

Short Communication

Iqbal and Nietzsche: Perfect man versus Superman

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This paper tries to bring nothing but the fact that Nietzsche's *Superman* (ubermensch) was in no way Iqbal's *Perfect Man*, for Iqbal himself acknowledges it a number of times that he was influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy, which according to him was very near to Islam. He says even at that and though he being an atheist, he felt his heart is a believer, even if his mind is an unbeliever.

Key words: Perfect man, Superman, transadental, Insan-i-kamil.

INTRODUCTION

The life and thought of the German Philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) intrigued Allama Iqbal so much that much of Iqbal's prose and poetry cite and discuss his view. It is seen that Iqbal drew much of his support for his dynamic philosophy from him, who in one sense can be seen as the culmination of vitalist movement. Some thoughts, allusions and symbols (e.g diamond and coal) in *Asrar-i-Khudi* may be traced to Nietzsche's 'thus spake Zarathustra.' Not only this, but the whole set of Iqbal's book '*Payam-i-Mashriq*' and his main idea of the *perfect man*, which of course stems from Islamic mysticism, can be compared in a certain way to Nietzsche's *superman*. In his book '*Thus spake Zarathustra*', Nietzsche provides a vague description of a *superman* (ubermensch). He states that man is something who ought to be overcome and by this he seems to mean that mankind will evolve into something far superior to contemporary humans. Though Allama Iqbal does not agree with Nietzsche's atheism and many of his ideas, as a philosopher, poet and mystic, had a much deeper insight into the personal experience as well as philosophical system of Nietzsche, its suggestions and consequences. However, some aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy are also very near to Iqbal's concept, particularly, the fight of Nietzsche against Platonism and its wrong interpretation of the Christian theology of the last century (that is concept of god as a pure 'causa prima, a concept which is quite opposite to the notion of god in the prophetic religions). In this context Iqbal says

in his Javed Nama.

Had he lived in the times of Ahmad he would have entered into the eternal Joy

And also,

Had Nietzsche (Farangi) been present in this era Iqbal would have taught him what was in the glory of God.

Iqbal's statement on Nietzsche's expression in his work '*Message of the East*' that '*His mind is disbeliever but his heart is a believer*' is a concise and appropriate judgment on the life and works of Nietzsche; and it can be inferred from it that the main difference between the two great poet is belief in god, as Nietzsche's concept of superman or over human is independent of the concept of god, because god is dead. Nietzsche condemned Christianity on the ground that it was mean, depressing, slavish and plebian. The noble prophet Mohammad (PBUH) made a similar remark about Umayyah bint Abi-sait (An Arab poet)

Amana lisanahu wa-fafara qal buhu (His tongue is unbeliever but his heart believes). Letter dated 24th Jan 1921 to Dr Nicholsion in S.A Vahid's edition, *thoughts and Reflection of Iqbal, lohare, sh. Mohd Ashraf 1964 (p.93)*

Iqbal admired Nietzsche and his powerful superman but

adds spirituality to the idea and this admiration led to the creation of perfect man; however Iqbal's concept of perfect man was an idea of superman of culture and history and he strongly refuted Western hypotheses that perfect man was superman in the following words, *'I wrote on the Sufi doctrine of the perfect man more than twenty years ago, long before I had read or heard anything of Nietzsche'*. In contrast to Nietzsche's concept of superman, Iqbal wanted the perfect man to be the union of eastern and western values. In east, man's spirituality is as important as his material being and perfect man is man plus spiritual and transcendental elements. His perfect man goes beyond the highlighted peak of perfection and is known as *Insan-i-kamil*. Iqbal's perfect man is the realization of highest possibility of being and the spiritual element makes him the crown of the universe. Iqbal's *Insan-i-Kamil* or perfect man is basically a concept of Al-Jelly, a Muslim thinker (Hussian 1960; Weischer 1979).

According to him, The perfect man revealed himself in prophetic grace and Iqbal's view of perfect man (superman) was a combination of Nietzsche and the prophet of Islam. Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is a complete and perfect man who inspired history, culture and entire humanity. He is exemplary perfect man for entire humanity. Nietzsche subjects Christian ethical philosophy to severe criticism (Abdullah 1916, Bausani 1954). His mind disbelieves God, since he denies god, but his ideas are very close to the religion of Islam. But Iqbal's concept of perfect man hinges on belief on god. The perfect man's arm is really god's arm, dominant and angle like in disposition, a servant with the master's attributes.

Nietzsche introduced in eloquent poetic prose the concept of supreme and the will to power... *Such heroic man of merit who has the courage to rise above masses. A heroic man who is spiritually famine stricken and Nietzsche fails and thus fails a genius whose vision was exclusively determined by his internal, spiritual famine stricken forces and remained least productive for want of external guidance.*

Nietzsche himself was aware of his tremendous spiritual need and says,

To confront alone, he confesses helplessly, an immense problem. It is as if I am lost in a forest, a primeval one. I need help, I need disciples. I need a master. It would be too sweet to obey' and 'why do I not find among the living man who see higher than I do and have look down on me. Is it only that I have made a poor search? And I have so great a longing for such.

Iqbal's perfect man unlike Nietzsche's superman is not a master over lesser man. He is in essence a spiritual being realizing himself in space and time and can be apprehended as a living force, possessing rights and duties in the social organism to which he belongs.

Iqbal's perfect man is not a callous friend drawing sadistic pleasure through cruelty and emerging out of slaughter of generations. He is the average man who fortifies his ego by a self-imposed physical and spiritual discipline and thereby rises above his present state creating a new world infinitely in meaning and possibilities. The ultimate aim of the ego says Iqbal, is not to see something but to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his activity and require a more fundamental 'I am'

Iqbal's perfect man is thus a developed personality who has earned complete and true freedom as well as immortality. Nietzsche saw his superman as the answer to the nihilistic rejection of all religious and moral principles that would be subsequent on a widespread acceptance that god is dead. The superman for Nietzsche was exemplar of true humanity, who would not be a product of long evolution but emerge when only man with superior potential completely masters himself and strikes off conventional Christian's heard morality to create his own values, which are completely rooted in life on this earth. The brutal superman of German Nazis (Hitter) as is widely understood but what he wanted was a 'Caesar with Christ's soul.

Conclusion

Allama Iqbal, as a religious genius, intuitively realized the *punctumsaliens* for the failure of Nietzsche, namely his *Luciferan* basis.

'I will not serve! This is where the great difference has between Iqbal and Nietzsche who had great sympathy with the brilliant western thinker in his quest for the absolute.

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