

Socio-Economic Objectives as Visualised by Quaid-i-Azam

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Prior to launching of the Pakistan Movement in the South Asian Subcontinent, the economic conditions of the Muslims, in general, were precarious. For this both the British and the Hindu *Bania* had joined hands after the fall of Mughal Rule in India. The Muslim League objective, therefore, was aimed at economic emancipation of the Muslims, both from the British imperial exploitation as well as from the Hindu money lenders.

The idea behind a separate Muslim state was that, in such a state it would be possible for the incoming people's government, to adopt and implement an economic system, based on the principles of Islamic *Shariat*, which prevent concentration of wealth into few hands, and thus ensure equitable distribution of the resources to the generality of the people, thereby paving the way for affluence and eradication of poverty and exploitation of man by man.

Unfortunately, the continuation of the impact of the Pakistan Movement came to a dead stop after the sad demise of the father of the nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who had assimilated the idea into himself and projected it to the extent of founding a Muslim state which would provide the ground for the ultimate realization of the noble objective.

But the question remains, why it has been so? The answer is not far to seek: The elements of exploitation including the outgoing imperial blood-suckers, became super-active finding the field bereft with the power of resistance. The power of dynamic

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leadership was gone, and the masses, bereft of it, became totally powerless.

Here, we are reminded of the past, through centuries, as to how the elements of exploitation spread their world-wide tentacles of exploitation, blood-sucking of the people all over the globe, including the land which comprises PAKISTAN.

For more than a thousand years, from the seventh century of the Christian era to the seventeenth – and even later, a good part of the world was dominated by a monetary and financial system which was different from the present. This world extended from Tangiers in North-West Africa to Cathay or China. Japan, indeed, had a civilization and a code of life of its own, restricted to the isolated islands of Nippon and quarantined from the rest of the world by sea.

The socio-economic system which had set itself up and dominated the East was one which had originally been based on the principles enunciated by Islam, altered or amended to suit the times and the place, by its followers, but with the core of it, more or less, intact.

Starting during the last decade of the fifteenth century, through the sixteenth and seventeenth, European nations began their plundering forays on the western coast of Africa and then, skirting it, entered the Indian Ocean where they struggled for supremacy of the high seas with the Arabs, eventually ousting them. They formed colonies and trading establishments on the periphery of the Indian Ocean, and with them, injected their own economic system into these regions, replacing the old one. Their dominance of the oceans and the sea-routes of trade, eventually brought them into conflict with the civilized but decadent nations of eastern Africa and Asia, and the small trading colonies were converted into vast imperialist empires, divided between several European Powers.

This overlapping was gradual, and took much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It therefore, coincided with a replacement of the old and decayed economic system by that of the European, creating new commercial communities and setting up fresh rules for the setting up of industry.

The impact of the industrial revolution and the development of science and technology made possible by the enormous riches plundered from the older civilizations of the Americas and Asia, and the slave manpower of West Africa, hastened this process of replacement of an old economic system whose ideological lines had not only become frayed, but grown shadowy by circumstances of history. The change was complete by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the meantime, however, the soullessness and immorality of the Western system had bred a reaction, in its own home. The competition and the race for more and more wealth, amassed by individuals through the operation of monopolies and cartels had led to wars between nations, and human life was expended in plenty. Laissez-faire, as an economic basis, had brought in untold misery to the human race. The reaction was in favour of the complete abolition of it, destroying the individual's economic motivation and merging it completely in that of the community. That is socialism – the other extreme, bred by the gross misuse of the first.

After the debacle of 1857, in which the Muslims of South Asia made a gigantic effort to wrest their political and economic rights from the looted hands of the imperialists, the Muslims began to appreciate that there was something seriously wrong with their approach to the efforts to regain their lost freedom and prestige. A powerful group led by Syed Ahmad Khan believed:

- a. that Muslim polity had come to grief because of the closing of the door of *ijtehad*, as a result of which the socio-economic laws of Islam could not be interpreted in a manner to suit the changing situations, and their place had been taken up by rigid dogmatism;
- b. that Muslims could never get out from under the heel of foreign domination without acquiring knowledge and proficiency in modern science and technology, and Muslim of South Asia could hardly do so as long as they were ruled by the British imperialists without first making a show of their full cooperation with their rulers and with that, opening the doors of modern education.

