

# Muslim Nationalism: Iqbal's Synthesis of Pan-Islamism and Nationalism\*

by  
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Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was a man of great many ideas—sublime and serene, dynamic and romantic, provocative and profound. He was both a great poet and a serious thinker; but in poetic works lies enshrined most of his thought. It seems rather platitudinous to say, but it is important to note, that a poet is essentially a man of moods, and enjoys a sort of poetic license which is scrupulously denied to a prose-writer. Since a poet usually gives utterance to his reactions to a given situation, his utterances and ideas need not always be compatible with one another. Such was the case with Iqbal.

During his poetic career, spanning some four decades, Iqbal had imbibed, approved, applauded and commended a great many ideas—ideas which occupied various positions along the spectrum on the philosophic, social, and political plane. Thus, at one time or another, he commended or denounced nationalism; propagated pan-Islamism and world Muslim unity; criticised the West for its materialism, for its cut-throat competition and for its values while applauding the East for its spiritualism and its concern for the soul; and condemned capitalism while preaching “a kind of vague socialism.”<sup>1</sup> While, on the one hand, he steadfastly stood for “the freedom of *ijtihad* with a view to rebuild the law of *Shari'at* in the light of modern thought and experience,”<sup>2</sup> and even attempted to reformulate the doctrines of Islam in the light of twentieth

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<sup>1</sup>H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1975) p. 157; (hereafter *Reconstruction*).

century requirements *a la* St. Augustine, he, on the other, also defended the orthodox position and the conservatism of Indian Islam on some counts. Though “inescapably entangled in the net of Sufi thought,”<sup>3</sup> he yet considered popular mysticism or “the kind of mysticism which blinked actualities, enervated the people and kept them steeped in all kinds of superstitions” as one of the primary causes of Muslim decline and downfall.<sup>4</sup>

It is to this aspect of Iqbal that Professor Hamilton A.R. Gibb was referring when he suggested:

Perhaps the right way to look at Iqbal is to see in him one who reflected and put into vivid words the diverse currents of ideas that were agitating the minds of Indian Muslims. His sensitive poetic temperament mirrored all that impinged upon it — the backward-looking romanticism of the liberals, the socialist leanings of the younger intellectuals, the longing of the militant Muslim Leaguers for a strong leader to restore the political power of Islam. Every Indian Muslim, dissatisfied with the state of things — religious, social, or political — could and did find in Iqbal a sympathizer with his troubles and his aspirations and an adviser who bade him seek the way out by self-expression.<sup>5</sup>

Be that as it may, there was yet one underlying theme in his thought and action throughout the whole span of his active life that held together his thoughts and ideas, diverse though they might be and were — viz., the rehabilitation of Muslims in the contemporary world.<sup>6</sup> It is not usually recognized that it was this goal that led him to develop the passion for Islam and to work and yearn for an Islamic resurgence in the twentieth century. His arrival at this higher ideal indicated his recognition of the fact that the regeneration of Muslims could not be accomplished but only within an Islamic framework, nor could it be brought about without an Islamic resurgence. Once Iqbal came to recognize this basic fact, he began seeing the travails of, and the calamities suffered by, Muslim peoples in a new perspective, even considering them as the harbinger of a new dawn. For instance, consider his comment on the defeat and

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<sup>3</sup>Gibb, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Latif Ahmad Sherwani (ed.), *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 3rd ed. 1977), p. 191; see also *Reconstruction*, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup>Gibb, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>For instance, see his “Saqlia”, “Bilad-i-Islamia”, “Mahasarah-i-Aderna” in *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Urdu) (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 3rd ed., 1977), pp. 133-34, 145-46, 216-17; hereafter *Kulliyat* (Urdu). See also “Nala-i-Yatim” in Anwar Haris (ed.), *Rakht-i-Safar* (Karachi: the compiler, 2nd ed., 1977), pp. 42-55.



desolation of the Ottomans in the First World War:<sup>7</sup>

اگر شمشایوں پر کو غم ٹوٹا تو کیا غم ہے کہ خونِ محمد نزارا بچ سے بہتا ہے سر پہ

What does it matter — if a thousand calamities befell the Ottomans?  
After all — out of the destruction of a hundred thousand stars does  
the Dawn emerge!

