

A NEXUS BETWEEN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE With special reference to “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam”

Ali Raza Tahir

Assistant Professor
School of Religion & Philosophy
Minhaj University Lahore
aliraza.srp@mul.edu.pk

Zainab Ali

Scholar (Psychologist)
zainabali.alvi9@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) (Iqbal, D. J. 1979) is a well-known Muslim theologian, philosopher, mystic, political theorist, politician, and wisdom poet of the 20th century. He is also known as the architect of Pakistan. He contributed in both the mediums of prose and poetry. His poetry is in both the languages Urdu and Persian. Similarly, he wrote and delivered lectures in both Urdu and English. His major philosophical work is in English. The magnum opus of his philosophical work is ‘The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam’. This book consists of seven lectures. In the beginning, in 1924, he wrote an article on the concept of Ijtihad. He delivered it as a lecture on 13th December 1924 in Habibia Hall, Islamia College Lahore. Sheikh Abdul Qadir presided over the address. This lecture was warmly welcomed by Muslim intellectuals all over the subcontinent. The representative of the Madras Muslim Association Saith Jamal Ahmad invited Iqbal to deliver a series of lectures under the above-said title. He wrote and delivered six lectures in Madras in January 1929 and later at Hyderabad and Aligarh University. The 1st edition of this book was published in 1930 with six lectures. In 1932/1933 he visited England to participate in the second round table conference. During his stay in England at the request of Aristotelian Society London, he delivered a lecture under the title ‘Is Religion Possible?’ Later on, he included the above-mentioned lecture in the second edition of this book. The 2nd edition was published in 1934 by Oxford University Press. The problem of the relationship between religion, philosophy, and science was a subject of special interest to him. Although he discussed this issue in his wisdom poetry also but he systematically addressed it in this book which is his major philosophical contribution. This article is an effort to critically appreciate Allama Iqbal’s views on religion, philosophy, and science from the perspective of his philosophical discourse.

Key Words: Religion, Philosophy, Science, Civilization, Reconstruction, Revelation, Reason

Research Statement

‘The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam’ is the masterpiece of Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal’s philosophical thought. In this treatise, he attempted to reconstruct the Muslim religious philosophy’ and tried to represent ‘ a scientific form of religious knowledge ’. Religion, philosophy, and science have their objectives, domains, and epistemological frame. Here, a question arises how Allama Iqbal addressed the problem of the relationship between religion, philosophy, and science?

Research Questions

- Are religion philosophy and science in contradiction with each other?
- Are they entirely separate and have no concern for each other?
- Are they complementing each other?
- What is the nature of their relationship according to Iqbal?

INTRODUCTION

Different Approaches in Respect of Religion, Philosophy, and Science Relationship

Three main approaches are existing in respect of the relationship between religion, philosophy, and science.

1. There is a sense of enmity and contradiction in respect of their relationship

2. They are entirely different from each other. There is a lot of difference in respect of their understanding of Absolute reality, epistemology, and axiology. So they have no concerns or links with each other.
3. Despite some basic and grave differences in metaphysical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological notions they have a close link and are complementing each other.

To understand above mentioned three approaches in respect of the relationship between religion, philosophy, and science, we should have an overview of different prominent ages of human history. We can divide human history into three main ages.

Pre-Modern age/Pre-Modernism (From the beginning to 17th century)

