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## **SPIRITUAL AND DEMOCRATIC FUNCTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND SAYYID ABUL 'ALA MAWDUDI**

**MOHAMMAD TEISIR BIN SHAH GOOLFEE**

Research Scholar

Department of Islamic Studies

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002

### *Abstract*

*To purify the inward-self is an incumbent duty of the followers of Islam. This practice enables the Muslim to enjoin what is good and to prohibit the wrongdoings thus fulfilling of the most important Qurānic formulas. The spiritual and democratic function refers to the fact that people who reside in a society must always scrutinize, through their proper conscience, the approaches and policies of their devout and spiritual leaders. Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938) and Sayyid Abul 'Alā Mawdūdī (1903-1979) have enlightened on both spirituality and democracy in their distinctive genre. For Iqbāl, the life of human is originally spiritual in nature while for Mawdūdī, it is a harmony administered by the religion. According to Iqbāl, humanity desires a spiritual scrutiny of the universe, of human advancement and rudimentary morals and ethics of an inclusive significance thus directing the maturation of human society on the basis of spirituality. A proponent of Islamic nationalism, Muḥammad Iqbāl is of the viewpoint that the Islamic civilization is based on Tauḥīd (Oneness of God). Its essence will give birth to parity, coherence and liberty. Mawdūdī, on his part, tries to safeguard the spiritual principles in his concept of Theo-Democracy and illustrates his concern for the requirement of a spiritual instrument to the political power.*

**Keywords:** *Inward-Self, Spiritual and Democratic Function, Muḥammad Iqbāl, Sayyid Abul 'Alā Mawdūdī*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Islamic spirituality is a deep pragmatic reminder to the creation about its cause of existence, genuineness and eventual terminus. It is the unambiguous upshot of the kind of intellectual progress that occurs when a believer mulls over Allah and His creation. Spirituality is the inexorable reference to Allah and confirming that whatever we plan to do, it

is to be executed with the purpose to seek His pleasure. The program of spirituality is to alter the adverse qualities and conducts of the believers. The lack of spiritual training, however, turns the character of man into a savage nature thus opening the doors of invitation for the penetration of vices and chicaneries. When discussing about spirituality, it is important to note that man treads on the

successful path only when his inner-self is purified. The purification of the soul strengthens the faith, and a strong faith defeats Satan in his treacherous tactics to beguile the minds of the believers. With the presence of a spiritual growth, man can search for the correct missions and objectives of life. On the other part, democracy is a system of government that centers its acceptability on the involvement of the masses. A durable society is the one which upholds its power and governs itself by itself, via the leaders who are to look after the welfare of people and answerable before them.

A democratic system functions successfully only when the positive traits of spirituality are inculcated. In the current practical context, true spirituality boosts up democracy, but democracy can also pulverize spirituality. The spiritual faculty prevents man from developing an egoistic nature and paves the way for political authority to serve for the betterment of its subjects. The instillation of spiritual principles such as altruism and bravery in political democracy can counterbalance the mammoth power of well-heeled benefits to inspire strategies and measures and equipose the cynicism and apathy of much of the population.

Unfortunately, there exists many countries in the world which are democratic just only for namesake. The common citizens are longing to witness a spiritually based democracy accompanied by moral and ethical principles. They expect to visualize a selfless democratic system which can open various doors of opportunities for every faction of the society. The mass demands a kind of political scope that communicates with their inner most ideals and principles as human beings, a better intellect of community and a sublime objective as a nation, which provides them an excellent acuity of public life and assistance to the mutual good instead of calling only to voracity and crave for power.

The purpose of governing a democratic system with spiritual abilities is to eradicate impartialities and establish kindness and prosperity. Jim Wallis, an American political activist, in his book titled as *God's Politics*, states that it is not about the question of whether God favors us, but instead, we should be asking if we are on the side of God and whether we are making use of our spiritual principles to promote generosity, righteousness and harmony.

The dimension of spirituality is rectitude. A democratic system based on spirituality signifies that we are not left on our own to deal with our issues, as support and assistance are perpetually obtainable from greater elements when it is demanded for. Democracy makes provision for the dedicated vessel to grasp and nurture the progress of the people. In other words, the democratic principle recognizes the impending probabilities and enables its growth thus providing the common population the optimum liberty to evolve. It lauds comprehensiveness, relations, the process of listening and compassionateness.

