

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v7i2.1516

Citation: AllahDino, Soomro, S., & Chandio, J. (2018). Muhammad Iqbal and Division of Sub-continent. Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 7(2), 319-327. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v7i2.1516>

Muhammad Iqbal and Division of Sub-continent

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Abstract

Muhammad Iqbal was not a professional politician but at certain stages of his life he showed a keen interest in the politics of the sub-continent. Even in the area, he handled many complex problems with remarkable insight and left a permanent mark on the events which molded the destiny of the million. His participation in the political issues of the day was based on sincerely and conviction. He cherished peace and orders more than anything else in life. In order to understand the various aspects of Iqbal's political career, it is essential to make a brief review of the contemporary political scene, when Iqbal turned his attention towards the political and constitutional problems which were ultimately to shape the future of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

Keywords: Muhammad Iqbal, Pakistan, Muslims, British, Hindus, Sub-continent, Practical politics, Independence.

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Introduction

The modern phase of Muslim politics started after the revolt of 1857. Some historians call it "The Mutiny" while others believe that it was a "War of Independence". However, students of history have no two opinions about the fact that it was an event of a very critical and decisive nature which had far-reaching repercussions on the later currents of politics. More than any other communities, the Muslims, as a nation, were deeply affected by its consequences. Their political, social, economic and educational life was totally unhinged and the horizons of their national existence were clouded with uncertainty, depression and frustration. The British suppressed the revolt with brutality and that marked the end of Muslim ascendancy over the land which the latter had governed with grandeur for several centuries. In alien domination, the Muslims also saw a threat to their religion.

Objectives of Study

Main purpose of this research is to find out the role of Muhammad Iqbal in creation of Pakistan. Further this study will give detailed answers of research question in light of political development in Sub-continent before creation of Pakistan. There is respectable number of works on Iqbal in English language but very few of them set out systematically to acquaint the reader with the heart of true work. This study will take expository and analytical approach to this subject and will fill the gaps of previous studies. As such, this study will not focus on the personal life of Iqbal and will not construct the philosophical thoughts of Iqbal literary contribution. Research will leave open question of development and change in Iqbal's thought.

Review of the Literature

Iqbal participated in practical politics in limited way. After his post-European profession, he presented speeches and addresses at many rallies held to voice Muslims' public opinion not only on domestic political matters, but also on international issues affecting the wider Islamic world. For three decades, he was in dialogs with many of Indian's distinguished political leaders. But perhaps his most enduring contribution to politics consist in his writing on the subject—essays, letters, addresses, and statements—that contain not only analysis and commentary, but also a series of constructive proposals on political thoughts (Mir, 2006).

There is hardly any other poet-philosopher in the world who developed his thought and art so steady and tangibly and who left such a deep and transforming impact on the minds on his people. Muhammad Iqbal's 'sphere of influence' is widening day by day, especially among the people who have to fight against slavery, despotism, despondency, demagoguery, injustice, high-handedness and lethargy. A sincere recipient of his stirring and inspiring message cannot but be the master of his fate and captain of his soul (waheed-uz-Zaman & Akhtar, 1993).

According to (Ahemd, 1968) Iqbal, like other most Indian Muslims or rather, like most other Indians must have observed with interest the political development that were taking place in the country. Furthermore, several of the Muslim social organizations with which Iqbal was closely associated aimed not only at protecting Muslims' rights as a religious community, but also at promoting Muslim education and creating general, not excluding political, awareness among Muslims. It seems, however, that Iqbal became seriously interested in political matters only during his stay in Europe, where he got the opportunity not only to study European politics thoughts, but also to examine and assess the disastrous consequences for European power of pursuit of nationalist policies on the continent, and of their imperialist policies abroad.

