CHAPTER VI

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

Iqbal the great poet of east attached the highest value to Individuality. And this is significant characteristics of his philosophic thought he never allowed himself to be betrayed into a one sided extreme position. With his broad vision and insight, he takes a balanced view of their respective claims.

He recognized the importance of the culture patterns of community life, which some modern educationists have tended to ignore in their eagerness to stress Individuality as the end of the educative process and the goal of social endeavor.

They have sometimes been inclined to overlook the fact that the growth of a full and free personality is impossible except as it draws its spiritual sustenance from the culture of the group to which it belongs.

Prof. Clarke of the university of London had discussed this issue in one the year Books of Education (London), with particular reference to its bearing on education, and made this significant remark: For, whatever else education may mean, it must mean primarily the self perpetuation of an culture.
A culture, which is the life of a determined society. This is true whether the cultural process is regarded, with the individualists, as the maturing of a free personality through the cultural sustenance which the life of a society can offer, or with the totalitarians as the affirmation of the one spiritual whole, in its temporary and partial bearers and servants, the citizens.\(^{37}\)

He, is however, careful to explain that while education must produce the \('type'\), it is equally necessary that, in the words of Prof. Hocking, \('it must provide the growth beyond the type'\).

Modern educational theory, therefore, must concentrate particularly upon \("the critical issue of a double relation of the type to society on the one hand, the claim of the society to perpetuate itself in the type and, on the other hand, the claim of the type to become more than a type, a person and so to react fruitfully, if critically, upon the society which has produced him".\(^{38}\)

In the tragic conflict of political doctrines it must seek for its anchor somewhere between the disruptive and disintegrating influences of the one and the wholly repressive and inhibitory pressure of the other.

Iqbal has discussed the issue with keen insight in his Masnavi, Rumuz-I-Bekhudi (The Mysteries of selflessness), which is a thoughtful elucidation of the nature of relationship between the individual and the cultural life of the community in which he lives


\(^{38}\) Ibid, p. 254.
moves and has his being. Alone, he is weak and powerless; his energies are scattered and his aims narrow, diffuse and indefinite.

It is the active and living membership of a vital community that confers on him a sense of power and makes him conscious of great collective purposes, which deepen and widen the scope for the growth of his individual self.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{فروٹا ارام ریالیت سے پتھرکے کی بھی}\\\textit{مجر کے دریا بہار ریالیت داریا پھیسی}

This is how Iqbal elucidates his conception of their mutual relationship:\textsuperscript{40}

\textit{فروٹی گروہ دریا قیار اسے میں}\\\textit{قطر کوہکس طلب تسلم شور}\\\textit{دوشے زوری مشرافت است}\\\textit{برو اسلاط گیا گی شور}\\\textit{بر کی آب ارگمن م علم گیا گی}

\textsuperscript{39} Muhammed Iqbal, Bang-I-Dara, Lahore, 1924. P. 210.
\textsuperscript{40} Muhammed Iqbal, Rumuz-e-Bekhudi, Lahore, 1918, p. 98-99.
Having explained how the individuals powers and purposes take their inspiration and their characteristics colour from the life of the community, he advises him to “string himself like a jewel in its chain”; otherwise he is in danger of being “wafted about aimlessly like the dust”. 41

He points out that, through such relationship, the individual may even transcend mortality and gain immortal life. “The individual who loses himself in the community” i.e., in the service of its great ideals and purposes “reflects both the past and the futures as in a mirrors so that he transcends mortality and enters into the life of Islam which is infinite and everlasting.” 42

The Indian community has a moral to learn. Without the right kind of education, the community will not only remain backward, but become increasingly so. Languages, world history and especially sciences all these are essential in the world of today. Without them one is

41 Ibid, p. 145.
42 Muhammed Iqbal, the secret of the Self, p. xiv.
crippled. It is also necessary to learn to put the knowledge thus acquired to proper use. In itself knowledge is only a means.

It can be employed for the good of the society, for making money, and in the service of public causes. Knowledge is justified only when it is put to good use and employed in the public cause. Otherwise, as we pointed out once earlier and as everyone will readily admit, it is like poison.

The modern mind is either dominated by the mania of territorial patriotism or obsessed with racial fanaticism and regards race and country as the only integrating forces in the life of a people.

The nationalist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries had accentuated the sentiment of narrow patriotism.

Then before the comparatively recent movements of international socialism could make such headway to break down national antagonisms, the new exclusivist doctrines of Fascism and Nazism, with their ideology of race worship and deprecation or hatred of other races ushered in still more dangerous tendencies.

Against this gloomy background, Iqbal's of view, which is an expression of the political philosophy of Islam, provides a refreshing contrast.
He has an uncompromising antagonism to the whole idea of race and color and to the narrow doctrines of nationalism and patriotism, which obstruct the development of a broad, human outlook.