Syed Ahmad Khan, therefore, stepped forward boldly to set the ball rolling in the direction. He was, of course, misunderstood,

not only by the ulema, but a large number of people who believed in the right dogmas set forth by them.¹

At the same time, he set up the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, where a fusion of Islamic culture with modern education was sought. The institution flourished and made its mark on the evolution of modern Islamic thought in the sub-continent. Since the College established by Syed Ahmad Khan, and the other activities of its founder, altered the static nature of Muslim thought, to forward-looking dynamism, the attitudes so touched off have been called “the Aligarh Movement”.²

By the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Islamic world of South Asia was seething with new ideas and thoughts and finding the socio-economic system planted on them by the colonialists, a burden which had to be got rid of. The imperialists, on the other hand, had been seeking to repress this attitude by seeking to promote western conceptions of democracy in which the Muslims would remain in perpetual subjugation in the region. It cannot be said with certainty if the imperialists had a clear notion of the possibilities of a threat, that Islam may eventually pose to their ideals of political economy, bringing to an end their supremacy in the economic field, faster than they could imagine. Probably they had. Orientalists of Europe had made Islam the subject of their special study. The secret arrangements arrived at the notorious Bretton Woods Conference, just after the Second World War, would indicate that the imperialists had come to an agreement to give political freedom to the colonies in exchange for economic slavery. The agreement could very well have been upset by an economically resurgent Muslim world. The Hindus, as opposed to the Muslims, could become willing partners to such an arrangement since they did not possess a polity of their own and whatever they had was not basically alien to that of the West.

Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan, joined the rank of the “nationalists” in the earlier part of his political career. It is understandable, since (i) he came from a section of the Muslims who had developed their business

1 Books on Syed

2 Books on Aligarh.

propensities under the aegis of the new economic dispensation of the Europeans, and (ii) circumstances threw him in close proximity to some “nationalist” leaders for earlier political tutelage. But, being basically a Muslim, he could not but identify himself with the other people of his community, especially the intellectuals. It was through the influence of the latter that he gradually began to realize that he and his people had quite different objectives of freedom from alien imperialist rule. It made him conscious of the distinct socio-economic ideology, to which he actually belonged, though historical circumstances had dimmed their view, and religious dogmatism had blocked the avenues of free thought.

With a character steeped in intense honesty and integrity, it can be said that Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah could not have taken the influence of these Muslim intellectuals without checking up for himself. Quaid-i-Azam was a born leader of man. He was not a follower; and he could hardly be expected to follow the findings and researches of others blindly and without conviction. There is ample evidence on record that he discussed the Holy Quran with a number of knowledgeable persons. He must have been reading it himself also. The influence of Allama Iqbal, the biggest leader of resurgent Muslim thought of the century, on him is very well known. Not only did they hold discussions when thrown together at London during the Round Table Conference period, but they did meet at other times as well.

But, Quaid-i-Azam was hardly one to start indulging in polemics over principles or philosophies, unless it was in his special field of politics. He had arrived at his own conclusions and he found that the general mass of the people, consciously or unconsciously, held the same view and, for him, the course was clear. During the course of his leadership of the Muslims to success, however, he did make him get lost in the maze of polemical controversies.

While the Pakistan Movement was gathering momentum all over the subcontinent, the All India Muslim League Council, as usual, held its annual session in 1944 at Karachi. The session was attended, as usual, by members of the Council from all the eleven provinces of British India. Being confident of the success of the Pakistan Movement even at that stage, Maulawi Tamizuddin Khan,

from the Bengal, moved a resolution in the Council proposing the constitution of an Economic Planning Committee, for making plan of the shape of economy that should be in vogue after PAKISTAN would come into being. The resolution, seconded by Mr. Hamid Nizami (the founder of *Nawa-i-Waqt*), was unanimously adopted and the Quaid-i-Azam was authorised to name the members, which he did, in due course.

The first meeting of this Planning Committee took place on 5 November, 1945 at the Anglo-Arabic College, Delhi. Addressing the inaugural meeting of the Planning Committee Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah said:

It is not our purpose to make the rich richer and to accelerate the process of accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. We should aim at levelling up the general standard of living amongst the masses, and I hope your Committee will pay due attention to this very important question. Our ideal should not be CAPITALISTIC, but Islamic and the interests and welfare of the people as a whole should be kept constantly in mind.

When Quaid-i-Azam made his comments at the foundation laying ceremony of the State Bank of Pakistan at Karachi on July 1, 1948 he reiterated the same views:

The adoption of Western economic theory and practice will not help us in achieving our goal, of a happy and contented people. We must work out our destiny in our own way, and present to the world an economic system based on true Islamic concept of equality of manhood and social justice...

Quaid-i-Azam termed the State Bank of Pakistan as the Laboratory of the new economic system.

The Islamic socio-economic system is based on three basic requirements:

- i. the ban on *riba*, which has been defined as usury and even something more:
- ii. the system of *Zakat* taxation by the State; and
- iii. the existence of a strong moral approach to productivity and trade.

