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## HUSSAIN-A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE TO AUTHORITARIANISM: A REVIVAL OF ISLAM IN THE LIGHT OF IQBAL'S POETRY

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*The poetry of Iqbal is replete with various symbols including an eagle, sparrow, Mullah, and Mard-e-Momin to inspire a specific class, particularly youth. Hussain, a prominent personality of Islam who stood against evil and sacrificed almost everything, became a symbol of resistance to those who don't have enough power against the malicious. Iqbal, like many other writers, used the name Hussain as a symbol of resistance against evil and trepidation. His poetic work, by realizing the intensity of the situation where Muslims were facing adversities, provided them with a beacon light to achieve the desired ends. A question that how his work, mostly seen in the context of religious reverence and Heroic admiration, found the said topic as a stimulus to the political and democratic goal. This paper endeavours to explore the roots of Iqbal's poetry on Hussain as a symbol of the saviour of the political institutions of Islam and his struggle to resist the despotism of Yazid and defend the caliphate. This paper extensively cites the Poetic works of Iqbal on the contribution of Hussain and his companions to challenge the autocratic rule of Yazid. It will further deliberate on the lessons learnt from the great sacrifice of Hussain. Iqbal's philosophy on the spirit of the Karbala movement is also examined by distilling Iqbal's poetic works from merely a Greco-Roman-styled heroic poetry inspired by the sentiments of Hero worship.*

**Keywords:** *Iqbal; Hussain; Democracy; Dictatorship; Resistance; Karbala Movement; Political Philosophy;*

## Iqbal's Life and Legacy

Commonly known as the national poet of Pakistan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal's forefathers belonged to Kashmir and he was born in Sialkot. Being a part of a religious family, the religious inclination toward Iqbal was very high since childhood. His immense natural talent led him to Government College Lahore and the University of Munich. After obtaining the degree of PhD, he returned. His poetry skills made him popular among political circles and soon he was recognized as a philosopher and poet. His Persian and Urdu poetry is considered the best version of his time. His poems especially for children are still very famous and a part of the educational curriculum. He was one of the greatest people of the twentieth century whose dedicated political vision of a separate homeland made him an artist, dreamer, and saviour of the Muslims of the Sub-Continent and also known as the Poet of the East.

## Symbolism in Poetry

Iqbal's Poetry is replete with various symbols to denote the thoughts and philosophies in a rational context. Iqbal's poetic works are influenced by symbolism and he seems impressed by the symbolist movement in literature. Eminent writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century extensively used symbols to personify their concepts and notions. (Simon, 1991, p.45). Among the literary circles, it is believed that in the absence of symbolism literature cannot be imagined, not even a single language. Words are beautifully expressed by symbols and symbols are mostly connected with letters which compose. (Simon, 1991, p.41). In literature, symbolism is the type of expression, essentially but arbitrary, until it has achieved the force of a convention, just for a hidden truth. Sometimes it is allowed us to attach but hopefully, our convention is a symbol of the unseen reality. (Simon, 1991, P.45).

The epic era of the Symbolist movement was French Revolution when literary symbols were at work in revolutionary literature. Iqbal having deep knowledge and critical appreciation of the French Revolution adopted various symbols to infuse spirit in his poetic ideas. Symbols played a significant role in his poetry to represent the ideas that only existed thematically. Symbols were also vital to

remain precise and concise while conveying his messages to the readers (Carlyle, 1831, p. 23). By using symbols, he managed to keep long stories short and could say something without indulging in preludes and backgrounds (Bowra, 1950, p.11). Hussain is a strong symbol he used to represent various desirable characteristics in his targeted readers. Since Muslims of India owed great reverence to the house of Muhammad (PBUH) and were convinced of the truth of the objective behind the great sacrifice of Hussain, therefore, Iqbal chose Hussain as a symbol for the revival of Islamic democracy (Khilafat) and a sign of resistance against the autocracy (Malukiat), for all times (Bowra, 1950, pp.12-14). Iqbal strongly believed in the revival of the Islamic democratic system and sought perfect salvation for Humanity in this Political institution. Thus, Hussain was a regulatable example for him to motivate his readers to stand against the evils of western democracy and to strive for the resurgence of the lost glory associated with the erstwhile institution of Khilafat. (Bowra, 1950, p. 20).

