

IQBAL DAY AT LAHORE¹

Address

by

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INEED hardly apologise addressing you in English because my purpose is not merely to reach my countrymen, but also to seek audience beyond our national frontiers. My theme, though local in topic, is universal in its sweep. And truly has Saadi said:

سخن کز بہر دین گوئی چه عبرانی چه سریانی
مکان کز بہر حق جوئی چه جابلکا چه جابلسا

No matter whether the words thou utterest in the way of righteousness are in Hebrew or Syriac ;

Whether the place where thou seekest God is Jabalka or Jabalsa.

On this momentous day, when a thousand golden remembrances link *the* years together, I have come, with a deep sense of duty and in humble devotion, to mingle my voice with millions in their multitude, and to bow in reverence to the sanctified memory of one whose effulgence shall never be dimmed. It was a life of pure flame. While the drums of destiny are incessantly beating to summon him to higher and yet higher glory, across echoing leagues and resounding years, he has abolished death and had brought eternity to light. Amid the war of elements and dissolution of matter, he has joined the invisible choir of the immortals. This is Iqbal, the seer, the singer, the thinker, the philosopher, the poet, dreamer of dreams, and, above all, the prophet and teacher whose life, like a multi-coloured dome, stains the white radiance of time and space. Age cannot wither nor time efface this perennial spring of eddying and ebullient life. From the tumult of life's fitful fever and the thundering chariot-wheel of time, his voice rises above his fellowmen, speaking the language and rhetoric of eternity. When the winds

¹ With the kind permission of the Central Iqbal Committee, Lahore.

are blowing and the stars are shining we shall greet and salute him. Thus he spoke about himself (Z.A., 143):

پس من شعر من خوانند و دریا بند و می گویند
جهانے را دگر گون کرد یک مرد کود آگاہے

After me they will read my poetry, grasp it and say:

A man who knew his self has revolutionised the world.

We estimate a poet's work absolutely, but his genius relatively. When a country has produced not a few poets of great stature and yet one of them towers above the rest, it must be acknowledged that such a one has transcended the limitations of mortal minds. And when one recalls his sweep of epic measure, his range of lyric songs, his depth of thought, his loftiness of idealism, his luxuriance of images, his sincerity of purpose and lucidity of expression, he takes a pride of place amid the canonised votaries of the Muses. Garami says of Iqbal:

دریة معنی نگران حضرت اقبال
پیغمبری کرد و پیمبر نتوان گفت

In the eye of those who know the secret of things

Iqbal fulfilled a prophet's mission but he cannot be called a prophet.

In this assembly of the learned, I have come without any title to learning, but I do claim some acquaintanceship with his many-sided thought and work apart from interludes of personal association with him at various intervals in the thirties of this century. It is impossible to put in words the overwhelming upsurge of emotions that have filled my heart and it is equally difficult to express all that one might say within the short compass of an inaugural address. This is a hymn of homage and an offering of the heart, not an appraisal of his vast literary and philosophical output. Indeed, he eludes classification and one cannot imprison or contain him in any standardised straight-jacket of arbitrary adjudication. I shall, therefore, confine myself to the barest outlines of the unbounded dimensions of his varied work. Thus he speaks (B.D , 84)

کثرت میں ہو گیا ہے وحدت کا راز مخفی

جگنو میں جو چمک ہے وہ پھول میں مہک ہے

The secret of the unity is submerged in multiplicity;

What is radiance in the glow-worm is fragrance in the flower.

The Pebbled Shore

We see him lonelier than ever with his eyes peering in the vastness of infinity. His poetry has much of the open space and very little of the fireside. The untiring energy of his mind hardly allowed him to sink on the silken pillows of indolence. His profundity of thought and enquiry, his consummate mastery of expression, his impeccable metrical accomplishments, embroidered with flowers of loveliness and filled with a wealth of imagination, reveal his superb artistry and workmanship. The man who was familiar with the flux of existence was ever in search of unrevealed Beauty. He felt his way towards realisation of perfect Beauty in his own life. He maintained that the qualities of the infinite are not in extension but in perfection. It is this ceaseless quest which kept him from the captive enchantment of the visible world or a passive acquiescence in its snares. He says (A.H , 14)

سرود رفته باز آید کہ ناید

نسیمی از حجاز آید کہ ناید

سر آمد روزگار این فقیرے

دگر دانائے راز آید کہ ناید

The melody that is silenced may or may not be heard again,

A breeze from Hedjaz may or may not blow again;

The days of this *Faqir* have come to an end,

Another knower of secrets may or may not come.

