

Iqbal's Educational Thought about Self & Individuality: A Reflection of Islamic Philosophy

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Abstract

This qualitative study focused on the investigation of Allama Mohammad Iqbal's educational philosophy as a reflection of Islamic thought about the specific variables. Special reference was made to his thoughts about female education and his views about self and individuality. In order to look for the answers to the research questions two major sources were utilized for collection of relevant information. It mainly focused on Iqbal's poetical work/his verses regarding the research variables. Secondary sources e.g. different books and web sources were also utilized for relevant information. Furthermore, Quran verses were also presented for relevancy of his thought with that of an Islamic approach regarding the focused variables.

Findings of the study show that Iqbal was ever concerned about the belated plight of the Muslims, particularly the young youth. Similarly his views about female education and the role which they play in the development of the individual and his role in the community is crystal clear from his philosophy.

Key words: Iqbal's Educational Thought, Self & Individuality, Islamic Philosophy

Introduction

Allama Mohammad Iqbal was a poet philosopher who was born on November 9, 1876. Inspired by The philosophy of Iqbal is primarily the philosophy of self or ego. He concentrates on the individual because "the secret of divinity resides in edification of the self". If a true and proper self is developed, it means that the whole universe is awakened. For Iqbal, there is no universal life. Everything, every being possesses an individual self and its importance depends on the degree of its development. The idea of personality gives us a standard of values. It solves the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. Self is a sort

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of system and unity of psychic experiences and activities. This self is developed through the process of continuous experience.

According to Iqbal the individual is everything, the whole universe revolves around him. Similarly for the development of the individuality education is the only way and means. No educational theory can be developed without considering the individual.

According to Iqbal it should be the primary function of education that a proper individual/self in interaction with the environment should be developed. The educative process would be such that it may know the nature of individual and its environment, which solve problems of the individual and his environment as well.

It, therefore, should be kept in mind that what is the function of the individual and how the educate process can play its role regarding the individual function. To Iqbal individuality or ego is of paramount importance. He has discussed it in Persian Masnavi “Asrar-l-khudi” (The secrets of the self), and it has developed/presented in his poetical verses and in lectures, he had discussed it in detail.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate about the views of Iqbal about self/individuality
2. To search out relevant verses from the holy Quran regarding his philosophical thought

Research Questions

1. What views are held by Allama Iqbal about self/individuality?
2. Is there any relation between Iqbal’s philosophy and Islamic philosophy?

Method of Data Collection

Primarily two main sources were utilized for collection of relevant information

1. Allama Iqbal’s original work/his poetical collections
2. Relevant Quranic verses/Ayahs
3. Different books written by renowned authors
4. Web sources

Content analysis was made in order to elicit meaning from the data which could meet the purpose of the study.

The Concept of Self & Individuality:

The philosophy of Iqbal is primarily the philosophy of self or ego. He

concentrates on the individual because “the secret of divinity resides in edification of the self”. If a true and proper self is developed, it means that the whole universe is awakened. For Iqbal, there is no universal life. Everything, every being possesses an individual self and its importance depends on the degree of its development.

"كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ"¹

"You are the best Ummah made for the benefit of humanity."

The idea of personality gives us a standard of values. It solves the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. Self is a sort of system and unity of psychic experiences and activities. This self is developed through the process of continuous experience.

Self is directive in its essential nature. This self is given the name of “id” by Plato. According to Plato id rules supremely but “ego” interrupts and thus brings reconciliation between id and super-ego.

Thus ego is not a thing but is an act. It is kind of tension caused by environment. Thus, the ego and environment invades each other².

In recent times subjects like psychology, biology and educational theory have given it special attention. Educationists and social thinkers are concerned with the problem of giving a place to the human individuality. To him self-hood or individuality is the center of human organization. He says that one’s self should be so developed that even God would acknowledge his self.

"Verily, God will not change the condition of men,
Till they change what is in them."

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ³

"Allah will never change the state of the people until they change themselves"

Hegel and his disciples maintain that it should be the objective of man/individual to lose his identity in the Absolute. But Iqbal contradicts this view and says that it should not be man’s moral and religious ideal to absorb himself into eternal self but to maintain his precious individually. The individuality aspires for the attainment of highest ego, so it should be the aim of education, according to Iqbal, that it should be strengthened. It means that the individuality of all persons should be realized in the educative process.

Regarding his philosophy of individuality one may ask where is the fountain from which he took his ideas and developed his thought/philosophy.

"إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ"⁴

“The believers are but one brotherhood.”

The answer is that he was a staunch Muslim with a firm belief in God and prophet-hood that's why he formulated a philosophy which is basically an Islamic philosophy.