## Heroic Poetry

Heroic poetry is found in the literature of almost every language and its roots date back to the Greek period when in their efforts to differentiate humanity in several sorts because the ancient Greek thinkers and scholars already have presented different areas for those brave people who live and die for the sake of brave life. Especially those who believed in the self-assertive principle (Muhammad, 1993, p.15). During the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. in Greek Methodology some notable persons considered men as their heroes whom Homer had considered as heroes because they sought and sacrificed for others and they deserved honour. The heroic life started very early but lasted too long in Greek society. The Greeks were not only on the list of respecting the superior categories of men who just lived for dignity and peace. Roman age which believed in the pursuit of honour also expressed its gratitude in adventurous poetry. This sort of poetry is still present in different areas of the world. The art of symbolism is still flourishing in almost all literature of the world. (Qureshi, 1994, p.102). The tradition of heroic poetry was brought forward by Arabs and Persians

by glorifying the adventures of their warriors, conquerors and leaders. In this form of poetry, the heroic life of a hero revolves around full respect and dignity. A poetic hero gives honour to humanity by showing what race is capable of and shares his good experiences with others by giving their admiration of life (Qureshi, 1994, p.78).

Poetry in the subcontinent is heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian literature; therefore, heroic poetry remained an essential element in the Urdu and Persian poetry of Indo-Pak. The sacrifice of Imam Hussain remained a core topic of heroic poetry in the Subcontinent. However, this poetry mainly stirred the sentiments of mourning and consolation on the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his companions while the incident of Karbala was often portrayed simply in the terms of a human tragedy. Iqbal, however, explores the philosophical and Political aspects of this defining episode of Islamic history. He regards Karbala as a movement rather than a simple tragic incident (Qureshi, 1994, p.105).

Allamah-Iqbal was strongly sure of the urgency of the foundation of pure Islamic and spiritual democracy for Muslims of India and he emphasized that an Islamic society could never be established without having an Islamic State the genera of his poetry used in this paper is an elegy (Qureshi, 1994, p.106).

### Iqbal's Thoughts about Democracy

Iqbal considers dictatorship and monarchy un-Islamic and he has placed great emphasis on Islamic democracy in many of his lectures and considered it better for the Muslim Ummah and all human life (Iqbal, 1960, p.32). Iqbal wished to light and spirit in Muslims which could take the Islamic guiding values and provide them assistance in this time (Suheyl, 2001, p.102). According to Iqbal, universal spirituality should be made under the canon of Islam and Islam is the righteous way of all humanity the foundation of spiritual democracy is one of the main principles which will lead human civilization towards evolution with a spiritual basis (Suheyl, 2001, p.103). Iqbal considered the separation of politics from Deen as the main reason for this (Suheyl, 2001, p.104). He said:

"جلال بادشاہی ہو کہ جمہوری تماشا ہو  
جدا ہو دین سیاست سے تو رہ جاتی ہے چنگیزی

(Suheyl, 2001, P.56).

Apart from religion and politics, injustice remains whether it is a glorious monarchy or a democratic spectacle.

Iqbal accepted some principles of democracy but he rejected the secular and material inclination of democracy. Iqbal's broad perception of Islamic concepts is proof of his deep intellectuality towards Islam, he accepts some canons of democracy and rejects others (Suheyl, 2001, p.70).

اس راز کو ایک مرد فرنگی نے کیا فاش  
ہر چند کہ دانا اسے کھولا نہیں کرتے  
جمہوریت ایک طرز حکومت ہے کہ جس میں  
بندوں کو گنا کرتے، تولا نہیں کرتے

(Kulliat-e-Iqbal, 1935, p.104).

کیا تو نے دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا جمہوری نظام  
چہرہ روشن، اندوں چنگیز سے تاریک تر

(Waheed, 2000, p.91).