According to him, it is not racial or geographical unity mere accidents of time and space, which can form the right basis of a people’s coherence.

It is the unity of emotions and outlook, of purposes and endeavor the merging of individual selves in the service of great, cooperative ideals and objectives, the sharing of common sufferings and achievements which cement a collection of individuals into a genuine millat or community:

The unity of hearts brings the Millat into being;
This Sina is aglow with that single flame!
A nation should have a unity of ideas,
One single purpose running through its mind!
A unity of sentiments should inspire its being,
And agreed criterion for sifting well from evil!
What is this folly, identifying the Millat with the country?
What is this folly, worshipping water and air and clay?
It is foolish to pride oneself on one's ancestry,
For it has sway over the body and the body is mortal.
Our Millat has an entirely different basis-
It is enshrined in the sanctuary of ours hearts.  

Having rejected what he holds to be the wrong concept of the Millat, he goes onto define its correct meaning:

What is Millat, ye believers in the oneness of God?
It means having one sight in a thousand eyes!
Men of the truth follow the same reasoning, make the same claim:

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"Our tents may be apart but our hearts are united!"
Unity of the outlook transforms specks of dust into the sun;
With a singleness of vision, you will see truth unveiled;
Do not look down upon this unity of outlook;
It is a reflection of the unity of God!
Art thou dead? This unity of outlook will revive thee;
Give up this life without a center and attain firmness.
Wouldst thou attain prestige and power?
Strive for the unity of thought and action.\textsuperscript{44}

Without such unity a community becomes disorganized, feeble, dead:

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The individual lives through the relationship
of the body to the mind;
The nation through conserving its past traditions.
The individual dies if the river of life goes dry,
The nation dies if it loses hold of the purpose of life.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44} Muhammad Iqbal, Javed Nama, Lahore, 1932. p. 227.
Whenever such unity of outlook and emotions is achieved, it becomes a source of unlimited power for individuals as well as the community, which can be used for any ends—good or evil. The ethical value of this power is determined by the nature of the ideas, objectives and ideals to which it is wedded.

In asking them to study the lives of lawyers like Ghose, Mahatma Gandhi asked them not merely to be satisfied with the heritage those great lawyers had left for them, but wished the present generation to do better. They should become the poor man’s friend in every sense and then alone would they be able to justify the legal profession.⁴⁶

Their end was not to get more than a decent livelihood or how to shine in life, but to serve humanity in order to serve the humanity in order to serve the motherland. They ought not to become lawyers in order to increase cases.

The education they received ought not to be prostituted to the base use of earning a livelihood, it ought to be used to promote moral growth to enable them to realize themselves, to understand that there was the Maker who saw everything and registered all thoughts, pure and the learning they derived should be dedicated to a vigorous self-analysis and not prostituted.

Iqbal stresses different aspects of a problem from time to time. Having forcefully elucidated the dynamic role of individuality in Asrar-I-khudi, he is here concerned with focusing our attention on the inter-

relationship of the individuality and the community and thye part played by the latter in shaping and moulding the former throught he social and spiritual sustence that it provides.

Unlike some modern thinkers, who are impatient ort contemptuous of the past Iqbal recognizes the power and hold of the past on the human mind and is fully aware of the value of History in the education and the evolution of a people? He realizes that a community cannot gain a true understanding of its inner self without an intelligent study of its own history and historical evolution.

It is a clear and cumulative appreciation of its manifold cultural associations, which knits it into a strong unity and gives it real intellectual maturity:
A new born millat is like a young child.
Nestling in the lap of his nurse!
A child who does not know himself yet,
A jewel overlaid by the roadside dust!
Its today is not linked up with its tomorrow,
Its feet untrammeled by the chain of day and night!
It is like the pupil of the eye of existence,
Which sees others but is invisible to itself!
It unites a hundred knots from its chain
Till it unwinds the end of the thread of the self!
When it warms up to the struggle of existence,
The new consciousness grows keener and stronger!
If it becomes oblivious of its past history
It lapses into non-existence.\(^{47}\)

But the history to which he would assign a place of honour in education is not just sensational styory or a legend, recounting interesting but unimportant happenings of bygone ages.

It is history, which vividly recreates the past, mirrors-m as in a looking glass-, the sources and achievements of a people's culture and gives them a true understanding of their place and function in the general march of mankind.

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The living assimilation of this past history gives them a sense of power and self-confidence and strengthens their individuality.

