

IQBAL — AS A SEER

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Most of you have heard of Iqbal with epithets such as 'a great Thinker', 'a great Philosopher.' It is not my purpose to wean you from these popular appellations, but I am going to put before you a proposition that might appear novel to some of you:

If Iqbal was a Thinker and a Philosopher, he was more, much more — a Seer.

Not that being a Thinker is anything derogatory. Only, a Seer is the rarer phenomenon.

This brings us to the important question: what is the difference between a Seer and a Thinker? A Thinker thinks things out. He tries to go to their roots. He explains their causes and points to the result of those causes, so that men's actions are rationalized. This rationalizing certainly makes a Thinker reach sound results and this rationalized, critical thinking is admittedly a great factor in the progress of civilization. Civilization is admittedly at its highest where thinking is critical, untrammelled and rationalized. Yet civilizations seldom *spring up* merely as a result of such thinking. They are more often brought about by a Seer whose actions and musings at the moment do not seem rational and understandable. Civilizations have oftener been brought about by dreamers. Well might Alexandre Kuprin say in the words of his prototype Platonov in YAMA:

.....There will come a writer of genius who will absorb within himself all the burdens of his life and will cast them forth to us in the form of simple, fine and deathlessly-caustic images. And we shall all say: Why, now, we, ourselves, have seen and known all this, but we could not even suppose that this is so horrible! In this coming artist I believe with all my heart".

Kuprin is here of course speaking of a particular social evil but the thesis applies in the case of any writer of genius, any artist, any seer.

دنیا کو ہے آس مہدیٰ بر حق کی ضرورت

ہو جس کی نگہ زلزلہ عالم افکار

The world needs that Leader of Truth whose eye would rock the world-thought like an earthquake.

نگہ بلند سخا دلنواز، جاں پر سوز

یہی ہے رخت سفر میر کارواں کے لیے

High vision; Heart-bracing speech; Life full of fire; this is all the equipage for the Leader of the caravan.

It is in this sense that I use the word Seer. You can call him an artist, but you will have to conceive this word not in the ordinary, routine sense of today, but as an artist who has the rare gift of seeing through glasses which have not been worn out by use: to see things in their original, pristine glory, and to have the ability, I should say, the genius, to depict those things, whether through words or through line and colour, so that the same images of things are conjured up in the mind of his (the Seer's) reader, (or viewer), as the Seer saw himself. It is in that sense that Iqbal was an artist. And it is in that sense that he was a poet. Not in the ordinary sense in which the word poet is understood today. The Qur'an speaks in a derogatory sense of only those poets who used this powerful vehicle of expression for ends that were not meant to ennoble humanity, that were rather meant to debase human passions by inciting human nature to indulge too much in the debasing

sensuousness: for, although the Qur'an says it is only the *غاوون*, the strayers from the true path, who follow the poets, it also follows this up by singling out only those poets who did not pursue a straight path. It is not a condemnation of *all* poets. It is, therefore, to the *excepted* category to whom my poet, or Seer, would belong.

True, Iqbal has decried being a poet, as he says:

مری نوائے پریشان کو شاعری نہ سمجھ

کہ میں ہوں محرم راز درون مے خانہ

Do not take my distressed voice as mere verse, for I am the knower of the innermost secret of the wine-shop.

But we must not forget that it is through *verse* that he conveys the message which he "saw"; in which, in other words, he played the role of a Seer. For he says:

پس از من شعر من خوانند و دریا بند و می گویند

جہانی را دگرگون کرد یک مرد خود آگاہ

When I am gone, they will read my verse and discover that a self-knowing man transformed a whole world.

Renan, the famous biographer of Jesus says that there is poetry in the words of a Prophet. So also is there poetry in the words of a Seer and it was naturally poetry (albeit technical poetry) that Iqbal used as a vehicle for expressing his message. Therefore, if Iqbal decried poetry it was the debased kind of poetry, the commonplace and the humdrum kind of poetry.

او حدیث دلبری خواہد زمن

رنگ و آب شاعری خواہد زمن

He wants from me the tale of heart-stealing. He wants from me the colour and sheen of verse.

مدار امید زان مرد فرودست

کہ بر من تہمت شعر و سخن بست

Hope nought from that low-hearted man who blames me with verse.

