

# IQBAL'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACUMEN: AN OVERVIEW

Engineer Mumtaz Hussain\*

## ABSTRACT

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal is the National Poet of Pakistan. The world at large recognizes him as great orientalist, philosopher and humanist. He is the true *vicegrant* of Almighty Allah (ﷻ) with the primary role of preserving Nature and natural bounties. He is the staunch lover of The Divine Creations whether inanimate or animate. He has frequently used physical, metaphysical, biological and socio-economic-cultural-political environments in his poetic works. He appreciates beauty, orderliness balance and aesthetics of the universes. He highlights significance of eastern environmental ethics especially for achieving closeness to Almighty Allah (ﷻ). He has ably represented sustainable relationship among The Creator, Divine Signs, humanity and biodiversity on mixed feelings of classicism & romanticism. He claims that environment is the common property of the entire Divine Family notwithstanding colour, creed, gender, racism and geography. He has always preferred intellectual pursuits over materialism. He opines that the western thinking revolves around mechanical & material gadgets whereas concepts of selfhood & morals are kept dormant. He strongly believes that the west is bent upon damaging the global ecology and now the eastern values need to be practiced for rendering the Planet Earth environmentally safe abode for humanity and other biodiversity.

### Key Words:

Orientalist, humanist, vicegrant, physical, metaphysical, biological and socio-economic-cultural-political environments, eastern environmental ethics, selfhood, morals.

## PREAMBLE

### 1. Divine Concept of Environment

#### 1.1 Islam as Divine Religion

Islam is the Divine religion of past, present and future. It is the moderate, progressive and green religion. Environment belongs to Almighty Allah (ﷻ). Islam lays tremendous emphasis on environment. It manifests immense support for environmental preservation. Environment is the sacred trust, being the primary responsibility of humanity.

#### 1.2 Integrity of Divine Family

It implies unity of humanity and Nature & natural resources (physical, ecological & socio-economic-cultural-political). Divine Message is to create complete harmony among all living beings (human & biodiversity) since these are all family members of Almighty Allah (ﷻ). Unity among creations arises from natural dependency and Oneness of The Creator. The entire Divine Family is considered as one organic whole. It is commanded to observe the golden principle of **live and let live** on the Planet Earth. Muslim UMMAH derives its identity from the Divine Values.

#### 1.3 Human Responsibility

All creatures including producers, consumers and scavengers are destined to perform their respective eco-responsibility. Being the best of all creatures, the man is responsible not only for protection of humanity but also for preservation of the other biodiversity and sustained relationship among various segments of The Creator's Family. Humanity is tasked to look after the rights and privileges of

the remaining inmates and non-inmates since the latter cannot raise such a voice at their own. The human being is vicegerent & deputy of Almighty Allah (ﷻ) on the Mother Earth. Man is duty bound for keeping sustainable balance among the Nature, ecological systems and socio-economic-cultural-political orders. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him has said: **The World is beautiful & verdant and Almighty Allah (ﷻ) has appointed you as His stewards over it. He sees how you acquit yourself.**

## ENVIRONMENTAL PARAMETERS

**2. The baseline environment** of any geographical entity comprises the following parameters:

**2.1 Physical Environments** (land, water, climate, noise etc)

**2.2 Biological Environments** (flora, fauna, wildlife etc)

**2.3 Socio-economic-cultural-political Environments.**

Iqbal had possessed deep insight of the environmental parameters. That is why he had frequently used such factors in his poetry with a view to convey his required thoughts to relevant people. Examples derived from real environments had made his poetry as beacon of light for the entire human race.

## IQBAL'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACUMEN

### 3. General

Iqbal is a natural poet. His poetic fabric is rich in natural knowledge and wisdom. His views are not orthodox but innovative and progressive. He always gives value to ground realities. He keeps a constant watch on external and internal human environments. He uses natural phenomena and features in his poetry. He often gives citations of dynamic environment. He motivates the human beings with examples of birds like eagle and landmarks such as desert & mountains. Similarly he appreciates special skills and understanding of those living in deserts & mountains. It is mentioned in the following verse:

فطرت کے مقاصد کی کرتا ہے نگہبانی  
یا بندہ صحرائی یا مرد کو ہستانی

### 4. Views about Universes

#### 4.1 Definition of Universe

Universe implies everything that exists from our Earth to the most distant stars. It comprises galaxies, stars, planets, nebulae & comets and other invisible things. It includes millions of galaxies. Each galaxy is made up of millions of stars. The galaxy in which we live is called **Milky Way**. The Sun is one of millions of stars in the **Milky Way** (Hamlyn Junior Encyclopedia).

#### 4.2 Genesis of Universe

At one point in time our universe was a smoke cloud. It was highly dense and opaque material. Almighty Allah (ﷻ) had created the skies and earth from the same homogeneous mass in six days.

#### 4.3 Solar System

**4.3.1** In the broad sense solar system forms part of natural environment partly or wholly. Its components are performing their assigned tasks for the periods as ordered by The Cherisher of the universes. Almighty Allah (ﷻ) has placed the objects of this system at disposal of the human beings. The

man has been advised to undertake researches in the Divine signs and utilize them for fulfilling his needs.

**4.3.2** The Sun and its planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune & Pluto), over 30 moons and thousands of asteroids, meteors & comets are called Solar System (Hamlyn Junior Encyclopedia).

#### 4.3.3 Glimpses from Iqbal's Poetry

Iqbal has mentioned about universes and solar system quiet often. He has asked the humanity to utilize these Divine bounties for benefit of humanity. He says that human thinking should aim at elevations above the skies and stars. A few verses are quoted below:

شاید کہ زمیں ہے یہ کسی اور جہاں کی  
تو جس کو سمجھتا ہے فلک اپنے جہاں کا!