I was taught to think and, I believe that genius is not eccentricity, that virtue is not a mask, that love has a seat in the human breast and that life is not a mere mockery and a dream.

In every human heart there lies a longing for immortality which inclines one first to hope and then to believe that God has implanted within him something which blossoms in the dust. As Hasrat Mohani says:

رائگان حسرت نہ جائے گا مرا مشیت غبار

کچھ زمیں لے جائے کچھ آسماں لے جائے گا

This handful of dust, O Hasrat, will not go in vain;

Some of it will be assimilated in the earth, and some in the sky.

God created man to be immortal and made him the image of His own eternity. Such is man's origin and such is his mission. This is Iqbal's faith. It was his belief that the immortal parts of our lives shall endure and shall rise, like the sun, from the posternation of death. He taught us to breathe the sweet air of futurity and to hope beyond the shadow of dreams. He maintains that to him who believes in an eternal life this mortal intermission is only a waiting ground and that, although the sands are numbered in our allotted span of life, our journey, in fact, begins from the pebbled shore in the great beyond which is a suburb of Elysian life. Viewed thus, Life is not a map of misery or a bridge of groans across a stream of tears. Such was the hopeful anticipation with which Iqbal had ever looked forward.

Lyric Poems

Iqbal's entry into the enchanted land of poets began with his lyric outpourings in *ghazals* and poems of exquisite charm and beauty. No translation can recapture the sound and surge of the verses in which he uses his magic gift to the full. Lines swell and crash like waves. Not a word falters and not a line lags. An undertone of wistfulness pervades them like the soft and sweet sadness of the flute. While they exude the vigour of a virile spirit, they are mellowed by the mournfulness of subdued tears and the pensive beauty of the moonlight. He attains a pitch which throbs and glows in words whose beauty makes them immortal. One hears the notes which are to become familiar in later verses while thought and action move through a mist

of dreams. His mood escapes from morbidity and glides into the heart of things. Flawless, magical in expression and knit together by glowing links, the verses melt into ecstasy. Packed with the perfumes of spring, the sweetness of scented blossoms, the enchantment of languorous day, the melody of singing birds and belter of gliding butterflies ; they are sustained by an ever-flowing fountain of impassioned outpourings. The effervescence of ideas is never strained and the balance is perfect. The lamp flickers in the wind of dawn and flame of longing is unsurpassed for its intense brightness and ardour.

In spite of the piling stock of well-worn metaphors and languid rhymes, and notwithstanding his adherence to old form and metres, he

had a very clear measure of the road before him. It is impossible not to be transported when contemplating the beauties which the magic hand of the poet raises with all the enchantment of creative power. From the cares of gain, the toils of ambition, the noise, the hurry and vexation of weary world, we rise, on the wings of poetry, to an ethereal elevation where all is tranquil. They are superb in their appeal. Their arresting beauty exudes a restlessness of passion. They emerge from the sap of life and recapture its grand symphony. They lift the soul by their elegance and cadence.

His Philosophy

Iqbal's absorption in religious philosophy, his unabated and unbending theism, his flaming faith reveal his inner self. In these he had discovered not a mere undercurrent but the main steams of expression. Much of his lasting fame will rest on them. Philosophy is the art of arts and Iqbal's life is not measured by the time he lived. It is pure fire and fervour. He believed that we live by an invisible light which dwells within us. His language is the archive of history. His references to Cordova and Granda and allusions to Muslim history quiver with anticipations rather than with a longing, lingering look behind. His mind never lay fallow. He sought for his fellowmen a lofty aspiration and combined with a puritan austerity a catholic understanding of literature and philosophy. As a moulder of the nation's thought he never compromised with his ethics.

