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Iqbal's Critical Approach to Secularism

Abstract

This paper explores Allama Iqbal's critique of secularism, a concept that emerged in the West as a response to historical conflicts between church and state. Iqbal viewed secularism as inherently opposed to the Islamic ideal of an integrated spiritual and temporal existence. His critique is rooted in the Quranic principle of Tawhid (the oneness of God), through which he envisioned Islam as a dynamic, evolving social order that should actively engage in all spheres of life, including governance. Iqbal observed that secularism arose from the Church's conflict with the Enlightenment in Europe, which fostered the emergence of both large and small churches. The Roman Church, for instance, used the confessional system to control the Christian world, while figures like Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileo intensified the clash between science and religious authority. By contrast, Iqbal emphasized that Islam is neither an ecclesiastical system nor governed by clergy but rather an inclusive way of life that bridges human and divine relationships and guides societal interactions. Central to Iqbal's thought is the idea that Absolute Reality is spiritual; thus, all that we perceive as "worldly" has a fundamentally spiritual dimension. Unlike Western secularism, he believed that Islam is compatible with scientific inquiry and that a future harmony between Islam and science is inevitable. For Iqbal, Islam is not merely a set of beliefs but a complete social system designed to connect humanity with God and provide a comprehensive framework for human relationships.

Key Words: Iqbal, Secularism, Critique, Islam, Spiritualism

Introduction

Muhammad Iqbal often hailed as the "*Spiritual Father of Pakistan*" and one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century, engaged deeply with the philosophical, political, and religious challenges facing the Muslim world in the wake of colonialism and modernity. Among the central themes of his thought is a robust critique of secularism. This concept emerged in the West as a response to the historical conflict

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between the church and state but was increasingly being proposed as a universal solution for governance in the modern world. Iqbal's approach to secularism is not merely a rejection of the idea as it was understood in the West; rather, it is a profound re-examination of the relationship between religion and politics within the framework of Islamic thought.

Iqbal's critique of secularism is rooted in his belief in the unity of human existence's spiritual and temporal aspects, a concept he derived from the Quranic principle of Tawhid¹ (the oneness of God). He envisioned Islam as a dynamic, evolving social order that must be actively engaged in all spheres of life, including governance. In this light, Iqbal's thought presents a unique perspective that challenges the universal applicability of secularism, advocating instead for an Islamic polity where religion and state are intertwined, serving as a guide for both individual conduct and collective social order.

This introduction to Iqbal's approach to secularism highlights his critical engagement with the concept and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how his ideas have influenced Muslim thought and political movements, particularly in the context of post-colonial states seeking to define their identity in the modern world.

Literature Review

*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*² by Allama Muhammad Iqbal is the most significant work, where he outlines his philosophy and critiques secularism. He argues for a dynamic interpretation of Islam that responds to modern challenges while rejecting the secularization of Muslim society. *Iqbal: His Art and Thought*³ by S. A. Wahid provides an in-depth analysis of Iqbal's philosophy, including his views on secularism. It is a comprehensive resource for understanding how Iqbal's life experiences shaped his ideas. *Islam and the Secular Mind: The Religious Philosophy of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal* by William C. Chittick compares the religious philosophies of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Iqbal, focusing on their respective responses to secularism and modernity. According to M. Saeed Sheikh's *Islamic Philosophy*⁴, Iqbal rejected the notion of separating religion from the state, a key tenet of secularism. Sheikh emphasizes that Iqbal viewed this separation as antithetical to the Islamic worldview, which integrates the spiritual and temporal aspects of life. *Iqbal's Conception of the State* by Javid Iqbal, written by Iqbal's son, views on the role of religion in the state and his critique of secularism. *Iqbal's Critique of Secularism: A Study of His Major Writings* by Khalifa Abdul Hakim focuses specifically on Iqbal's critique of secularism, exploring his ideas on the inseparability of religion and politics in Islam. *Iqbal and Modern Islamic Thought* by Annemarie Schimmel provides a comprehensive overview of Iqbal's thought, with a significant portion dedicated to his views on secularism and

his vision for the modern Islamic world. *Secularism in the Post-Colonial Islamic World: Iqbal's Vision of Islam and Modernity* by Hafeez Malik examines Iqbal's response to secularism in the context of post-colonial Muslim societies and his vision of modernity rooted in Islamic principles.

In a literature review on Iqbal and secularism, several gaps or areas needing further exploration could be identified. There is a lack of research on how his ideas about secularism have been received and interpreted. The literature often presents Iqbal's views on secularism as a monolithic stance. However, there is a need for a detailed analysis of how his thoughts on secularism evolved. Most studies on Iqbal and secularism are confined to religious studies, philosophy, or political science. There is a lack of interdisciplinary approaches that could integrate perspectives from sociology, anthropology, or cultural studies to understand the broader implications of Iqbal's views on secularism.

Iqbal uses the term secular, and it is essential to understand this term thoroughly because there are various misconceptions and interpretations associated with it. This paper will provide a comprehensive explanation of this term. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the meaning of secular is related to the worldly or the affairs of this world. The literature largely presents Iqbal's views on secularism in a positive light, often lacking critical perspectives or counterarguments. There is a need for more balanced analyses that consider potential limitations or challenges in applying Iqbal's ideas about secularism.

Research Methodology

Library-based research is undertaken that is primarily qualitative, focusing on the interpretation and analysis of texts, and an analytical approach is used to deconstruct Iqbal's writings and speeches to critically understand his views on secularism.

The introduction of the term secularism:

Iqbal used the term in a specific context, and it is crucial to grasp its meaning as he intended. He employed it to signify a solid and tangible concept related to worldly exchanges. This individual integrates their intellectual or ideological beliefs with worldly social and political realities, shaping their traditions based on them.⁵

Secularism is a philosophy or system in which religious or doctrinal principles are not included in governance matters, and governmental and societal systems are kept free from religious identifications. It supports a multicultural and multi-religious society where individuals have the right to live according to their religious or non-religious beliefs.

