a modernist, reformist Muslim thinker in India. His influence is not limited to India and what is Pakistan today. He is the most outstanding poet-philosopher of the world of Islam, and probably of the world in general, after the demise of his spiritual guide, Maulana JalalUdin Rumi (born in 1207) in 1273.

حادثہ وہ جو ابھی پردہ افالک میں ہے عکس
اس کا مرے آئینہ ادراک میں ہے
نہ ستارے میں ہے، نہ گردش افالک میں ہے نری تقدیر
مرے نالہ بیباک میں ہے

(Iqbal, 1976:64-65)

(Events as yet folded in the scroll of Time
Reflect in the mirror of my perception.
Neither the planets, nor the spinning skies
Only my bold song can tell you your destiny)

If we think about and see through the development of the poetic works and history of the World literature, particularly of the Subcontinent, the appearance of Allama Iqbal is not less than a miracle, which changes the main theme and style of the literary heritage of the region. While Iqbal is so much committed to the basic rules of the classical poetry, the

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innovative changes that he has introduced in his poetry have introduced a new track in the Urdu and Persian poetry and in the way and manners in which he has been appreciated by the contemporary literary community is a unique example. Man is the most important creature of the Universe in the philosophical paradigm of Allama Iqbal. He believes that:

آدمیت احترام آدمی
باخیر شو از مقام آدمی

(Iqbal, 1970:242)

(Manliness is to respect man;

Be aware of the true position of man)

Iqbal surpasses his peers in so many ways. He was a poet and thinker of grand esteem. Very few men of letters managed to bring together poetry and philosophy so aptly as Iqbal managed to do. Indeed, it is a fantastic achievement. Poetry, by definition, relies on images and symbols. It keeps away from directly stating the thoughts or emotions. Rather, it favours suggestiveness. On the other hand, philosophy, deals with logical concepts, which requires preciseness in thought and expression. Thus, in a sense, being a poet-philosopher is a paradox.

Nonetheless, this paradox can be traced in the nature of human beings as well. They are inclined towards, and away from, definition of thought and feeling. This psychological process has emerged variously in the tradition of literature and philosophy. At times, it has led poetry to turn philosophical or philosophy to become poetic, and there are occasions when poetry and philosophy stand distinctly apart in terms of their intent and impact. Remember, Plato's Republic bears no room for poets and dramatists. Thus, integrating poetry and philosophy into a single entity— as is the case of Rumi and Iqbal – is an uncommon achievement.

Iqbal's first poetic work *Asrar-e-Khudi* ("سِرِّ السِّرِّ" Secrets of the Self) is an excellent expression of his main literary theory. In its preface (تمهید), he not only introduced himself, but also his vision about the Universe and human being. For instance, he clearly articulated:

Though I am but a mote, the radiant sun is mine:
Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.
I am merely a particle, but the dazzling sun is in my custody;
Hundreds of morrows are in my bosom.
No one hath told the secret which I will tell
Or threaded a pearl of thought like mine.

(Iqbal, 1920:2-6)

In fact, Iqbal does not refer to himself in the verses quoted above. Rather, he has attributed it to the entire mankind. Henri Bergson, the celebrated French philosopher, wrote that each philosopher has only one great thing to say. This was also valid for Iqbal who highly admired his French contemporary. In his own writings on poetry, philosophy, and politics, Iqbal had a remarkable idea: the self or selfhood, called *khudi*. 'For Iqbal the theme of humanity is closely linked with the complex idea of *khudi* (literally 'selfhood'). (Mir, 2000:4)

Iqbal's contribution to modern Muslim philosophy and thought was not only his relentless effort to understand the impact of modernity on Islam and Muslims, but his writings also reveal his own titanic struggles to come to terms with a modern Muslim self and the construction of personhood in the early twentieth century. "Iqbal, the Rumi of the 20th century, like his great predecessor was well versed in the various branches of conventional Islamic studies and was well acquainted with the old as well as with the new and contemporary schools of thought." (Irfani, 1986:42) Iqbal was fully aware that ideas and concepts and the life worlds that humans inhabit were not givens but rather constantly constructed: societies were retooled conceptually and technologically; communities were constantly reconstructed in tandem with the evolution of the imaginaries and spirits of individuals. The try to unite the Muslim to his base "Quran" and "Sunnah" has been observed by many scholars throughout the history of Islam, but Iqbal mixed this with a revolutionary force of western philosophy to ensure its triumph. (Nicholson, 1920:xii)

