

The concept of man in Iqbal

Dr. Saleema Beevi F, (M.phil, Ph.D)

T.C 43/813(2), NKRA-103, Kallattumukku, Manacaudu P.O, Trivandrum, Kerala - 695009, India.

Email- saleemaphilosophy@gmail.com

Abstract: Philosophers have interpreted man in varied ways according to their vision. When some defines him as a rational animal some others define as a laughing animal. In terms of rationality man is the superior animal. Muhammed Iqbal the poet and philosopher is one among those who believe that man is endowed with rationality and intellect as well he is a religious social being. Man's temporal living on earth is conditioned by his deeds as per the spirituality of his religion. Iqbal examines the spirituality of religion and existentialism in connection with man. His vision of man is as said by the French philosopher Ernest Renan that man is enslaved neither by his race, nor by his religion, nor by the course of rivers, nor by the direction of mountain ranges. A great aggregation of men, sane of mind and warm of heart, creates a moral consciousness which is called a nation. How Iqbal brought inspiration and philosophy to the human mind is worth examining.

Key Words: Man, religion, existentialism, humanism.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Human existence has been the priority of philosophers, poets, religious thinkers and mystics from the dawn of civilization. The study of man, within the west and within the east reflects apparently the opposite polarities. The 20th century, the age of humanism, consciously or unconsciously with a relative difference in the east and the west ' made a radical shift of reference from the Divine or Ultimate authority to man. Today largely for all practical purposes, man is the measure of all things. In the modern age, the sense of human autonomy is very deep, without de-linking the relevance of God. In the east, the destination of man largely remains spiritual.

2. DISCUSSION:

2.1. The Concept of Man: A Study

The concept of man cannot be confused with the metaphysical world. The role of trustee is assigned to man on the earth, assigning him a free personality. The concept of accountability gives him a free choice of perceiving his own way in shaping his destiny, he does not disappear completely in the ever-moving wheel of creativity. The basic concern of all religions is man. God created Adam, making him the vicegerent on this earth. There was eternal loneliness, before the creation of Adam; man was not thrown in to the void or in the vast desert of loneliness. Things had been created for him. The world is the stage for his performance.

In the light of man's place in the Divine scheme, there have been evaluations of man by thinkers, philosophers, Sufis, theologians and writers. Rumi in his book 'Masnawi' asserts, "there are in man the equalities of highness" ¹. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan also placed man with God and says that "man is made in the image of God and so has to participate in creation and man is the architect of his own future"². Ibn-Arabi also acknowledges the very important position of man and tries to bridge the gap between the creator and the creation.

Iqbal's View of man was one who was truthful; compassionate fearless and one who could face death with equanimity. So, Iqbal in his religious reconstruction adds

"You ask me of the marks of a man of faith?

When death comes to him, he has a smile on his lips". ³

He presents a very comprehensive conception of man, who is ultimately characterized by limitless divine potentialities and qualities. Man is un-analysable, unpredictable, and free and is always an open possibility. So, he says that unlike all other objects in the phenomenal world, man alone enjoys the distinction of being alert, wakeful, creative and moving. Iqbal's man is finite and yet he is also boundless. To prove this, he says,

"A man is an ocean that is vast and free

Its every drop is like the boundless sea".⁴

2.2 Religious Connotation:

Discussing the story of Adam, Iqbal refers to the Quranic verse that declares "everything in this world is reconciled to its fate, Man's energies alone are insistently demanding the earth to be the dwelling place and a source of profit becomes the profit which he ought to be grateful to God." In his Religious construction, he adds, "according to Quran man is not a stranger on earth. Quran also says, 'And we have caused you to grow from the earth'"⁵.

Here the word, 'grow' has deep meaning and refers to the extraordinary and unique gift of creativity bestowed by God on man- God has created everything- lofty mountains, vast plains, roaring streams, thick forests etc. on the earth and the sun, the moon, clouds and starry heavens for the service of man, and he has bestowed the capability to conquer all that is in heaven and earth. Man has only to bring in to play his hidden potentialities for vigorous action and all the earth and the heaven will move at his order.

Man's greatness has also been expressed in terms of the belief that man is the architect of his own destiny. His fate is not subject to the movement of stars, or for that matter, to the operation of any external factors. To pointing this, he says in his poetry 'Dialogue between God and man,' that,

"How long will my dust remain subordinate to the stars?

Either I am not there or the revolving of the heavenly stars⁶

Iqbal says that the concept of human greatness can hardly be expressed with greater consciousness and force or in a more superb or sublime manner. The man who emerges is not a mere figment of imagination. He possesses all the reality of a historical creature. He is a man, a visionary, a self-maker, a self-breaker and a self-critical creature. Undoubtedly, he was born in a pre-determined world.

Then in spite of insisting on the infinite potentialities of man Iqbal has admitted that man is not absolutely free, he has his limitations. But Iqbal again says that the limitation of human freedom and determination are not fixed and final. That is, man is capable of enlarging the area of his freedom and narrowing his limitations. Through ceaseless effort and creative actions, he can transform his powerlessness into powerfulness, dependence into independence and pre determinism into freedom. And he can attain mastery over himself as well as the world around him. He can conquer nature which has always posed a challenge to him.

2.3 Man: An existential Crisis

Next man's rule over the elements of nature leads Iqbal to a revival of belief in theory that man occupies the central place in the scheme of things. In Iqbal's view, man is not only the centre and the ruler of the world, but he is also God's assistant in the creation, refinement and perfection of the universe which is still imperfect. So, by giving great importance to man Iqbal shows the relation between man and God. For that he quotes 'the dialogue between man and God'. That is, here God says,

"I created the universe from one and the same water and clay you created the Iran and Australia, I created pure steel out of the earth you made a sword, an arrow and a gun, you made a prison for the singing birds".

