



RESEARCH PAPER

The Critique of Democracy by Dr. Mohammad Iqbal in the Light of Quran and Hadith

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| PAPER INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: June 26, 2021 | The purpose of this study is to analyze Iqbal's criticism of modern secular democracy, focusing on its limitations and exploitative nature. Western political philosophers acknowledge the failure of secular democracy, with sovereignty often dominated by elected rulers. Economic philosophers like Bertrand de Juouvenel and Daya Krishna argue that democracy is a myth rather than reality. Karl Marx's concept of Communism counters capitalism by arguing for a sound sovereign, complete code of life, and ethical standards. Iqbal criticizes Western democracy, emphasizing its Islamic approach. Research is undertaken to find out a rationale for analyzing Iqbal's critique of Secular Democracy by reviewing his writings, the Quran, and Hadiths. After undertaking a qualitative study given the data available, the findings are that Islam offers guidance for solving human problems, fostering brotherhood, and establishing peace. Its comprehensive system ensures democracy's success, with equal opportunities and fair distribution. |
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Introduction

This was in 1926 when Allama Iqbal contested and won the election for the Punjab Assembly (Legislative Council). He then actively participated in all the sessions of the assembly and delivered speeches on various topics. He often spoke about the rights of farmers, laborers, and women. The above-mentioned fact reveals that Allama Iqbal was not only a theoretical but also a practical politician and democratic leader. Indeed, his political stature rose rapidly. He started participating regularly in political activities from 1924, and just six years later, in Allahabad, he gave practical shape to the concept of Pakistan. This eminent modern Muslim philosopher and thinker strongly disliked all forms of dictatorship and coercion. He wished for the people to become masters of their

own fate and future. The Poet of the East expressed this popular or democratic power in one of his verses as follows:

ہے سلطانی جمہور کا آنا ہے زمانہ
جو نقشِ کہن تم کو نظر آئے، مٹا دو

Allama Iqbal's greatest wish was to lift the Muslims of the modern era out of decline through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). In this context, he delivered seven lectures, known as "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam." Therefore, it is essential to examine how our renowned modern Islamic thinker viewed democracy, which extremists consider un-Islamic. The famous English poet, Alexander Pope, said, "Only fools fight for power." However, according to Allama Iqbal, the form of government is very important because it shapes the character of a nation and leads it to success or failure. (Human history also confirms Allama's thinking and shows that in countries where dictatorship has ruled, cowardly and timid nations have emerged. On the other hand, democracy instills courage and self-confidence in every individual and provides them with the opportunity to fully utilize their abilities.)

Iqbal was able to hear imperialism's voice playing on the Western democracy's flute (Khizr-e-Rah). Iqbal criticized Western democracy in *Bang-i-Dara* (The Sound of the Caravan Bell) and claimed that, except for imperialism, it contains nothing. A so-called beautiful fairy of independence has been misinterpreted as an oppressive ghost dancing in the mask of democracy. He noted, among other things, that the main purpose of Western democracy is to exploit the underprivileged in the service of the wealthy. He contends that a society and institution based on secular democracy will never be sound or ideal. Iqbal emphasized the flaws of the limited idea of capitalistic Western democracy and dialectical materialism, and he claimed that Islamic democracy produces justice and unanimity whereas Western democracy produces class warfare. (Rehman, 2004). Islam forbids both treating others unfairly and treating others unfairly. (Quran: Al-Baqara, 185) He issued a warning, saying that, despite its possible poor fit, democracy was a coat that other European nations had tried on before discarding.

In reality, Allama Iqbal was right about Western (Secular) democracy, which in practice fell short of expectations despite its theoretically sound and ostensibly lucrative promise of "government of the People, by the People, and for the People." Famous Western political theorists were forced to acknowledge the fallacy of secular democracy. Although it is theoretically believed that the people have sovereignty in Western democracies, as soon as the elections are done, the people are effectively subordinate to the elected authorities. (Rahman, 1998)

However, Allama Iqbal was not at all an admirer of Western-style democracy. The first reason for this dislike is that Western democracy is based on "quantity," not "quality." It treats all human beings equally but does not distinguish between them in terms of

education, ability, and talents. This is why Allama Iqbal sarcastically criticized Western democracy as follows:

"Democracy is a form of government in which people are counted, not weighed."

