

Iqbal's Concept of Humanity

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Abstract

Mohammed Iqbal is one of the most relevant and prominent personality and an active voice from South Asia to elevate the man from a mere material being to its actual stature where one could perceive the purpose, objective and destiny of being in this world. Against modern secular and materialistic view of man Iqbal's conception of humanity is rooted in the traditional and cultural heritage of man. He advocates for universal unity of mankind based on broader values of human ethics. For him Divine guidance paves the way to entire mankind to achieve peace, equality, human welfare and salvation. A better individual development is possible in a well-structured society based on the ethical system beyond the superficial distinctions.

Keywords: Peace, Justice, Equality, Solidarity, Unity of God,

Introduction

The present paper is a concise study of Iqbal's views on humanity, its unity and integration. His conception of man is a personality to be developed not a mere tool to be used just for materialistic purpose. For both the development of individual and society constitutes his concept of humanity. In understanding his standpoint the study elucidates his writing both in prose and poetry.

Iqbal's Concept of Humanity

The main features of Iqbal's writings are the elevation of human character and ascension of humanity. The climax of his poetry is connected with the respect for the humanity. It is from this point that the ray of the individual shines and through this light of individuality, social attitudes and behavior is formed. In this way through individual attitudes and social concerns, the entire humanity becomes a part of Iqbal's subject on which he had extensively expressed his point of view with deep insight and study of different tradition of thought. Iqbal had drawn both Eastern and Western sources and traditions of thought. However, he has been in the main, inspired by the Holy Quran and the traditions of Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ).¹

Iqbal considers the whole mankind as one brotherhood and rejects the superficial distinctions based on race, nation, region or color. Rejecting the secular nationalistic ideals of the west as the basis of social and political group-making, he advocates for universal brotherhood based on the teachings of Islam. In his famous Persian work *Ramoz-e- Bekhudi*, he says:

Our essence is not bound to any place
The vigor of our wine is not contained
In any bowl; Chinese or Indian

Alike the sherd that constitutes our jar,
 Turkish and Syrian alike the clay
 Forming our body; neither is our heart
 Of India, or Syria or Rum,
 Nor any fatherland do we profess
 Except Islam. When pure- descended Kaab
 Brought to the Prophet for any offering
 His famed *Banat Su'ud*, whereon he strung
 The night-illuminating jewels of his praise,
 And there addressed him as an unsheathed
 sword.²

For Iqbal, the faith in the Oneness of God (*Tawheed*) is a symbol of unity among the people which holds the entire mankind together and transforms them into one universal brotherhood. The spiritual bond that is the belief in one God leaves no room for nationalism or regionalism and integrates people to lose their racial, ethnic or regional colors. Illustrating this point, he says:

This is the destiny of nature; this is the secret of Islam. Worldwide
 brotherhood, and abundance of love!
 Break the idols of color and blood and become lost in the
 community.
 Let neither Turonian, Iranian nor Afghans remain.³

Against the nationalistic philosophy of the secular west, Iqbal accepted the different distinctions and borders among the nations for the feasibility and convenience of administrative purposes but not for the divisions among the people. In his famous philosophical work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he says:

A true and a living unity, according to the nationalistic thinkers, is not so easy as to be achieved by a merely symbolic over-lordship. It is truly manifested in a multiplicity of free independent units whose racial rivalries are adjusted and harmonized by the unifying bond of a common spiritual aspiration. It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us that truth that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinction for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members.⁴

The unity of mankind is more important than unity among nations. The unity among nations is based on national interests of each nation, and hence its sustainability is always doubtful while as the unity and

relation among people based on moral, religious and human values leads to universal good and safeguards the interest of entire mankind. Regarding the League of Nations founded in 1920 during his lifetime. Iqbal expressed his concerns on the plea that it was established to unite nations instead to unite mankind, as he asserted in his poetic work *Zarb-e-Kaleem*:

Contemporary era witnessed tremendous contacts among nations.
 The unity of mankind, however, remained, concealed;
 Western polity advocates division among nations,
 Islam pleads but for unification of humanity.
 Holy Makkah has sent a message to Geneva.
 Ought to there be unity of mankind or unity of nations?⁵

To Iqbal the revealed divine knowledge prescribes the spiritual path to all humans. This knowledge without any shade of doubt commands the whole mankind to become a truth seeker to build the relation with their Creator and at the same time maintain harmony, peace, justice and equality with the fellow beings. The civilizations and the societies which followed the divine guidance have attained great heights in the cultural heritage of human history. Through the path of enlightenment, faith, devotion, love and submission to God, they illustrated the most effective precedence to know the self and the Creator. To Iqbal, Islam provides the foundational principles of Tawheed (Unity of God) and Nubuwwat (Prophethood) to the entire world community and a masterly system to live with peace, unity, justice and solidarity. In his words:

The new culture finds the foundation of world- unity in the principle of Tawheed.
 Islam as a polity is only a political 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 ultimate spiritual basis of all life,
 loyalty to God virtually amounts to man's loyalty to his own ideal nature.⁶

Iqbal emphasized the ideals of unity, equality, solidarity, love, peace and justice in elevating the differences between human beings. He rejects the secular and materialistic ideals of the west which look into man superficially and become a tool and means of exploitation and suppression to create socio-economic inequality and injustice in the society. Condemning the materialistic and exploitative tendency of the western civilization, he says:

One nation preys on another,
 One sows the seed, another takes away the harvest.
 It is "wisdom" to snatch food from the weak and to rob
 their body of the soul.

The way of new cultures is to murder people;
 And this killing is done under the garb of commerce.
 These banks the result of clever Jew's
 Have taken away God's light from the heart of man.⁷

Human history had always witnessed continuous struggle to widen the differences on the basis of racial, communal, materialistic and regional distinctions. These differences had become a source of constant rift and conflict in human societies. Iqbal held that the reason behind all this chaos and conflict is lack of broader humanitarian values which hamper the individual and social development. Both individual and social development are complimentary to each other and better individual development proposes a better and well-structured society. In the present times, Iqbal's views of humanity and its unity has a lot of relevance in view of growing conflicts and wars consuming precious human lives, loss of resources and gross violation of human rights in most parts of the world. In such situations, Iqbal's message serves as a source of guidance to attain peace, communal harmony, world unity and human welfare. Iqbal's wisdom visualizes a new man for future society, a comprehensive all-round personality who is God fearing with the ability to create a just social order.⁸

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