We can divide all religions into two main categories i.e. revealed religions and non-revealed religions. Abrahamic religions are revealed religions and are associated with a divine chain started from Adam A.S. and ending at Holy Prophet (SAWW). The most basic concept of all revealed religions is a firm belief in the superiority and authority of supernatural and transcendental reality known as Almighty Allah/God. In the pre-modern era, this authority was affirmed in all divine religions both theoretically and practically. In mythological religions, this authority was also for supernatural powers which were gods, goddesses, and deities. In classical Greek philosophy, there were materialists (Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes) who presented the philosophy of nature and agreed on the concept of an Absolute reality which is the basis of everything. (W.T.Stace, 1962) Further, there were Pythagoreans who were the precursors of mathematical mysticism. They presented the concept of 'number; as the basic principle. Some philosophers (Parmenides and Heraclitus etc) put up the question about the sources of knowledge. (Grayling, 2020) They differentiated between reason and sense perception and accepted only reason as a source of knowledge. They denied the authenticity of sense perception as a source of knowledge. They validated the reason as an authentic source of knowledge and declared sense perception unreliable. In this way, a gulf emerged between idea and deed, visible and invisible, and philosophy and science. Some philosophers like Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Atomists tried to reconcile both extreme positions. Sophists created the problem of knowledge and value by considering sense perception only an authentic source of knowledge and rejecting any role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge. Socrates challenged Sophists and by his method again restored the supremacy of reason upon all other sources of knowledge. This controversy of reason and sense perception or philosophy and science again emerged in the idealism of Plato. But despite all these epistemological controversies, we find a concept of supreme and supernatural reality in Greek myth and Greek philosophy in the form of a god and goddess, an idea, spirit, or God. In the scholasticism of the medieval age all the superiority, dominancy, and decision-making authority were only for supernatural and transcendental authority. But unfortunately in the 14th century due to the following reasons, a revolt against priesthood and church raised which developed a controversy between religion and philosophy on one hand and religion and science on the other side. We can mention the reasons as follows;

- The learning of Greek philosophy and description of the origin of the universe, human beings, and values in the light of human reason only
- The interpretations of Roman and Greek texts in the existing scenario
- The rejection of scholastic philosophy, revolt against tyranny and rigidity of church, and emphasis on the studies of philosophy and science.

Resultantly the philosophical and scientific movements and schools of thought started to emerge in Europe. Many controversies, contradictions, and conflicts surfaced between religion and philosophy on one hand and in religion and science on the other side two centuries before the renaissance. Although the foundations of Godless and atheistic philosophies have been laid in this era in the name of knowledge and humanism, despite all these conflicts we find a concept of a Supreme Being, Supernatural Authority, and Transcendental Reality in different ways in different religious, mythological and philosophical traditions of the pre-modern age.

Modern age/Modernism

In the 17th century due to the movements of scientism, humanism, reformation, and renaissance, a new era of western philosophy started with the rationalism of Descartes (1596-1650). The basic aim of this modern western rationalist philosopher was to provide certainty to philosophy like mathematics and physics etc. He was of opinion that questions about metaphysics and metaphysical issues are the main

cause of the lack of certainty and clarity in philosophy. So we should eliminate metaphysics from philosophy. By presenting his dualist philosophy based on two substances 'mind' and 'body' he emphasized the elimination of metaphysics from philosophy. The negation of metaphysics was the negation of religion. To proceed with his philosophical thought Descartes admitted the existence of God as a creator substance. But it was only to resolve the problem of mind and body interaction. So he admitted God as a creator substance and mind and body as created substances. In this way, he set the foundations of a Godless universe.

Post-Modern age/Post-Modernism

The emphasis of philosophy is on reason while the focus of science is on the certainty of empirical knowledge. Post-Modernism is a late 20th-century movement that sprung up as a reaction against the claims of the authority and authenticity of both philosophy and science. This was a wide range movement that influenced philosophy, literature, fiction, architecture, art, and all relevant critical theories and approaches. In this way, postmodernism deprived human beings of objective standards and approaches. Consequently, the civilization whose foundation was laid by the renaissance on pure reason (philosophy) or sense perception (science) in the 17th century reached skepticism, relativism, and subjectivism in the post-modern era.