In English, the term translates literally as "*Secularism*."

Secularism is generally applied to the separation of state politics or administration from religious or church matters.

The definition of secular education is as follows:

Secular Education is a system of training from which definite religious education is excluded.

The term secularism is attributed to George Jacob Holyoake⁶, who was born in Birmingham, Great Britain, in 1817. He was raised in a religious environment, but upon reaching maturity, witnessing the lack of social compassion in religious circles led him to distance himself from religion. He then began participating in the Owenite socialist movement. Ultimately, he became an outspoken anti-religious advocate. In 1841, he publicly denied the existence of God, leading to his imprisonment on charges of apostasy in Cheltenham. Following this, he became an adversary of Christianity. However, he was not entirely sympathetic to what he perceived as dogmatic atheists. In 1850, he met the renowned secularist activist Bradlaugh⁷, and a year later, in 1851, he clarified the term "*secularism*."

Bradlaugh and his associates, including Charles Watts Jr., were atheists, and all of them were also involved in Holyoake's movement. He coined the term secularism to distinguish his movement from the atheism of these individuals. Holyoake neither embraced theism nor advocated atheism. Theism can be briefly understood as the belief that God, as the creator of the universe, is transcendent, not having once created the machinery of the cosmos and left it to run on its own, but is immanent, continuously guiding and controlling the universe. God is in constant communion with the human soul, providing guidance and serving as the guiding force of nature.

In contrast, atheism denies the existence of any God or absolute power that created, sustains, and guides the universe. Holyoake did not align with either of these perspectives. He did not assert the presence of God, nor did he claim that any guidance comes from Him, unlike religious advocates. Simultaneously, he did not adopt the atheistic standpoint that denies the existence of God or any guiding influence.

This was a peculiar and unique approach in which Holyoake exhibited detachment and even aversion to religion on the one hand. On the other hand, he did not express an inclination towards atheism. This peculiar inclination led him to coin the term "*secularism*." Theism and atheism are not only conflicting but are also opposites of each other. However, supporters of secularism, such as Holyoake and his companions, claimed that they were neither opposed to religion nor atheism.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, secularism is merely the name for detachment from religion, and secular education refers to education in which no religious influence is involved. The purpose and objective of education are also to study the manifestations of nature, the effects of the universe, and the events and phenomena of the world,

uncovering the hidden truths within them. Furthermore, this study should be done in an unbiased manner, so that the facts are discovered through an objective method. This is also referred to as an empirical method.

In other words, the purpose of secular education is to ensure that religious biases do not influence the revelation of facts, and the objective of the empirical method is to study facts free from any internal or external influences. It seems that secular education and the empirical method are closely related to each other. The only difference is that in the empirical method, all kinds of influences are kept free from affecting the study, and emphasis is placed on the removal of religious influences in secular education. When the matter is so clear, the question arises: Why is Iqbal opposed to secular education? The matter is not so simple, and the reality of secularism is not only what is evident in dictionaries and Holy Oak's statements. In reality, secularism is not just a term; rather, it has become the style of thought and way of life of the present civilized and progressive world. Iqbal is opposed to this mode of thought and outlook, and this way of thinking and way of life did not just emerge spontaneously; rather, behind it are some factors and motives that are shaping it. There is a historical background to all of this, and without keeping that in mind, the true nature of secularism and its essence cannot be understood.

Historical Background of Secularism

This historical background can be briefly described in just one sentence: secularism originally emerged due to an intense conflict between the Church and the Enlightenment or Rationalist movement. However, this summary does not shed specific light on the nature and essence of secularism. To understand it more clearly, it is necessary to narrate the story of the prolonged and ongoing conflict between the Church and the Enlightenment movement. Although this story is lengthy and requires a comprehensive classification, it is briefly recounted here to clarify the true nature of secularism.

The religion of the Roman Empire initially adhered to paganism.⁸ However, in 3305 CE, Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire embraced Christianity for certain political reasons, and the Christian religion gained political power. Gradually, this political power increased, and the sphere of Christianity began to expand. Before long, almost the entire Europe fell under its influence, resulting in the emergence of small and large churches in all European countries. Each church had its organization.

Then, all these churches were affiliated with a central authority, and the head of this center was the Pope of Rome. From a religious perspective, the Pope of Rome was the focal point of faith. In terms of worldly glory, dignity, and power, he was also the source and fountainhead of imperial authority, as all the crowns, big and small, in Europe were

devoted to its sanctity and subject to its rule. The belief in him was widespread in the Christian world that he was infallible and the vicar of Christ.

The doctrine of the Trinity was a fundamental belief in Christianity, but the Roman Pope added some other issues to the basic tenets of the Christian faith. These issues, which Saint Augustine explained in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters of his book 'Confessions,' were related to the interpretation of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. In this book, after explaining the philosophy of the Trinity, he elaborated on the creation of the universe, earth, and sky, as well as the composition of their essence according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

In this context, he made some strange and absurd claims, such as flat Earth, with the sky erected like a dome and stretched like a fine membrane. He argued that the Sun, Moon, and stars move to provide light to humans. The Earth is the center of the universe, and all other celestial and non-celestial bodies are subordinate to it, and so on. These issues no longer remained subjects of contemplation but became the foundational beliefs of the Christian religion, denial of which was considered synonymous with disbelief.

The Russian Church not only established these beliefs as the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion but also enforced them through the ecclesiastical courts of bishops, where deviations from these beliefs were punished. Due to this ecclesiastical system, medieval Europe remained submerged in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, European historians refer to this period as the 'Dark Ages.'