Therefore, Iqbal could confidently appeal to Muslims to construct a new thought. He wrote challengingly saying: 'Nor can the concepts of theological systems, draped in the terminology of a practically dead metaphysics, be of any help to those who happen to possess a different intellectual background' (Iqbal 2021: 78). He fully understood the fact that the lived conditions of each epoch generated their own founding myths and metaphysics, even though there was also a succession of ideas, or what we would call the continuity and discontinuity of thought. When Iqbal offered some brief outlines of the ideas of pioneering figures who, in one way or the other, had renovated religious thought in Islam in the past, he was clearly trying to urge Muslims to find the optimal set of ideas for the human condition as experienced in his day. In his critical readings of scripture, theology, prayer, philosophy, and ethics in his pioneering lectures published as *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal offered hints and delicately suggested pathways that he hoped others would pursue. The world of Islam, he proposed, 'should courageously proceed to the work of reconstruction', which was more than 'mere adjustment to modern conditions of life'.

Iqbal's concept of the Self (Khudi) and the Self-negation (Bekhudi) pertain to Man and his relation to the ultimate power of God (Allah) or Nature. 'Iqbal believed that human values can be reconciled by the process of synergy by combining Khudi (Self) with Bekhudi (Selflessness) within the framework of the highest human value of Ishq (Love). (Dil, 2013:26) 'The word 'human ego' or 'khudi' used by Iqbal likewise is taken by him to mean the unity and totality of the human person.' (Khaliq, 2016:25) The relation between man and God is the main thing to understand in Iqbal's theory of self. According to Iqbal, Man is the most important creature in this universe as the Man bears the most important role of being chosen by the God. This belief leads Iqbal to an optimistic thought of life. 'Iqbal's optimism is an outcome of his belief, common to the Sufis, but expressed most vigorously and persistently by him, that man's separate entity is only a small ripple or eddy in the ocean which is God, and is therefore inseparably bound up with it.' (Singh 1938:67) Iqbal simplifies the Man's character on earth as described in Quran in three points:

- i) Man is chosen of God
- ii) Man is representative of God on earth
- iii) Man is trustee of a free personality (Iqbal, 2021:76)

In the ideology of the Self, he explicated the above mentioned Higher Place of Man and his development in three stages: Obedience, Self-control and Divine Vice gerency or Caliphate (Iqbal, 1920:72)

Man, according to Iqbal, has been created with the perfect disposition:

Truth has no need of me for tiring-maid;
To stain the tulip red is Nature's care.

(Iqbal, 2000:253)

But there are some obligations of Nature as well, which Man is supposed to fulfil. It is called obedience or acceptance (and to attain his designated place, the man must accept and act upon the rules of Nature, and the Creator. In this path, the suffering that he has to bear, takes him close to the Creator and the patience thus employed is referred to as Self Control or self-restraint (ضبط نفس). Then there is a third stage of Caliphate (نبايت الهى) where the man enjoys the authority which has conferred upon him by the God:

Tis sweet to be God's vicegerent in the world
And exercise sway over the elements.

(Iqbal, 1920:79)

When man has reached the Caliphate, world becomes his servant as he is the master of knowledge. Iqbal is the admirer and so much devoted to Maulana Jalal Ud Din Rumi and calls him Murshid (thespiritual guide):

پير رومى مرشد روشن ضمير كاروان
عشق و مستى را امير

(Iqbal, 1966:5)

(The mentor Rumi, the clairvoyant murshid,

The leader of the caravan of love and ecstasy)

'Iqbal discovered his kinship with Rumi in his approach to man's relation with God. (Rehman, 1991:87) Maulana also believes in the supremacy of Man but according to Maulana, the real men in the world are quite scarce. Humanity needs to work harder to reach the highest pedestal of Man.