All mental links seem present in the written words. From lyric songs to philosophical meditation the transit is so light that the reader is hardly conscious of the change of mood. He fully explores the flights of the soul

which he mirrors so splendidly in a wealth of fervid imagery and fancy. They find in the poet a nobility of purpose which contracts with the stock-in-trade of lesser minds. His work is singularly rich in intuition. His genius was born of a deep-seated religious faith. The world is not possessed of a plethora of such poetry and there is, by no means, an abundance of literature which exhibits such intensity of passion and peace and such power of revelation.

Iqbal's philosophy is religious but he is not averse to spiritual speculations. He, however, turns to the moral fervour of Jalauddin Rumi rather than to Platonic contemplation and abstract dissertations. He thus refers to Rumi (A. R., 8):

پیر رومی خاک را اکیسر کرد

از غبار جلوه با تعمیر کرد

The pir of Rum turned earth into Elixir ;

From the particles of my dust he raised heavenly visions.

The influence of Jalauddin Rumi, whom he calls his master, permeates his thought and mind. He describes himself as a disciple of this great teacher:

مرشد رومی حکیم پاک زاد

سو مرگ و زندگی بهر ما کشاد

My Murshid, Rumi, the philosopher of pure descent

Revealed to me the hidden secret of life and death.

In the prologue to *Asrar-i-Khudi* he relates how Rumi appeared in a vision and bade him rise and sing. Though he rejects the doctrine of renunciation as practised and preached by those who are described as mystics, he interdicts self-indulgence and pursuits of creature-comfort. But, his belief in selflessness is not the same thing as advocating self-renunciation, It would not, however, be quite correct to say that he rejects *tasawwuf* or the philosophy of the Sufis. It is true that his mind revolts against popular extensions of Sufi doctrines which lead to complete renunciation of self and unrelieved asceticism, but the goal which he sets for himself is the same.

Iqbal's philosophy is not inconsistent with the views of the great masters of Sufi doctrines. It is not opposed to them, as propounded by its highest exponents. For instance, he says (J.N., 14):

بر مقام خود رسیدن زندگی است
ذات را بے پردہ دیدن زندگی است

To reach one's destination is the mission of life,

To see 'unveiled' one's Self is the mission of life.

Some of the popular professors of Sufi philosophy have, however, descended to undiluted self-renunciation, self-annihilation and to a profane pantheism. Iqbal strenuously resists their innovations. His insistence is on self-realisation. In repudiating self-renunciation his goal is the same as that of the Sufis, namely, union of Self- with the Absolute. In the ultimate analysis, it would be apparent that the final goal can be reached by two different paths. The clash is in the methods that are adopted and not in the objective. There is no divergence in the goal, and indeed, Tribal has a genuine admiration for the Sufis. He speaks of them in glowing terms and refers to them with reverence. Thus he speak (B.D., 108):

جلا سکتی ہے شمع کشتہ کو موج نفس آن کی
الہی کیا چھپا ہوتا ہے اہل دل کے سینوں میں
تمنا درد دل کی ہو تو خدمت کر فقیروں کی
نہیں ملتا یہ گوہر بادشاہوں کے خزینوں میں
نہ پوچھ ان خرقة پوشوں کی ارادات ہو تو دیکھ انکو
ید بیضا لیے بیٹھے ہیں اپنی آستینوں میں

O God ! What a power is there in the hearts of these mystics,

Their breath can re-ignite fire in the dead candle.

If you wish to have a living heart, pay obeisance to them.

A living heart is a gem, not available in the treasures of the kings.

Don't ask ; if you have a believing heart, then see

The White Hand (of Moses) in their sleeves.

What, then, is the goal on which his journey is set? What is the objective on which his eyes are fixed? He holds that the purpose of life is self-realisation. To him life is real. It is no desert mirage. It is no illusion "full of sound arid fury, signifying nothing." He disowns Vedantic formalism and dialecticism and rejects the pantheism of the pseudo-mystical poets who consider life to be pure illusion and *maya*, which has no real existence. He denounces renunciation of self, which is regarded, as in other schools of philosophy, as a veil to Reality. His thesis is that the individual must attain perfection by realising ultimate Reality within himself and not by annihilating Self. The end seems to be the same. Whether it is to be achieved by being absorbed in the Eternal or by absorbing the External within oneself is a question which in the end resolves itself into a pure question of method. But the divergence in the courses which are followed by adherents of different schools of thought constitute; by itself a vital distinction. He throws his weight against the forces of self-annihilation and argues that it is only by self-development and self-realisation that the individual can absorb the Eternal. This is the *Khudi* of Iqbal.