In the deep darkness, the light of knowledge emerged when Islam's sun rose, and Muslims, after departing from the Arabian Peninsula, captured the significant center of Christianity, Jerusalem (Al-Quds). Subsequently, they conquered Constantinople and then advanced further, unfurling the crescent flag over Spain and reaching the heart of Europe, the Pyrenees Valley in France. The Muslim conquests had not only shaken the Christian world, but along with it, the enlightening lamps of their scientific achievements began to dispel the darkness in Europe. The intellectual contributions of Muslims, acknowledged by European authors themselves.

The purpose is that when the light of knowledge began to spread in the Christian world through the efforts of Muslims, the Church saw that the foundations of its grandeur and power were shaking. Now, to strengthen its grip, it resorted to coercion and oppression. It has been stated that initially, the Church had established ecclesiastical courts of bishops for punishing those deviating from its proclaimed beliefs. However, now it realized that the philosophy of this struggle for knowledge against their ignorant beliefs could not be dealt with through such measures, so they implemented two

special arrangements. One was the establishment of religious courts or Courts of Inquisitions, and the other was the method of confessions.

Religious courts or inquisitorial councils imposed severe punishments on individuals found guilty of committing acts considered heretical by the Church. These punishments ranged from imprisonment and fines to various forms of brutal torture, leading to death penalties. The procedure involved accusing the suspect, and the accused had an obligation to explicitly confess to the alleged charges, which the Church of Rome considered as part of religious doctrine. According to Dr. Draper, author of *The Conflict Between Religion and Science*, the accused had no permission to present any testimony, express their innocence, or provide evidence in their defense.

People were cautioned that each individual should only entertain those thoughts sanctioned by the rulers of the church. According to the method of Confession, every Christian needed to confess their sins secretly in front of their church priest. The priest would then absolve them of these sins; otherwise, the individual would remain a Christian sinner. Reports of confessions, made through priests, were sent to the Pope of Rome. In this way, through the confessional system, the Church of Rome had an extraordinary and effective means to control the common people and the elite. The method of confession was, in reality, a vast network of espionage, spread throughout the Christian world. Through this system, one family could be turned against another, and every individual within a family could become an informer against another.

Then, when, through this method, the Church not only knew about people's actions but also had knowledge of their thoughts and ideas, if it became apparent that someone's actions and thoughts deviated from the declared beliefs of the Church, the system of inquisitorial councils immediately came into action. The person would be arrested and brought to the present court.

The purpose of the system of inquisitorial councils and the method of Confessions was a dual tool, through which the Church of Rome had a grip on the entire Christian world. Thus, the ecclesiastical system not only throttled the individual's freedom of action but also erected barriers against the freedom of thought. Let's take a glimpse of the golden deeds performed by the Courts of Inquisition to accurately assess the tyranny and oppression of the Church against the freedom of thought and action."

Dr. William Draper writes:

"As a result of the actions of this court (Inquisition) in the first year, i.e., 1381 AD, two thousand individuals were burned alive in Andalusia, and besides them, several thousand corpses were exhumed and burnt, while seventy thousand individuals were given sentences of imprisonment or penalties for life... Based on anonymous complaints, the accused would be

arrested without any evidence presented against them. No opportunity was given to confront witnesses. Instead, the accused was tortured in the dungeons... Mercy was shown so that the criminal was not tortured for a second time in the rack. The torturer would inform the accused that today the breaking of their bones was not done properly, so they would receive the punishment of the rack for life.

Llorente, who is a historian of the Inquisition, estimated that a collaborator and his associates burned two thousand two hundred individuals alive, created the deaths of six thousand eight hundred individuals through the making of effigies, and gave different punishments to nineteen thousand three hundred and twenty-one individuals in the eighteen years. This alert priest, who had lost his senses, destroyed the Hebrew version of the Gospels wherever found, and in Sepulveda, he burned fifty thousand books of Oriental sciences, stating that they contained teachings of the Jewish religion."⁹

Despite this coercion, oppression, and injustice, the light of knowledge and wisdom spread, and revelations and discoveries regarding the universe and its various manifestations and effects continued. In this series, three pioneers are worth mentioning: Copernicus, the second Bruno, and the third Galileo. Their scientific achievements and their struggle, patience, and perseverance against the coercion and tyranny of the Church can be observed so that the clear picture of the mutual war and conflict between the Church and the Enlightenment comes to light."

Copernicus wrote a book titled "De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium"¹⁰ in 1507, but due to the fear of the Church, he did not publish it for some time. In this book, he stated that the Earth is not the center of the universe, but the Sun, the center of the solar system, is. According to him, the Earth revolves around the Sun, not vice versa. He also wrote that besides the Earth, there are other planets, each rotating on its axis and orbiting around the Sun. He wrote that the Earth is one of the many celestial bodies in infinite space, similar to other planets.

He had accepted before Newton that there is a force of gravity in the Sun, the Moon, and other celestial bodies. Copernicus finally published this book in 1543. When a printed copy reached him, he was lying on his deathbed, still breaking into a smile. The publication of this book challenged the Church as it contradicted the proclaimed beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. The Court of Inquisition declared this book heretical, and reading it was considered a crime. Luckily, Copernicus passed away with the book's publication, or else he might have faced the Inquisition's persecution for his ideas.

Copernicus passed away but left behind a book that sent a wave through the scientific world, stirring controversy in the Christian world. By declaring this book heretical, the Church was satisfied that it had

suppressed the rebellion. However, this was a misunderstanding. It is undeniable that for some time, there was silence on the battlefield of ideas, but this silence was, in fact, the calm before the storm.

In 1584, the writings of Giordano Bruno, an Italian philosopher, were published. The publication reignited the conflict against the Church – Giordano Bruno was born seven years after the death of Copernicus. While he grew up, he devoted his life to serving the Church and eventually became a part of the clergy. However, he was not satisfied with some of the Church's beliefs. He began expressing his doubts, leading to suspicions and hostilities from religious authorities.