The Basic Theme of 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam'

The above book is the magnum opus of Iqbal's philosophical thought. This book consists of seven lectures. At first in 1924 he wrote an article on the concept of *Ijtihad*. He delivered it as a lecture on 13th December 1924 in *Habibia* Hall, Islamia College Lahore. Sheikh Abdul Qadir presided over the lecture. This lecture was warmly welcomed by Muslim intellectuals all over the subcontinent. The representative of the Madras Muslim Association Saith Jamal Ahmad invited him to deliver a series of lectures on this topic. He wrote and delivered six lectures in Madras in January 1929 and later at Hyderabad and Aligarh University. The 1st edition of this book was published in 1930 with six lectures. In 1932/1933 he visited England to participate in the second round table conference. During his stay in England at the request of Aristotelian Society London, he delivered a lecture under the title 'Is Religion Possible?' Later on, he included the above-mentioned lecture in the second edition which was published in 1934 by Oxford University Press. He had profound studies and comprehensive knowledge of Islam, ancient religions and philosophies, and modern western advancements in the field of religion, philosophy, history, literature, psychology, politics and science, etc. He described the main thesis and purpose of this book in these words:

"In these lectures, I proposed to undertake a philosophical discussion of some of the basic ideas of Islam, in the hope that this may, at least, be helpful towards a proper understanding of the meaning of Islam as a message to humanity. (Iqbal, 1989)

Religion, Philosophy, and Science Relationship

Syed Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838-1898) is known as the reformer and founder of the modern Muslim world. He emphasized that for revival and renaissance Muslims should focus on the study of philosophy and science along with religion. In the subcontinent, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was the torch bearer of this approach. (Mir, M. 2006). There were a number of religious persons who were opposing to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan due to his approach to religion, philosophy, and science reconciliation. Iqbal advanced the Afghani's movement of the renaissance by reconciling religion and philosophy on one side and religion and science on the other. He tried to interpret religion from the perspective of the advancements of the modern era. In the 19th century in the Muslim world, two approaches were prevailing i.e. traditionalist and modernist. Iqbal's 1st religious cum philosophical work was 'The Concept of *Ijtihad* in Islam. This article was innovative, inventive, novel, creative, and analytical. But the traditional orthodox religious representatives were not ready to acknowledge it. Some main religious persons like Abdul Majid Drya Aabadi, Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi, Syed Suleman Nadvi, Hussain Ahmad Madni, and Najm al-Din Islahi, etc did not appreciate Iqbal's this philosophical discourse. Most of them declared him a heretic and to his thought a heresy. According to Syed Nazir Niazi, a representative of a seminary from the subcontinent requested religious scholars of Cairo (Egypt) to declare Iqbal's thought a heresy as previously they had declared Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan a heretic. (Iqbal, D. J. 2008) Similarly in 1984 in a seminar in Riaz (Saudi Arabia), a leading representative of a religious seminary of Soudan moved a resolution to declare Iqbal's this work a heresy and said that Muslims should avoid

studying it. (Iqbal, D. J. 2008) This reaction was only due to Iqbal's thesis that as an individual and as a nation and community we cannot get the rise without the study of philosophy and science along with religion. On the other hand, the intellectuals who were enlightened-minded welcomed warmly Iqbal's reconstruction and reinterpretation of religious thought from the perspective of the advancements in the fields of religion, philosophy, and science. When Iqbal delivered his above said lectures at Aligarh University, the renowned philosopher of that time Dr. Syed Zafar ul Hassan in his presidential address acknowledged it as; Dear Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam' is extremely valuable and precious contribution. The present Muslims and their coming generations would be obliged and grateful for your efforts to reconcile religion, philosophy, and science on one side and to open new and fresh avenues for the modern Muslim mind on the other hand. (Umer, M. S. 2002) According to Saleem Ahmad, Allama Muhammad Iqbal tried to address the problem of the interaction of Muslim civilization with a modern Western civilization based on religion, philosophy, and science relationship. (Iqbal, D. J. 2008) Dr. Fazalur Rahman in his book 'Islam and Modernity' gave a critical analysis of Allama Iqbal's philosophy. Despite some differences with Allama Iqbal, he held that his thought has live elements to advance Muslim societies based on Islam. (Iqbal, 2008) Dr. Syed Hossein Nasr evaluated critically Iqbal's thoughts in his book 'Islam and the Plight of Modern Man'. He appreciated and acknowledged the worth of Iqbal's poetic work and considered debatable his philosophical thought. (Nasr, H. 1984) W.C. Smith in his book 'Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis' presented a weak analysis of Iqbal's philosophy which shows that in this respect his study is superficial. (Smith, W.C. 1985) According to Gibb, Iqbal's work is a unique example in the whole Islamic world to reconstruct Muslim theology in a new way. (Gibb, H.A.R. 1947) Prof. Muhammad Munawwar Mirza was of opinion that these lectures were delivered by Iqbal in 1929. We should also evaluate Iqbal's these lectures from the perspective of his work i.e. letters, statements, and lectures delivered by him after 1929 till his departure in 1938. (Iqbal 2008) Moulana Saeed Akbar Abadi in his book '*Khutbat e Iqbal parr aik nazar mae*' critically analyzed the objections of some other writers on these lectures and held them superficial. (Akbar Abadi, S.A. 1983). In this respect, the contribution of Dr. Javed Iqbal (the son of Allama Muhammad Iqbal) titled '*Khutbat e Iqbal: Tas,heel o Taf,heem*' is extremely valuable. In his work, he reviewed the previous work of all prominent scholars on this book with his analysis. Dr. Arif khan in his book '*Mubahis Khutbat e Iqbal*' described that in this philosophical discourse Iqbal criticized the bare materialism of the west and illuminated the importance of spirituality. (Khan, 2019)