#### **The Democratic Culture in Islam**

Islam is a religion which propagates the peak values of harmony, human rights, freedom of speech and belief, impartiality, isonomy and democracy. Any society which maintains and puts into practice these principles is Islamic in nature. Many intellectuals opionate that Shūra (Mutual Consultation) is the Qurānic asseveration of democracy. A divine directive, it refers to the discussions and debates that occur at assemblies or meetings (Majālis). These gatherings were in action during the time of Prophet Muḥammad which clearly demonstrates that he taught the early converts the Islamic democratic culture. In Islam, the victor is the one who undoubtedly believes in the Unity of Allah and the Day of Resurrection; the one who is actively involved in propagating good and prohibiting evils,

maintains the prodigious ethics of harmony, impartiality and freedom of choice, fears Allah and submits to Him only. These were the traits that transformed the believers during the period of Prophet Muḥammad and gave birth to a valiant democratic state among them. Besides, it is important to know that equality exists also between races and cultures, men and women and between different religions as well.

The Qurān defines Muslim society as that where individuals are attached to Allah, offer their prayers, whose matters are by consultation among them, and from whose provisions they donate. Shūra, in a way, is a kind of direct democracy in which every individual is his or her own representative and involves decisions taken by the majority and its applicability by all the believers of the Islamic Faith. As long as the nature of managing the affairs is prosperous, the opponents have full freedom of belief and expression. Democracy, on the other hand, also involves the process of accountability. A genuine Islamic society is the one which is run through the executives and who shall be accountable to their people, which is a Qurānic injunction as well.

Prophet Muḥammad established the first Islamic state in Madinah and taught the Companions (peace be upon them) the proper notion of governance and administration. That is the reason why he chose nobody to be the ruler after him. However, after the demise of the Prophet, the democratic Islamic state witnessed a drastic change in political leadership. State was turned into empire thus leading the political democratic nature to mark its end.

### **Spiritual Democracy**

Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877/ 1294 A.H -1938/ 1357 A.H) was one of the greatest seers of humanity of all times. He was deeply involved in the cultural, intellectual and political reconstruction of the Muslim world. Being a multi-dimensional personality, he was

considered as one of the most eminent and influential figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While focusing on the concept of democracy, Muḥammad Iqbāl was both a critic and proponent. Critical was the view that western democracy does not consist of a collective applicability of its values and therefore, there is a lack of faith which detaches it from other connected universals. Class war is the outcome of western democracy. He believes that secular democracy exploits the poor in the interest of the rich. Hence, according to him, such kind of democracy can never develop a comprehensive and best nature. Iqbāl believes in Islamic democracy, in which there is justice and consensus.

The origin of Islamic democracy is found in the Qurān and Prophetic Traditions, with all its rudiments and criteria. Democratic spirit, Iqbāl says, must pervade in all spheres of life, literature and culture to integrate and discipline the nation. Democracy is attached with the total code of life (Islam) and hence, Iqbāl lays emphasis and urges the Muslim community to return to the primeval purity of Islam, since the reason behind the current breakdown of the Muslim world is the abandonment of the Islamic teachings.

Muḥammad Iqbāl provides a clear-cut elucidation regarding democracy. Though he prefers it, yet he finds some demerits in it because he felt that it was more a methodology than an ideology. He advances his own annotations and coined to a new nomenclature called *spiritual democracy*, which is on the basis of Qurānic injunction. According to him, spiritual democracy refers to a democracy in which everything is perceived and administered by the laws of Allah. However, in the democracy of the west, people are sovereign. Therefore, in the spiritual democracy of Iqbal, Allah alone is Sovereign and there exists no scope of denial in this absolute fact.

Muhammad Iqbal admired novelties. When democracy was emerged as a governmental system, he stretched his arms to give it a warm welcome, having in mind that this novel system might be consisting of a helpful nature to allay the anguishes of the browbeaten and oppressed people. Nevertheless, Iqbal, within a short span of time, realized that the western democracy showed its defective nature thus lambasting it by noticing that people are counted instead of weighted. It is a material-based concept in which no ingredient of personality development is found thus eschewing the spiritual fact. According to Iqbal, humanity needs the following three elements in today's era:

1. Spiritual analysis of the universe.
2. Spiritual emancipation of humanity.
3. Universal elementary values for the development of a spiritual society.