In any case, it was his devotion to the cause of Muslim regeneration that led him to adopt various political philosophies at various stages in his life. Without attempting to identify the numerous currents and cross-currents in his political thought, one may still pinpoint three important bench-marks, each representing a distinct phase and philosophy but not merging into the other. For the sake of convenience, these may be termed as the nationalistic, pan-Islamic and Muslim-nationalism phases. The rest of the paper attempts to discuss how Iqbal arrived at the last phase via the earlier ones.

It is common knowledge that Iqbal entered the corridor of fame as a nationalist poet. In this phase, he was profoundly influenced by the spirit of nationalism abroad, and gave eloquent utterance to feelings of patriotism. He sang of India, its rivers, its mountains, its countryside as well as of its glorious past and its cultural heritage. In the same vein were cast the trilogy—*tirana-i-Hindi, Hindustani Bacchon Ka Qauomi Geet* and *Naya Shiwala*. Not only did Iqbal laud India to the high skies, putting her on a pedestal higher than Greece, Egypt and Rome<sup>8</sup> — the chief citadels of ancient civilization; he also saw divinity “in each speck of the country’s poor dust.”<sup>9</sup> Alongside, while his constant refrain was that religion did not preach “enmity” ( *بغی* )<sup>10</sup>, he even accused “our God” of setting “his preachers to scold and to revile.”<sup>11</sup>

This phase came to an abrupt end after Iqbal’s visit to Europe, 1905-08. Before his European sojourn, Iqbal had opted for nationalism

<sup>7</sup> *Kulliyat* (urdu), p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> یونان و مصر و روم اسب بٹ گئے جہاں سے اب تک مگر ہے اپنی نام و نشان ہمارا

Greece, Egypt and Rome have lost their place in the world! But — still intact are our name and place! *Kulliyat* (Urdu), p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> پتھر کی سورتوں میں کھسا ہے تو خدا ہے خاکِ وطن کا بھوکو ہر تڑپ دینا ہے

That God dwells in stone-idols, you fancied!  
But in each speck of my country’s dust, I see deity.  
*Kulliyat* (Urdu), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> مذہب نہیں سیکھا آپس میں بیکرکتا ہندی ہیں ہم وطن سے سارا جہاں ہمارا

To be hostile to one another, Religion teaches not!  
Indians are we all, and Hindustan our country.  
*Kulliyat* (Urdu), p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> انہوں سے بیکرکتا تو نے جنہوں سے سیکھا جنگِ دہل بکھا! واعظ کو بھی خواتے

From these idols you (O’ Brahman) have learned hatred of even those close to you,  
To his preachers likewise, Allah has taught squabble and strife.  
*Kulliyat* (Urdu), p. 88.

because he felt that the regeneration of Indian Muslims lay in their marching together with other communities towards a nationalist dispensation — in the raising of “a new altar” (*Naya Shiwala*), without reference to religion. But, now, as events from the Bengal partition (1905) days indicated even his fellow Muslims in India were having serious mental reservations about the sort of nationalism preached and propagated from the predominantly Hindu Congress platform. True to his grain as a poet mirroring his people’s hopes and fears, ambitions, and aspirations, Iqbal was also inextricably caught up in this wave of Muslim skepticism about Indian nationalism.

Besides, his grounding in Western philosophy, his initiation into modern Western thought and his close contact with Western life seemed to have acted as a catalyst, enabling him to perceive things in a wider perspective and in clearer terms. From the vantage point of an European base, Iqbal could easily see that the onward march of nationalism had bred racialism in several Muslim countries. Under the impact of nationalism and in order to build up their own separate nationalistic altars, the Turks, the Egyptians, the Iranians, and the Arabs had tended to emphasize their particular racial origins and their racial separation from each other, thereby rivening the Islamic concept of *ummah*, enfeebling the Muslim world and, in consequence, laying it all the more open to Western designs, aggression, and exploitation.