نغمہ کجا و من کجا، ساز سخن بہانہ ایست

سو مے قطار می کشم ناقہ بے زمام را

From song to me is a far cry. The instrument of verse is just excuse: with verse I only call the straying camel back to the caravan.

I therefore maintain that Iqbal was not so much a Philosopher and a Thinker as a Seer. A Thinker reaches results, maybe after eternities of rationalizing and thinking; a Seer *sees* those results. He does not have to *reach* them: he is *there*.

خرد کے پاس خبر کے سوا کچھ اور نہیں

ترا علاج نظر کے سوا کچھ اور نہیں

Wisdom has nothing except Knowledge; thy cure is nothing but Vision.

حریف نکتہ توحید ہو سکا نہ حکیم

نگاہ چاہیے اسرار لا الہ کے لیے

The Philosopher could not attain the secret of the oneness of god. To know that secret needs a seeing eye.

خرد نے مجھ کو عطا کی نظر حکیمانہ

سکھائی عشق نے مجھ کو حدیث زندانہ

Wisdom gave me the eye of the scholar; it is Love that taught me the language of the fear-nought, the rind.

یہ فیضان نظر تھا یا کہ مکتب کی کرامت تھی

سکھائے کس نے اسمعیل کو آداب فرزندگی

Was it the blessing of Vision or the Miracle of the school of Wisdom: Which taught Ismail the high manners of sonship?

بلند بال تھا لیکن نہ تھا جسور و غیور

حکیم سرّ محبت سے بے نصیب رہا

The Philosopher admittedly flew high but he was not a man of courage or a respecter of self; he remained luckless in the secret of love.

پھرا فضاؤں میں کرگس اگرچہ شاہیں وار

شکارزندہ کی لذت سے بے نصیب رہا

Although the vulture flew round in the air like the hawk, he could never know the taste of live game.

پرواز بے دونوں کی اسی ایک فضا میں

کرگس کا جہاں اور بے شاہیں کا جہاں اور

Although the two fly in the same atmosphere, the worlds of the hawk and the vulture are worlds apart.

گاہ مری نگاہ تیز چیر گئی دل وجود

گاہ الجھ کی رہ گئی مرے توہمات میں

At times my keen eye (of the Seer) broke into the heart of Being itself, while at other times it (of the Philosopher) got entangled in my own superstitions.

نہ فلسفی سے نہ ملا سے بے غرض مجھ کو

یہ دل کی موت، وہ اندیشہ و نظر کا فساد

I have no truck with either the Philosopher or the Theologian. The Theologian is the death of the heart and the Philosopher is the conflict between fear and vision.

زمانہ عقل کو سمجھا ہوا ہے مشعل راہ

کسے خبر کہ جنون بھی ہے صاحب ادراک

The world takes Wisdom as the Light of Life; who knows that it is also the Soul's Fire that burns its way into things?

عقل ہم عشق است و از ذوق نگہ بیگانہ نیست

لیکن ایں بیچارہ را آن جرات رندانہ نیست

Wisdom is also Love and is not totally deprived of the taste of Vision;

only, poor wisdom does not have that fear nought courage.

بچشم عشق نگر تا سراغ او گیری

جہاں بہ چشم خرد سیم یا و نرینگ است

See through the eye of Love, that thou mayst find track of Him; the world seen through the eye of Widom is nothing but a Mirage.

At this point I cannot do better than quote an excellent criticism on ART, by the great French Philosopher, HENRI BERGSON, who, in a digression on Art, has said in his book LAUGHTER:

"...Could reality come into direct contact with sense and consciousness, could we enter into immediate communion with things and with ourselves, probably art would be useless, or rather we should all be artists, for then our soul would continually vibrate in perfect accord with nature... .Between nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil is interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd — thin, almost transparent, for the artist and the poet".

عمرها در کعبه و بتخانه می نالد حیات

تا زبزم عشق یک دانای راز آید برون

Life weeps ages in the House of god and in the House of Idols; it is only then that from this House of Love one knower of secrets emerges.

نظر آئیگا اسی کو یہ جہاں دوش و فردا

جسے آگئی می سر میری شوخی نظارہ

He alone will see this world of yesterday and tomorrow, who happens to possess my keenness of vision.