He believes that the development of the individual presupposes a society and in that faith he finds the ideal society of his vision in the Prophet's conception of Islam. He epitomises this concept in the following reference to Balal, the Ethiopian devotee of the Master (B.D., 273):

ہے تازہ آج تک وہ نوائے جگر گداز

صدیوں سے سن رہا ہے جسے گوش چرخ پیر

اقبال کس کے عشق کا یہ فیض عام ہے

رومی فنا ہوا حبشی کو دوام ہے

That heart-piercing cry is still alive,

That the old revolving sky has been hearing since centuries.

Iqbal, from whose love all these generous bounties proceed?

Alexander of Rum has perished but the Ethiopian has become immortal.

In striving to make the individual achieve Perfection, he seeks to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. His philosophy permeates all his work but it finds its fullest play and greatest concentration in the famous poems collected under the titles *Asrar-i-Khudi* (The Secrets of the Self) and *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness). The principles and fundamentals of his philosophy are expounded in the first and, as reflected in social context, they find expression in the latter. He holds that the individual who loses himself in the community transcends mortality and enters an eternal life, that is, Islam. He emphasises the value of history as a formative factor in maintaining the sense of personal entity in a people.

According to Iqbal, the universe is not a completed act: it is still in course of formation. The process of creation is still going on, and man too takes his share in it. The moral and religious ideal of man is self-realisation. Its highest form is the Ego (*Khudi*) in which the individual becomes a self-contained and exclusive centre. The greater his distance from God, the less his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the completest person. He is not absorbed in God: he absorbs God into himself. Life is, therefore, an assimilative process.

It would be readily acknowledged that *Asrar-i-Khudi* is striking enough to command attention. Its audacity of thought and expression and its logical brilliance dissolve in the glow of feeling and imagination and it wins the heart before taking possession of the mind. Its artistic quality is remarkable in its excellence. To him life postulates a perpetual motion : to be static is to die. Therefore, the quest is eternal and the chase is unceasing. To him life means movement. He says (B. J., 171) :

فریب نظر ہے سکون و ثبات

To be perpetually static is nothing but illusion.

Such is the dynamism of Iqbal's philosophy.

Political Thought

His perennial philosophy has influenced his political thought. He views the individual in a corporate context. His political thought is imbued with his philosophy, which, again, wells out of his religious outlook. It is a social manifestation of an inward faith. He asserts that man is not a citizen of a profane world which has to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. In accordance with his Islamic principles he co-relates matter and spirit. His political philosophy is pragmatic though elevating and lofty. His emancipated soul believes that loss of freedom is death and enjoins us to live in freedom and to die in freedom,

In this behalf he asks us to emulate the virtues of the Prophet. He says:

پر کہ عشقِ مصطفیٰ سامانِ اوست

بحر و بر در گوشهٔ دامانِ اوست

Whoever is possessed of the love of the prophet

Contains in the folds of his skirt, land and sea.

He believes that life of the individual is embedded in the life of the community. He further holds that the unity of the nation must be projected in religion and religious faith. To him religion is not divorced from politics and he thus expresses himself (B J., 62) :

جلال بادشاہی ہو کہ جمہوری تماشا ہو

جدا ہو دیں سیاست سے تو رہ جاتی ہے چنگیزی

Whether it is the majesty of monarchy or the game of democracy,

If religion is separated from politics then the regime of Chengiz only remains.

It has been rightly said that the aspirations of a people must spring from a sense of its nationality, and it is Iqbal's faith that nationality is impossible without faith and religious belief. The poet is steeped in a pervasive spiritual presence. His poetry lifts the veil from hidden beauty. To him the essence of

life is love. He speaks significantly and fervently through a serene vehicle of words and phrases. Indeed, the soul has a thousand ways of communicating itself.

