

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PAKISTAN*

Pakistan is a young country but its philosophical traditions extend back to over one thousand years to the days of Arab conquest of Sind, nay they recede still back into the archaic past. The unconscious element forms an important part of an individual's mind. It also forms an integral part of the mind of a community or a people. Iqbal rightly observes that a nation moves forward with the entire weight of its past.

The philosophical traditions in Pakistan were given a definite shape with the establishment of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress. The Philosophical Congress provided a platform where philosophers from the two wings of the country, as also from other parts of the globe, assembled every year to discuss various movements in modern thought. The Congress afforded thinkers in Pakistan an opportunity to project the philosophical basis of the ideology of Pakistan, the philosophy of life which our country advocates, Islamic values etc. This helped the thinkers in Pakistan to delineate the various facets of the ideology of Islam and their prominence in the moral habitude or the ethos of our people. The late Professor M.M. Sharif and some of his colleagues especially Professor Q.M. Aslam, Professor C.A. Qadir, Mr. B.A. Dar, Dr. G.C. Dev and Mrs Akhtar Imam deserve thanks of the nation for setting the Pakistan Philosophical Congress on sound footing and guiding and channellizing its activities to secure national intergration and to project the Philosophy of the country.

In tonight's discussion we propose to limit ourselves to a discussion of the philosophy of four thinkers viz Iqbal, M.M. Sharif, Dr. G.C. Dev and Professor C.A. Qadir. Of course there are other thinkers who could be profitably included in the list but in view of the short time at our disposal we are restricting ourselves to these four only. Before we start discussing

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philosophers individually it appears proper to state a few general characteristics of the philosophy of Pakistan.

The chief characteristic of the philosophy of Pakistan is that it is theistic both in spirit and in content. All notable thinkers of Pakistan have, with some variations, subscribed to theism. Pakistan has a long tradition of sufism. Sheikh Ali Hajvari, popularly known as Data Sahib, who lies buried in Lahore, was the first person to write a treatise on sufism. The saints and sages have been preaching, through the ages, in the areas now comprising Pakistan, different sufi traditions. Sufism has a great impact on our literary traditions. You turn to Urfi, Amir khusro, Mir Taqi Mir, Ghalib, Bulley Shah, Waris Shah, Baba Farid and you find how their works are steeped in sufi traditions. Despite the hold of sufism on public mind pantheism or the doctrine of wahdat-ul-Wajud has not found favour with the Pakistani thinkers. In some quarters it is urged that Iqbal was in the beginning of his career an advocate of pantheism. The basis for this assertion is a certain letter of McTaggart who, on reading *Asrar-e-Khudi*, was much influenced by Iqbal's philosophy of self and wrote that while in England Iqbal made him believe that he was a pantheist. Even Dr. Javid Iqbal in his introductory article to a collection of Iqbal essays entitled "Iqbal, the Poet of Tomorrow" subscribes to this view and further adds that in his note-book (*Stray Reflections*), the poet philosopher admits that Wordsworth saved him from atheism and since Wordsworth was a pantheist Iqbal must have been, for some period at least, a pantheist. This is hardly any sound argument. Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality* and Iqbal's poem on *Glow Worm* remind one of strong influence of Plato on these poets; yet we can hardly describe Wordsworth as a camp follower of Plato. And the title that Iqbal gives to Plato in "Javid Nama" shows in what measure he held the great Greek Philosopher. Even in his famous lectures on *Reconstruction* Iqbal appears to relish in laying threadbare the inherent weaknesses in the systems Plato of and other Greek thinkers.

Another characteristic of the Philosophy of Pakistan is that the opposition between reason and intuition finds no place in it. Iqbal, Khalifa Abdul

Hakim and Dr. G.C. Dev have laboured to award equal status to the two modes of apprehension and regard them as complementary processes. Iqbal in fact overshoots the mark when he takes Gnazali to task on this account.

The third feature of our contemporary thought is that in the last decade there is a marked shift in it to analytical thought. This is especially true of the contributions of the late Professor M. M. Sharif but more so it appears in the works of Professor C.A. Qadir, at present Iqbal Professor of Philosophy, at the Punjab University. To Professor Qadir goes the credit of presenting Logical Positivism and Existentialism in lucid form in the country but, what merits greater consideration, is his firm approach to a defence of the language of religion, in terms of its meaningfulness. With these preliminaries we now turn to a brief survey of the thought of four thinkers whom we propose to take up during the rest of the time at our disposal.

IQBAL

Iqbal is a spiritualist and a pluralist. He regards God as the ultimate basis of all existence. He arrives at this conclusion, through an analysis of conscious experience. He further finds support for his thesis in concepts of matter and life as developed in modern physics and modern biology. An analysis of experience reveals that life is pure duration. There is nothing static in our inner life: all is constant mobility, a perpetual flow in which there is no halt or resting place. Constant change, however, is unthinkable without time.—Conscious existence thus means life in time. He further asserts that pure time is an organic whole in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with and operating in the present. Pure time is not a mechanical repetition of homogeneous moments. No two moments in the life of an individual can be exactly alike. 'To exist in real time is not to be bound by the fetters of serial time, but to create it from moment to moment and to be absolutely free and original in creation.'