For the development of ego/individuality, the teacher can play a vital role i.e. he can instigate his pupils for holding high ideals and then motivates them for achieving these ideals.

Iqbal points out to the Quranic concept that Quran is imperial in its attitude and holds that in the domain of knowledge, scientific or religious, complete independence of thought from concrete experience is not possible.

"وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ"⁵

"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect."

The characteristic of a good individual is that he should not depend on others but should make himself as strong and dignified that he should earn his livelihood for himself as well as should fulfill the needs of others. Such measures should be adopted in the school curriculum that this quality might be developed in the individual. After which he can benefit by himself as well as render his services for others. In this regard he gives his opinion thus.

"Asking disintegrates the self

And deprives of illumination the Sinai bush of the self

By asking poverty is made more abject

By begging the beggar is made poorer"⁶

To give the individual his own identity i.e. a true Islamic figure/identity, he separates East from the West. He advises the Muslim Youth that they should not follow the West but should follow their own ideals. Because the West has enwrapped the development of the East and has repressed their creativity. He addresses them in the following manner.

"Not indebted to the glass makers of the West.

Make thy flagon and cup with the clay of Ind⁷."

Our educational system should be formulated on such Islamic lines that it provides opportunities for the development of the individual on true Islamic lines. Iqbal deplores greatly that our youth is intoxicated with the Western culture and education. They receive Western education but has forgot about their past glory and history. They no longer adore and admire their own values; instead they have become the follower of such a nation which does not have their own scientific or educational theories. They have imitated the Muslim scientists and physicists and the basis of their theories the West has developed

their education. So the Muslim youth should not blindly follow the West but they should be proud of their ancestors and their works.

Iqbal deeply regrets that the Muslim youth has acquired knowledge from the strangers and they have put up their ideas in their mind. Iqbal says that whenever I look at you, I do not know whether it is you or someone else. In these verses he forcefully argues their point.

'How long this circling round the assembly's fire?
Have you a heart? Then burn yourself in your own fire.
An individual becomes unique through self-realization
A nation becomes truly itself when it is true to itself'.⁸ "

Courage

Iqbal believes that the cultivation of an attitude of courage is essential for the proper education of character. This education should be on such lines as to eradicate all influences which tend to produce an attitude of fear.

The source of this courage exemplified by the faithful is their fear of Allah. Because, Allah instructs us in the Qur'an:

"وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آتَمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ"⁹

"Do not conceal testimony. If someone does conceal it, his heart commits a crime. Allah knows what you do."

Courage can be cultivated as an attribute of character by making Tawhid (monotheism) an active working principle of conduct. This, according to Iqbal, implies a rejection of all fears except the fear of God, a surrender of our will and purposes to his increasing purpose and an attitude of manly defiance towards all other powers which may threaten to arrest our freedom of thought and development and the exercise of our legitimate human rights.

Courage, according to the Qur'an, requires fearing nothing and no one other than Allah. An example of such exemplary behavior is given in the Qur'an:

"الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا"¹⁰

"(Prophets are) those who conveyed Allah's Message and feared Him, fearing no one except Allah. Allah suffices as a Reckoner. "

Our generation has been growing up with cramped natures, lacking initiative, courage and self-reliance. They are limited in their sympathies, narrow in their loyalties, and timid in the formation of their purpose. It is love, in the sense in which Iqbal capacity for great needs, gives an explosive and dynamic quality to individuality.

"When love teaches the ways of self-respect,
The secrets of domination are revealed to the slaves!
The faqir whose faqr savors of the faqr of Ali

Is superior to Darius and Alexander!
Courage and truth are the attributes of brave,
The lions of Allah do not know fear!"¹¹

Tolerance

The second quality which Iqbal considers to be an essential constituent of the good character is tolerance. True tolerance must find a place in any pattern of thought which lays stress on individuality. If individuality is to be developed to its fullest extent in all members of a community, in-tolerance will be suicidal, as it will lead to perpetual conflict and clashes and thus arrest the desired development.

It is the utmost duty of our educational system that in the individual's personality tolerance should be developed. To behave with other people in such a way their good arguments should be accepted and their bad responses should be tolerated and improvised.

Faqr or Istighna

The third quality that of Faqr or istighna has come in for great stress in the late writing of Iqbal. What is this Faqr? When man is engaged in the conquest of his world, he should retain an inner attitude of detachment and superiority to his material possession-this is Faqr.

"Verily, Allah has revealed to me that you should adopt humility. So that no one may wrong another and no one may be disdainful and haughty towards another.
[Muslim]"

It is kind of intellectual and emotional asceticism which does not turn away from the world as a source of evil and corruption but uses it for the pursuit of good and worthy ends. It gives the right intellectual and emotional tone to individuality.