Bruno ventured to Switzerland, France, England, and Germany to avoid their reprimand. However, everywhere he went, he faced persecution from the Church, who considered him an enemy due to his questioning of certain religious doctrines. To escape their censure, he roamed from place to place, but the Church's spies continued to haunt him, causing him trouble wherever he went.

Giordano Bruno delivered lectures in England and wrote books. In them, he expressed the idea that the Earth is not the only world but there are other worlds as well. He affirmed Copernicus's heliocentric model of the solar system. Ultimately, when Bruno returned to Italy, he was arrested in Venice and kept in solitary confinement for six years! He was not given any writing tools or reading materials during this time. Later, he was transferred from Venice to Rome.

Here, the Roman Inquisition brought charges against him, accusing him of impious views, that contradicted the sacred scriptures. Then he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment! Two years later, he was brought before the court again. The holy judges ordered him to repent of his great sins! Bruno refused to comply with the execution of the order. The sacred court immediately expelled him from the Christian Brotherhood, and not only that, but the holy tribunal, through an act of mercy, issued an order that he should be sentenced with such leniency that not a drop of his blood should fall on the ground! This mild punishment meant that the criminal should be burned alive! The execution of this sacred order took place on February 16, 1600, and Bruno was offered to the flames of a living fire!

Thus, once again, the Church breathed relief, extinguishing the rising flame of rationality.

Only eight years after Giordano Bruno was offered to the flames, a significant event occurred in 1608 – the invention of the telescope! The credit for this invention goes to a Florentine resident named Galileo Galilei. Galileo was a mathematician and physicist. He heard that a Dutch spectacle maker named Lipperhey had specially joined two pieces of glass, and when he looked through it, distant objects appeared larger and clearer.

Galileo immediately created a device based on the same principle and gradually improved it. This device is called a telescope. When Galileo observed the Moon through this instrument, it became apparent that, like Earth, it also had valleys and mountains. Then, when he looked at the Sun through the telescope, it became clear that it was not flawless; instead, its face was spotted, and it was not silent either but rotated on its axis.

He then turned his gaze towards Jupiter and found that it was not without blemish. Instead, a quarter of it was bright, and, in the end, the entire circumference began to shine like a complete moon. Copernicus had theorized before that all the planets shine by reflecting the Sun's light, but Galileo's telescope confirmed these results through direct observation. Now, he worked boldly and courageously and announced that Copernicus's theory is correct, and the ideas he presented in his book "On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres" are correct according to observation.

Galileo took great courage and initiative in proving the heliocentric model as Copernicus had theorized. His telescope provided direct observation, aligning with the conclusions presented by Copernicus. He boldly declared that the ideas Copernicus had put forth in his book were correct and verified by observation.

Now he took great courage and initiative to prove the heliocentric model as Copernicus had theorized. His telescope provided direct observation, aligning with the conclusions presented by Copernicus. He boldly declared that the ideas Copernicus had put forth in his book were correct and verified by observation.

Galileo's bold announcement was equivalent to challenging the Church - the Holy Inquisition immediately accepted this challenge. The Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition promptly accepted this challenge. The challenge against Galileo led to an arrest warrant, and the very next day, he stood in the religious court as an accused. The court, charging him with a personal offense, stated that you are teaching the principle that the Earth revolves around the Sun, even though this belief is entirely contrary to the teachings of the sacred scriptures. Then he was issued a warrant for his arrest, and the next day he stood in the religious court as an accused. The court charged him with a personal offense, stating that he was teaching the principle that the Earth revolves around the Sun, even though this belief is entirely contrary to the teachings of the sacred scriptures.

Galileo's trial, the harshness of the judgment, his forced recantation, and the later years of his life are crucial chapters in the history of the conflict between science and the authority of the Church. It is a testament to the enduring struggle for the freedom of scientific thought and the separation of science from dogma.

After this incident, there was silence on the battlefield for sixteen years, and silence spread over the scientific world, but on the one hand, the

church's heart was ablaze, and on the other hand, Galileo was restless. In the end, it was unavoidable. In 1632, he made a bold move against the church and published his book "*The Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*"¹¹. This book worked like fuel on the fire. The church's anger flared up instantly. A session of the Sacred Court was convened, and Galileo once again found himself standing in the defendants' dock. The presiding judge of the Supreme Court of Appeals issued a verdict stating that the accused Galileo had committed the crime of heresy and apostasy, and the recommended sentence was for him to kneel before the court, renounce his principles of motion, and be cursed. Otherwise, he should be prepared for the punishment of death! Galileo submitted before the court's decision. He knelt before the court, repented, denied the principle of motion, and was cursed. Yet, the fire in the heart of the church did not cool down, and Galileo was imprisoned! He spent ten years in prison, but how? Throughout this time, all sorts of atrocities were inflicted upon him, and such tortures were inflicted upon him that his ethereal soul took flight from the cage of materialism even within the prison! Even after his death, the church did not fear him; his coffin was desecrated, and to the extent that he was not even allowed to be buried in the Christian cemetery!

This is a light-hearted picture of the clash that arose between Christianity and modern science! It was necessary to react to the tyranny, oppression, and despotism of the Roman Church. This reaction took on various forms.

One reaction manifested in the form of Martin Luther's Reformation Movement. Luther's act of nailing the *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of the church in the German city of Wittenberg was a real challenge to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The conflict between the Pope and Luther arose from the question of whether the truth of the Gospel is based on the authority of the Church or the Church's authority is based on the Gospel. In other words, who can interpret the truth: the Gospel or the Church? Luther claimed that the Church alone does not have the right to interpret and explain the Gospel. Adherence to the directives of the Holy Scriptures is necessary for Christians, but compliance with the Church's commands is not mandatory. In other words, every person has the right to express their opinion on religious matters. The Church cannot impose its opinion on everyone by citing the guidance of the Gospel. This is the essence of Luther's Reformation Movement!