The important principles of democracy such as freedom, equality and election are appreciated by Iqbal (Iqbal, 1953, p.50). Iqbal strongly believed that the concerned person is chosen and should be expelled by the people (Qureshi, 1994, p.63). If it is against the law, then Iqbal claims democracy more than the most important aspect of Islam is considered a political ideal. But at the same time, he said that this ideal of freedom lasted for thirty years in the Muslim world and later disappeared with its political expansion (Iqbal, 1992, p.52).

Iqbal suggests that the universal spiritual interpretation should be based on Touheed (Waheed, 2000, p.32). Islam is the best way for humanity and it will also come towards the evolution of human civilization on a spiritual basis. Now it becomes easy to analyze and observe the concept of spiritual democracy (Waheed, 2000, P.32). Iqbal warned the Western nations about the history and significance of their civilization. He describes:

"دریا مغرب کے رہنے والوں کی بستی دکان نہیں ہے  
کھرا جسے تم سمجھ رہے ہو وہ اب زر کم عیار ہو گا  
تمہاری تہذیب اپنے خنجر سے آپ ہی خود کشی کرے گی  
جو شاخ نازک پہ ایشیا بنے گا ناپائیدار ہو گا"

(Waheed, 2000, p.33).

O people of the west! God's world is not for exploitation

What you consider to be economically genuine will  
turn out to be worthless  
Your civilization will commit suicide with its  
daggers  
The nest built on a frail branch will be unstable.

"ایک ہوں مسلم حرم کی پاسبانی کے لیے  
نیل کے ساحل سے لے کر تابخاک کا شجر"

(Manzoor, 2014, p.44).

Muslims show unity into a single body, For  
Haram's defence from the shore of the Nile to  
Kashghar.

### Hussain-A Symbol of Democracy

Imam Hussain was the unique symbol of  
democracy. Islamic history reveals that the Holy  
Prophet (SAW) did not refer any of his relatives to  
Khilafat or any of his close friends (The News,  
2016, Karachi). It is worth noting that the boat was  
obtained for that Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R.A.)  
also which alone gave credit to his Khaleefa.  
Hazrat Umar (R.A.) was not exempt from the bat  
because of his nominee Hazrat Abu Bakar (R.A.)  
(Iqbal, 1994, p.50). Hazrat Ali (R.A.) also tasted  
the same therefore the deflection of Hazrat Ameer  
Muawiya (R.A.) from that process rose his  
resistance by close fellows of the Holy Prophet  
(S.A.W) and when Imam Hussain was forced for  
ba'at in favour of Yazid the Hussain favoured  
sacrifice of his entire family but did not bow to  
Yazid (Iqbal, 1994, p.51).

"سردار نہ دو دست در دست یزید  
حقا کہ بنائے لا الہ است حسین

(Iqbal, 1994, p.67).

He gave his head but not his hand  
In Yazid's hands (as a bat),  
By God, Hussain (R.A.) is the foundation of La  
Illah.

Imam Hussain describes his sacrificial  
mission in his own words: "I have not taken this  
position neither out of arrogance nor pride nor out  
of corruption and injustice, I have risen to seek  
reform in the community of my Grand Father. I  
would rather choose death than evil and weakness"  
(The News, 2016, Karachi). In the Islamic world,  
Imam Hussain is a principle, but his sacrifice is  
seen as the revival of faith and justice (The News,  
2016, Karachi). Hussain gave everything he had,  
including his life for the honour of those around

him (Islamic Society, 2016). Hussain was known in  
social and class circles for his spirituality and  
honesty. That is why people came to him and his  
family (Iqbal, 1992, p.19). As a prince of his tribe  
and a prominent figure in the Islamic Empire, he  
would relinquish the greatness of his position in  
favour of breaking bread with the helpless people.  
Hussain cut down all barriers, brought people  
together and helped them (Iqbal, 1992, p.20).