What, then, was the remedy? It lay in Muslims holding together — in pan-Islam. An answer to this question had been attempted by Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-96) a few decades earlier, and despite the march of events in the previous two or three decades, the Afghani legacy still dominated the Muslim mind to the point of becoming its magnificent obsession.<sup>12</sup> This was particularly true of Indian Islam — as evidenced by their reaction to the unprovoked Italian raid on Tripoli (1911), the Balkan War (1912-14) and the still later Khilafat question (1918-24).<sup>13</sup> Despite the dizzy heights that Iqbal had often times reached in the realm of philosophy, religion, and poetry, he was essentially a product of Indian Islam. Not only could he not shed the Afghani legacy; he was also a great admirer of Afghani — as several of his later poems indicate.<sup>14</sup>

Little surprising, then, that like Afghani, Iqbal came to the pan-Islamic ideal in response to a desperate situation confronting the Muslim world. The credo of the Young Turks, the revolt of Sharif Husain of Makkah (1916), the Sykes-Picot Pact (1916) stipulating the division of

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<sup>12</sup>See Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1921), ch. II.

<sup>13</sup>See Sharif al Mujahid, “Pan-Islamism” in *A History of Freedom Movement* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), pp. 88-117.

<sup>14</sup>For instance, see the three poems on Afghani in *Jawid Nama: Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* (Persian) (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 2nd ed., 1975), pp. 647-49, 650-51, 665-70.



conquered Ottoman territories among the victorious Allied powers, the iniquitous Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 establishing a “national home” for the Jews in Palestine, and the earlier (1907-09) strangulation of the Persian constitution — all these events portended that not only had the Muslim peoples, now isolated from one another, become a convenient target of Western designs but that mundane Islam itself had also reached its nadir. Hence Iqbal’s chastisement of Muslims for becoming race-conscious and race-oriented, his exhortation for the building up of a single *millat* or *ummah*, and his clarion call to Muslims to unite for the defence of *Baitul Haram* from the banks of the Nile to the frontiers of Kashgar.<sup>15</sup>

While commending Islam as the supreme bond between Muslims, Iqbal denounced the concept of *Watniyat*<sup>16</sup> (nationalism) which, he felt, had divided Muslims and riven the Muslim world. Nationalism and pan-Islamism, it may be remembered, are competing ideologies — the one founded on the communality of race, language and territory, and the other on the common legacy of a universal religion, and a cosmopolitan culture. They do not represent the two ends of a continuum, but a dichotomy. Hence Iqbal’s abandonment of nationalism for pan-Islamism represents a radical shift in his position, and not an evolution of his thought.

Although Iqbal held to his pan-Islamic orientation for over two decades, a keen observer of Muslim affairs such as he was, he could not have escaped perceiving the harsh fact that his panacea of pan-Islam in its idealistic and classical form was not propitious or relevant in the Muslim world situation of the ’twenties. For good or for ill, several Muslim countries had opted for nationalism and for politics based on *asabiyat* — i.e., racial and/or linguistic unity — and were seeking nationalist solutions to their problems. Nationalism was a fact of life in almost all the Muslim countries, with territorial frontiers constituting an integral part of the basis of nationhood in Muslim countries as well as in the post-war era. Nothing perhaps dramatized this as the turning away, in 1920, by the Afghan authorities of the Muslim emigrants who trekked to the Afghan borders in quest of a *Darul-Islam* under the impulse of the

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<sup>15</sup> ایک نیشنل مسلم مردم کی پیمائش کے لیے نیل کے ساحل سے لے کر آریزا تک کا سفر

From the banks of the Nile

to the soil of Kashgar

The Muslims should be united

For the protection of their sanctuary.

*Kulliyat* (Urdu), p. 265. Trans. by Tariq and Aziz, *The Guide: Iqbal’s “Khizar-e-Raah”* (Lahore: Pan-Islamic Publications, 1954), p. 32.