The man says,

"I am one who made Glass out of the stone

I am one who prepared an antidote from poison

You created the wilderness and mountain.

I created the flower and garden orchard and you created the night,

. I created the lamp you created the clay; I created the globlet".⁷

Here Iqbal clearly shows that in the first part of the above poem, God suggest that creative achievements are destructive. But in the later part, man has insisted on the fact that his creative achievements are not only constructive

but superior in some aspects. So far as the human greatness is concerned, Iqbal does not insist on the fact that man is God's assistant in the creative process of the world.

In Iqbal's view, the relation between man and God is that of creator and the created, the ruler and the ruled, the worshipper and the worshipped. God is the Supreme Creator but the perfection of His creation has very often depended on the creative talent of man. That is man's creation is supplementary to that of God.

Here one can say that speaking about the relation between God and man, Iqbal seems intent upon justifying the way of God to man to bring all his creative powers to compel man to free the path of Godliness. To understand this, Ghalib says,

"Capacities inherent in human nature, which keep man. from treading the path of godliness despite all its benefits?"⁸

Then he says that apart from being an assistant to God, man is also God's best critic. Man is the greatest critic of the supreme artist, God. In the book, Dialogue between God and Man, man says,

"By creating me thou (God)

Has created thy critic,

I am a painting which harbour

Complaints against its painter."

Then God says;

"It is so and speaks not anything else about it."

There upon commented Man:

"It is like this but it ought to be like that."

Then also God said,

"Set a new pattern since I am a lover of novelty,

What sort of world thou have made?

A wonder house today and tomorrow!"⁹

2.4 Man-The Metaphysical Reality

It is clear that Iqbal's man is placed in the tension between determinism and free will. He is alive in the conflict of evil and virtue. In his thought and deed, he becomes the spokesman of the divine reality. In his book 'religious reconstruction', he discusses the relationship between man, universe and God.

Iqbal argues with the basic principle of mysticism that it is an attempt to reach the ultimate reality through inner experience and that it discards intellect or reason as insufficient and relies on love or intuition. That is, he believes in the intuitive approach to reality. That is, the concept of man in him relies on intuition. So, in his lectures he adds, "nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps the reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. In fact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says is only a higher kind of intellect".¹⁰

Here it is clear that Iqbal gives reason and intuition in their proper places and regards intuition as the higher form of intellect through which man can be properly gained metaphysical knowledge. In a word, Iqbal says that man, first of all, has to cross intellectual or rational cognition and then enter into the realm of intuitive cognition in order to have a glimpse of metaphysical reality.

Iqbal defines intuition as a unique experience of its own kind, essentially different from every other mode of cognition.

It is not perception or thought because it transcends the limitations of both, it makes metaphysics possible.

In Iqbal's view, the ultimate truths which religion and metaphysics seeks to emphasize do not know us in the ordinary way. The ordinary way is the way of experience. Iqbal does not mean to suggest that the empirical way is a false way

or empirical experience does not give any knowledge. But here he adds that experience and thought represents only a particular level of knowledge, a normal level. In this level whatever is known is known under space-time dimension and is useful from the empirical and pragmatic point of view. But the reality in itself cannot be directly known in this way. But Iqbal is not in favour of denying the importance of sense experience or of thought. He feels that they approach in a very indirect manner, through the symbols of reality. But it is possible to approach reality directly and to have a direct consciousness of reality.

3. CONCLUSION :

Iqbal feels that intuition is not a mysterious faculty. It has played dominant roles in the history of mankind. It has influenced the life and behaviour of societies of all times and places and they have left enduring expressions on the mind of man. It is better to enumerate the characteristics of intuition as they have been explained by Iqbal:

Firstly, a very prominent character of intuition is immediacy. Intuition is immediate knowledge of reality or God because intuition knows the knowledge of reality without the help of any medium. That is, intuition has the directness of sense experience. Intuition grasps its object directly as senses do. In this respect, intuition is completely different from thought as conceptual knowledge that knows only through concept or thought as deferential process. Secondly, intuitive experience always apprehends its object as a whole. It is an un-analysable unity. Its unity can never be broken. That is intuition is knowledge by being, because in intuitive awareness, the distinction between the subject and object vanishes altogether. In intuition, the knower becomes one with the known and thereby realizes it. To the question, how do we come to know that the known being is Divine Self? Iqbal says, "this process is not different from the process by which we become aware of the presence of other minds. We do not become aware of their presence with the help of any special faculty. That is, the only ground of my knowledge of other minds is the awareness of the physical movements similar to my own, from which I infer the presence of other minds. The other minds are believed to be there on account of my awareness of some kind of response in between me and the other. Similarly, in a similar realization - in an awareness of some kind of 'response' - in between me and the Supreme, I become conscious of the Supreme self".¹¹

Thirdly, in Iqbal's view, intuition is the propriety of the heart, not of the mind or intellect. Intellect knows its object after creating a distinction between the knower and the known, but the heart, establishes an affinity with its objects; in fact, in a sense, it becomes the object.

Lastly an intuitive experience enables an individual to realise eternity in a moment. This intuitive experience enables the individual to forget the worries and anxieties of mundane existence and lifts him up in an entirely different world altogether. Here Iqbal says that here this experience gives to the individual a sense of the unreality of serial time. The mystic experience fades away very soon and the individual returns to serial time, but the moment in which he gets the experience continues to inspire him. It also makes him to realize that -serial time can be transcended and the eternity can be realized in a moment.

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