For this reason, the Poet of the East called Western democracy a naked sword (a sword without a sheath). He further strengthened his argument by giving an example:

"Two hundred donkeys together cannot equal one human mind."

Since democracy is not a philosophy or ideology but merely a form of government, it has taken many shapes over the past two centuries. For example, British democracy still survives in a limited monarchical form, while American democracy gives the President the most powerful position. Yet, the rulers of these so-called democratic or people-friendly countries have inflicted immense suffering on humanity and escalated wars over the past two hundred years. (Rahman, 1998). This is why, in "Bal-e-Jibril," even the astonished Devil cries out. (Laski, 1938). Professor Harold J. Laski notes that factors that defy scientific explanations impact voters' judgments when selecting their governors in his book *Democracy in Crisis*, which analyses the behavior of voters and democratic leaders. (Laski, 1931) Rousseau's taunt that the electorate is only free at the election and that freedom is merely the prelude to new domination contains a crucial truth, according to Laski, who also notes that the electorate cannot choose the representative it wants and can only strike blindly against those who have offended it momentarily. Every political dispute is a struggle between two engaged minorities for control of the unresponsive majority. (Laski, 1931) In a democracy, the average citizen has very little sense of political power, has little interest in issues that are far removed from his daily life and are almost entirely outside of his experiences, and his or her vote has a negligible impact on the overall outcome. (Ali Malik, 2004)

Western European nations continue to exist as democracies only in name. He also believes that democracy does not exist in any country to achieve a Government of the People, by the People, and for the People. (Qureshi, 2014). He makes the argument that the democratic system is quite expensive and that a candidate's ability to pay plays a big role in whether or not they are successful in winning the election. "The British democracy is today accepting the dictatorship of the Prime Minister as a substitute for its actions," argues Stafford Cripps after analyzing modern democracy as a form of government. (Qureshi, 2014).

Democracy is made up of the votes of the many incompetent people who elect the dishonest few to administer a lousy government under the pretext of serving the public good.

The political need for Superman is something Shaw explicitly acknowledges in *Man and Superman* under the heading "The Political Need for the Superman": "We have been forced to Proletarian Democracy by the failure of all the alternative systems. Democracy is limited by the human components that make up its constituents. When

a Great Political movement occurs, it is not deliberately organized or directed; humanity's unconscious self works through the issue like an elephant through a jungle. He also holds other intriguing and wise opinions about the Western version of democracy. Without researching Islam as a way of life and its type of government, a secular world concluded that all governments are unsatisfactory. (Qureshi, 2014).

Despite being democratically elected, Parliament does not inspire confidence; it is seen as a component of a corrupt and outmoded system." Even when a member of parliament expresses himself honestly, there is a propensity to see some sort of hand behind him because many of its members are seen to be employed by industrialist lobbying groups. The image of democracy has been damaged by the fact that many representatives are chosen through force and money. (Nayyar, 1989) Has democracy, as an ideal worthy of pursuit, become antiquated because of its failure due to inherent weaknesses? The once-dominant confidence in democratic institutions is now in disarray. Recently, it appears as though the democratic institutions have utterly capitulated to the rise of absolutism. Supporters of democracy are becoming less steadfast. Some claim that it is retreating. Others claim that it is at a turning point. It is stated that democracy's future is gloomy and dim. (Air, 1959)

Both Bertrand de Juouvenel of France and Daya Krishna of India read significant papers at a conference sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom held in Rhodes in October 1958. Both of them agreed that democracy is more of a myth than a reality.

Karl Marx proposed his idea of Communism as a counterblast to capitalism, the offspring of Western democracy, and its other flaws, which had to vanish owing to its intrinsic flaws. The idea is that the New World Order is the final bet made by Western politicians, who repeatedly make the same mistakes. It's a brand-new bottle of stale, aged wine.