<sup>16</sup>For instance, see his poem on Husain Ahmad, *Kulliyat* (Urdu) p. 691; “Wataniyat”, *ibid.*, pp. 160-61. See also his statement on Islam and Nationalism in reply to Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani’s statement, published in *Ehean* (Lahore), 9 March 1938; cited in Sherwani, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-63.

*Hijrat* edict of their *ulama* during the Khilafat movement.<sup>17</sup> In any case, each one of the Muslim countries was going its own separate way under the impact of nationalism.

Iqbal could not have possibly ignored all this — and much more. “True statesmanship”, he told his audience at the Allahabad (1930) League session,

cannot ignore facts, however unpleasant they may be. The only practical course is not to assume the existence of a state of things which does not exist, but to recognize facts as they are, and to exploit them to our greatest advantage.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, it seems but logical that deeply concerned as Iqbal was to see the Muslim peoples remain firmly anchored to their pristine Islamic legacy and heritage, he tried to resolve the conflict between nationalism, the fact of life, and pan-Islamism, the ideal towards which he would like to see them strive. Thus, Iqbal, like Afghani, arrived at the concept of “Islamic”—but, more accurately, Muslim—nationalism.<sup>19</sup> While preaching and working for pan-Islam, Afghani, it may be remembered, had also supported local nationalisms wherever he found them to fit in within the broad framework of his ultimate goals.<sup>20</sup>

Despite his initial distrust of nationalism, Iqbal, it may be argued, could reconcile himself to it, if only because he found that “no non-Muslim group has cut across a Muslim society for a nationalist one.”<sup>21</sup> To quote Prof. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a perceptive observer of the Muslim world in recent times.

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<sup>17</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1925, volume I, *The Islamic World Since the Peace Settlement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 555; F.S. Briggs, “The Indian Hijrat of 1920”, *The Moslem World*, xx: 2, April 1930, pp. 164-68; Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1920* (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1921), pp. 51-53; P.C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements* (Delhi: Government of India, 1925); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1946), p. 202-3.

<sup>18</sup>Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan* (Karachi: National Publishing House Limited, 1970), II: 157; (hereafter *Foundations of Pakistan*).

<sup>19</sup>Toynbee (*op.cit.*, p.7) describes “the new-born Islamic Nationalism” as “a middle term between the ‘Herodian’ and the ‘Zealot’ reaction to the West”, that had “discarded the most individual features of both” and refers to the “defiance of the victorious Allies by the defeated Turks within less than a year after the Armistice of 30th October, 1918” as “the classic example” of the new Islamic Nationalism manifesting itself “in acts of courage and even heroism” (p.9). For extended discussion, see Stoddard, *op.cit.*, ch. V.

<sup>20</sup>See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 48. See also Sharif al Mujahid, “Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani”, unpublished Master’s thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1954, chapter III.

<sup>21</sup>Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, p. 80.



... Wherever nationalism has been adopted in the Muslim world, and in whatever form, the 'nation' concerned has been a Muslim group. No Muslim people has evolved a national feeling that has meant a loyalty to or even concern for a community transcending the bounds of Islam.<sup>22</sup>

... Muslim groups differ as to the degree to which the Islamic innerplay with nationalism is overt and explicit. They do not differ in the fact that everywhere their nationalisms are enthusiasm for Muslim nations.<sup>23</sup>

At another place, Prof. Smith remarks,<sup>24</sup>

... the driving force of nationalism has become more and more religious the more the movement has penetrated the masses. Even where the leaders and the form and the ideas of the movement have been nationalist on a more or less Western pattern, the followers and the substance and the emotions were significantly Islamic. (The Westernizing leaders have frequently been surprised to discover the degree to which they have let loose an Islamic upsurge.)