### Philosophy of the Karbala Movement

It's not easy to judge the sacrifice of  
Hussain on worldly parameters. It was obvious that  
with a handful of companions including women  
and children how one could win a war against a  
well-equipped army of thousands. In the words of  
Iqbal, it cannot be understood the means of reason  
but to fathom the depth of this act one has to open  
the eye of love. Hussain stood against Yazid and  
left his home town due to the threat of  
assassination. Hussain made his way towards the  
east with his family and comrade (Iqbal, 1992,  
p.92). Hussain was finally victorious after this  
bloody, tragic but heroic act of sacrifice. His death  
brought revolutionary changes and especially the  
collapse of Yazid's tyrannical rule. Hussain  
remained determined and still, his legacy continues  
to attract billions of populations (Iqbal, 1992, p.93).  
Hussain especially during the sad event in Karbala  
reveals that success is not obtained by superiority in  
numbers (Iqbal, 1992, p.94). According to Iqbal,  
Hussain's great wisdom and self-determination to  
fight for norms and principles are exemplary for  
everyone (Iqbal, 1992, p.94).

### Iqbal's Poetry on Hussain AS

Allamah Iqbal himself was a lover and  
mourner of Imam Hussain. Iqbal loves Hussain and  
praised his life and sacrifice to be a lesson for  
mankind. To him, Hazrat Hussain's life was an  
example of Muslim sacrifice and offering a solution  
to their all problems (The News, 2016). Iqbal said

"عزم او چون کوپساران استوار  
پایدار و تند سیر و کامگار"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.32).

"تبغ بھر عزت دین است و بس  
مقصد او حفظ آیین و بس  
ما سوی اللہ را مسلمان بندہ نیست"

پیش فرعونى سرش افکنده نیست  
خون او تفسیر این اسرار کرو  
ملت خوابیده را بیدار کرو"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.33).

"تبغ لا چوں از میان بیرون کشید  
از رگ ارباب باطل خون کشد  
نقش الا الله بر صحرا نوشت  
سطر عنوان نجات ما نوشت  
رمز قرآن از حسین آموختیم  
زا آتش او شعله با اند و ختیم"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.33).

"اے صبا اے اے پیک دور افتادگان  
اشک ما بر خاک پاک اور رساں"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.33).

"حقیقت آبادی ہے مقام شبیری  
بدلتی رہتی ہے نان داز کوفی و شامی"

(Bal e Jibril, p.65).

Allamah Iqbal refers to Imam Hussain as an epitome of eternal truth who set an example through his martyrdom to guide all those who choose the path of resistance as the deceitful tools of treachery, cruelty and expediency keep on change keep serving the greed of usurpers. Imam Hussain's martyrdom ushered in a new era of struggle against unlawful rule based on tyranny. The world has ever seen a struggle between two opposing forces that good and evil, right and wrong. World history is a testimony of the contest between truth and deceit, vice and virtue. There could never be a compromise between two poles. This contest was arranged by the clash of two personalities Moses and Pharaoh and this tradition of challenging evil was carried forward by Hussain during his challenge to Yazid and his autocratic rule (Fariyan, 2000, p.9).

"موسی و فرعون شبیر و یزید  
این دو قوت از حیات آید پدید"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.35).

The world's political history would always witness the contending factions representing vice and virtue being aligned with either of the poles that is Hussain or Yazid, Moses and Pharaoh. Thus, through his sacrifice, Hussain not only set an example but formulated the principles for the determination of right and wrong (Raza, 2019, p.12).

"اک فکر ہے شبیری، اس فکر میں ہے میری  
میراثِ مسلمانی، سرمایہ شبیری"

(Bal e Jibril, p.36).

عجب مزاق ہے اسلام کی تقدیر کے ساتھ  
کاٹا حسین کا سے نعرہ تکبیر کے ساتھ"

(Bal-Jibrael, p.20).

The challenge to dictatorship cannot be procrastinated/ deferred/ put off/delayed to pacify the dictatorial wrath. Imam Hussain exemplified strength and fortitude without human and material resources. On the battlefield of Karbala, his army was mismatched with that of the enemy and Yazid's strength overnumbered in men and logical resources. However, this incompatibility didn't shake the determination of Imam and his courage to say No to what he believed was wrong.

"دشمنان چون ریگ صحرا لا تعد  
دوستاں او بہ یزداں ہم عدد"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.45).