The main causes of Secular democracy's failure include the lack of a good, wise, and impartial ruler, the absence of a comprehensive code of conduct with an ideal sense of direction to address fundamental human problems, the diversity of Western society, disregard for any ethical standards of conduct, and a lack of belief in accountability to the Supreme Power.

The Western Political Philosophers attempted to graft democracy as a form of government onto the Western secular society that was split along racial, racial, and racial, class, and exploitation lines, with the inevitable result that the values of democracy proved to be alien to the said society. The synthetic transplant had to meet a certain demise. (Rahman, 1998).

The fundamental reasons for failure have been identified by Western political philosophers. According to Edward Benes, the success of democracy needs a cohesive community built on equality, but he observes that this is not the case in European society. (Benes, 1940) In his paper "The Internal Conditions of Democracy," Professor Laski noted that democracy may persist as long as individuals believed they shared

lofty aspirations and similar ideals. (Laski, 2014) In his piece "Democracy," John Dewey notes that the concept of democracy is under more threat than ever. He claimed that the major reason secular democracy failed was because it was not ingrained in the people's bones and blood and everyday activities. Political democracy is unstable until democratic habits of thinking and behavior are ingrained in a people. Historically, democratic forms have only included contests between political parties and elections for the parliament. It cannot be the only thing. It has to be supported by the inclusion of democratic practices in all social interactions. (Dewey, 2005) After recognizing the shortcomings of American democracy, Walt Whitman wrote *Democratic Vistas*, which suggests that to address the situation in the future, the majority of American mentality, taste, and belief should be changed and a new spirit introduced into national life. This new spirit should affect politics for reasons beyond popular suffrage, achieving a religious and moral character beneath the political productive and intellectual bases of the State. (Whitman, 1987)

The aforementioned prerequisites for democracy's success, as proposed by Edward Bens, Laski, John Dewey, and Walt Whitman, are entirely present in Islamic civilization even if they are noticeably lacking in Western society. Let's look at Islam's social, political, and economic democracies.

The idea of the unity of God (Tauhid) and humanity as members of a single Brotherhood serves as the cornerstone of social democracy. Islam established human equality and fraternity, which are the cornerstones of democracy. According to the Al-Quran, mankind was born from a pair, and from that pair, innumerable men and women were dispersed. (Quran, Nissa, 4:1) Furthermore, it is stated that God created mankind from a single male and female and that He divided people into Nations and Tribes just for the sake of knowing one another (and not so that they can hate one another). The most honorable person in God's eyes is undoubtedly the most righteous person. (Quran, Hujrat, 49:13) Prophet (PBUH) also stated in his Farewell speech. "O you people, Allah says that you were made into tribes and countries so that you may be recognized. He claims that you were created from one male and one female. Undoubtedly, the one who reveres God the greatest is the one who is most honored in Allah's eyes. Except in matters of piety, there is no superiority between an Arab and a non-Arab, a non-Arab and a white person, or a black person and a white person. Muslim Brotherhood is likened to the human body as well. According to Al-Hadith, when one component hurts, the whole likewise feels it. Each person's social standing and the irrational purpose of existence are the same, just as they were in the teachings and practices of Islam. Not only did the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) take the initiative to free the slaves, but he also worked to establish them with respect and dignity in society. Even during the Meccan era, Hazrat Khadijatul Qubra (RA) invested her fortune in this initiative. After Zaid was liberated, he was accepted into their family and wed Zainab, the Prophet's (Peace be upon Him) cousin. After being set free, Belal was given a very honorable position among the Muadhun. Even Umar the Tremendous used to regard Belal with tremendous reverence when he saw him approaching because he knew the leader was coming. Iqbal said that Sultan Mahmud

and his servant Aiyaz may stand next to one another in the same queue without distinction. (Rahman, 1998)

So, according to Allama Iqbal, Western democracy, devoid of moral and religious principles, is actually a new form of dictatorship. In the Western world, the wealthy ruling class maintains its control by exploiting the people. Under the name of democracy, the public is given some conveniences to keep them obedient and compliant.