During the Muslims Rule in the subcontinent, usurious activity was largely in abeyance, and there was a good deal of morality in transactions. *Zakat*, indeed, had long ago been abandoned as a state exercise in taxation, though it still existed in such forms as *ushr*,

etc. The existence of *riba*, which provides people a good deal of unearned income, has the tendency to progressively reduce the value of money. Historical records, however, show that from the times of Alauddin Khilji to the end of Aurangzeb's reign, commodity process had remained more or less static. Rather, they were a little lower in Khilji's time, because he had to maintain a huge standing army to face the danger of the Tartars on the border. Turk and Mughal feudalism did not affect price-levels, as the system was in no way comparable to the feudalism of Europe. Feudal arrangements in the Muslim lands ensured continued productivity except in times of war.

The economy which is based on "usury" at present in vogue, is the implantation of the Europeans, an import from the West where it had been popularised by the Jews of Lombardy, to which category belonged Shylock of Shakespeare. Now, let us see what was the outline of economic system which was in the mind of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and which, he wished to be further studied by the economists of the State Bank.

Economic activity for the Muslim is not an affair without morality. The accumulation of wealth by itself has been condemned in the severest terms. It must be spent, first on the necessities and comforts of life, and then on helping out others, and the overall good of the community. All actions related to production and exchange, therefore, preclude those propensities which lead people to indulge in making profit for its own sake, and to pile up wealth. This only exemplifies how all means which are immoral and aim at providing greater profits to the producer or the trader, have been disallowed. Money, earned through honest means, has to be kept in circulation, and not allowed to grow in idleness. As it is, on the exclusion of unearned money, the absence of speculation, the ban on gambling etc. an individual would hardly be able to have a lot of money to save; but even that, which is in excess of his wants, he should utilise for the national good.

This leads to the direct question, as to how could there be capital formation in a truly Islamic society? The answer is simple. All capital formation would be handled by the state or by individuals through cooperatives, in which only the workers will join and no other. Of course, small-scale investments can be made

by individuals, out of their own savings, provided that they themselves operate or work the industries they establish or trade that they carry on.

In a full-fledged Islamic socio-economic system, there can be no fear of the individual being uncertain of the availability of minimum living standard. For, it has to be primarily a welfare state. A very wrong interpretation has been given through the ages to *ghuraba*, the plural of *gharib*. Who is “*gharib*”? Not necessarily the beggar, who seeks alms and charity. In the very first phase of the introduction of the Islamic system, the alms-seeking beggar would disappear. After that *gharib* would be any one who is unable to meet the minimum requirements of a basic standard of living. With the increase in the national standards of living, the levels of income treated, as below the minimum watermark, will also rise. The difference has to be made up from the Public Treasury of the State.

Another misinterpretation is of the word *miskeen*. This is derived from the same root as that of *sakunat*, which means living, as in a house. Obviously, the next who come within the purview of state help are those who are houseless. The State has to be responsible largely for housing, in a socio-economic system in which individuals, though given full liberty to pursue their own vocations unhindered, shall hardly have enough savings to build a dwelling house, and would depend on the State to provide living places to them. By an illegal autocracy at an early stage, a false connotation had been attached to *Zakat*. The latter has been translated by some modern commentators of the Qur‘an as “charity,” which definitely, is not. It is a sort of State tax meant for specific purposes, and an *ijtehad* concerning the areas of its imposition, can provide ample resources to the State for setting up a welfare state of the highest type, while providing for the defence and development. Further, idle wealth is taxable in Islam and savings, instead of allowing to multiply through unearned additions to it, have to be reduced by taxation.

This, then, is a broad outline of the socio-economic system of Islam. The system can be adopted by the *ijma* of the people, in other words, by the legislature. Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had definite ideas regarding this, when he made his speech

on the opening ceremony of the State Bank of Pakistan. But, obviously, his great regard for democratic norms, and fully conscious of the principles of *ijtehad*, *qiyas* and *ijma*, he left it to the experts to find out the lines which would be in conformity to modern times.

The Islamic system is one of “mixed” economy, a middle course between the capitalist and the socialist systems, with a strong moral background to it. It is not only practical, but many of the nations are prone by experience to incline towards it. Though their groundwork is not quite sound. It is hoped that a day would come when Pakistan would show the way to the world, for an economic system which is not quite new, though it would be so, for the modern world, groaning under multifarious economic ailments, which apparently seem to defy solution. In this, Pakistan would only be doing what Quaid-i-Azam had intended it to do : to make Pakistan a successful laboratory for the socio-economic experiment of Islam.