

## **Representation of Spiritual Atrophy in Allama Iqbal's Poetry.**

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### **Abstract**

The paper is an attempt to explore the spiritual atrophy in modern life which finds place in the poetry of Allama Iqbal (1877-1938). He tried to advocate the authority of religion and believed that the modern perplexities and chaos were because of a lack of a unified ethical social code which religion alone could guarantee. Iqbal believed that emancipation from the authority of the religion had led to social chaos, even to the point of anarchy and that the consequence is the inevitable doom. He is of the opinion that religious beliefs should determine the behaviour and habits of a successful social life and emphasises the need of higher spiritual knowledge and power than the material progress of society. The poetry produced by him can be of great use in awakening man's spirituality and improving one's life by establishing a harmonious relationship with God and fellow human beings. His poetry is unparalleled in its elegance and its capacity to ennoble and humanize and above all its capacity to move man to a glorious action.

**Keywords:** Allama Iqbal, religion, atrophy, modern malaise, God.

### **Introduction:**

Allama Iqbal's diagnosis of the malaise of modern civilization, when people felt dazzled by the visual aspect of the western civilization, Iqbal explored beneath its surface and saw the hidden dangers: "There on the western Horizon/it is not the rosy hue but a stream of blood" (Iqbal *Western* 16). According to him, the post Renaissance western civilization was gravely biased which gave rise to the dreadful conflict between Christian faith and scientific discipline. He asserts in his poetic collection *Bang-i-Dara* (1924):

Western democratic systems is the same old musical instrument

Which contains no tunes other than imperial ones

It is the demon of autocracy dancing in the garb of democracy.

And you think it is a fairy of freedom come from Paradise (Iqbal *Dimensions* 48)

The above verses clearly assert about and warn against bogus democracy. Iqbal took all such democratic process as deceptive and misleading which was apparently granting freedom but was inwardly a tool of imperialism and autocracy. Iqbal exposes the seamy side of modern civilization and also dwells upon the wretched aspect of city life which is characterised by a sense of decay and frustration. He finds that the greatest evil of the modern industrial and technological civilization is the fact that it has de-humanized humankind. He asserts in *Bal-i-Jibril* (1935), “The domination of the machine is the death of the heart/Tools crush the sense of humanity” (Iqbal Western 92). It is also worth mention here that the literary genius look forward to the birth of a new world order based on a combination of the scientific knowledge of the West and the wholesome spiritual values of the East. Iqbal communicates this thought in *Javid Namah* (1932) as:

For the Westerner life’s proper equipment is Reason

While for the East the secret of being lies in love

Reason knows truth through love

While it strengthens the foundations of love

When love and Reason embrace each other

A new world is born

Arise and lay the foundations of a new world

By combining love with reason. (Iqbal *Western* 81)

The age in which Iqbal was born was the age of Western domination of the East. The Western world view and the Western values were incontestably accepted. Iqbal asserts: “The glitter of the Western philosophy failed to dazzle me/As the antimony of my eyes is the dust of Medina and Najaf ” (Iqbal *Western* 155). Sometimes things do look impossible but history stands witness to the fact that goals which were thought impossible at a certain juncture of time were tuned into possible. Life is will and where there is no will there is death. Allama Iqbal has repeated the same theme in the following verse, “The living God is in search of living soul/A dead prey does not deserve an eagle’s assault” (Iqbal *Dimension* 62).

Iqbal bemoans the spiritual atrophy of humanity in his poetry and decries the loss of spirituality in his verses, which reflects the state of modern civilization and dwells upon its dreadful conditions, horror and ugliness. It grippingly reveals the state of degeneration in the modern civilization. Iqbal makes idea of spiritual degeneration clear through his writings that the persons who are

spiritually dead cannot be expected to accept guidance. Iqbal expresses his disgruntlement with the inertia, inaction and loneliness of the modern man, gave vent to his displeasure about the nominal democracy in his poetry. Instead of subduing the worldly things and using it as a means of spiritual emancipation, the modern man under the influence of West considers this world as an end in itself. Thus the demon of materialism holds the whole world in the grip of its tentacles and what is the way out of this deadly impasse? Iqbal answers: “Humanity needs three things today—a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of the human society on a spiritual basis”. (*Reconstruction* 142)