Moreover, in Western democracy, it becomes easier to oppress the minority. For instance, in 1887, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan said, "If (British) democracy comes to India, Indian Muslims will find themselves at the mercy of the Hindus." Today, the dire condition of Indian Muslims is evident to us. Thus, Western democracy allows the majority to act at will. In the modern world, it is conceivable that the spirit of Islam could be the timely catalyst that would settle this dispute in favor of peace and tolerance. (Toynbee, 1949) After considering Islam's potential for resuming her historic role in resolving global issues, Toynbee evoked Islam in the following manner: "If the current state of humanity were to precipitate for peace." In his research of Islam, he was astounded by the Brotherhood inside it and observed that when the Brotherhood of Men's ideology was discharged from the cannon mouth of Islam, it ignited the entire globe. He also had a strong conviction that Islam is the only system capable of realizing humankind's ambitions and dreams. (Toynbee, 1949) Islamic society alone is a democratic one, making it a suitable and fruitful environment for the creation and development of political and economic democracies.

In the Islamic way of life, democracy is an essential political goal in line with the Quranic Way of Life as a global governance system. Al-Quran offers a comprehensive rule of living to address all of humanity's issues, both material and spiritual. Every aspect of life is combined into one legal system called Shariah, which is the sole way of life that places moral values above government, law, and justice. Iqbal harshly criticized politics that lack a moral foundation: If Deen and politics are divorced or somehow separated, Chengizi is what is left. In his Outline of History, H.G. Wells praised the Islamic System of Life, claiming that it was the world's largest, freshest, and purest political ideal that had not yet been put into practice and that it provided the majority of humanity with better terms than any other. (Wells, 1920) The Al-Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, with all of its components and prerequisites, lay the foundation for Islamic democracy. Islam places a responsibility on men to individually and collectively carry out the Islamic Scheme of Life to establish God's Kingdom on earth. Men are the vicegerents of God on earth. On Islam, consultation on administrative matters had been made mandatory, as had their consultation on current affairs. Once you've made your choice, put your confidence in God because He likes those who do just that. (Quran, Al Imran, 3:186) Conducting business requires mutual consultation. (Quran, Shura :38 n.d.) Prophet and Khulafa-e-Rashedeen strictly adhered to the consultation idea. Umar had two shuras; the first was distinguished and the second was inclusive of knowledgeable Muhajreen and Ansars. Without the Majlis-e-Shura, in his opinion, Khilafat was not feasible. The activities of Majlis-e-Shura can be likened to those of modern Parliaments, with the distinction

being that the former operates under Divine direction, the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah, and by shared ideologies, whilst the latter lacks both a divine code and an ethical foundation. Preliminary selection for the position of Khulaf-e-Rashedeen used to be made by a small group of the aged and wise after mutual deliberation. Each time, community permission was necessary. The elected Caliphs in their usual speeches after the election, had to address the people ensuring them that the Caliph would act according to the dictates of Al-Quran and Sunnah which ensured people's rights and prescribed obligations of the Caliphs. The people have all the freedom to criticize the activities of the Caliph. Deviation from the fundamentals of Islam would even entail removal from office. Umar was warned by a man "I swear that If thou commit errors, we shall not hesitate to punish thee with our swords". To these frank words, Umar replied: "I thank God that there may be found among the Muslims the one to correct Umar's errors with a sword. "While Umar was amid his *Khutba*, one of the persons from the congregation rose and asked: "Where from you have got the cloth for the long dress?" Abdullah Bin-Umar, his son, said that he had handed his half of the fabric to his father while standing up in an old, short garment. In Islam's view, the greatest Jihad is the declaration of justice in front of an oppressive ruler. (Sahih Muslim, 887)