Iqbal, in his spiritual democracy, explains that the Muslims of today must be given the liberty to appreciate his position and restructure his social life based on ultimate values, which will turn on the green signal to indicate the fact that spiritual democracy is the eventual objective of Islamic Faith. In a nutshell, Iqbal is a promoter of spiritual democracy and an opposer of the western democracy to some extent. Spiritual democracy, as per the view of Iqbal, provides an optimum of liberty and fairness to his potentials and abilities. According to Iqbal, the secular democracy is a cataclysmic, impartial and treacherous weapon operating in the name of colonialism and capitalism. He points out the causes for the moral and cultural decadence of the Eastern people and the West, who cannot digest the unveiling of truths. Iqbal opposes the European democracy because there is segregation of state and religion, thus turning it into an unspiritual and deceitful nature and is shaped by the capitalists for their own sinister strategies. In brief, it can be said

that Iqbal criticized only the demerits of democracy. He was in favour of adopting only those democratic principles which was in accordance to the concept of democracy in the Islamic Faith. He rejected the non spiritual and worldly ideas of democracy and classified spiritual democracy to be the successful system of government which paves the way for the application of the Qurānic injunction of enjoining decency and prohibit indecency.

#### **Theo-Democracy**

Sayyid Abul 'Alā Mawdūdī (1903/1321 A.H – 1979/1399 A.H) was a prominent Pakistani Journalist, Theologist and Promoter of Islam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Indo-Pak Subcontinent. He was the first Muslim scholar, who coined a new term, *Theo-Democracy*, to connote that texts of the Qurān and Ḥadīth are binding, and other than the texts, are open to discussion, deliberations and even dissent. Furthermore, Mawdūdī states that there is no barrier between spiritual and secular life. He opposes the western concepts of nationalism and secularism because they are imperial constructions and therefore has no seat in Islam. He also states that the western theocracy is dissimilar to Islamic theocracy. The theocracy of Europe allows the religious scholars to set the laws and associate them with God. Mawdūdī categorically lambastes it, terming it to be an evil state instead of theocracy. Whereas, Theo- democracy, he says, is to be found in the hands of the Muslims and those people who govern according to the primary sources of Sharī'ah. Thus, the Theo-democracy of Mawdūdī indicates that sovereignty belongs to Allah only and to implement His Divine laws is incumbent.

The aim of establishing an Islamic state is to advance a comprehensive system of social impartiality for its citizens. The organs of the state – executive, legislature and judiciary – should operate with equal power shared among them and nobody, comprising the Head of State, is to be

above the law, that is, the judiciary. Both the executive and legislator will be formed according to the opinions of the citizens after consultations. However, in the affairs where guidelines are absent in the Islamic laws, such matters would be sorted out through mutual consultation (Shūra). This will ultimately make the government democratic. The most important point is that in Theo-democracy, no religious faction nor the general believers of the Islamic Faith can change the Divine laws.

According to Mawdūdī, the government is the most powerful and effective factor which influences the social life, culture and morality. The best way to end this strife and purify the life of evil is to eradicate all nefarious states and substitute them with those which theoretically and pragmatically rule on pietistic values and incorruptible ideologies. The aim of Jihād is to replace un-Islamic governmental systems with the Islamic governance. Mawdūdī advocates that the position of a man who is selected to govern the state affairs is nothing than that all the believers must delegate their allegiance to him for the functioning of the administration. He is answerable to both God and his subjects. While discussing about democracy, he opines that all believers of the Islamic faith have an equal involvement in the political matters, but the main criterion remains that there should not be any transgression of the Sharī'ah, which signifies a theocracy.

Mawdūdī favors *Ijtihād* (Independent Interpretation). He says that matters relating to administration and others, if not found in Sharī'ah, would be resolved only with the consensus of the believers. However, he says, if the requirement is needed to interpret the Islamic Laws, this would be fulfilled only by all those Muslims who have acquired the ability of interpretation. This statement gives a clear indication that the

democratic ethics of consultation do verily advocate democracy.

Regarding the term *خِلاَفَة* (Vicegerency) Mawdūdī has referred to the Qurān and says that *خِلاَفَة* means the state rule yet bearing in mind that Sovereignty belongs to Allah only. He says that the concept of *أَوْلِيَاءُ الْأَمْرِ* (those who hold power) is for those who govern the collective affairs of the believers and therefore deserve obedience as long as they do not breach the Islamic rules and regulations.

### Conclusion

Comparing the views of both intellectuals, it is found that Muḥammad Iqbāl opposed only the flawed elements of western democracy whereas Mawdūdī denies secular democracy and prefers Theo-democracy. Having said that, both Iqbāl and Mawdūdī are in favor of a ruler who does not breach the Islamic laws in his governance. This indeed leads one to conclude that not contravening the divine commandments requires spiritual traits. When man purifies his inner-self, he comes under the shelter of Allah, thus strengthening his faith and distancing him from sins. He recognizes the dissimilarities between legal and illegal means and therefore, is capable to propagate kindness and prohibit evilness. A leader having these spiritual qualities indicates his God-consciousness and the fear of Allah is instilled in his heart, which prevents him from committing social injustices and acknowledges the realization to work for betterment of the people.

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