یہیں بہشت بھی ہے حور و جبرئیل بھی ہے

تری نگہ میں ابھی شوخی نظارہ نہیں

Paradise. Houri and gabriel are here on this earth: only thy eye does not have the keenness of vision.

حور و فرشتہ ہیں اسیر میرے تخیلات میں

میری نگاہ سے خلل تیری تجلیات میں

The Houri and Angels are prisoners of my imagination: my eye pierces Thy Light

جو بات حق ہو وہ مجھ سے چھپی نہیں رہتی

خدا نے مجھ کو دیا ہے دل خبیر و بصیر

What is truth is not hidden from me: god has given me a heart which is knowing and seeing.

میری نگاہ میں ہے یہ سیاست لا دیں

کنیز اہرمن و دوں نہاد و مردہ ضمیر

This secular politics is in my ken — a handmaid to the god of evil, mean of nature and dead of conscience.

میں نے تو کیا پردہ اسرار کو بھی چاک

دیرینہ ہے تیرا مرض کور نگاہی

I have pierced the very veil of secrets but thy disease of blindness is too ancient to cure.

مجھ کو تو یہ دنیا نظر آتی ہے دگرگوں

معلوم نہیں دیکھتی ہے تیری نظر کیا

I see this world transformed: I do not know what *thine* eye sees.

یا رب درون سینہ دل با خبر یدہ

در بادہ نشہ را نگرم آن نظر یدہ

O god ! bless my breast with a heart that knows: give me an eye that *sees* intoxication in the wine.

دو عالم را توں دیدن بہ م ینائے کہ من دارم

کجا چشمے کہ بیند آن تماشائے کہ من دارم

Both the worlds can be seen through the wine-jar that I have: where is the eye that *sees* the spectacle that I have.

According to Bergson, we do not see things as they are in reality. We only see what is *useful* for us to remember things by. In other words we do not see actual, *individual* things themselves: in most cases we confine ourselves to reading, so to speak, the *labels* affixed to them. Then comes along an Artist between whom and his consciousness the veil interposed is thin and almost transparent. He not only sees reality in its individuality, in the original harmony of line and colour in which it exists in reality, irrespective of our utility recognition; he depicts it, if he is a poet, in words which bring the original image of reality to our consciousness, and we perceive ourselves transported to a different world from that which we see around us. The sense of wonder comes upon us, as though the Creator was saying to us: "What has happened to your senses? Why have they been dulled? Why are they receiving blurred images of the things of beauty which I created for you to

see and wonder at, and exalt My name?" This is the sense of wonder that, for instance, the Qur'an arouses when it says:

"And do they not see how the camel has been created, and how the skies have been raised, and how the mountains have been stood, and how the earth has been spread!"

This is also the sense of wonder which ghalib tries to arouse in us, albeit for a fleeting moment, when he says:

جب کہ تجھ بن نہیں کوئی موجود

پھر یہ ہنگامہ امے خدا کیا ہے

When there is no one but Thee, then what is all this fuss, O God?

یہ پری چہرہ لوگ کیسے ہیں

غمزہ و عشوہ و ادا کیا ہے

Who are these fairies and what is blandishment ?

شکن زلف عنبریں کیوں ہے

نگہ چشم سرمہ سا کیا ہے

Why are these amber locks curled: What is this gazelle like eye?

سبزہ و گل کہاں سے آئے ہیں

ابر کیا چیز ہے ہوا کیا ہے

Whence the rose and the greenery; what are the clouds and the air ?

Not only does a Seer see reality in its original, pristine shape; he even fills out, for the clarity and effectiveness of his image, details which were originally not perhaps there; and for this a Seer does not have to be a man experienced in the ways of the world. He only looks within himself. *Ex hypothesi*, if he had to look *out* for seeing reality, he would be a Thinker not a Seer. He only looks *within* himself and sees what he sees. Here again I should like to quote Bergson:

"Poetic imagination is but a fuller view of reality. If the characters created by a poet give us the impression of life, it is only because they are the poet himself — a multiplication or division of the poet, — the poet plumbing the depths of his own nature in so powerful an effort of inner observation that he lays hold of the potential in the real, and takes up what nature has left as a mere outline or sketch in his soul in order to make of it a finished work of art."

This is Iqbal's *دی خودی* or Self, or Ego. This *دی خودی* is an important element in the system of reality which Iqbal saw and rendered into verse.