This philosophical work of Iqbal consists of seven lectures and a preface. By reading the 1st line of the preface of the book we can easily know the basic spirit of his philosophy. The first line of the preface is as; "Quran is a book which emphasizes deed rather than idea". (Iqbal, 1989) This first sentence of the preface reflects the basic spirit of Iqbal's thoughts presented and unfolded by him in coming lectures. This sentence encircles all domains of the life of a person i.e. thought, feelings, expression, conduct, behavior, and attitude. Iqbal further elaborates it as follows:

"And religion, which in its higher manifestations is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual, can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter". (Iqbal, 1989)

This judgment of Iqbal is like a seed that has the potential to be a tree with all its fruits and flowers. There are two main words in this statement 'idea, and 'deed'. 'Idea' means a theory and philosophy while 'deed' means a practical implementation of that philosophy or theory. Now the question arises where will be the implementation of that theory, idea, or philosophy? The answer is very clear it would be only possible in the physical, visible, and material world which we observe and experience with our five senses. So we may conclude that Quran is a divine source of knowledge in the religion of 'Islam'. It gives a vision, a road map, and a set of principles about all aspects of all existents. No doubt Quran is a theory, an idea, and a philosophy, but its spirit is practice and practical implementation of this divine message and teachings in the physical world. According to Iqbal the most basic, higher, and prior source of knowledge is 'revelation'. This divine guidance is for the grooming, nourishment, and development of a human being. The distinctive feature of a human being is the reason. It differentiates a human being from animals and all other creatures. A human being can understand divine guidance only with the help of reason. Reason without divine guidance is directionless and

creates doubt only. No doubt five senses provide us the information about visible things and the material world but reason creates meaning in that information and transforms it into knowledge. Reason enables a being to play his role in this universe by comprehending the commands of Allah and implementing them in this material world which we know with our five senses.

“But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. According to Quran, there are two other sources of knowledge-Nature and History; and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that the spirit of Islam is seen at its best”. (Iqbal, 1989)

So, the main proposition of Iqbal is that only a civilization culminated with the blend of religion, philosophy, and science (in other words revelation, reason, and sense perception) will be ideal and beneficial for humankind. Because a civilization based only on reason would be emotionless, feeling less, passionless, and inhuman. The imaginative Republic of Plato is an example of such a civilization that is reason-based but has no room for human feelings and emotions. On the other hand, the civilization based on sense perception leads toward brutal skepticism, individualism, subjectivism, relativism, and lust. To be a human means the fulfillment of all spiritual and material and internal and external needs and requirements. According to Iqbal:

“As a cultural movement, Islam rejects the old static view of the universe, and reaches a dynamic view...The search for a purely psychological foundation of human unity becomes possible only with the perception that all human life is spiritual in its origin”. (Iqbal, 1989)