What is history, O stranger to thyself?
A tale, a story or fable?
No! It makes thee conscious of self,
Capable in action and efficient in quest!
Sharpens thee like a dagger on the whetstone
And then strikes thee on the face of thy world!
Behold the dormant flame in its fire,
Behold Tomorrow in the lap of its Today!
It s candle is a guiding star for the nations luck
Making bright both tonight and yesternight!
The experienced eye that beholds the past
Recreates its image before thee!
Assimilate history and grow strong,
Drawing life from the breaths that are gone!
Thy present rears its head out of the past,
And thy Future emerges out of the present!
Wouldst thou achieve the everlasting life?
Sever not the bonds of the past with the present and the Future!
Life is the perception of the surge of continuity;
For the wine drinkers, it is the gurgling of the wine in the flask! 48

Iqbal further holds that, in periods of decadence, a people can gain new vitality by turning to the healthy sources of their past culture. By striking their feet, as it were, firmly on the ground of this culture, they gain, like Antaeus, fresh power and inspiration.

In such critical periods, he deprecates, excessive untrammeled individualisms and unchecked liberty of thought, which ignore the values of the past in determining the right course of action and degenerate into license.

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48 Rumuz-I-Bekhudi, pp. 172-173.
When the texture of life has become weak and worn out,
The community gains stability through imitation!
Tread the path of thy fathers—it spells unity;
Such imitation means the discipline of the commun ity!
Thou hast lost the ocean; learn to control thy loss!
Guard carefully the water in thy small stream!
Ijtihad in the age of decadence
Dislocates the texture of a nation’s life!
Following the way of those who have gone before
Is safer than Ijtihad by scholars without vision!49

If these verses are taken by themselves, without reference to the
general trend of Iqbal’s thought, they would seem to favor a static or
conservative conception of culture and a rejection of the dynamic,
forward looking outlook. But, as already pointed out, Iqbal has drawn
pointed attention here to one important aspect of the situation.

To put his viewpoint into right perspective, it is necessary to take his
ideas as a whole and evaluate them in the general context of his
thinking. Such a comprehensive approach would show that he is a
kindred spirit to Goethe and Carlyle, fully appreciative of the role of
original, creative individuals in the development and progressive
reconstruction of the life of a community.

The social order always tends to be stable and stationary; it is only
such individuals, possessing independence of thought and originality

49 Ibid, pp. 143-144.
of vision, who can give it new values and introduce a dynamic element into its routine.

When a community becomes lazy, slothful, disinclined to effort and averse to change, some great individual is born to give it a new impetus:

When the web and woof of his activity is slow and lifeless;
And the bud of his intellect is unopened,
When he fights shy of effort and struggle,
And does not exploit the treasures of Nature,
God brings into being some inspired person,
Who expands a single creative word into a volume:
A player who, with his musical notes,
Endows this clay with a new life!
He creates new lines of insight,
And brings a garden to bloom in the desert!
He gives a new form to the nacked intellect,
And invests its poverty with riches!
He strikes off the fetters from the feet of the slaves
And frees them from the tyranny of Gods!
He reassures them that they are no one’s bondsmen,
Nor inferior to these mute idols.\(^\text{50}\)

This idea recurs very frequently in his poetry and is to be found as a central motif of thought in all his writings:

\[\text{قوم نايمد از دلی ماصوب وـ} \]

The individual is born of a handful of dust,
The nation out of the heart of an inspired individual.\(^\text{51}\)

\(^{50}\) Ibid, pp. 102-103.
\(^{51}\) Ibid, p. 136.
Of such great and unique individuals he sings with lyrical fervor:

مریخ از آسمان آفت پیرین
پیام و شیب غرب و شرق

The man of God descends from Heaven like lightning,
Consuming in his fire cities and plains, East and West;
We are all emotionally inspired by his fire,
Otherwise we would be but poor creatures of water and clay.\(^{52}\)

It need hardly be pointed out that Iqbal is using here the language of metaphor. He does not obviously look forward to the coming of some great bloodthirsty conqueror, a scourge to the East and the west, the towns and the countryside.

The emphasis is on “man of God”. As the second verse indicates, he is a man with uniqueness of vision and intensity of feeling who broadens our outlook and our sympathies. He is to burn away the cobwebs of old, effect and out-worn institutions and inspire men with a new message of hope and creative life, making them ‘sahib-dil’, i.e., endowed with sensitive hearts.

\(^{52}\) Javid Nama, Op.cit, p. 244.
This doctrine of individuality for Iqbal is not mere academic thesis, it is charged with urgent practical significance. The reason appears to be twofold.

On the one hand, he had a poignant realization of the general decadence that has beset the Muslim world for the last two centuries, due largely to the lack of the right kind of intellectual and moral leadership.

Secondly, the recrudescence of certain political movements in the west, which seek to repress the freedom of the individual through the over organization of collective life, made him stress specially the value of individuality. In his lectures, he has given unambiguous expression to his views on this question.

According to the Iqbal, each individual has a role in making up the community to which he belongs. Afraad kay haaton hai aqvaam kee taqdeer the fate of humanity is in the hands of every human being.