Verse upon verse can be quoted in support of this seeing, this *نظر*, and I am only contenting myself with quoting a few more: —

نگاہ وہ نہیں جو سرخ و زرد پہچانے

نگاہ وہ ہے کہ محتاج مہر و ماہ نہیں

Vision is not that which knows the red from the yellow: Vision is that which is independent even of the sun and the moon.

جب تک نہ زندگی کے حقائق پہ ہو نظر

تیرا زجاج ہو نہ سکے گا حریف سنگ

Until thy eye sees the truths of life, thy mirror will not be able to stand the blow of the stone.

زمانہ اپنے حوادث چھپا نہیں سکتا

ترا حجاب ہے قلب و نظر کی ناپاکی

The world does not hide its happenings; it is the uncleanliness of thy heart and of thy eye which is thy veil.

یہی زمانہ حاضر کی کائنات ہے کیا

دماغ روشن و دل تیرہ و نگہ بیباک

Is this the be-all and end-all of the new world: a bright brain, an insolent eye, but a black heart?

دل و نظر کا سفینہ سنبھال کر لے جا

مہ و ستارہ ہیں بحر وجود میں گرداب

Row the boat of thy heart and thy eye safely; the moon and the stars arc whirlpools in the sea of Being.

کچھ اور ہی نظر آتا ہے کاروبار جہاں

نگاہ شوق اگر ہو شریک بینائی

The affairs of the world are seen transformed, if the seeing is accompanied by the vision of life.

اسی نگاہ سے ہر ذرے کو جنوں میرا

سکھا رہا ہے رہ و رسم دشت پیمائی

With this eye my fear-free love is teaching every particle the manners of desert-roaming.

نگاہ شوق میسر نہیں اگر تجھ کو

تیرا وجود ہے قلب و نظر کی رسوائی

If thou hast not the vision of love, then thy being is merely a dissipation of the heart and the eye.

نگاہ پاک ہے تیری تو پاک ہے دل بھی

کہ دل کو حق نے کیا ہے نگاہ کا پیرو

If thy eye is clean, thy heart is clean: for god has made the heart the follower of the eye.

دلوں م میں ولولے آفاق گیری کے نہیں اٹھتے

نگاہوں میں اگر پیدا نہ ہو انداز آفاقی

Universe-conquering passion does not arise in the heart if the eye does not first produce the manner universal.

حقیرم، از تو خواہم ہر چہ خواہم

دل کو ہے خراش از برگ کاہم

If I am a beggar, it is of Thee that I beg whatever I want: touch thou the heart of a mountain with the leaf of my being.

مرا درس حکیمان درد سر داد

کہ من پروردہ فیض نگاہم

The lesson of the Philosophers has given me a headache, for I have been brought up only in the lap of the eye that sees.

مرا در دل خلید این نکته از مرد ادا دانی

ز معشوقان، ادا، کاری تر از حرف دلاویزست

From a man who knew, this secret came into my heart: from the beloved, a loving blandishment is more effective than a loving word.

مرا بنگر که در هندوستان دیگر نمی بینی

برهمن زاده راز آشنائی روم و تبریزست

See me because thou seest not the like of me in India — descended from the line of Brahmins but the knower of the secret of Rum and Tabriz.

این جهان چیست صنم خانه پندار من است

جلوه او گر و دیده بیدار من است

What is this world but the idol-place of my vanity. Its brilliance is nought but the product of my own wakeful eye.

هستی و نیستی از دیدن و نا دیدن من

چه زمان و چه مکان شوخی افکار من است

Being and non-Being is from my seeing and from my non-seeing. Whether it is Time or Space, all is but the result of my own perception.

من درین خاک کهن گوهر جا می بینم

چشم هر ذره چو انجم نگران می بینم

I see in this old dust the diamond of life. I see every atom looking upon us like a star.

دانه را مثل پرکاه سبک می یا بهم

شاخ در شاخ برو مند و چوان می بینم

The grain which is yet in the lap of the earth, I see it youthful and bearing fruit on every branch.

کوه را مثل پرکاه سبک می یا بهم

پرکاهے صفت کوه گران می بینم

I see the mountain as a straw, waif-like and rootless, and I see the straw like a mountain, heavy and rooted.