There is no room for the rulers and the ruled to stray from the pathways of equality, justice, and fairness to everyone since the Al-Quran and Sunnah provide the fundamental guidelines for a homogenous, indivisible, and integrated way of life. As a result, the fundamental components and tenets of democracy are inextricably linked to the Islamic way of life. In Islam, there is no room for any monarch to abuse their authority in an autocratic or dictatorial manner as long as they live according to the Quran. In contrast to the secular West, Islam develops a society that is founded on liberty, equality, and brotherhood, the fundamental tenets of democracy, as opposed to viewing democracy as an isolated and casual endeavor during elections at regular intervals. For Islam's social, cultural, political, and economic institutions to succeed, they must all be unified under a single code of conduct. Non-Muslim intellectuals were forced to concede Islam's supremacy in terms of democracy. The religion given to the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) guaranteed the fundamentals of democratic social, political, and economic systems in addition to teaching the highest ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Before the concept of Islam's successful promotion and practice of democracy was understood in Europe, it took over 12 centuries. Charis Waddy finds it surprising that democracy dates from the French Revolution (1789 A.D.), even though Islam espoused and upheld the democratic values of liberty, fraternity, and equality a thousand years earlier. However, democracy cannot develop or flourish even if it is imposed from above unless a community is intellectually prepared with core ideals of Equality, Brotherhood, and Common Ideology. It is a historical truth that Napoleon became a king and was crowned Emperor within 15 years of the French Revolution. As a result of Napoleonic hegemony, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity vanished from not just France but also the whole European continent. When speaking about the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in one of her speeches in London, Sarojini Naidu called attention to the fact that what the West dreamed of today was not just a dream

but realized fourteen hundred years ago by the lone desert dreamer who communed with the stars and first understood the brotherhood of man and the right of every person to freedom and equality. (Rahman, 1998)

In reality, democracy cannot be ensured without the distribution of money through the distribution of political power. Without economic democracy, political democracy is essentially a misnomer. The first political philosopher to explicitly state that the significance of economics is a prerequisite for the success of politics was Ibn Khaldun, the father of sociology, in his *Muqaddima* (prolegomena) to his *Kitab al-Iber*. The same idea is held by Western thinkers as well. Old-fashioned democracy and new-style Marxism both failed, according to Bertrand Russell, since the former was only political and the latter was simply economic. The only rule of conduct that addresses all aspects of life – personal, social, political, economic, national, and international – is Islam. Within its framework, Islam's economic system is a crucial component. The political, judicial, legal, cultural, and social systems of Islam are inextricably linked to its economic systems. And the moral basis of Islam serves as the basis for all of these areas. Therefore, its economic system works in cooperation with other schools of Islam, a comprehensive code of conduct, to achieve the greatest good for humanity in a balanced manner. Islam bans capitalism and exploitation and assures the fair distribution of money via its belief in God's ownership and particular economic system. According to Islam, God is the exclusive owner of all property, and He also holds all political and legal authority. He is the rightful owner of all that exists above, below, and inside the earth (Quran, Baqarah, 2:284-286) The principles of God's ownership, Khilafat, fraternity, and the trusteeship of men – His vicegerents on earth – form the foundation of the Islamic economic system. (Rahman, 1998)

The assertion of the poor's right to share in the wealth of the affluent somewhere in the first part of the seventh century A.D. was unthinkable in the world at the time. However, the impoverished have a claim to the riches and properties of the wealthy, as recognized and affirmed by Islam. (Quran, Al-mai'dah(5:32)

According to the Al-Quran, men will be evaluated by God on how well they handled their responsibilities for their possessions and private selves.(Quran, Al-Imran, 186) Zakat payment has been mandated as an obligation alongside Salat (prayer). The award has been announced for charitable giving both during the day and at night, both in private and in public. Spending for family, orphans, the poor, travelers, those who ask, and for ransom to release slaves has been mandated out of love for Him. (Quran, Al-Imran,3:92)

Usury and monopolies, which foster capitalism, are both prohibited in the Islamic Economic System. Because exploitation is carried out through usury, Islam opposes it and promotes trade.(Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:275-279) God and the Apostle declare war against interest rates. (Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:279)He who monopolizes is a sinner, the Prophet said (Al-Hadith). Wealth is distributed among the few wealthy people in the West's capitalist economy. Islamic law forbids hoarding as a major sin because it promotes sharing riches in the community. (Quran, Al-Tawbah, 9:34-35).