He has to be conscious of his responsibilities to society because he cannot function alone: 'Fard Qaam rabt-e-millat say hai' an individual is sustained by society: 'tanha kucch nahin' by himself he counts for nothing; he is like a wave of the ocean which ceases to exist if there were no ocean.
That boy will grow into a courageous, healthy and service minded boy, provided he gets a wholesome, environment. His body as well as his mind will develop in right proportion.

He will serve the villagers. And will be content to live on the subsistence provided by the villagers. Through his service and the knowledge acquired by him he will provide proper guidance to the people around him and thus train more young men.

So in this way the institution for the benefit of the society must give the education.

In an interesting and thoughtful discussion of the conditions prevailing at the time of the destruction of Baghdad in the 13th century, which brought general disintegration of the Muslim world in its wake, he points out how the conservative thinkers of the period had focused all their efforts and attention on “the one point of preserving a uniform social life for the people by a jealous exclusion of all innovations.

Their leading idea was social order, and there is no doubt they were partly right, because organization does to a certain extent counteract the forces of decay. But they did not see, and our modern Ulama do not see, that the ultimate fate of a people does not depend so much on organization as on the worth and power of individual men.

In an over-organized society, an individual is altogether crushed out of existence. He gains the whole world of social thought around him
and loses his own soul. Thus a false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection.

Such as we see in many Eastern and western countries today constitute no remedy for the peoples decay. The only effective power, therefore, that counteracts the forces of decay in a people is the rearing of self-concentrated individuals.

Such individuals alone reveal the depths of life. They disclose new standards in the light of which we begin to see that our environment is not wholly inviolable and requires revision.

This principle is relevant not only to certain collectivist states in the West where over organization and a “false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection” have killed freedom of thought and arrested the forward movement of the human spirit, but also to India and Pakistan and many other countries of the East.

Here also we find certain tendencies of revivalism, which are likely to retard rather than accelerate progress. A due reverence for the values of the past does not, and should not; mean a failure to take new forces and movements into account and to make necessary adjustments.

Iqbal has quoted, with approval, this significant remark of a modern historian: “the verdict of history is that worn-out ideas have never risen to power among a people who have worn them out.” Thus, on a careful weighing of evidence, it would be seen that Iqbal takes a dynamic view of human culture. For him, the development of
individuality inevitably implies what he has called “the principle of movement in thought” without which the wings of the human spirit become clipped and it tends to subsist only on fruitless, “worn-out ideas”.

The relationship between the individual and the community must, therefore, be interpreted, as one of dynamic, mutually enriching give and take and education should be oriented accordingly.

In Asrar the emphasis was more on individual; in Rumuz, it was on community. Then he emphasized on individual and community according to him that both had to be integrated to achieve the common ideal of communal ego, which was the main objective of human existence on his earth. He wrote:

The relation between the individual and the society
Provides the real source for enlightenment for both
The individual cannot attain perfection
Unless he merges with the community.

Sir Muhammed Iqbal was having international outlook and only the permanent and the universal have a prominent place in his system or political exigencies. His creative development and his emphasis on the brotherhood of man lead us to believe that Iqbal’s concept of human unity was not theoretical but practical and real.
In an illuminating article entitled "Human Unity Concept now a Reality" Dr. Karan Singh says that the concept of human unity is as old as civilization itself.

He refers to Rigveda in which "we have a reference to Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam, the world as a family". Dr. Karan Singh is "Sure that such references can be multiplied in the other scriptures that the human race has produced in its long and tortuous evolution on this planet".

In this context one is aptly reminded of the Holy Quran, a major source of inspiration for Iqbal who, like Aurobindo, can rightly be called a prophet of human unity. Iqbal rejects the old static view of the universe and propounds a dynamic view.

This dynamic view, for Iqbal forms the basis of their emotional system of unification, which ultimately "recognizes the worth of individual as such, and rejects blood relationship as a base of human unity".

Iqbal's philosophy of human unity takes its source from its conception of individuality and uniqueness of man as emphasized by the Quran. According to Iqbal, the Quran has a definite view of man's destiny as a unity of life. This concept of unity of life embraces the entity human race irrespective of caste, color, creed, and nationality.

Iqbal attacks the "abstract conception of human unity" and says that the idea of human unity is "neither a concept of philosophy, nor a dream of poetry". Iqbal does not visualize human unity as divorced
from human consciousness, which in his words constitutes the center of human personality.

He bemoans the situation that this unity of human consciousness "never really became a point of interest in the history of Muslim thought".

Here it would not be out of place to refer once again to Iqbal's attitude towards modern knowledge which, obviously, led him to reconstruct religious thought in Islam and, in the context of which he says:

"The only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate the teachings of Ismal in the light of that knowledge, even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us".