Yesterday the Master with a lantern was roaming about the city,
Crying, 'I am tired of devil and beast, I desire a man.'
My heart is weary of these weak-spirited companions;
I desire the Lion of God and Rustam, son of Zal.
They said, 'He is not to be found, we have sought Him long.'
A thing which is not to be found-that is my desire.

(Nicholson, 1952:67-69)

Iqbal in his poetry speaks of this desired man the one who has attained third stage of the Self, Caliphate (نیابت الهی). In his view, a man can capture the God if he has the real Man power:

Where I roam in my mad pursuit
The angel Gabriel is but small game.
Come, O my manly courage, cast
A lasso upon God Himself

(Iqbal, 2000:107)

In this way, Iqbal gives the ultimate glory and power to Man and no one has the authority to deprive him of this prized stature:

نائب حق در جهان آدم شود بر
عناصر حکم او محکم شود علم
اسما اعتبار آدم است
حکمت اشیا حصار آدم است

(Iqbal, 1971:166-168)

(Man is the deputy of God on earth,
And over the elements his rule is fixed;
Yet Adam's glory was that he possessed
The knowledge of the names, and being wise
In natural ken, was thereby fortified)

And then Iqbal moves a step further and makes a question to the reader that the man beautifies the world of God by his hard work, whether it can be said that man provides assistance to God:

نوای عشق را ساز است آدم
گشاید راز و خود راز است آدم
جهان او آفرید، این خوینتر ساخت مگر با
ایزد انباز است آدم

(Iqbal, 1994:209)

(To the voice of love Adam is music;
He reveals secrets, but he is a secret himself
God created the world, but Adam made it better
Adam, perhaps, is God's co-worker)

At this stage the Man argues the God to do more for the betterment of the world:

گفت یزدان که چنین است و دگر هیچ مگو گفت آدم که چنین
است چنان می بایست

(Iqbal, 1964:157)

(God said, "The world so lies,
And say not otherwise";
Said Adam, "So I see;
But thus it ought to be!")

And finally comes the debate between God and Man and Iqbal celebrates Man's contribution in development of the world by saying:

من آنم که از سنگ آئینه سازم

من آنم که از زبر نوشینه سازم

(Iqbal, 1994:269)

(I am one, who makes a mirror out of stone,
And turns poison into sweet, delicious drink.)

This dignified position of the Man makes him a personality that Gabriel also wishes to become peer of Adam:

If Gabriel were to go through this book,
He would cast aside the pure light as if it were dust;
He would bewail about his station,
And relate to God the condition of his heart:
I no longer desire unveiled Epiphany,
I desire nothing but hidden heart-sore.
I am ready to forego eternal union,
For now I realize what sweetness is in lamentation!
Give me the pride and submissiveness of man,
Give unto my heart burning and consuming of man.

(Dar, 1996:7-8)

Here are more examples to better understand the concept of Man's dignity in poetry of Iqbal:

برخیز که آدم را بنگام نمود آمد این
مشت غباری را انجم به سجود آمد

(Iqbal, 1964:134)

(Rise up! The hour is here
That Adam shall appear;
The stars bow, as they must,
To this handful of dust.)

او امام و او صلوات و او حرم
او مداد و او کتاب و او قلم آنچه
در آدم بگنجد عالم است آنچه در
عالم نگنجد آدم است برتر از
گردون مقام آدم است اصل تهذیب
احترام آدم است

(Iqbal, 1970:75)

(Himself is Imam, prayer and sanctuary,
Himself the Ink, himself the Book and the Pen
That which is contained within man is the world,
That which is not contained within the world is man.
Loftier than the heavens is the station of man,
And the beginning of education is respect for man.)

عشق اندر جستجو افتاد و آدم حاصل است جلوه او
آشکار از پرده آب و گل است

(Iqbal, 1964:149)

(Love went searching through the earth
Until Adam came to birth;
Out of water, out of clay
Manifested his display.)

Iqbal in his famous poem (تسخیر فطرت) interprets the birth of the Man an incident that overwhelms the nature:

فطرت آشفته که از خاک جهان مجبور
خودگری، خود شکنی، خود نگری پیدا شد

(Iqbal, 1994:244)

(Nature was distraught because,
From the dust of a world without will,
One had been born who could
Make and unmake himself,

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