Muhammad Iqbal succeed to the post of being a first Muslim politician of sub-continent to have conceived the idea of Pakistan at the early stage of political career. And the most importantly he wanted to have an Islamic state. At first, Iqbal was in favor of united India which is depicted in his poem Tanana-e-Hind. At

later stage when he understood the solution of the downfall of Muslim nation was a separate Muslim, he altered the poem Trana-e-Hind to Tarana-e-Millat in which he redeemed as global Islamic Community (Sultan, April 16, 2012).

According to Hassan (Hassan, 1967), Iqbal had drunk deep of the Eastern and Western lore, and certain affinities between his thought and thinker of East and West are easily discernible. The author has tried to point out these affinities in a very interesting survey. Starting with Greek thought where two representatives, to whom Iqbal has referred frequently, Plato and Aristotle, are first described. The author says: "Greek thoughts which forms the basis of European philosophy did not have much attention for Iqbal. In fact, he vehemently criticized Plato, both in prose and poetry, for the evil effect of the latter's philosophy on Muslim thinking."

It can be safely remarked that by the beginning of the thirties, Iqbal had entered the front-rank politicians of the Muslim community. He continued his poetic and philosophic pursuits but later politics was also consuming an equal portion of his time. While the rest of the Muslim leaders fought for seats, Iqbal came out with an ideology which became the basis for the future political struggle of Muslims (Majumdar, 1962).

Muhammad Iqbal shaped the actual political culture in the politics of Sub-continent. He thoroughly examined and monitored the situation and became a dynamic Muslim activist. Later, due to mystic Islamic background he advocated Muslim nationalism at the cost of Nationalism in India. Further, Iqbal joined the Islamic political force during the dominant role of Indian National congress. However, according to Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World, he was not so active and skillful politician but proved to be the seen political mentor of Jinnah in regard to creation of separate Muslim homeland Pakistan (The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World, 1995).

Research Methods

For this research, secondary source of data collection has been utilized to collect the data. Thus, the systematic approach relies to conduct an in-depth analysis of official documents, books, research generals, essays and newspapers was conducted. Further, few scholars and poets were interviewed to generate the broad concept of research.

The methodological tools used were workshops, interviews, focus group discussions, review of document and data analysis. This research also captured quantitative key variables and applied these variables to assess the sources. After going through the review of literature few research questions have been generated to analyze the data.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, objectives and significance of the study, following research questions have been extracted that will be answered during the process of research:

- What was the role of Muhammad Iqbal in the establishment of Pakistan?
- Does Muhammad Iqbal played vital role for identify the political future of Muslims in Subcontinent?
- How Muhammad Iqbal shaped the independence of Pakistan?
- Is Muhammad Iqbal relevant in today's politics?

Muhammad Iqbal and the Sub-Continent's Politics (1905-1926)

The evolution of Iqbal's thoughts on nationalism with particular reference to the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, has been noticed earlier in detail. To begin with, he was a fervent nationalist, but even at the height of his nationalistic fervor, he was a Muslim first and a nationalist afterwards. His primary concern was the fate of the Muslim community in India (Ambastha, 2016). It was their interest, prestige and welfare which constantly kept his mind occupied. Both as an observer and a participant in practical politics, he kept the interests of his people in the forefront (Shamloo, 1948). Although, it was during his later years that Iqbal became involved with practical politics, even early in his life he did not hesitate to participate in movements which were meant to safeguard the political rights of the Muslim community.

After his return from England, Iqbal was mostly busy with his professional affairs, but he was fully aware of the political climate around him. An organization by the name of Muslim League was in existence in Punjab, even before the creation of the All-India Muslim League in 1906. Later the Punjab Muslim League was affiliated with the All-India Muslim League. Shah Din, who later on became the Chief Judge of the Punjab Chief Court, was the President of the Provincial Muslim League and Mian Mohammad Shahfi (later Sir Mohammad Shah) acted as the Secretary of this body. During this period, Iqbal was closely associated with the work of this organization, and used to participate in its deliberations. It is to be kept in mind that from 1910 to 1923 Iqbal's participation in politics was not active. His primary concentration was on poetic and philosophic works. He wrote stirring poetry which created political and religious awakening among the Muslims. It does not mean that Iqbal was a religious fanatic. His primary objective was to secure peace and freedom for all communities. This is meant to show that in spite of his specific views on Indian politics, Iqbal was ever desirous of promoting friendship and understanding among the various political parties (Ambastha, 2016). It is meant to answer those critics who, in view of Iqbal's advocacy of a separate Islamic state, accuse him of religious fanaticism.