It's rotating amongst the rich alone is prohibited to maintain wealth circulation. (Quran, Al-Mai'dah, 5:32) Islam forbids both scrounging and excess, striking a balance between the two. (Quran, Al-Hashr, 59:7) When the Al-Quran commands that wealth is more than what the wealthy require to be handed to the poor, Islam adopts yet another revolutionary stance.³⁸ It makes sure that money is distributed equally. Islam's economic system was so effective that no one was willing to receive Zakat under Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz's Khilafat. (Rahman, 1998).

Because democracy is practiced in the social, political, and economic spheres of life, it is safe to say that, in contrast to other religions and man-made isms, Islam guaranteed the success of democracy due to its merit as an integrated system of life encompassing all of its spheres.

After praising the Islamic system, Charis Waddy notes: "These concepts have more than just moral worth. They bring a legal structure and are legally implemented for Islam. According to a legal concept established by Caliph Umar, if a person dies from famine, the town's residents would all be held accountable for his unlawful death as if they had all killed him. (Quran, Al-Mai'dah, 5:32) also points out that Islam introduced an economic doctrine of fair distribution and equal opportunity for the first time. Islam holds that God is interested in social liberation, economic stability, and moral and ethical advancements as well. (Rahman, 1998).

She continued by praising the Prophet for his remarkable contributions to democracy and human issues in general to world civilization. She asks, admiring Islam's virtues as a full way of life and the magnificence of the Prophet of Islam: "What does the Prophet's life imply to us? At the time of his death, at the age of sixty-three, his native land had been entirely changed by his life's work. Not only did a new, pure faith take hold, but the rights of women and children were also given new foundations, politics, and the economy were restructured, and democracy was introduced into public life in a way that was extraordinarily ambitious for the time.

Islamic law, or Shariah, is based on divine wisdom, and both in this life and the next, it seeks to promote human happiness. The All-Wise Creator is the only one who truly understands the needs of humans, His creation, and vicegerent on this planet; in contrast, so-called secular political leaders are unable to even adequately conceive of, let alone prescribe, any genuine solutions to issues.

Iqbal's critique of Western democracy is in line with the warning in the Al-Quran: "Wert thou to follow the common run of those on earth, they will lead thee away from the Way of God, they follow nothing but conjecture, they do nothing but lie." The Islamic version of democracy is the only way to ensure that people may participate, and it is only appropriate when done so by the rules and regulations described in the Qur'an.

Conclusion

Iqbal argues that democracy focuses on numbers rather than the quality of individuals. This means that everyone has an equal vote, regardless of their education, ability, or understanding of issues, which can lead to unwise decision-making. He believes that Western democracy is a facade for the elite to exploit the masses. The ruling class maintains power and control by giving the illusion of freedom and choice, while in reality, the public remains subservient. Iqbal points out that Western democracy can lead to the tyranny of the majority, where the rights and needs of minorities are overlooked or oppressed. This is evident in the historical and contemporary treatment of minorities in various democratic nations. He critiques the lack of moral and religious principles in Western democracy, arguing that without these guiding principles, democracy becomes another form of dictatorship, masked under the guise of people's rule. Iqbal sees Western democracy as flawed and insufficient for truly equitable and just governance. He envisions a system where moral and religious values are integral, ensuring that governance benefits all individuals and fosters genuine development and justice. Iqbal argues that Western democracy often fails to provide true representation. The elected representatives might not genuinely reflect the will or the best interests of the people, leading to decisions that favor a select few rather than the majority. He is concerned that Western democracy, by separating politics from ethics and spirituality, leads to moral degradation. In his view, a governance system should uphold and propagate high ethical standards and spiritual values, which are often neglected in secular democratic systems. Iqbal criticizes the short-term focus of Western democracies driven by electoral cycles. Politicians tend to make decisions that yield immediate benefits to secure votes, often at the expense of long-term welfare and sustainable development.

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