IQBAL, JAMAH-I-DIGAR: A COLLECTION OF IQBAL'S LETTERS TO ALLAMA RAGHIB AHSAN. ED. BY M. FERIDUL HAQ; Gardezi Publishers, Karachi, pp. 152, Price: Rs. 16.

The book under review is a collection of Iqbal's 44 letters (35 in Urdu and 9 in English) addressed to Allama Raghib Ahsan, a well-known scholar and a leader of the Muslim political movement of the sub-continent. This collection is of utmost importance for a historian of the Muslim political movement in the united India, in so far as it helps him in making an assessment of Iqbal's contribution to the movement and evolution in his political, social and religious thoughts. It reflects, though sometimes briefly, Iqbal's views concerning some important political and religious contemporary issues arising between 1927 and 1937.

Raghib Ahsan to whom the letters have been addressed was certainly one of the close confidants of Iqbal, as is corroborated from the contents of most of the letters. He was born in Gaya district, Bihar, in 1904, and completed his early education from Madrisah Aliah, Calcutta. He was still quite young when he joined the Muslim political movement in 1918, and was sent to jail in 1922 due to his active participation in the non-cooperation movement. Besides his larger works: Jihad for Millathood, Kitab-i-Nubeen and Light from the East, he also contributed more than two hundred articles on the political and religious problems of the Muslims of the sub-continent, most of which were published in the Star of India, Calcutta, and, as indicated by some of Iqbal's letters in this collection, some of them were inspired by Iqbal. Like Jamaluddin Afghani and Iqbal, he was a staunch believer in Pan-Islamism, and devoted his life to the cause of the Muslims of united India. For this purpose he founded the All India Muslim Youth League. He was a member of the All-India Muslim League Council from 1937 to 1948, and held in high esteem by the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah who, in a statement on 15 June 1946 in Delhi, called him "a living conscience of the Pakistan Movement" and appreciated his bold and intrepid criticism for the love of Islam.

During 1932 and 1935, he fought for the protection of the rights of Muslims and separate electorate.

After the formation of the Congress ministries in the provinces in India, Raghib through writing a number of pamphlets in Urdu and English divulged the atrocities perpetrated by Congress on the Muslim minority of India. In order to counter the anti-Muslim League activities of the Congressite Ulema of United

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India, Raghib managed to organise on 11 July 1945 the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam under the leadership of Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, and on 28 October the same year he convened an important meeting of the Ulama and Mashayikh under the auspices of Muslim League at Calcutta which expressed open and strong support for Pakistan movement.

After the partition of India, Raghib stayed in Calcutta, where he wrote his famous book Pakistan Commonwealth on Islamic constitution, doctrines and principles. He also published two other important books: The Principles of Islamic Economics and the History of the Making of the Muslim Nation in India. During his stay in India, he fought for the protection of the rights of Muslim minority, and for this purpose he organised the league for Protection of Minorities in India. Such activities of Raghib exasperated the Indian government who tried to arrest him, but he succeeded in crossing over to the former East Pakistan, where he stayed in Dhaka. He made tireless efforts for making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state, and, at last, the endeavours of persons like Raghib were fruitioned with success when on 12th March 1949 the Pakistan Constituent Assembly passed the famous Objective Resolution, which later formed the Preamble of the 1956 Constitution.

In 1953, Raghib came to Karachi where he stayed for about a year away from his family, and struggled for the enforcement of Islamic Constitution and fought for freedom of press, independence of Kashmir and other current problems. During the riots before the fall of Dhaka, his library containing some very important documents relating to Pakistan movement including his correspondence with Iqbal, Jinnah and other leaders of Pakistan movement were destroyed. This shock bruised Raghib's heart which could not be healed upto his death. After performance of Hajj, Raghib migrated finally to Pakistan in March 1974 and settled in Karachi, where he died on Friday, the 28 November 1975 on the threshold of the Siddique Akbar Mosque in North Nazimabad and was buried in the Sakhi Hasan Graveyard, Karachi.

As regards the letters under review, they relate to a very sensitive and important period of Iqbal's life, and contain, though briefly, Iqbal's reaction to some of the important events of that period. These events include the arrival of Simon Commission in India (1927), Nehru Report (1928), Round Table Conference (1929-30), All Parties Muslim Conference (1931), Third Round Table Conference, Iqbal's visit to France, Spain and Afghanistan (1933), beginning of Iqbal's protracted illness (January 1934), and the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1935. The letters between 1934 and 1937 relate to the period of Iqbal's waning health during which he also visited Bhopal for treatment (1936). The illness proved fatal and Iqbal died on 21 April 1938 (only about seven months after the last letter of this collection dated 23 September 1937).

This collection contains some letters which bear special
importance in view of the views expressed by Iqbal on some current political issues of those days as well as some religious social problems.

Iqbal in these letters has repeatedly lamented the internal dissensions and apathy of the Ulama' to the most sensitive issues of the time. He has also pointed out the hypocrisy of the so-called educated intelligentsia. While exhorting Maulana Raghib to throw himself wholeheartedly into the service of Islam, he writes in his Urdu letter dated 39th May 1933:

"Wherever you are, do not lose your sincerity and devotion towards Islam. Devote all your faculties and energies to the service and preservation of Islam. At the moment this is the highest virtue. It is because the profession of the Ulema and mystics is no more the same as that of their predecessors. As regards the modern educated class, hypocrisy is the cardinal principle of their life. They follow it in all their daily affairs. But some day all of them are going to be disgraced, and truth shall triumph. It may not happen in my life, but it shall happen in your life..."