Muhammad Iqbal, Nehru Report and Simon Commission

Although in the beginning Iqbal desired non-participation in the party politics of the country, from 1926 onwards he swiftly developed a close association with various Muslim political parties in which he held important offices. The political movements were extremely animated and Iqbal was conscious of the fact that contemporary political activity was crucial for the future political status of all communities. Nehru Report was the issue of the day. Muslim leaders held different opinions regarding this report. They were divided into three groups. The first group led by Maulana Azad and Dr. Ansari advocated the acceptance of the report in totality. The second group headed by Mr. Jinnah and the Raja of Mahmudabad and the third group consisted of Sir Mohammad Shafi and his followers who wanted to reject the Nehru Report completely. Iqbal belonged to the third group. It was on the question of the Nehru Report that the dissenting group of the Muslim League left the organization and under the leadership of Sir Mohammad Shah formed a parallel League called the "Shah League". In regard to the Nehru Report Iqbal entirely sided with Sir Mohammad Shah. He became the Secretary of the Shafi League.

While the Congress and the Muslim League were wrangling about the Nehru Report, the British Government sent the Simon Commission to make an on-the-spot enquiry about the future constitutional advancement of the country. The Simon Commission was boycotted both by the Congress and the Muslim League. But the Shah wing of the Muslim League had decided to co-operate with the Simon Commission. In order to prepare the draft of the representation, the Shah League had constituted a committee and Iqbal was one of its members. While the committee was busy drafting the representation, Iqbal was suddenly taken ill and went to Delhi for treatment. The Committee prepared the draft in his absence, and on return, Iqbal found that some vital points had been omitted from the final draft. Because of this, he was most

annoyed and resigned from the secretary ship of the Shah League. The effect of this resignation was that the representation was reshaped in the light of Iqbal's suggestions (Iqram, 1961). As a matter of principle Iqbal believed that in politics, debates and discussions were better than sticks and brickbats (Ambastha, 2016). In his opinion, the Muslims were not to hesitate to explain their position before the Commission, and along with Sir Mohammad Shah, he played a significant role in putting before the Commission the Muslim point of view. He also wrote a small poem in praise of the Simon Commission, in which he pointed out that the work of the Commission might open new vistas of hope and happiness.

The Muslim leadership had not been divided so badly as during the late twenties of this century (Ali, 1978). The Muslim League Jinnah wing which had decided to co-operate with the Congress and accepted the Nehru Report was thoroughly disappointed when, at the final meeting of the All-Parties Conference, its three minor amendments were rejected. It was at this juncture that the Muslim Conference came into existence with which Iqbal associated very closely.

Muhammad Iqbal and Muslim Conference

The Muslim Conference emerged out of a reaction which was felt among certain Muslim leaders against the conciliatory attitude of the AIML towards the Nehru Report (Batalvi, 1961, p. 219). The moving spirit behind it was Sir Fazl-i-Hussain, who was, at that time at the peak of his political career. Sir Mohammad Shah also worked effectively behind the scene in its deliberations. These leaders had support from all those elements of Muslim population who thought that the Nehru Report should be rejected in totality by the Muslims. On the 28th August, 1928, the Second Session of the All-Parties Conference was convened under the Chairmanship of Dr. Ansari. It was in this meeting that the Nehru Report was given its final shape. Maulana Mohammad Ali and Mr. Jinnah had gone abroad, Maulana Shaukat Ali was present, but his protestations were completely ignored.