The principle of interpreting and explaining the Holy Scriptures and relying on them, which emerged from Luther's efforts, was common. It was not only related to purely religious or ethical matters but also to philosophical truths and discoveries of the secrets of nature. However, Luther tried to limit this principle to moral and religious matters. He was opposed to philosophy and wisdom. He not only criticized Aristotle but

also vehemently opposed him and even insulted him as if the Roman Catholic Church, which was the follower of the Pope, was inherently opposed to modern science, but this new sect, i.e., Protestantism, which is the follower of Martin Luther, was not much in favor of freely expressing opinions in the light of discoveries of facts and manifestations of the universe. Therefore, as Dr. John William Draper writes:

The Christian Church's two rival groups, namely Protestants and Catholics, were unanimous and united in the mutual competition to ensure that "except for those sciences which are contrary to their views of the Holy Scriptures and any science should not be seen from the perspective of peace and tolerance."

Regarding freedom of thought, the only difference between these two groups was that since the Roman Catholic Church had a center and then had the power to enforce its decisions, it could enforce its decisions by force. However, the Protestant faction was spread across different countries and was deprived of government power, so it could only expel the culprit by declaring him an outcast from the Christian community. However, it would be wrong to say that Luther's Reformation movement did not open the door to freedom of thought and expression but in the mutual struggle between the Russian Church and the Reformation movement, the path to freedom of expression was smoothed out.

Another reaction to the trembling and horrific atrocities of the Russian Church was that enlightened individuals became opposed to religion itself and considered religion merely a collection of myths and superstitions! This is the foundation of the Atheist Movement. Luther's efforts were aimed at stopping this trend. Thus, he tried to support the declining branch of the Christian religion, but this support was ineffective. From the fifteenth century onwards, there was rapid progress in modern sciences in Europe. Criticisms began to be made of old notions and ideas. Many of these criticisms proved to be the pallbearers of ancient beliefs and superstitions, and those that remained began to break down. There were new revelations about the universe and its various manifestations.

On the one hand, new instruments were invented, delving into these new revelations and theories, and dismantling the spirit of ancient ideas. Columbus had discovered the New World. The movements that traveled around the world not only discovered new paths but also proved the roundness of the world... Europe had now stepped into the industrial age. New industrial factories had taken the place of old handicrafts. The hot market of industry and commerce had started, and with it, the mutual competition had begun. Amid all these circumstances, the molds of thought and understanding were changed. Instead of cursing and ridiculing new ideas, degrees of welcome and encouragement began to be bestowed. In such an environment, how could the church maintain its influence?

Luther's movement had already weakened the church's grip, and now the atheist movement found a great opportunity to pull out its pegs - so it happened that in the coming centuries, the atheist movement spread rapidly.

The third reaction to the conflict between religion and science was that a group emerged that considered religion to be worthy of attention and made it a religion without giving importance to it and made it a religion only based on reason or enlightenment - this is the group called secularism.

The fundamental principle of secularism is that human welfare and improvement rely on material means. These means are important and sufficient for human progress and well-being. Knowledge of these means comes from reason, and we verify them through life experiences. Mathematics, physics, chemistry, secular sciences, and similarly, human behavior and attitude can also be secular; indeed, they should be. Just as the foundation of these sciences is neither religious nor does it have any connection with any religion, similarly, the foundation of human behavior can also be non-religious. For such behavior, guidance from reason and practical experience is necessary. If one wants to advance further, merely the guidance of conscience is enough. Secularism's perspective is only focused on this material world; it neither believes in nor gives any importance to, any other world because even if such a world exists, it is not concerned with human welfare and well-being.

Secularism has chosen reason and experience for its guidance, but human behavior cannot exist in a vacuum; it cannot remain confined within the pages of books or the four walls of laboratories. Some fundamental principles or philosophies of life are necessary for human behavior, which become the source of thoughts and actions. Secularism has solved this problem by adopting utilitarianism as the course and installation of human actions and thoughts. Encyclopedia writer Erie S. Waterhouse writes in his article on Religion and Ethics:

The philosophical roots of secularism can be found in the schools of thought of James Mill and Jeremy Bentham, known as Associationism. Secularism has inherited its anti-theistic strain from them. Consequently, the Utilitarianists are regarded as the founders of secularism.

The directors of Encyclopedia Britannica also concur with this viewpoint, stating:

"Secularism is a particular form of utilitarianism. Religion had imprisoned reason within the fortress of superstitions and illusions, but over time, the walls of this fortress began to crumble. The Protestant faction, witnessing signs of weakness in these walls, adopted a more accommodating stance towards reason. The movement of atheism struck a blow to these crumbling walls, demolishing them, and secularism, seeing reason liberated in this manner, crowned it as its sovereign."¹²

Religion is hostile to reason and modern sciences. The Reformation movement is opposed to Protestant Christianity but also harbors no love for reason. The movement of atheism is a friend of reason and an enemy of both religion and the Reformation movement. Secularism is a staunch supporter of reason, but neither a friend nor an enemy of Christianity and the Reformation movement. While this may seem true on the surface, a deeper study of the aforementioned discussions of secularism reveals that its foundation is based on the separation of religion and worldly affairs. This theory of the separation of religion and worldly affairs is a fundamental principle of Christianity. The saying of Jesus Christ, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God, the things that are God's," encapsulates this principle."

Christianity's two branches, namely Roman Catholic and Protestant, hold the fundamental belief that here, there is no God, and therefore, the question of religion is irrelevant. If there is a God, then Caesar alone is Caesar. Hence, whatever exists belongs solely to Caesar. Secularism asserts that whether God exists or not is inconsequential to me; in my view, it is Caesar who holds sway. Whatever needs to be given, I will give to Caesar.