انقلابے کہ نہ گنجد به ضمیر افلاک

بینم و ہیچ ندانم کہ چساں می بینم

A revolution that cannot be contained in the heart of the Heavens, I see and do not know why I see it.

عشق از لذت دیدار سراپا نظر است

حسن مشتاق نمود است و عیان خواهد بود

Love is all seeing, from the deliciousness of seeing. Beauty wishes to be known and known it shall be.

بهار برگ پراگنده را بهم بربست

نگاه ماست کہ بر لاله رنگ و آب افزود

The spring has only put the scattered leaves together. It is *my* eye which has given the poppy colour and sheen.

بخود نگر گله ہائے جہاں چی می داری

اگر نگاہ تو دگیر شود جہاں دگر است

Look into thyself: why dost thou complain against the world ? If thy eye becomes different, thy world will become different.

It only remains for me to say a word on whether a Seer *knows* that he is a Seer. Why is he able to answer all questions put to *him* without thinking and rationalizing? Because he is *seeing* the reality. He is seeing it in its pristine glory. He has seen the original outline of colour and line which the Creator created to charm and enchant mankind. He sees god's signs. He does not have to think. He has the sixth sense. A Philosopher, even if he *eventually* knows as much as a Seer knows to *start with*, will still fall short of the role of the Seer: the Philosopher will not be able to arouse in his hearers the same image which the Seer will, through his beautiful words, through his spectacles. The Philosopher will take long to explain things to his hearers in commonplace language, and the images he will create will still be images of the things blurred and not of the things original and pristine. A Philosopher will not convince the way a Seer will.

In the end I must re-emphasize what I said in the beginning. I do not wish to deny that Iqbal was a great Thinker. Indeed he was. The personality of even a Seer is a multiple one. No one is a Seer twentyfour hours, or a Thinker twentyfour hours. A Seer sees and this very act leads him to ponder, and pondering, he further sees. Seeing and thinking are not mutually exclusive. All I say is that Seeing in Iqbal outweighed his Thinking — he was in his essence a Seer, not a Thinker.

While on this point, I must, refer to something which is sometimes averred in certain quarters: namely, that Iqbal got his philosophy from the aggressive Philosophers of the West, like Nietzsche. Admittedly he learnt much in the West. He certainly learnt the modern way of thinking, wherever

he has done thinking. And why not ? Knowledge is not Eastern or Western, and in any case, the West itself had, only a few centuries back, borrowed, not only the *way* of thinking but the *content* of that thinking, from the Eastern Arabs, all ready-made.

But can the following verses for instance, ever have been taken from Nietzsche.

طاقت عفو در تو نیست اگر

خیز و با دشمنان درآ به ستیز

If thou canst not pardon, rise and have it out with thy enemy.

سینه را کارگاه کینه مساز

سر که در انگبین خویش مریز

Do not make thy breast a battle-ground of grudge: do not pour vinegar into the honey of thy being.

And, again, those who say that the concept of شاهین "hawk", has been taken from the West, should remember that the شاهین which Iqbal held up as a model was not every شاهین but only that which has the freedom of the Aerial atmosphere.

زمن گیر ایی که زاغ دخمه بهتر

ازاں بازے کہ دست آموز شاهینست

Take it from me that the crow of the wilderness is better than the hawk which has been trained on the hand of a King.

Iqbal indeed was the knower of the innermost secret of the wine shop of nature, محرم راز درون خانه and it is the light with which he saw this secret that he wished to be universal.

جوانوں کو مری آہ سحر دے

پھر ان شاہیں بچوں کو بال و پر دے

خدایا آرزو میری یہی ہے

مرا نور بصیرت عام کر دے

O God! give the youths my sigh of the morning; give these young hawks my wings.

My wish is merely this: make the light of my eye universal.

I have merely thrown up an idea to those who have devoted their lives to the study of a great mind and it is for them to work on this aspect of Iqbal and test the truth of this idea — or throw it away.

I must now close on Iqbal's own idea of the coming of the Seer.

ہزاروں سال نرگس اپنی بے نوری پہ روتی ہے

بڑی مشکل سے ہوتا ہے چمن میں دیدہ ور پیدا

The drooping (self-seeing) narcissus weeps thousands of years on its lightlessness: it is only then that the garden produces a Seer.