IQBAL DAY CELEBRATION HELD AT THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE, LONDON

Address by

PROFESSOR RUSHBROOK WILLIAMS

MR. Deputy High Commissioner, President and Member of the Majlisi Iqbal : The subject of Iqbal is almost inexhaustible, and I do congratulate those who have arranged this very interesting and important gathering on combining with the Iqbal Celebrations, the celebrations in honour of his great Bengali compatriot, Nazrul Islam. It seems to me that to combine the honours which are given to these two great poets and philosophers is a living symbol as it were of the unity of the two wings of Pakistan. It would be almost impertinent of me to deal with Nazrul Islam because I never had the honour of meeting him but so far as Sir Mohammad Iqbal was concerned, I am old enough to remember him very well. I met him many times in Lahore when I was a much younger man and I also met him at the Round Table Conference in London and I met him once more before he died. The one facet of his multifarious genius which I should like to examine for a few moments tonight is the influence of his thinking upon the thinking of the Qaid-i-Azam. Here again I was very fortunate because I had the honour to meet the Qaid-i-Azam many times. I sat with him in the old Legislative Assembly of India. I saw a great deal of him at the Round Table Conference, and then when he decided, almost despairing, I think, of the fate of the Muslim community in India, to practise at the Privy Council in London, I met him on many occasions. The result is, that I was able as it were to make my personal analysis of these two great men and to measure something of the effect which they had upon one another. Because if it is true that Iqbal influenced the Qaid-i-Azam, it is also true that the Qaid-i-Azam and his great nation-building work exercised a profound influence upon Iqbal, and illuminated the last years of his life with a new hope. It was interesting to compare the attitude of these two great men towards the then dangers and future hopes of the Muslim community in the Indian sub-continent. Qaid-i-Azam had two great characteristics. There was first of all his immense intellectual capacity which made him tower like a pinnacle over ordinary

human beings and secondly he had a great faith in the possibility of amicable negotiations with the majority community, and throughout Qaid-i-Azam's life right up to, I should say, 1935 or 1936, these two characteristics dominated him. In the first place he was an intellectual aristocrat. Nobody could meet him without feeling they were encountering a towering personality. That was a wonderful thing for the future of the Muslim community. But it also in a way rather isolated Qaid-i-Azam from lesser mortals. The second characteristic was his abiding faith in the possibility of obtaining safeguards for the Muslims by negotiation which would serve as the basis of their position in an independent India. Right up to 1935, I think, he never really gave up the hope of that. Now if one turns to Sir Mohammad Iqbal one notices a different approach altogether. Thanks to his deep study of Islam and in particular of the Holy Quran, he was inclined to take a much more radical view than the Qaid-i-Azam was, to begin with, at least, of what was needed for the Muslims in India. He firmly believed that it was not for the Muslims to save Islam but for Islam to save the Muslims. He was not interested so much in the possibility of a political compromise. What his deep study had led him to feel was that it was impossible for the Muslims of India to be good Muslims unless they were in a position to practise Islam as it should be practised. And Islam to him, of course, meant certain very definite things. He was a great reformer in the sense that he exhorted the Muslims of his day to get back to the fundamentals of the Quran to realise that Islam is a gospel of dynamism and of energy, not merely a gospel of passive philosophy. But combined with that was his conviction that if the Muslims were to practise Islam as it ought to be practised they could only do it in a territorial unit of their own. Hence, of course, we get the famous passage in his address at Allahabad in 1930: "I would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or out of the British Empire with the formation of a consolidated North-West Muslim State appears to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least in this part of the world." His anxiety was to create a Muslim National Home in which Islam could be practised in the spirit of the *Shariat* and he firmly believed that that was only possible by some form of partition. It is interesting to note that at the time when Socialism of the secular type which Jawaharlal Nehru was then preaching was so fashionable among the majority community, Iqbal at that time believed that the conception was wrong. In 1931 he wrote to the Qaid-i-