The crux of the matter lies in the ideological clash between Christianity and science. One branch of Christianity, namely the Church, suffered defeat in this clash, while the other branch, the Reformation movement, chose a path of retreat. Meanwhile, the movement of atheism continued, but it was secularism that emerged victorious. This was the outcome of the conflict that persisted for a considerable period between Christianity and the Enlightenment movement.

At present, the situation is such that the Church and the Reformation movement have reconciled with secularism, as they already shared the common ground of the separation of religion and worldly affairs. Now, the movement of atheism finds itself in the lap of secularism, making its prey easy to catch.

The interesting aspect of this entire saga of conflict and ideological clash is that religion or faith has been equated with Christianity, meaning that Christianity is not just one religion among others; rather, it has been considered the sole representative religion of the world. To such an extent, that scholars and knowledgeable researchers like Dr. John William Draper even classified Islam as a branch of Christianity! Thus, the conflict that arose not just from Christianity, but from the Church and Enlightenment, was turned into a clash between religion and science! And the defeat of Christianity was understood as the defeat of religion itself!

The real nature of secularism:

Upon careful examination of all these details, several realities emerge:

1. Secularism, as a result of intense conflict with Christianity and the Enlightenment movement, has emerged as a prominent force in the world.
2. It is a sign of Christianity's defeat and the triumph of the Enlightenment.
3. Secularism neither favors nor opposes religion, but in reality, its inclination towards atheism is evident, as noted by the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics writer, Eric S. Waterhouse.
4. This bend has a historical but natural and innate cause. Rejecting the delusion imposed by Christianity, secularism has taken reason as its guide, and this very reason is also the precursor of the movement of atheism. Thus, they both have the same leader. Then both secularism and atheism emerged due to the intense conflict between Christianity and rationality or wisdom (modern). In other words, they both have been born from the womb of the same conflict, meaning they are twins. Now, whether secularism, Christianity, or religion and atheism express a kind of indifference to both in the same way, but in the circumstances and environment in which both of them, secularism and atheism, have emerged, the natural and necessary demand is that there should be no room in the heart of secularism for religion. Still, there must be a soft corner for atheism. This indifference is not a kind of neglect but is based on contempt and hatred because religion (Christianity) has become its enemy anyway. On the contrary, atheism's association with disgust and hatred is not based on hostility but because in the war of rationality against religion, they both remain partners. The foundation of indifference to atheism is only a kind of disguise. May religion persist.

Iqbal's thought fundamentally revolves around Islam. His poetic style reflects this. Iqbal famously said that the best part of my life has been spent studying Islam, its system of Shariah and politics, its culture, its history, and literature. The spirit of Islam, which manifests itself in due time, has permanently connected me to such insight that, from its standpoint, I can perceive the importance of Islam as a global reality.

From these statements, it becomes quite clear that the source of his thinking is Islam.

He explains more clearly: "The emergence of a Luther is not possible in Islam because Islam does not have any organization similar to the

Church, which resembles medieval Christianity and which invites destruction to a reformer."

Iqbal states that from a theoretical perspective, governance and authority in Islam are not attained by any individual, group, or collective, i.e., the masses, but rather, governance or supreme power is attained only by Allah Almighty. Islam, as a political system, is a practical method of making the principles of monotheism a living element in the emotional and intellectual life of humans. Its demand is for loyalty to God, not for the throne and crown. Practically, the Islamic system of governance is called the "Islamic State," which is the method of governance where the great and exemplary principles of Islam are implemented. Here, no single individual or a few individuals hold clerical powers; rather, they are only the executors of those principles.

Iqbal says:

"The realization of the Islamic state, from our perspective, is our endeavor to manifest these great and exemplary principles of Islam in the world of time and space as a force. It is as if a desire, in the sense of perceiving these principles, is being manifested in a particular human community. When the Islamic state is referred to as the government of Allah (Theocracy), it is in these meanings. It does not mean that we hand over the reins of power to some 'vicegerent of God on earth' who, under the pretext of their assumed infallibility, always keeps a veil over their tyranny and oppression."

In Iqbal's view, Islam is neither an ecclesiastical system nor a rule of clergy and priests. It does not involve the rule of mullahs like that of priests and clergymen. So then, is Islam a supporter of the dualism of spirit and matter, and thus the separation of religion and world? Before answering this question, let us briefly hear from Iqbal about how the dualism of spirit and matter, and thus the separation of religion and world, originated, and what is the nature of the relationship between spirit and matter. He writes:

The cause of this ancient misconception, namely the duality of spirit and matter, is the separation that was created in the unity of the human self by understanding our existence as a combination of two distinct realities that, despite their mutual unity and connection, are fundamentally opposed to each other. However, it is the spirit that, when viewed about time and space, takes the form of matter. Therefore, when observing the actions and deeds of humans in the external world, we call it the body, but when their true purpose and objective are considered, we call it the spirit.

Then he further clarifies that according to the Islamic point of view, the Absolute Reality is merely spirit, and its life consists of the activity that we see manifesting over time. Therefore, it is the physical, material, and worldly realm in which the spirit finds an opportunity for expression. In

this context, everything that is conventionally referred to as worldly is essentially considered spiritual. Thus, the greatest service that contemporary thought has rendered to religion is its critique, through which it examined the material and physical, concluding that materiality has no significance in itself unless we trace its roots to the spiritual. In other words, there is no existence of an impure world; on the contrary, all the multiplicity of matter is merely a field for the spirit's self-awareness, and therefore, everything is sacred.

Now, let's address the question: Does Islam believe in the duality of spirit and matter or the separation of religion and the world? Hear the answer in Iqbal's words:

Islam does not divide the unity of human existence into the irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. According to Islam, God and the universe, spirit and matter, church and state are organically connected, meaning they are interconnected and related. Man is not a resident of an impure world that should be abandoned for the sake of some distant spiritual world. In Islam's view, matter is the spirit that has manifested itself within the bounds of time and space.