Iqbal's association with the Muslim Conference was close and long. At first, he was the member of its Executive Council, and after that he presided at its annual session held at Lahore on the 1st March 1932. In his Presidential Address, he explained many complex issues of Indian politics with perspicacity and eloquence. He again voiced his apprehensions about the political philosophy of the Hindu community, which was patently western in origin and substance and thus, in his opinion, entirely unsuited to the conditions prevailing in the country (Ambastha, 2016) (Waqar, 2016). There was a climate of confusion. A reconciliation and synthesis of the two attitudes was an urgent need. Not only did Iqbal provide the keystone on which the ideological arch of Pakistan hinges, the one side of which consists of ulemas and the other of completely westernized people with a secular outlook, but he was also in favor of a new culture.

As a provincial legislator, he also kept a keen eye on the interests of his own community. He was conscious of the fact that the Muslims were not getting their due share in the administrative and educational life of the country (Waqar, 2016). The Hindus had established many educational institutions and most of the educational funds were consumed by them. He often brought this disparity to the notice of the government. In practical politics Iqbal's conduct was equally inspired by this spirit. He had an advantage over the professional politicians because he could bring forth the cool reflection of a philosopher to bear upon the complexities of public life.

Muhammad Iqbal and the Round Table Conferences

The most significant political events of the early thirties were the three Round Table Conferences, convened by the British Government in London to resolve some of the basic political and constitutional problems. In 1927, The Central Assembly in Delhi had passed a resolution suggesting that a Round Table Conference be convened in which representatives of the British Government and Indian people could participate in a face

to face discussion and iron out the differences about the future constitution of India. The British Government at that time completely ignored this resolution. The Labor Party in England had always been favorably disposed towards the freedom movement of India. It came to power in 1929 and wanted to show some gesture of sympathy to the Indian aspirations. So, it decided to convene a Round Table Conference in London, where British and Indian representatives could meet to find solutions to the main problems. The Viceroy had mentioned that the Indian representatives of various communities would be nominated by the Government, but maximum efforts would be made to provide representation to all major political parties. The Indian National Congress resented the Viceroy's suggestion and decided to boycott the conference. The Government, however, went ahead with its programme. At the Conference, the Muslim leaders emphasized their demands about the future constitution of India, they also referred to the type of relationship that would be maintained between Great Britain and India, and they also mentioned the gravity of the situation in the light of fast deteriorating communal conditions. At the primary session of the Round Table Conference, which began in London on November 12, 1930.

Iqbal participated in the second and the third sessions of the Conference. The representation was through Government nomination. Mr. Gandhi strove hard for the nomination of Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari but failed to achieve this object. Sir Fazl-i-Hussain again played a decisive role in the selection of the Muslim delegation. All the four new members were from the Muslim Conference, so that there was no danger to the unity of the Muslim view-point. The Agha Khan led the delegation. Iqbal was among the four new members. The Conference had two committees, the one on 'Federalism' and the other on 'Minorities'. Iqbal was selected as a member of the 'Minorities Committee'. In the Committee-meetings, he explained to Mr. Gandhi all the possible implications of the minority question and worked tirelessly to evolve some kind of compromise with the majority community but all efforts ended in failure (Waqar, 2016). After negotiating for a week behind the scene with minorities, Mr. Gandhi reported failure and suggested that the communal problem should be referred to the judicial tribunal after the constitution had been drafted. All the minorities jointly protested against this move, saying that the Hindus by indefinitely postponing the question of minorities, wanted to grab power themselves.