Azam arguing that the *Shariat* with its security of political and economic rights to all was the best answer to what he called the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru. He wrote to the Qaid -i-Azam in 1931 (28th May) : "After a long and careful study of Islamic Law, I have come to the conclusion that if this system of law is properly understood and applied, at least the right of subsistence is secured to everyone. But the enforcement and development of the *Shariat* of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim State or States." He went on, "For Islam the acceptance of Social Democracy in some suitable form and consistent with the legal principles of Islam is not a revolution but a return to the original purity of Islam. The modern problems are therefore far more easy to solve for the Muslims than for the Hindus. But, as I have said above, in order to make it possible for Muslim India to solve these problems it is necessary to redistribute the country and to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities." All the time that the Qaid-i-Azam was in England after he had momentarily, at least, almost despaired of the future of the Muslims in India, Iqbal continued hammering at him in a generally remarkable series of letters and at the same time he concentrated his great energies and his great powers of thought upon convincing the Muslim community of India of the necessity of adopting his own dynamic conception of what Islam ought to be and could be. And it is interesting to notice, I think, that it is a facet perhaps of Iqbal's work which has not always been brought to sufficient prominence, that although as a practical politician he was not particularly happy with the then political atmosphere, he saw with the insight almost of a Seer exactly what had to be done. Take, for example, his address in 1932 to the meeting of the Muslim Conference. "The Indian Muslims should have only one political organization with Provincial andDistrict branches all over the country." He went on to urge the raising of fifty lakhs of rupees, the formation of youth leagues and the organiation of well-equipped volunteer corps throughout the country under the guidance and control of a central organization. Now that was exactly the principle on which, when the Qaid-i-Azam returned to India in 1934, he began the political organization of the Muslim community. In order to back up what I am saying I should like to quote from the Qaid-i-Azam's foreword which he wrote to *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah* which were published some four years after Iqbal's death. "It was a great achievement for the Muslim League that its lead came to be acknowledged by both the majority and minority provinces. Sir Mohammad Iqbal played a very

conspicuous part, though at that time not revealed to the public, in bringing about this consummation . . . His views were substantially in consonance with my own, and had finally led me to the same conclusion." Now when the Qaid-i-Azam returned to India in 1934 the influence which Iqbal was gradually asserting over the trend of his thought, did not cease and it was, if anything, accentuated as then Qaid-i-Azam began to realize anew the seriousness of the situation. Between 1932 and 1937 Iqbal worked tirelessly towards two ends: first, to convert the Qaid-i-Azam towards the idea of Pakistan, and secondly, to make the Muslim League the acknowledged voice of the Indian Muslims. And as I have already told you, five years after Iqbal's death, Qaid-i-Azam paid him that great tribute in the foreword to the collected edition of Iqbal's Letters. By 1937 the change had come in the Qaid-i-Azam's ideas and the decision was taken to convert the League into a mass movement but in that connection I should like to quote from a letter which Iqbal wrote to the Qaid-i-Azam (May 28, 1937), "I have no doubt that you fully realise the gravity of the situation so far as Muslim India is concerned. The League will have to finally decide whether it will remain **a** body representing the upper classes of the Indian Muslims or the Muslim mas[s]es who have so far, with good reason, taken no interest in it." In another letter (June 21, 1937), Iqbal said "You are the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance through the storm which is coming to North-West India, and perhaps to the whole of India." He went on: "A separate federation of Muslim provinces, reformed on the lines I have suggested, is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims. Why should not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal be considered as nations, entitled to self-determination just as other nations of India and outside India are?" So well had Iqbal done his work that in 1940, two years after Iqbal's death, Qaid-i-Azam was able to say: Pakistan is inevitable. I should like to close this very brief address by the tribute which the Qaid-i-Azam paid in the letter which he wrote to Iqbal's son. "To me," Qaid-i-Azam said, "he was a friend, guide and philosopher and during the darkest moments through which the Muslim League had to go, he stood like a rock and never flinched for one single moment."

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IQBAL'S CONCEPTION OF HIS ROLE AS POET

Abdullah Yasamee

To Iqbal, the poet represented the consciousness of his people : the poet was the one whose duty it was not only to perceive but also to interpret the eternal truths of Islam to the Muslims of the world, and more especially those of India. This conception of the poet is clearly brought out in this verse of Iqbal:

شعر را مقصود اگر آدم گری ست

شاعری ہم وارث پیغمبری ست

If the object of poetry is to create a new man,

Then poetry too is a successor to prophethood.

The natural corollary of this view that the poet represented the consciousness of his people was that "the spiritual health of a people largely depends on the kind of inspiration which their poets and artists receive" (Iqbal's Foreword to the *Muraqqa-i-Chaghtai).* This conception of the poet as a prophet revealing to the people the Islamic truths and calling them to their divinely-ordained task was eminently relevant to the situation in which Iqbal began his career.