علی کا زیب زین زندہ ہے فاطمہ کا چین زندہ ہے۔  
نہ پوچھ وقت کی ان بے زبان کتابوں سے  
جب ازان سنو تو سمجھو حسین زندہ ہے۔"

(Kulliat Iqbal, p.21).

He chose to confront the imperial fervour of Yazid which derail the Khilafat and planted Malukiati (autocracy). Therefore, he left a legacy of freedom not only for Muslims but for the entire humanity. His courage, sacrifice and steadfastness paved the path for Muslims to seek their renaissance (Raza, 2019, p.11). Iqbal traces the roots of the Karbala movement in response to the decline of Khilafat (Muslim polity) in an Islamic state. With the political decline of the institution of Khilafat whole social and political fabric of the Muslim state shattered. Imam Hussain couldn't witness the fall of an Islamic state as a silent spectator. Therefore, he rose against the menace of Malukiati (autocracy) and launched his resistance campaign in the form of the Karbala Movement.

"سرخرو عشق غیود از خون او  
شوخی این مصرع از مضمون او"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.34).

On the worldly parameter, Hussain couldn't win the physical war and embraced martyrdom along with his handful of the army but with his blood, he drew a line of distinction between truth and falsity. From the sand of Karbala Hussain emerged as a symbol of freedom and a saviour of Islamic ideology. Iqbal hails the sacrifice by saying that Hussain uprooted monarchy from the Islamic political canvass and the savage idea of oppression

and cruelty was condemned forever. With his blood, he nurtured a garden which symbolizes the truth and freedom for all the times to come.

"زنده حق از قوتِ شبیری است  
باطلِ آخر داغِ حسرتِ میری است"

(*Ramooz e Bekhudi*, p.32).

Iqbal further explained that the Karbala movement was not aimed to achieve any personal gain nor was interested to assume power without the due Political process of appointment of Khalifa. He challenged the despotism of Yazid and declared him a symbol of tyranny and dictatorship.

### Hussain and Ismail: Epitomes of Sacrifice

Iqbal through his poetry established the sacrifice as a seed of resistance freedom and challenge to dictatorship. Here Iqbal compares Hussain and Ismail. Like the glory of Abrahamic prophecy begins with the sacrifice of the beloved ones being victimized and submitting oneself on the altar of sacrifice are two different concepts. Whatever happened at Karbala was not an accident, but rather a culmination of a thoughtful process which laid the foundations of freedom from tyranny. According to Iqbal, Ismail was a prelude to the epitome of sacrifice.

"سر ابراهیم و اسماعیل بود  
یعنی آن اجمال را تفصیل بود"

(*Kuliyat-e-Iqbal*, 1999, p.53).

Spreading a universal message for humanity, Iqbal said that they should imitate Hussain, who sacrificed his precious life for the way of truth. The legacy of Imam Hussain is for all mankind and cannot be placed in one Muslim sect. The impressive splendour of his testimony is the eternal conviction that will forever guide mankind in his conduct. Hussain has guided the truth that will last until the day of judgment. Iqbal's love for Imam Hussain is a witness to his great religious inclination. Hussain sacrificed his life for the revival of eternal truth, according to Iqbal, Hussain was the symbol of truth and love for Allah. Iqbal pinpoints and highlights the universal message of inspiring glory of the martyrdom of Hussain and considered it an unforgettable truth that will provide true guidance for all generations.

### Progeny of Prophet Muhammad (SAAW)

Although Hussain could have enjoyed a comfortable life in isolation by simply submitting allegiance to Yazid, he could have enjoyed a prominent position in the court of Yazid as well, owing to his lineage and being a prominent member of the house of the Prophet but he preferred to choose the path of truth instead of worldly comforts and it was, therefore, a lesson that resistance movement is not limited to the deprived class and persons belonging to lower strata of the community. It is not the saga of Have-nots but where comes the conflict of principles it is the responsibility of those who enjoy a prominent position in the community to withdraw from the leisure of life and lead the efforts to resume the collective political rights.

"بهر آن شهزاده خیر الممل  
دوش خاتم المرسلین نعم الجممل"

(*Ramooz e Bekhudi*, p.98).