Again in some of his famous poems like “Tarana-i-Hindi” (The Indian Anthem), “Hindustani Bachon Ka Quami Geet” (the National Song of the Indian Children) and “Naya Shiwala” (The New Temple), Iqbal shows his concern for the people and encourages his countrymen to overlook their differences of caste and faith and work unitedly for the freedom and welfare of India, “Religion does not preach mutual hatred/We are all Indians and India is our motherland” (Iqbal *Western* 40). In 1905, Iqbal went to Europe. He observed into the heart of things there and found it (Europe) diseased. Iqbal found the so called high propositions of the time like Materialism, Imperialism and Nationalism, eating Europe’s vitalities and leading it to a suicidal warfare. The holocaust of 1914-18 had begun to shed its shadows on those with a discerning eye and Iqbal was among them:

O Westerners, God’s world is not a shopping centre,

What you hold to be genuine and true will turn out false and counterfeit.

Your culture will stab itself to death;

Unstable is the nest built on a precarious twig. (Iqbal *Western* 41)

The above lines deal with the barrenness of city life in modern civilization. There is the scene of a wintry morning covered with fog is symbolic of the desolation and spiritual decay. Seeing the same crisis everywhere, Iqbal thus gives man a central position and to this effect he says in *Bal-i-Jibril*: “The tumult of the world is due to the passion of man/The sun is only a looker-on, the stars are mere spectators.” (Iqbal *Western* 54). Iqbal believes in the inherent goodness and impeccability of man. The stars, the worlds above, are frightened by the prospect of human evolution. He beautifully sums up the idea in *Bal-i-Jibril*: “The rise of the clay-made man frightens the stars who fear/Lest this fallen star acquires the stature of full moon” (Iqbal *Western* 107).

Iqbal positively looks forward to a golden age when man will be able to realise his full potential and reach the heights destined for him. Iqbal traces the development of the idea of revolution. He feels that in the modern world it had started with Luther's movement in Germany and the French Revolution and will be completed with the revolution of the Orient. In "Masjid-i-Qurtubah" (1932), he says:

Germany has experienced the tumult of Reformation

Which obliterated the vestiges of the past

And declared the innocence of the church-father to be an error,

And set afloat the fragile boat of free thinking.

The French eye too has seen the Revolution

Which metamorphosed the Western world.

The Turks, who are hoary with the worship of the past,

Are also relishing the taste of rejuvenation.

The soul of the Muslim is again in ferment;

It is a Divine secret which the tongue cannot unveil. (Iqbal *Western*108)

Similarly, Iqbal impresses upon the individual the need for a constructive role in these bad times. Iqbal thus says and celebrates the grandeur of man in the following verse: "Exalt thy ego to the extent that every decree of fate/Is issued by God in consultation with man." (Iqbal *Western* 126). Iqbal's man looks forward hopefully to the position of grandeur where he can will his fate. It is the vigour of Love that distinguishes the religion of the Free man from that of slaves. He says in *Bal-i-Jibril*: "Love is the prime guide of reason and heart and vision/Religion and the law (of shariah) are an idol-house of concepts without love" . He says in *Bal-i-Jibril* that "The salvation of mankind lies only in this/That junaidi (sainthood) and Ardsberi (Kingship ) are combined into one." (Iqbal *Western* 58)

### **Conclusion:**

In Iqbal's opinion, man is God's own deputy on earth and carries the Divine spark in his soul. The soul has to be cultured and developed in this world, so that it may lead to a spiritual direction which culminates in a higher and nobler phase in the life hereafter. This amounts to a clear

refusal of the atheistic humanism of the West which does not insist on the belief in God and does not look behind the earthly life. Iqbal's man is not a mere being of flesh and blood clinging to the dust; he is a God-man, at once an emperor and a dervish. Undoubtedly, Iqbal has given a very clear picture of spiritual and cultural chaos of the modern society and the importance of moral and spiritual realization is increasingly felt.

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