Iqbal is not a mere sainted Aristotle but a devout seeker of light. He does not look at the heavens in silence but stretches his hand in perpetual quest and unceasing search. He maintains that atheism, which is blasphemy towards mankind, is the vice of the few and that its two great apostles are wealth and power. He set the love of meditation against the crash of wealth. When the dusk of evening begins to gather and the shadows of twilight grow deeper, the mind instinctively turns towards the creator.

As to the political direction of the sub-continent, he exhibited, in his youth, a burning faith, which was dimmed in later years in a united India under a unified sovereign state. He also strongly felt that differences in religious persuasions need not lead to animosities between their respective adherents. He says, in his oft-quoted verse (B.D., 8?):

مذہب نہیں سکھاتا آپس میں بیر رکھنا

Religion does not preach hatred towards others.

But he drank his bitterest cup in the venom of militant Hinduism. The trends of political intolerance gave him the rudest shock. He was broken-hearted. He expresses himself thus in a cry of grief (B.D., 82):

اقبال کوئی محرم اپنا نہیں جہاں میں

معلوم کیا کسی کو درد نہاں ہمارا

Iqbal, there is no co-sharer of my grief in this world; Who is there to fathom my secret sorrow ?

Impelled by the compulsion of circumstances, he turned towards vision of a separate state for the Muslims.

I have indicated how he wove his deep religious faith in the warp and woof of his political thinking. To the political deliberations of his countrymen his contribution was considerable. But, above all, his was most potent influence in effecting a moral and intellectual revolution among the

Muslims of the sub-continent. He delivered a series of lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. In these lectures he had tried to reformulate and re-state dynamics and religious philosophy in the context of the stresses of the times.

Following the Round Table Conference, which met in London in 1930, he demanded, at the annual session of the Muslim League, at Allahabad, the formation of a consolidated Muslim State. He said :

"I, therefore, demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interest of India and Islam. For India, it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power. For Islam, an opportunity to mobilise its law, its education, its culture and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times."

The dream of Pakistan, already vaguely simmering in the political pool of the sub-continent, took shape in the ivory tower of the poet. His vision came to flower and fruit although he did not live to see its fulfilment. The political plan which he had propounded at the sybilline session of the Muslim League led to the creation of Pakistan. He gave, to use a prosaic phrase, the blue print for Pakistan, when he gave to "airy nothingness, a local habitation and a name." It would not be a mere poetic licence to say that Pakistan is Iqbal and Iqbal is Pakistan, for, in his receptive and hospitable breast, flushed the pre-natal heart of Pakistan.

The Man

A philosopher, a poet, a preacher, a seer, a teacher and a reformer, he was one of the profoundest thinkers of the age. He had drunk deep at the stream of humanity, and there was hardly anybody who so shared the problems, the afflictions, the struggles, the despairs and the triumphs of his fellowmen. He was filled with an all-embracing love which governed his thought and mind. He was claimed by the Muses in his early youth. His fruitful life and his restless spirit never allowed him to rest. He expresses his perpetual quest of the infinite in the following verse:

موجود ز خود رفتۀ تیز خرامیده گفت

ہستم اگر می روم گر نہ روم نیستم

A wild wave rolled fast and said:

I exist if I move ; I cease to exist, if I do not.

I have had the privilege of meeting him, a number of times, after he had passed the meridian of his life, that is, his middle forties. It was a sublime prerogative. Like a silken thread in rich tapestry, his mind ran through the varying fabric of human thought and, again, like a great river, it meandered through many a land, imparting life and luxuriance in its career of redemption. To know him was to love him. To see him, in the white attire of grace, was to look at the beautiful face of the Perfect. How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculty! If manners are the shadows of virtues, he was a paragon of virtuous manhood. Time and space ceased to exist in his presence. He looked like an Iranian sage with his mind re-oriented, rejuvenated and re-vitalised with the life giving impact of Islam.