In Europe, Christianity was initially recognized merely as a monastic system, which gradually evolved into a vast ecclesiastical organization. Luther's protest was against this very ecclesiastical organization. The reason for this was clear: such a political system had no actual connection with Christianity, and Luther was entirely justified in standing against it.

If you start with the belief that religion is solely concerned with the other world (the afterlife), then what happened to Christianity in Europe is entirely natural. The universal moral system of Jesus Christ was replaced by a national system of ethics and politics. As a result, Europe was compelled to conclude that religion is a private matter for the individual and has no connection with the life that is referred to as worldly (temporal).

So, Islam may not be considered merely a private matter for the individual, but perhaps it could be regarded as a sacred collection of high moral teachings primarily aimed at the moral reform of the individual and society. Let's hear Iqbal's perspective on this:

"It cannot be denied that Islam, along with being a moral ideal, is also a kind of social structure. By social structure, I mean a social framework organized through a legal system within which a specific moral ideal breathes life into existence. In the life history of Indian Muslims, this has functioned as an essential unifying element."¹³

In Iqbal's view, Islam is both a moral ideal and a social structure, which is why he sometimes refers to Islam as a "social-political organization" to describe it.

Elsewhere, he writes:

“From a religious perspective, the truth is that Islam, which is referred to as a socio-political organization, is complete and eternal”.

In this context, here is another very brief but highly comprehensive and clear statement of his:

“Islam is not merely a collection of creeds; it is a social code”.

According to Iqbal, Islam is not merely a sermon from a mount. It encompasses not only a moral ideal but also a social method, a socio-political system, and a legal structure. Some argue that, in changing times, only its moral and religious teachings might be adopted, while its social, political, and legal principles are set aside. Iqbal's stance on this matter is clear, unequivocal, and definitive:

"The religious ideal of Islam is organically linked to the social system it has created, meaning they are inseparable. Denying one necessitates denying the other."¹⁴

He expresses this thought succinctly in a letter:

"Islam, as a religion, is a comprehensive system that encompasses both religion and politics. To separate one aspect from the other is to undermine the true essence of Islam."¹⁵

In summary, Iqbal is a deeply religious person, and his concept of religion is that it is neither a church system nor a theocratic form of government. There is no infallible deputy of God here, nor does anyone possess divine authority. His religion does not advocate the duality of spirit and matter or the separation of religion and the world. It is neither an ascetic way of life that abandons the world nor a monastic system that renounces worldly life. It is neither a purely private affair nor merely a sacred collection of noble sermons and high moral principles. His religion is a "whole," not a part. It advocates the unity of spirit and matter and the integration of religion and the world. It is, along with being a sacred belief and a high moral ideal, also a social form, an economic, political, and legal system, and all these aspects are interlinked. In other words, according to his conception, religion is a complete system of life and a comprehensive code of conduct, both for the individual and society... and this religion is Islam! Thus, they boldly declared this belief during the annual session of the All-India Muslim League in Allahabad:

"You have chosen to address this session of the All-India Muslim League to a person who has not lost faith in the living force of Islam, which will liberate human perspectives from geographical boundaries. A

person who believes that religion is a vital force in the lives of individuals and nations, and who is firmly convinced that Islam is the master of its destiny and cannot accept any other destiny."¹⁶

This is Iqbal's concept of Islam! Does this concept align with the background and essence of secularism?

It has already been explained that the intense conflict between Christianity and modern science gave birth to secularism. From Iqbal's perspective, Islam and the church system are fundamentally different. In the church system, a religious group claimed divine authority and sought to impose its superstitions and unfounded ideas on people's minds through the power of government and rule. In doing so, it became a tyrannical force obstructing enlightenment, scientific research, and discoveries. In Islam, there is neither a priestly system like in the church nor opposition to scientific research and discoveries. Iqbal states:

"Islam's enemy is not science (as some people mistakenly believe). Islam's position against science is not at all antagonistic."¹⁷

Iqbal's view is that there is no enmity or conflict between Islam and science; rather, there is cooperation between them. He even goes so far as to say that, in the future, such harmony will emerge between the two that it will astonish us. He writes:

"The day is not far when such harmonies between religion (i.e., Islam) and science will be revealed, which are currently hidden from our eyes."¹⁸

The church sought to suppress scientific research, inventions, and discoveries through force and oppression. As a reaction, the movement of atheism and secularism emerged. The movement of atheism tried to uproot religion entirely, while secularism sought to push it into the background. However, when there is no inherent conflict between science and Islam, then why is there a need to turn away from it and embrace secularism? According to Iqbal, Islam is in harmony with science and modern knowledge, and it even encourages modern scientific research and discoveries. In such a situation, relegating Islam to the status of a mere private belief and adopting secularism is not a rational approach.¹⁹

Secularism believes in the duality of spirit and matter, and consequently, in the separation of religion and the world. In Iqbal's view, Islam strongly opposes this division. Secularism considers religion to be a private matter for a few devout individuals, tolerating it as a set of moral

teachings or ethical codes, albeit reluctantly. However, even this ethical code is limited to a few ritualistic, lifeless rules in the private life of an individual, and can only operate within the confines of certain religious ceremonies. It has no role to play in collective life, especially in the economic, social, and political spheres of national life. Secularism becomes agitated by any attempt of religion to interfere in these areas.²⁰

In Iqbal's view, as we have seen, Islam is not merely a collection of a few rituals; it also encompasses a social system. It serves as a means of connection between God and humanity, and it also provides a code for determining and establishing relationships between human beings. In such a situation, adopting only those beliefs of Islam that pertain to the relationship between God and humanity, while abandoning its social code and replacing it with the ideology of secularism, is, in Iqbal's words, tantamount to rejecting Islam in its entirety.²¹