"آن امام عاشقان پور بتول  
سرو آزادی ز بستان رسول"

(*Asrar o Ramooz*, p.71).

"اللہ اللہ بآئیں بسم اللہ پیر  
معنی زح عظیم آمد پیر"

(*Asrar o Ramooz*, p.89).

"شوکت شام و فریاد رفت  
سطوت غرناطه ہم از یاد رفت"

(*Ramooz e Bekhudi*, p.31).

"تار ما از خمه اش لرزان بنوز  
تازه از تکبیر و ایمان بنوز"

(*Ramooz e Bekhudi*, p.32).

"زنده حق از قوتِ شبیری است  
باطلِ آخر داغِ حسرتِ میری است"

(*Asrar o Ramooz*, p.7).

### Hussain AS- the Leader of Justice and Freedom

The concept of Islam revolves around Monotheism despotism is always denied by Islam. Naturally, mankind believes in one creator so the rest of the powers are automatically negated. When we prostrate before God, we cannot bow to anyone else. Beautiful rich symbols of power and fear are defeated. The Quran says about monotheism in Surah Ikhlas:

"Say: Allah is one, Allah is self-sufficient. He was not born of anyone, nor was anyone born of him. And He has no peer," (*Al-Quran*, 112: 1-5).

Hussain sacrificed his life along with his loved ones in the way of Almighty Allah.<sup>53</sup> On the plain of Karbala, his determination, courage and bravery have left memorable signs on history. Iqbal said:

"تیر و سناں و خنجر و شمشیر آرزو است  
بامن میا کہ مسلک شیبیر آرزو است"

(Payam e Mashriq, p.10).

"در نوائے زندگی سوز از حسین  
اہل حق حریت آموز از حسین"

(Ramooz e Bekhudi, p.41)

Iqbal says that Hussain's every drop of blood ushered Islamic renaissance.

"بہر حق در خاک و خون غلطیدہ است  
پس بنائے لا الہ گرویدہ است"

(Asrar o Ramooz, p.11)

"سرخ رو عشق غیور از خون او  
شوخی این مصرع از مضمون او"

(Asrar o Ramooz, p.18)

"ریگ عراق منتظر، کشت حجاز تشنہ  
کام خون حسین باز دہ کوفہ و شام خویش را"

(Zaboore e Ajam, p.8)

The difficulties were not in favour of Imam Hussain and they continued to grow during the war. It was an unequal fight. Finally, Imam Hussain gave his life to Islam. Famous western author Gibbon says about the tragic death of Imam Hussain: "The sad scene of Hussain's death will rise the innocence of the cold reader every year, especially in Muharram-ul-Haram" (Iqbal, 1992, pp.9-11).

Hussain is a witness to how the rights of his helpless people have been violated and good values have been erased from society. Iqbal discloses that he learned the secrets of the Quran from Hussain and took the precious treasure of faith from his life.

## Conclusion

Iqbal's poetic work on Imam Hussain AS is not merely a collection of Heroic poetry as was common in Greek and Roman literature but it contains a strong message embedded in it. Iqbal's poetry is not limited to the sentiments of reverence for Hussain but he seeks the light of the Islamic renaissance in the character of Hussain. According to Iqbal, Karbala was not an incident; it was a movement where Hussain with his blood drew a line of distinction between evil and virtue. The Karbala movement is an established example of

resistance against autocracy and despotism, for all the times to come. The act of Hussain answered the lasting questions about freedom, justice, good, evil, and salvation. His sacrifice was emulated by freedom lovers and truth seekers in all the societies of the world. Whenever any dictator tried to usurp the public's fundamental rights, the Karbala movement's paradigm was the call for resistance. Hussain exemplified the courage to negate what was/is deemed wrong. It also set a principle that how one can win triumph while being oppressed and it is not required to be equal in material terms to stage a challenge against tyranny. Iqbal establishes that Hussain didn't seek personal glory or worldly benefits rather he strived to safeguard the political institution developed and designed by the last Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His act of resistance eliminated the concept of Malukiat (autocracy) from Islamic Political Philosophy.

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