

THE SONG OF TIME

Translated from Iqbal's Payam-i Mashriq or “Message of the East” by Dr. Reynold A. Nicholson, Cambridge

[Dr. Nicholson says that “The Payam-i Mashriq was written as a response to Goethe's West-Ostlicher... The sage of the West, the German poet, who was fascinated by the charms of Persia, depicted those coy and wisdom beauties and gave the East a greeting from Europe. Although the Payam resembles the Divan in form, since both contain short poems arranged in sections, which bear separate titles, and also in its general motive, there is no correspondence as regard the subject-matter . . . much in the Payam is hard to comprehend and harder to translate.... It is worthwhile to become acquainted with Iqbal's rich and forceful personality.”)

Sun and stars in my bosom I hold:

By me, who am nothing, thou art ensouled.

In light and in darkness, in city and world,

I am pain, I am life, manifold.

Destroyer and Quickener I from of old.

Chingiz, Timur—specks of my dust they came,

And Europe's turmoil is a spark of my flame,

Man and his world I fashion and frame,
Blood of his heart my spring flowers claim.
Hell-fire and Paradise I, be it told.
I rest still, I move—wondrous sight for thine eyes!
In the glass of To-day see To-morrow arise,
See a thousand fair worlds where my thought deep lies,
See a thousand swift stars, a thousand blue skies!
Man's garment am I, God I behold.
Fate is my spell, freewill is thy chant.
O lover of Laila, thy frenzy I haunt ;
As the spirit pure, I transcend thy vaunt.
Thou and I are each other's innermost want;
Thou showest me forth, bid'st me too in thy mould.
Thou my journey's end, thou my harvest-grain,
The assembly's glow and the music's strain.
O wanderer, home to thy heart again!
Behold in a cup the shoreless main!
From thy lofty wave my ocean rolled.