Again, in another Urdu letter dated 15th September, 1933 he castigates the religious leaders for being divided, and hence harmful for the cause of the Muslims. He offers the solution for the compilation of the Muslim Personal Laws through an Assembly of Ulema, and exhorts the Muslims to make serious endeavours for the establishment of an Islamic State in the North Western part of India, or materialisation of the Pakistan plan. He considers the disunity of the Ulema as the main hurdle in the way of success. He says:

"In my opinion, for the present, there should be an Assembly of the Ulema for framing the Personal Laws of the Muslims, so that Central Assembly may not frame any laws relating to the Personal Laws of the Muslims unless it is considered, (and approved) by the Assembly of the Ulema. Secondly, as there are some matters relating to Shari'a which are to be decided only by Muslim Qāzīs, therefore a number of Muslim sub-judges must be appointed for this sole purpose, and, as in the past, there be Ṣadr al-Ṣudūrs in the High Courts. I believe that in the present circumstances, if the Muslims should make all possible endeavours, they can achieve only this much. But as regards your plans, it depends on the future conditions and circumstances, of which the most essential factor is the establishment of an Islamic state in the North Western part of India, or the materialisation of the Pakistan scheme. Even after the fulfilment of these schemes, further efforts shall have to be made for the achievement of complete independence according to Shari'a. But to a large extent this depends on the unity of the Ulema. But their disagreement is even more than that among the common folk. Their existence, (particularly of those who have become politicians), is more
harmful than the Muslims hankering after positions (in the government)".

As regards the socio-economic issues, Iqbal has expressed some very radical thoughts about the landed property in Islam in his Urdu letter dated 11th December 1934. He says:

According to Islam the ownership of land belongs to Allah, and man is only a trustee of what has been entrusted to him. In my opinion if some Muslim misuses his land, he may be brought to book by the Muslim sovereign. This is a point which has been understood well in Europe by Mussolini.

One of the Abbasid Caliphs asked most probably Imam Muhammad or Abu Yusuf his opinion about the ownership of land, to which the Imam replied that the land belonged to one who kept it "alive" (or developed)......The Muslim Ulema out of their ignorance have been engaged in scholastic debates on Islamic dogma, but none, except perhaps Shah Waliullah, has paid attention to the social system of Islam. Today we need the details of Islamic social system, as due to economic problems people are no more interested in the metaphysical issues. Now as a system Islam's success depends on how we can prove its socio-economic system to be superior to that of other systems......

"As regards the Qur'anic laws concerning distribution of a deceased's estate among his/her heirs, in my humble opinion, they do not apply to landed property and are confined to the mobile property, though the jurists hold a different view and the practice of the Muslims has also been different (from my opinion)".

Likewise, in the English section, there is a very interesting letter dated 6th March 1934 showing that Iqbal apparently differed from the Pakistan scheme, although he had asserted in his historic address at the All-India Muslim League's Allahabad session in 1930 in favour of the formation of an Islamic state comprising the North-Western areas of undivided India. But it may be noted that following a bitter criticism by some Europeans, particularly Edward Thompson, in his letter to the Times dated 3rd October 1951, for some reasons, he tried to interpret his plan in a different way. In this letter he writes:

"I am enclosing two copies of Edward Thompson's (a well-known literary man in England) review of my book. It is interesting in many ways and you may like to publish it in your paper.

Please send the other copy to the Star of India (Calcutta). Please also note that the author of this review confuses my scheme with "Pakistan". I propose to create a Muslim province within the Indian Federation; the Pakistan scheme proposes a separate federation of Muslim Provinces in the North-West of India outside the Indian Federation and
This apparently incongruous stand was obviously adopted by Iqbal in order to mitigate the velocity of the severe wave of criticism unleashed in the Western press against his original plan (which was none else than the plan of Pakistan). This view is corroborated by the fact that he always saw eye to eye with and stood by the side of Mr. Jinnah in his demand for Pakistan, as the latter in his preface to the booklet: "Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah" has clearly acknowledged:

His views are substantially in consonance with my own and had finally led me to the same conclusions as a result of careful examination and study of the constitutional problems facing India, and found expression in due course in the united will of Muslim India as administrated in the Lahore Resolution of the All-India Muslim League, popularly known as the "Pakistan Resolution" passed on 23rd March 1940.

In short, Iqbal's letters to Maulana Raghib give his views and comments on the multifarious problems pesterling the Indian Muslims of those days as well as some vital questions relating to socio-economic system of Islam. Viewed from these angles, these letters occupy a special importance and, therefore, this collection is certainly an addition to the vast collection of data relating to the study of Iqbal's religio-political ideas.

In the end, it is also hoped that the compiler of these letters, M. Faridul Haq, will fulfil his promise of publishing the letters written by Mr. Jinnah to Maulana Raghib, which are expected most probably to throw more light on some ticklish issues relating to the Pakistan movement and other contemporaneous political questions.

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