"The objective of knowledge is the purity of the intellect.
The objective of Faqr is the purity of the heart and the vision!
When the sword of the self is sharpened on the whet-stone of Faqr.
The stroke of a single soldier acquires the might of an army."

He sums up this character epigrammatically thus:

"He is flashing sword against for untruth.
And a protecting shield for truth!
His affirmation and negation
Are the criterion of good and evil
Great is his forgiveness, his justice, his generosity and his grace, Even in anger
he knows how to be kind!"¹²

Individual and Community

Iqbal attached the highest value to individual but, and this is a significant characteristic of his thought he never allowed himself to be betrayed into a one sided extreme position. With his broad vision and keen insight, he takes a balanced view of their respective claims. Not only he riders his attention and concentration on individuality but he duty recognizes the importance of the cultural patterns of community life, which some modern educationists have tended to ignore in their eagerness to stress individuality as the end of educative process and the goal of social endeavor.

Iqbal has discussed the issue with keen insight in his Masnavi, Rumuz0i-Bekhudi (The mysteries of selflessness), which is a thought elucidation o the nature of relationship between the individual and the cultural life of the community in which he lives, moves and has his being.

"وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ"¹³

“Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your lord and cherisher. Therefore, fear me (and no other).”

Alone he is weak and powerless, his energies are scattered and his aims narrow, diffuse and indefinite. It is active and living membership of a vital community that confers on him a sense of power and makes him conscious of great collective purposes which deepen and widen the scope for the growth of his individual self.

"The individual gains significance through the community.

The community achieves its organization through individuals¹⁴."

“The individual who loses himself in the community” i.e., in the service of its great ideals and purposes- “reflects both the past and the future as in a mirror so that he transcends mortality and enters into the life of Islam which is infinite and everlasting”¹⁵.

When the individual mixes himself in the life of the community and fulfills the needs and aspirations of that society the individual should remain in Islamic bonds

“The individual exists as a part of society.

Alone he is nothing.

A wave is a wave only inside the river.

Outside of it, it is nothing.

The individual lost in the community

Is like a drop which, seeking to expand, becomes an ocean¹⁶."

Iqbal has laid certain conditions for an ideal society. This society must have a spiritual basis which is provided by the principle of monotheism. “The stat, according to Islam, is only an effort to realize the spiritual in a human organization”.

"وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعَ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ"¹⁷

"Thus have we made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Apostle a witness over yourselves....."

The new culture finds the foundation of world unity in the principle of Tawhid (Monotheism). It demands loyalty to God.

Iqbal cherishes the vision of a world state in which all the Muslims would form an indivisible community. He accuses "Nationalism (in the narrow sense of the word) as well as imperialism of destroying the feelings of brotherhood of sowing the seeds of war and of robbing us of paradise".

It can only be possible through an Islamic society that the individuals will be united into one community and will work like one being.

The individual, in isolation, is like a particle of dust swayed here and there by the wind but when this individual forms a community in collaboration with other individuals, it becomes strong and consequently a stable society.

He advises the individual that he should not confine himself only to his inner self but also strive for overcoming the whole universe because God himself wants him to conquer the universes and he should be pessimistic; Iqbal points to the fact in these words:

"O fool; It was you who become satisfied with a few rose buds.

The garden was so full of roses that it would have enough for you"

For him, the development of individuality inevitably implies what he has called "the principle of movement in thought" without which the wings of the human spirit become clipped and it tends to subsist only on fruitless, "worn-out ideas". The relationship between the individual and the community must, therefore, be interpreted as one of dynamic, mutually enriching give – and take and education should be oriented accordingly.

Findings and Conclusion

Iqbal always remains deeply concerned about the depressed state of Muslims. He got an eagle eye to look deep into the frivolities in which all the Muslims in general and the youth in particular had been led astray. Iqbal, through his verses and lectures, had tried to convey his message to the Muslim youth to come out of their slumber and revive in them the spirit and enthusiasm which their forefathers had once possessed. The Quranic verses (Ayats) have put strong emphasis on the making of individual life with a true Islamic face and so Allama Iqbal too in his poetry has delineated the true

character of Muslim youth. He had foreseen and anticipated the dangers which were in store for the Muslims if they don't shun the footprints of the West and Non-Muslims. He gave them the lesson of self, ego hood and individuality. He also greatly supported female education and stressed that they should be given equal opportunity of education in order to help boost the character of their offspring and make them true Muslims. It is recommended that the teaching of Quran and Hadith must be made compulsory for the development of a true Islamic character. Individual efforts should be appreciated but collectivism is equally important in Islam.

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