In summary, secularism is not merely a collection of philosophical ideas or intellectual theories; it is a way of thinking and a way of life. It has ousted religion from all spheres of individual and collective life, establishing its own rule over them, and has confined religion within the four walls of places of worship. It only allows religion to step outside these walls occasionally, typically during moments of joy or sorrow. Religion, God, and the sacred text may be mentioned in wedding ceremonies or festive gatherings, or when someone dies and the need arises to bury them, religious figures may be called upon. This is the role of religion as permitted by secularism, and nothing more.²²

In Iqbal's view, Islam is not merely a collection of beliefs; it too is a way of thinking and a way of life. Islam does not accept that its jurisdiction should be limited to the mosque. It seeks to influence and permeate all aspects of an individual's and society's life. In essence, secularism wants to rule over all aspects of human life except for religious rituals. At the same time, Islam seeks to establish its authority over every aspect of both individual and communal life, alongside religious practices and rituals.

Secularism demands that religious ceremonies be left to religion, but the rest of life should be handed over to secularism. Islam, on the other hand, demands that nothing be left out and that the entirety of life be entrusted to it. Secularism, echoing Christianity, says that what belongs to God (i.e., spiritual matters) should be given to God, and what belongs to Caesar (i.e., worldly matters) should be given to Caesar. Islam, however, declares that everything here belongs to God, leaving nothing for Caesar; hence, all your affairs should be handed over to Islam. This is the point where the conflict between Islam and secularism begins.

Atheism does not believe in God and religion. It argues that these things have no reality; they are merely products of the human mind. The only reality, according to atheism, is this world, this material universe, or humanity and its various issues. These issues do not require any guidance from a higher realm or any inner light; common sense can solve them, and it does so, with the guiding principle being utilitarianism. Thus, atheism has completely expelled God and religion from the universe, excluding them entirely from human life. In other words, atheism is a completely irreligious philosophy.²³

Secularism has somewhat tolerated God and religion, but it has confined its jurisdiction to the place of worship, taking control of all human and worldly matters. Secularism states that if you insist on believing in God and religion, you may do so, but they cannot be allowed to interfere in human life and its worldly matters. These issues must be resolved by reason, in the light of utilitarianism. Secularism has thus removed God and religion from all worldly matters of human life, limiting them to only a few spiritual matters... In other words, secularism is a partially irreligious philosophy.

Christianity claims to believe in God and religion, and it also acknowledges that their sphere of action is limited to the church or this world, without insisting on stepping beyond these boundaries. Therefore, the issues related to this world and human beings should be resolved in the light of reason and utilitarian philosophy... In other words, Christianity is a partial religion.²⁴

Islam declares that the true essence of the universe and the real center of human life is God and the life code sent by Him. This is the only concept of "truth," and all other ideas are "falsehoods." Truth has come to exist, endure, and permeate all aspects of life, while falsehood is meant to flee and vanish. "And say: The truth has come, and falsehood has perished. Indeed, falsehood is bound to perish" (Quran). Therefore, Islam is not something that can be excluded from human life and its various aspects; atheism is completely irreligious, Christianity is partially religious, and secularism is partially irreligious. Since religion is truth, every issue and matter of human life, its principles, and its details must be resolved in the light of religion... In other words, Islam is a complete religion.²⁵

Iqbal believes in a complete religion. Given this, how could he support or believe in complete irreligion, i.e., atheism, partial irreligion, i.e., secularism, or partial religion, i.e., Christianity? This is the fundamental and real reason for Iqbal's disagreement with secularism and secular education!

Conclusion

Iqbal views Islam not merely as a set of beliefs or rituals but as a comprehensive way of life that governs both the spiritual and worldly aspects of existence. He critiques secularism for relegating religion to a limited, private sphere, separating it from worldly affairs, and reducing it to mere rituals. Iqbal rejects this compartmentalization, asserting that Islam demands authority over all aspects of life, integrating both the spiritual and material. He contrasts Islam with atheism, which denies God entirely, and Christianity, which allows for a partial division between the sacred and secular. Iqbal firmly believes that Islam, as the ultimate "truth," must permeate every facet of individual and collective life, and he opposes secularism because it undermines this holistic religious framework. Thus, his fundamental disagreement with secularism lies in its attempt to exclude religion from worldly matters, which, in his view, contradicts the very essence of Islam as a complete religion. Iqbal's critique of secular education stems from his belief that it separates religious values from worldly knowledge, thereby creating an incomplete and fragmented approach to life. He argues that Islam provides not only spiritual guidance but also a comprehensive framework for all aspects of human existence, including social, political, and intellectual life. Secular education, by excluding religion from its curriculum, undermines this holistic vision, promoting a worldview detached from divine guidance. Iqbal believes that true education should integrate both spiritual and worldly knowledge, as Islam does, fostering a balanced development of the individual and society. For Iqbal, secular education's failure to acknowledge the centrality of Islam in shaping human character and moral values is a major reason for his opposition to it.

Notes & References

¹ Tauhid is the central and most fundamental concept in Islam, referring to the oneness of God. It is derived from the Arabic word "Wahd," meaning "one" or "unity." Tauhid asserts that there is only one God, Allah, who is the sole creator, sustainer, and ruler of the universe. Martijin Theodoor. Houtsma (eds.). *The Encyclopædia of Islam: A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples* (Generic Publishers, Vol- 4 , 2018), 65

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¹⁶ Lateef Ahmed Shinwari, *Speeches and Writings of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), 7

¹⁷ Sheikh Abdullah, Iqbal Nama, *Naama (Majmua-e-Makateeb-e-Iqbal)*, Vol-02, (Aligarh: Shoba-e-Mashiyat Muslim University, 1968), 56

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