An enthusiast for Islam as Iqbal was, he could take comfort from these positive aspects of nationalist developments in various Muslim countries. He could particularly feel satisfied with the developments nearer home since the early 'twenties. For, the striking test of Muslims giving allegiance to a predominantly non-Islamic nationalism was India. Here, for a while, the Muslims generally "gave themselves with zeal" to a composite Hindu/Muslim, Indian nationalism,<sup>25</sup> but then the general Muslim group turned against it, and "Indian nationalism. . . presently collapsed in shreds so far as the general Muslim group was concerned."<sup>26</sup> This development underlined, among others, one basic fact of Muslims vis-a-vis nationalism: "A non-Islamic nationalism could not, for Muslims, stand against them."<sup>27</sup> The Indian experiment also showed that "the appeal to the Muslim group for loyalty to a society other than its own

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 75; see also pp. 74, 76.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

religious one”<sup>28</sup> was bound to fail sooner or later.<sup>29</sup>

Heartening as these developments were from an Islamic viewpoint, it was also found that nationalist movements in various Muslim countries — in Turkey, in Iran, in Egypt, and elsewhere — provided at that time the only means for getting rid of foreign domination or for successfully withstanding Western designs, as well as for rehabilitating mundane Islam in these countries. It was this realization that led Iqbal, it may be argued, to applaud the new (nationalist) experiments in various Muslim countries, notably in Turkey. While in 1924, Iqbal had bemoaned the abolition of the caliphate with the verse, *Lo! the unthinking Turks have torn asunder the mantle of Khilafat,*<sup>30</sup> five years later, he defended Mustapha Kemal Ataturk's (1880-1938) precipitate and extremely controversial decision.<sup>31</sup> More important, he even went to the extent of considering “perfectly sound” Turkey's *ijtihad* in vesting caliphate or *imamat* “in a body of persons, or an elected Assembly.”<sup>32</sup> If the one represented the anguished cry of a pan-Islamist, the other represented the enthusiastic defence of a nationalist venture by the leader, however much accredited, of a single Muslim country in a matter intrinsically Islamic, without consulting — in fact in complete disregard of the consensus of—the rest of the Muslim world.<sup>33</sup> This indicated how far afield had Iqbal travelled from his pristine pan-Islamic stance and orientation.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>29</sup>The reason for this was that in predominantly non-Muslim countries such as India, Russia and China, however, the Muslims, as minorities, “had little to gain and much to lose by the spread of nationalism into the countries where they lived.” Toynbee, *op.cit.*, p. 39; see also pp. 46-47.

چک کر دی ترک تاراں نے خلافت کی جیسا

<sup>30</sup>See also:

خلافت کی پہن اُنیاں ہوں پر اس تو راہ لاکھیں سے دُھونڈ کر اسلاں کا تپ و جگر

Go! search somewhere

And bring the Heart and the Soul

Of thy great Ancestors:

So that ye may once again,

In this world, raise the Foundation

Of the long-forgotten Caliphate

*Kulliyat* (Urdu) p. 265. Trans. Tariq and Aziz, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup>*Reconstruction*, p. 157. Iqbal seems to have written (but not published) the lecture on “*Ijtihad*” by 1924-25 since Murray T. Titus includes quotes from the unpublished essay in his “The Reaction of Moslem India to Western Islam” in John R. Mott (ed.), *The Moslem World Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), pp. 98-104.

<sup>32</sup>*Reconstruction*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup>For instance, the Indian Muslims were completely aghast at this precipitate Turkish decision; see Sharif al Mujahid, “*The Khilafat Movement*”, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. XXVII: part IV (October 1978), pp. 307-10; Mott, *op.cit.*, pp. 96-98.



It is also significant that this shift was not confined merely to an isolated but crucial incident in the post-war Muslim world; it was also reflected in the new political framework Iqbal proffered to the Muslim world, torn as it was between the imperative need to find nationalist solutions to their desperate problems and the longing passion for pan-Islamism. Following Zia Gokalp (1875/76-1924), the chief theoretician of Turkish nationalism, Iqbal advocated multi-nationalism — with a view, of course, to energizing Muslims and rehabilitating Islam.