After having established the creativeness of conscious existence and life Iqbal proceeds on analogy and infers that the universe is a free creative movement. 'The universe is not a thing but an act.'

From the analysis of conscious experience Iqbal further concludes that ultimate reality is pure duration in which thought, life and purpose interpenetrate to form an organic unity. Since life is not a chaotic but an organising principle Iqbal conceives it as a centralizing ego. He perceives a rising note of egohood in the universe. There are different grades of egohood. 'It is the degree of the intuition of 'I-ness' says Iqbal, 'that determines the place' of a thing in the scale of being..... Our 'I-ness' is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not-self'. But to the ultimate self the not-self does not present itself as a confronting other. What we call nature or the not-self is only a fleeting moment in the life of God. His I-ness is independent, elemental and absolute'. Self gets expression through self-revelation. Just as a finite self reveals itself in character, similarly the Infinite Self or God expresses itself in a uniform mode of behaviour. 'Nature is to the Divine self as character is to the human self.' Nature therefore is capable of growth and expansion. It is finite but boundless. Its boundlessness is potential and not actual. Creation is, thus, a continuous process

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(This Universe is, as yet, far from being complete,

For the echo of the Eternal Be is continuously being heard)

God or the ultimate reality is both immanent and transcendent in nature. Man, the finite ego, is to strive to assimilate divine attributes. His highest development is not a slipping into the Infinite but a bold affirmation of his self in His presence. An individual who shows such a degree of self integration is Mard-e-Momin or Insan-e-Kamil. Ethically speaking the ideal is to strive for that degree of self-integration which helps the individual to have perfect composure and self-possession in the presence of the Infinite Ego.

M.M. SHARIF

Professor M.M. Sharif during his life time developed a synthetic and comprehensive philosophy of his own which he named Dialectical Monadism. It was G.M. Leibnz in 1714 who first conceived of the concept of force to be the basic cosmological principle that exists in the atoms which he calls monads. The monads are then the soul atoms which are not static but alive and active. Professor Sharif's philosophy is in line with the pluralistic traditions in modern thought for he believes in the reality of monads which are the finite centres of experience.

Professor Sharif analyses experience as a complex of thought and the object thought of. Experience comprises both the subject and the object or what he calls the base-entity and the basic entity. The two play an active part in experience.

Aristotle in his metaphysics emphasised the object or the basic entity as the cause of sensation-complexes. Kant had, on the other hand, said that as the categories are universal they could not be derived from physical objects. They are thus the contributions of the perceiving mind (the base-entity). The categories have a universal and necessary meaning of their own that can be apprehended independently by the subject without any reference to the experience of physical objects. They are, however, holds Professor Sharif, not the contributions of the subject alone because as characteristics of physical objects these categories are relatively independent of the subject's will. One cannot, for example, apprehend physical objects, the spatio-temporal sensation-complexes having qualities, quantities, relations, at one's will. According to Professor Sharif knowledge is the result of inter-action between both the subject and the object. Both factors, the base-entity and the basic entity, play a vital role in experience and to deny or exaggerate the role of any one of these factors would only lead to a distorted view of reality.

Knowledge about our own selves as base-entities Professor Sharif thinks, is direct, intuitive and synthetic. My knowledge of my self reveals that I

am a self-identical, active, persistent, and self-conscious centre of energy having a free will working within the limits of the categories and their manifold. This centre of energy he calls monad and it is related to the manifold of other monads starting from the inorganics to the human individual. The higher Monads are immanent in and yet transcend the lower ones.

Professors Sharif believes that the process or the activity that takes place within the monads is dialectical. The dialectical process, according to Hegel, proceeds from one idea of thesis to its anti-thesis, both of which continue to form a synthesis. Hegel, of course, conceived of this dialectical process in a purely rational or conceptual sense. Karl Marx thought it to be a purely material process. For Professor Sharif however, the dialectical movement is a Monadic movement, a movement of being essentially like my self. The dialectical process is a movement of the self through the complementary not-self and then to the synthesis of both in a more developed self. The dialectical process is basically teleological from the lower or the organic to the higher human level. The lower or the organic level is not a conscious level but at the higher or human level it becomes conscious and is thus explicitly teleological. Man creates ideals for himself. There are however, limitations in his way which he is constantly trying to overcome. Man thus creates ideals which involves the absorption of the not-self into himself and which then results in the realization of the ideal. Such a dialectical process goes on in man without end. Man has a strong desire to shed his imperfections and attain to perfection and since the latter is not attained the dialectical process goes on endlessly.