So, for him, there is no possibility of division and separation between celestial and material, divinity and earthly. For him, Islam is the springhead of all activities of human life and phenomena of nature. Iqbal says that in the course of history along with some other reasons, the division between spiritual and material, soul and matter, and mind and body became the cause of separation between religion and state in the modern western world. This separation opened the holes for deistic, agnostic, and atheistic philosophies and approaches in modern societies. A human being has been introduced and gradually transformed as a material entity to develop, produce and enhance matter and capital and fulfill animal desires. In this way, material or soulless civilization came into existence on the basis of ruthless reason (philosophy) and lustful materialism (science). This is the main crisis of humankind in this materially developed age. Iqbal diagnosed the problem and solution of all the problems of our age as follows;

“Humanity needs three things to-day-a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual interpretation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis”. (Iqbal, 1989)

CONCLUSION

According to Iqbal, we are living in a world that is at two extremes i.e. materially it is at its peak and spiritually it is soulless. Its appearance is attractive while the inner self is dreadful. For Iqbal human being is neither only an abstract mind nor a soul nor only a matter. Its representation is neither only in the form of an idea nor only in an action. It can neither survive and evolve only with reason nor only with passion. It is a masterpiece of soul and matter, mind and body, reason and feelings, and idea and deed. It requires a firm, solid, eternal and optimistic ground and vision to live in this changing and challenging world. Islam provides that ground in the form of faith and firm belief in an unseen but live, omnipotent, and omniscient reality. Rational activity in all affairs of life is the basic nature of a human being. This is the domain of philosophy. The actualization of spiritual and rational potentials to discover nature is a scientific activity. A human being is a component of the soul, reason, emotions, and body. The future of humanity depends upon a civilization blended with revelation, reason, and sense perception (religion, philosophy, and science). So for a peaceful, healthy, friendly, optimistic, and beneficial civilization and a safe and secure future for this planet, we will have to provide a spiritual basis for all rational, empirical, and cultural activities of a being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Religion, philosophy, and science relationship is the major objective of Iqbal's both wisdom poetry and philosophical discourses. In this philosophical treatise, Iqbal endeavors to develop his thesis with the theories, ideas, and philosophies of more than one hundred and fifty renowned philosophers, theologians, mystics, psychologists, scientists, and intellectuals of the East and the West. In this article

keeping in view our limits and binding, we have tried to point out the basic theme, abstract, and gist of this philosophical discourse only. We hope coming scholars will explore this thesis further through their scholarship. Because it is not only an academic activity but it is a need of time in both eastern and zwestern societies also.

REFERENCES

- Grayling, A. C. (2020). *The History Of Philosophy*. Penguin Books Random House UK.
- Akbar Abadi, S.A. (1983). *Khutbat e Iqbal Parr Aik Nazr*. Srinagar: Iqbal Institute Kashmir University.
- Gibb, H.A.R. (1947). *Modern Trends In Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press Chicago.
- Iqbal, D. J. (2008). *Khutbat e Iqbal Tasheel o Tafheem* . Lahore : Sang e Meel Publications, Iqbal Academy Pakistan Lahore .
- _____. (1979). *Zinda Rood*. Lahore : Lahore. Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons Publishers.
- Iqbal, A. M. (1982). *The Reconstruction Of Religious Thought in Islam*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan.
- Khan, M.A. (2019). *Mubahis Khutbat e Iqbal*. Jehlam: Book Corner Jehlum Pakistan.
- Mir, M. (2006). *Iqbal*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan.
- Nasr, H. (1984). *Islam and Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press Chicago & London.
- Smith, W.C. (1985). *Modern Islam in India*. New Delhi: Osha Publications New Delhi India.
- Umer, Muhammad Suheyel (2002). *Khutbat e Iqbal Naey Tanazur Mae*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan.
- W.T.Stace. (1962). *A critical history of greek philosophy*. London: MacMillan & Co Ltd.