For the present [he advocated in 1928/29], every Muslim nation must sink into her deeper self, temporarily focus her vision on herself alone, until all are strong and powerful to form a living family of republics. A true and living unity, according to the nationalist thinkers, is not so easy as to be achieved by a merely symbolical overlordship. 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 Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and *not for restricting the social horizon of its members*.<sup>34</sup>

In advocating multi-nationalism in Islam, Iqbal seemed to have taken the cue from Mustafa Kemal. Imbued with a tremendous sense of realism as he was, Kemal, instead of attempting to resuscitate as it were the ghost of a universal Islamic empire, envisaged in separate sovereign national states for the various Muslim peoples. In a message to the Central Khilafat Committee, dated 10 March 1922, the would-be *desmanteler* of Khilafat had said:<sup>35</sup>

The dream of the centuries, cherished by Muslims, that the Caliphate should be an Islamic government including them all, has never proved realizable. It has rather been a cause of dissensions, of anarchy, of the war between the believers. Better apprehended, the interests of all have made clear this truth: that the duty of the Muslims is to arrange distinct governments for themselves. The true bond between them is the conviction that “all believers are brethren.”

Though similar, Kemal's and Iqbal's ideas yet differed in one fundamental respect: Whereas Kemal was for *restricting* the social horizon of the Turks to Turkey alone, Iqbal was *against* “restricting the

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<sup>34</sup>*Reconstruction*, p. 159.

<sup>35</sup>Cited in Zaki Ali, *the World of Islam* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1947), p. 92; and M. Ahmad, *Pakistan and the Middle East* (Karachi: Kitabi Markaz, 1948), p. 157. The version in Ahmad, though similar in substance, is somewhat differently worded.

social horizon” of the members of a Muslim nation. This crucial difference made Kemal’s multi-nationalism concept essentially nationalistic while making Iqbal’s basically pan-Islamic.

Even so, this new stance represents a radical shift in Iqbal’s previous position: from the high pedestal of a universal Islamic state he comes down to the more prosaic and pragmatic plane of separate but “strong and powerful” (i.e., independent) Muslim states. It is interesting that he even cites Ibn Khaldun’s (1332-1406) views in regard to the “three distinct views of the idea of Universal Caliphate in Islam” as well as of Qazi Abu Bakr Baqilani in respect of “the condition of Qarshiyat” to buttress his line of argument which, of course, is informed by a high degree of eclecticism. After all, why great “ruptures in Islam for the sake of a mere symbol of power which [had] departed long ago?”<sup>36</sup>

Even so, an Islamicist that he was, Iqbal was anxious to make sure that instead of replacing Islam, nationalism serves the ends of mundane Islam. Hence while he could not, in view of post-war developments in the Muslim world, shy away from recognizing artificial boundaries and racial distinctions, he very much wanted to make sure that they should not be allowed to restrict the social horizon of Muslims. And as long as this horizon was based on Islam, there was every hope that nationalism would turn into an enthusiasm for Islam, that the ethos would remain essentially Islamic, and that the door for cooperation between various Muslim countries would remain wide open.

It may be argued that in composing a good many of his works in Persian, instead of writing in Urdu only—the *lingua franca* of his fellow Muslims in India—Iqbal was seeking to keep intact the horizon and cultural tradition of Indian Islam. It is significant that while Turkey and Iran opted for romanized Turkish and de-Arabicised Iranian (or Persian) alphabets under nationalist impulse and had broken the Islamic linguistic tradition, Iqbal sought to retain that tradition and wrote in Persian which may be termed as the intermediary language between Arabic and other languages in the Islamic world.

Thus, Iqbal sought to resolve the sore conflict inherent in the nationalism-pan-Islamism dichotomy through the formulation of a synthetic concept of “Muslim nationalism.”<sup>37</sup> A cross between the two competing ideologies, “Muslim nationalism” claims attributes of both, but in varying measure. While the structural appurtenances and format are cast in the nationalist framework, the ethos are inspired by Islam. It is a translation, on the political plane, of Iqbal’s self-perception of his own message:<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>*Reconstruction*, p. 158.

<sup>37</sup>See above, note 19.

<sup>38</sup>*Kulliyat* (Urdu) p. 170.



عجی غم ہے تو کیا، اے توجہ بازی ہے مری نغمہ بندی ہے تو کیا، اے توجہ بازی ہے مری

What — if my goblet is non Arab?

Its contents are Hijazi, after all!

What — if my lyric is Indian?