The dialectical process constitutes the very existence of each monad and is a value to which it tries to give a richer content. The categories and values are immanent in the finite monads but because they are spiritual entities they transcend every one of them. God is the unity behind all values and is a Monad among all monads. God is immanent in all finite monads but He being spiritual transcends them all. The question regarding the existence of God, Professor Sharif contends, cannot be decided on purely rational grounds and is primarily a matter of faith. "Since the Absolute is the highest ideal

of our will and in His contemplation our feelings are fully appeased, and His idea is the highest reach of our imagination, we develop the faith that the Absolute is not merely a real on the plane of thought but is the ultimate real as being."

DR. G.C. DEV

Professor G.C. Dev, at present head of the Department of Philosophy, Dacca University, can rightly be termed as the philosopher of synthesis. The synthesis of reason and faith, or of matter and spirit is, what he tries to work for. In the preface to his book *Idealism : a New Defence and a New Application*, he writes, "On the basis of a new orientation of the time-old idealist philosophy, I have made in it a defence of one-world and visualised the future of the common man in a synthetic philosophy that finds the truth of matter in spirit and of spirit in matter." Professor Dev lays more emphasis on the practical aspect of philosophy, than on its theoretic aspect for he holds "that world's best philosophy is to my mind more an answer to human needs as expressed in human history than a product of subjective fancy of select individuals." In his presidential address delivered at the 10th session of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress he observed "—my approach to philosophy has been more through the heart than through the head as is generally desired in our times—Rightly or wrongly, I have been used to look at philosophy with the magnifying glass of a lover and not with the dissecting, surgical knife of an analyst. That temperamental preference has its dangers, but for me it has been a most rewarding experience without which life will not be worth living."

Dr. Dev regards unity as the essence of spirit and plurality as the essence of matter. That which divides and distintegrates is matter and that which integrates and unites is spirit. They are the two inseparable aspects of the same reality. Reason, the objective reason, by an analysis of normal experience can give us an insight into the material aspect of reality. It may end in materialism as its only philosophy and an attachment for material values the sum and substance of its ethics. Left at this stage reason is sceptical in its attitude to spirit and indifferent to spiritual values. But reason has a sub-

jective role too which hankers after unity. In religious experience reason attains to its ideal of unity and can have a peep into the nature of spirit and thus a new dimension of reality dawns before the imagination of the philosopher. "The nucleus of a sound and sobre philosophy is neither materialism nor spiritualism as they are commonly understood, but a happy merger of both." Dr. Dev discovers in Islam a happy synthesis of both spirit and matter so beautifully expressed in the phrase '*Din and Dunya*'. It is this philosophy of synthesis of spirit and mater which can save humanity from destruction. Since the essence of spirit is unity and that of matter plurality it is only the perception of essential unity which can bring men closer together and thus prepare them to accept the principle of peaceful co-existence.

C.A. QADIR

Professor C.A. Qadir, Iqbal Professor of Philosophy, at the University of the Punjab, is a notable figure in the fraternity of living philosophers of today. In Pakistan he was for a long time regarded as the sole champion of logical positivism, a movement in contemporary thought which started in twenties in Europe. A marked shift in his writings to existentialism and to a defence of religion became visible in early sixties. His articles on 'Language and Religion', 'Psycho-analysis and Religion', 'God and Logic', 'Question of the Pot' and 'God and War' contain the fruit of his mature thought on religion, its role in establishing peace and a defence of religion in the context of contemporary philosophic thought—a task which had been admirably taken up by Iqbal in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Professor Qadir rightly points out that the language of religion is multi-dimensional. It is sometimes the language of analogy, sometimes of obedience or faith, sometimes of encounter. The meaningfulness of religious discourse has, therefore, to be determined with reference to the context in which it occurs. This context is differet from the contexts of scientific and mathematical languages. The criteria are also different. There is no need to suppose that truth is synoymous with deductive or inductive reasoning and the results of that reasoning. There are countless ways in which truth is

arrived at in practical life and to confine it to just two ways is a great injustice. Religious truths are arrived at differently, with the help of criteria which are different from the scientific and logical ones. 'Religious language is essentially interpretative and attempts at literalism are doomed to failure'.

In his article 'God and war' Which forms a chapter in the Critique of War edited by Robert Ginsberg, Professor Qadir has made out a cogent case for tackling the problems of war on the basis of some of the fundamental principles of Islamic ideology. He says 'the theocracy of Islam recognizes neither church nor priesthood, it's simply an assertion of the sovereignty of God, which in turn is the sovereignty of values. The idea of sovereignty of God is.....very useful for peace. As observed already, the sovereignty of God is, in fact, the sovereignty of values, or what amounts to the same thing, the sovereignty of man, for values have no meaning except in a human situation that is enriched and ennobled by their adoption. This idea stresses the accountability of man to the ultimate reality which is essentially good.'

From the sovereignty of God follows the idea of the brotherhood of man. Oneness of God implies oneness of mankind. A sound political outlook can harbour no racial, geographical or materialistic conceptions.

Thus we find that thinkers in our country have theism as a pivotal point in their thought. With God as the supreme creator and also the locus of all ultimate values the requirements of a religiously oriented society are fully met. From the unity of God follows the unity, equality and freedom of all men. Such a conception alone can bring mankind closer together and make universal peace possible.