The alchemy of his genius transformed the humblest regions of society into a kingdom of romance, illuminated the commonest paths of life and filled its open spaces with fresh air. In the lowly dwellings of men where poverty prevail>, he discovered the throbs of fluttering hearts and heard the music of human yearnings. His mind was a vast cathedral through whose coloured windows the sunlight streamed in. A soft and tranquil spirit, his great influence, like the scented flame of an alabaster lamp, filled the mind with warmth and fragrance. He had a tenderness of feeling and a warmth of affection which welled out from the depths of the great love which had steeped his soul. Such was the man and such was the unsullied grace of his regal grandeur.

And the Bells Toll

The writer of lyrics, epic poetry, hymns, songs, *mathnavis*, satires, elegies, quartrains, chronograms, essays, political and philosophical dissertations would easily constiute an encyclopaedia. He was himself, what he had been searching for, a "perfect man." Although deeply wedded to the sober philosophy of the East, he did not spurn the knowledge that he gained in the West. What invests his work with universal appeal is its teeming catholicity.

The mainsprings of his patriotism strengthened his faith in Islam, with its gospel of brotherhood, as a force for the regeneration of the world.

His exquisite poem; had cast their magic spell on me in my boyhood and I wrote, in my middle teens, critical appreciations of his poetry and literary composition. I said, in an article, written in my college days, that everything which he touched was coloured by the rich hues of his refreshing philosophy. One does not picture him as a schoolmaster although his poems are didactic. He makes one see and feel the Beautiful and yet his eyes are on the subject itself. Of his poem, entitled "Himalaya", I wrote : "It is Iqbal all over and Iqbal when he was young. He stands in awe before the rugged beauty of the mountains. He gazes and gazes on the snowy peaks till his eyes, in a fine frenzy rolling, glancing from the mountains to heavens and from the heavens to the mountains, caught a glimpse of the sublime amid the eternal snows." I further said: "Iqbal combines the vision of a prophet with the imagination of a poet. There is nothing of the wailing and weeping philosopher in him. He is a Sufi and although a golden thread of symbolism runs through his poetry, he is not a 'mystic'. His poetry is marked by sincerity of purpose, clarity of diction and lucidity of thought and expression. His rhythmic flow is like rippling of a brook. Hesoars like the lark, glides like the swallow and sings like the nightingale." In the mellow autumnal glow of retreating youth I still hold the same view which I had formed in my juvenile mind. In spite of the classical draperies in which his ideas are shrouded he is sweet and soft; sweet as the smiles when lovers meet and soft as the parting tears.

How far the stream of Iqbal's thought has influenced the currents of contemporary thought, it is difficult to say. But it cannot be contested that he had achieved his object in no modest manner. Few poets have had such a large audience as Iqbal has. Some of his works, though not all, have been translated into English, Bengali, Hindi, German, Arabic and Turkish. His abiding charm lies in those depths of personal experience from which hymns and prayers arise. They emerge from the sap of life and secrete the garden-scents of Eden. He is not a wandering mendicant chanting his complaints in a toss of rhymes. In his "Shikwa" there is nothing of the suffocating incense of a malarial eroticism which, occasionally, contaminates the songs of the Vaishnava. He has taught that life is not a gust of wind which is scarcely felt before it is gone.

His was no lamentation or threnode of despair; his thoughts were tinged with a wistful mournfulness when he surveyed the crumbling minarets of Islam. His vision is, however, beginning to take shape and there is a new life pulsating in the world of Islam. It is not easy for the average mind to understand his other-worldliness which did not have the asceticism usually associated with it. His detachment from the common stream of life was a puzzle to many but he was no hermit, no recluse in a monk-cell. He received, in his life-time, the homage of kings and peasants. When the bells began to toll for him, his fellow citizens in Lahore could not have given him a better proof of their esteem and reverence and of their deep devotion than by selecting, for his last resting place, a sanctified sepulchre by the steps of the great Badshahi Mosque, a symbol of the soul of Islam.

When the grass shall grow over the remains of what is trivial and transitory and when the ephemeral and the transient shall choke in its own tangles, his undying fame shall flower in an eternal sunshine. His has been the mightiest of national voices, but, in the final assessment, his place would be in the pantheon of the world's elite. In the midst of the awakening pools of clanging trumpet-sounds, our hymn of love will overleap the tomb, and shall strike a chord which will never be out of tune. While sending up our prayers in remembrance, may we say unto death:

You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.