Its rhythm is Hijazi, after all!

Interestingly, it was within the contours of this framework that Iqbal sought “to illuminate. . . the avenues of. . . political action”<sup>39</sup> for Muslim India in 1930 and to spell out a destiny for it. Since Indian nationalism was pro-Hindu and predominately Hindu-oriented, the Muslims should construct a separate “nationalism” of their own. Since the whole of India could not be won for Islam, if only because of the overwhelming Hindu majority, “the life of Islam as a cultural force” in India must be saved by centralizing it “in a specified territory.”<sup>40</sup> This must be achieved by setting up “a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State”, compromising “the most living portion of the Muslims of India.”<sup>41</sup>

It is also significant that Iqbal demanded “the creation of autonomous States” on the basis of “the unity of language, race, history, religion, and identity of economic interests,”<sup>42</sup> and that “in the interests of [both] India and Islam.” Iqbal’s elucidation of this last point is important.

For India, it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam, an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian Imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its laws, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, while the bases or attributes of nationalism such as language, race, history, identity of economic interest and viable territorial frontiers (and territorial unity) were sought to be incorporated among the bases of (what later came to be known as) the “Pakistan” demand, religion was to be the leavening factor, and the consequences were to be spelled out in essentially Islamic terms. Thus were laid the intellectual foundations of Muslim nationalism in India.

To conclude, then. In adroitly adjusting his position vis-a-vis nationalism and pan-Islamism, in seeking to resolve the conflict between them in the world of Islam by evolving a synthetic concept of Muslim nationalism, in giving it an inherently Islamic direction — in doing all this and much more, Iqbal personified pragmatism, statesmanship, and,

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<sup>39</sup>*Foundations of Pakistan*, p. 156.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

above all, creativity of the highest order. He is often called an idealist, but he was an idealist that tempered his idealism in the dull fire of experience. Hence, he could come up with a viable concept like Muslim nationalism; he could proffer a workable solution to the Indian constitutional problem.

As our discussion above indicates, the popular view that Iqbal was vehemently opposed to nationalism *per se* is somewhat misleading. What he was against was nationalism of a sort — a nationalism that led to cut-throat competition between nations in the West, that led to the deification of the state at the expense of morality, that became the spring-board for the Western exploitation of the East. When a nationalist upsurge was exploited for the regeneration of Muslims in however specified a territory, or for rehabilitating the power and prestige of mundane Islam, he applauded the venture approvingly. One important aspect — though usually ignored or glossed over but no less revealing—of Iqbal's political framework during his "multi-nationalism" phase is that despite his erstwhile serious reservations, Iqbal does pay his mead of tribute to nationalism when he includes almost all of its bases among the considerations that would impel the Muslims to strive towards, and the Hindus to agree to, the setting up of "a consolidated Muslim State" in India, and the British to set it up. And he was pragmatic enough, despite his uninhibited flights in the ideational world, to commend the centralization of the cultural life of Islam in a specified territory.

Finally, it is equally interesting to note that Iqbal was as well informed by the principle of eclecticism in the ideas he approved and in those he rejected at various times. After all, Indian Islam had been guided by this principle in choosing or rejecting elements from the Hindu cosmos for harmonizing with and eventual incorporation into its social-heritage framework.<sup>44</sup> In the modern period, this fundamental approach, which made Indic Islam Indian in certain aspects and Islamic in its more basic aspects, was adopted, perhaps consciously, by both Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1819-98) and Sayyid Amir Ali (1849-1928), and this with the ultimate object of regenerating and rehabilitating Muslims on various planes — religious, cultural, social, and political. Thus, it may be argued, in being informed by this principle, Iqbal was responding in the same way as Islam had responded to the impelling need for adjustment in the Indian environment, and carried forward the traditions set by Indian Islam over the centuries, and buttressed powerfully by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Amir Ali in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>44</sup>For an extended discussion on this point, see the present author's article, "Ideology of Pakistan", in Sharif al Mujahid (ed.) *Ideological Orientation of Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Committee for Birth Centenary Celebrations of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, 1976), pp. 143-44.