Seeing that the various communities had failed, to find a solution to the 'minority problem' in August, 1932, the Prime Minister of England announced his famous "Communal Award". It did not give the Muslims all that they had demanded, for instance they were given majority seats in Punjab but not in Bengal, but the "Award" did maintain that the communal electorates should continue. On 24th August, 1932, Iqbal issued a comprehensive statement on the Communal Award. He made many statement and made critical investigation of all aspects of the Award from the Muslim point of view, and through statistics and common sense, he tried to prove that the Muslims of the sub-continent were in no way gainers in this decision of the Government. But at the same time he felt that the Award, though inadequate from the point of view of the Muslims, was much better than the claims of the Congress, which was bent upon wiping out the very existence of the Muslim community as a separate political entity. The Congress working committee, in its resolution, neither accepted nor rejected the Award (Waqar, 2016). On 19th June, 1934, Iqbal issued a statement, condemning the Congress for such a nebulous stand on such a vital issue, and at the same time he advised the Muslims to hold fast to the Award with all its imperfections.

The Third Session of the Round Table Conference was convened in November, 1932. Iqbal was again nominated by the Government as a member of the Muslim delegation. He was nominated as a member of the Educational Committee of the Anglo-Indian community in the Conference, but it appears that he did not attend any meeting of this committee in most of the meetings of the conference his role was more or less of an observer. This time Iqbal took an opportunity to acquaint the political circles of Britain with his scheme, which he had formulated in the Allahabad Address.

The preceding discussion clarifies Iqbal's point of view on the communal problem to a considerable extent. He detested the establishment of a secular democracy of the western pattern, because it would reduce the Muslim community to a position of permanent minority, where its survival would depend upon the sweet will of the majority community. He opposed territorial nationalism because it would mean the disappearance of the Muslims as a historical and cultural entity in the land they had ruled with such distinction, for several centuries. Moreover, it would damage the religious and political ideology of the Muslims, which was their distinguishing feature. He wanted an honorable solution of the problem, which could assure the Muslims a respectable status in the political and constitutional system of the sub-continent, wherein they could live in the light of their religious and cultural requirements.

The need for a separate Muslim State was rooted in the political speculations of Iqbal, which he conveyed in his writings, all his life. He was dedicated to the cause of the Sharia and believed that Islam could play a vital role in the world of today. The Islamic social system, in his opinion, had some very effective principles which could guarantee peace and order for humanity. The Islamic socio-economic system provided enough scope to remove poverty of the Indian Muslims, and the laws of Islam still had enough potency to control the unrighteous and anti-social acts of man. The new state that he visualized would be a sort of pioneer project to demonstrate the basic utility of the Islamic ideology, and would afford an opportunity for the Muslims to develop through Ijtihad, an Islamic system which would be in consonance with the needs of modern times.

Conclusion

By 1935, Iqbal was convinced that the All-India Muslim League was the only political party among the Muslims, which could galvanize the national potential to safeguard the interests of the Muslim masses. At its Bombay Session in 1936, the All-India Muslim League authorized Mr. Jinnah to organize a Central Parliamentary Board to work for the forthcoming elections under the Government of India Act, 1935. Mr. Jinnah approached Sir Fazl-i-Hussain to help him in forming the Punjab Parliamentary Board on behalf of the Muslim League, but the latter refused to co-operate in this matter. Jinnah then turned to Iqbal, who readily agreed to give every possible help in the formation of the Punjab Parliamentary Board. The Punjab Muslim League under the leadership of Iqbal made every possible effort to mobilize men and material for the coming election.

Towards the close of Iqbal's life, the picture of Muslim politics was encouraging. He worked ceaselessly, with supreme honesty and sincerity, to bring unity of purpose and ideals among the Muslims. In 1937, he fell seriously ill and died in April 1938, but the later political currents in the sub-continent showed that his endeavors were not wasted.

Leadership in Iqbal's ideal state would arise as a result of an effort to replicate the qualities of the Prophet, whose leadership in all spheres of community life provides an eternal guide to the Muslims. Magnanimity, prudence, piety, courage to fight for righteous cause, forgiveness in a moment of triumph, fear of God and love of people are some of the characteristics which form the most suitable equipment for a Muslim leader. Loyalty to the Sharia and services to the people are the criteria to judge the competence of a leader. According to Iqbal leadership is not monopolistic in nature. Monopoly of power by an individual or a group is contrary to the Canon Law.

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