کافر کی یہ پہچان کہ آفاق میں گم ہے  
مومن کی یہ پہچان کہ گم اس میں ہیں آفاق

اس مرد خدا سے کوئی نسبت نہیں تجھ کو  
تو بندہ آفاق ہے وہ صاحب آفاق!

ہیں تیرے تصرف میں یہ بادل، یہ گھٹائیں  
یہ گنبد افلاک، یہ خاموش فضا میں

### 5. Environment as Common Property

Iqbal thinks that environment is common property of all religions and civilizations. Nobody should transgress their limits for damaging environmental values. All people of the world should work together in unison for preservation of Nature and natural resources.

### 6. Extensive Application of Natural Phenomena

Iqbal had extensively utilized the natural environmental acumen in his towering poetry. He has used mountains like HIMALAYA & TUR, animals like spider, firefly, lion, mule, squirrel, cow & goat, birds like nightingale & eagle (SHAHEEN) and candle, moth & trees.

فضائے نور میں کرتا نہ شاخ و برگ و بر پیدا  
سفر خاکی شبستان سے نہ کر سکتا اگر دانہ

تقدیر کے پابند نباتات و جمادات  
مومن فقط احکام الہی کا ہے پابند

شاہین کبھی پرواز سے تھک کر نہیں گرتا  
پُردم ہے اگر تو تو نہیں خطرہ افتاد

جہاں تازہ کی افکار تازہ سے ہے نمود  
کہ سنگ و خشت سے ہوتے نہیں جہاں پیدا  
موسم اچھا، پانی وافر، مٹی بھی زرخیز  
جس نے اپنا کھیت نہ سینچا وہ کیسا دہقان  
شبِ نم، بلبل، شہباز، مرغان صحرا

پرواز ہے دونوں کی اسی ایک فضا میں  
کرگس کا جہاں اور ہے شاہین کا جہاں اور  
اٹھاسا قیادہ اس راز سے  
لڑا دے ممو لے کوشہباز سے

## 7. Western Morals and Environmental Values

Iqbal is critical of the western nations since they have destroyed the natural environment through unbridled application of machinery, equipment and industrialization. They have kept their materialism & profiteering over the human values. They have damaged the Nature and natural resources for meeting their nefarious ends.

ہے دل کیلئے موت مشینوں کی حکومت  
احساس مروت کو پھیل دیتے ہیں آلات

## 8. Eastern Traditions and Environmental Ethics

Eastern traditions are based on brotherhood and perpetuating moral values. People in Asia and more environment caring than the western nations. They enjoy high standard of environmental ethics. They generate lesser waste materials than the western nations.

کھول آنکھ، زمین دیکھ، فلک دیکھ، فضا دیکھ  
مشرق سے اُبھرتے ہوئے سورج کو ذرا دیکھ

## 9. Sustainable Balance between Beauty and Aesthetics

The Creator and Sustainer has created many universes according to His Design and Plan. His creations follow certain orderly manner. Beauty and Aesthetics are hallmark qualities of The Great Architecture as under:

### 9.1 Beauty and Aesthetics

Islam stresses need for keeping the surroundings neat, clean and tidy. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) has said, **Almighty Allah (ﷻ) is beautiful and He loves beauty; He is generous and loves generosity; He is clean and loves cleanliness.** The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) Peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) has further told that **Cleanliness is half of belief.** Aesthetics is created by combining beauty and art.

9.2 Iqbal has expressed his deep vision of beauty and aesthetics in many pieces of poetry. Iqbal claims that Nature is beautiful and forms integral part of Eternal Beauty. Almighty Allah (ﷻ) is The Supreme Beauty. He is staunch admirer of Nature and natural beauty. He terms beauty as metaphysical and not psychological. A few verses are cited below:

وجودِ زن سے ہے تصویر کائنات میں رنگ  
اسی کے ساز سے ہے زندگی کا سوزِ دروں

میری نظر میں یہی ہے جمال و زیبائی  
کہ سر بسجود ہیں قوت کے سامنے افلاک  
نہ ہو جلال تو حسن و جمال بے تاثیر  
ترا نفس ہے اگر نغمہ ہو نہ آتش ناک  
یہ حسنِ لطافت کیوں وہ قوت و شوکت کیوں  
بلبل چمنستانی، شہباز بیابانی!

## 10. Poet of Hope and Humanity

Iqbal had been extremely worried about the humanity at large. Especially he was not satisfied with education and environmental performance of Muslim UMMAH and Muslim Youth. He had always stressed the eastern people to acquire knowledge and technology for improving their social status among the nations of world. However, he had not lost hope and always looked on positive side. His famous verse on this account is quoted below:

نہیں ہے نا امید اقبال اپنی کشت ویراں سے  
ذرا نم ہو تو یہ مٹی بہت زرخیز ہے ساقی

## **Synchronisation of Iqbal's Vision with Current Scenario**

11 . Iqbal's poetry demands the humanity to undertake all possible measures for upholding environmental ethics and morals. The current state of ever deteriorating natural environment may be rectified with guidance from Poet of the East. There is no need to go all out against the western way of polluting the environment but to convince them for ecological preservation in the best interest of present and future generation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of above discussion following discussions are made.

12. Since western technical know-how has not been able to preserve Nature and natural resources as ordained by The Creator, the eastern environmental ethics should now be tried.

13. There is dire necessity of launching interfaith and inter-civilization dialogue for protection of environment at global level.

14. Iqbal's environmental acumen should be included in the curricula of educational institutions.

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