With the collapse of all law and order in India following the destruction of the Mughal Empire, it was natural that the Muslims of India should fall into despair. After the Mutiny of 1857, the British, severely shaken, became convinced that the chief villains were the old ruling class, the Muslims, with the result that they became the sole target of repression. This situation further deepened the attitude of despair and exclusive concern with other-worldliness. Thus a pessimistic attitude to life began to take control of the Muslims. The intellectual leaders of the Muslim community despairingly turned in upon themselves, concentrating on literature as a dream-inducing drug for their sufferings. This pessimistic attitude rapidly infected the poets, who represented the nation's consciousness. Ghalib wrote:

قید حیات و بند غم اصل میں دونوں ایک ہیں

The chain of life and the bonds of sorrow are in reality one.

Another writer summed up this attitude of resignation thus:

کچکول کو تاج خسروانی سمجھے

اور دنیائے دلی کو فانی سمجھے

دریائے حقیقت وہی جائے پیر

جو قصۂ عمر کو کہانی سمجھے

He who looks on the beggar's bowl as a kingly crown,

And the present world a fleeting bubble,

He alone traverseth the ocean of Truth,

Who looks upon life as a fairy tale.

Thus, as the nation's consciousness fell into error, so did the rest of the nation, just as a man with bad eyes and ears has illusions about the world around him. Despite the efforts of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, such attitudes remained prevalent up to Iqbal's time and, indeed, up to the present day.

Iqbal saw the results of these negative attitudes and realised the dangers to which they would lead and were already leading (B. D., 66) :

ذرا دیکھ اس کو جو کچھ ہو رہا ہے ہونے والا ہے

دہرا کیا ہے بھلا عہد کہن کی داستانوں میں

Just see what is happening around and what is going to happen;

What is the use in paying attention to the old tales?

As already explained, it was his duty as part of his nation's consciousness to make his people aware of what, through his exceptional powers of vision,

he could see, and to find a remedy for their troubles. He saw that the origins of the spiritual decadence of his people lay in their subjection to others:

از غلامی دل بمیرد دربدن

Slavery deadens the heart.

However, he realised that a purely materialistic remedy was insufficient; for the people were in a state of spiritual slavery (B. J., 162):

امارت کیا شکوہ خسروی بھی ہو تو کیا حاصل

نہ زور حیدری تجھ میں نہ استغنائے سلمانی

Not to speak of wealth, even kingship is of no avail,

You have neither physical prowess of Haider nor spiritual self-sufficiency of Salman (of Fars).

The contradiction between quietistic doctrine of passive resignation and the Islamic doctrines of individual's responsibility for his actions and man's stewardship on earth were apparent to him. In *Zarb-i-Kalim* (p. 8), he wrote:

This Quran is claimed to teach total otherworldliness,

Which once made the Muslim master of the moon and the Pliedes.

Today they follow the principle of fatalism,

Those whose will was an expression of God's desire.

What was wrong gradually came to be regarded as right—.

Because slavery transforms people's conscience.

Having analysed the problem Iqbal had now to propose a solution; the result was his well-known doctrine of *Khudi*. He believed that in the cultivation of the individual *khudi* lay the answer to the spiritual malaise of the Indian Muslims. In place of passivity it demanded creativity. One of the utterances Iqbal places in the mouth of God is (J. N., 225):

ہر کہ او را قوت تخلیق نیست

پیش ما جز کافر و زندیق نیست

He who does not possess power of creativity,

Is naught but an Infidal and a Zindik.

In one of his poems Iqbal told of how foreigners despised Indian Muslims as beggars (Z. K., 20) :

انگریز سمجھتا ہے مسلماں کو گداگر

Now, if the Muslims are to save themselves by cultivation of *Khudi,* they must renounce the beggar's mentality (A.R., 24) :

از سوال افلاس گردد خوارتر

By asking, poverty is made more abject.

If they are to survive they must did themselves of the timorousness which results from subjection and decline (A.R., 109, 111) :

بیم غیر اللہ عمل رادشمن است

کاروان زندگی را رہزن ست

ہر کہ رمز مصطفی فہمیدہ است

شرک را در خوف مضمر دیدہ است

Fear of other than God saps vitality,

It waylays the caravan of life.

One who understands the religion of Muhammad,

Regards "Fear" as the source of *shirk.*

The whole philosophy is one of active resistance to suffering, in marked contrast to negative notions of passive acceptance of fate. Iqbal holds that " the Ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstruction in its way."

(Introduction to the English translation of *Asrar-i-Khudi.)* In the poem "Morning" (Z.K., 6) he proclaimed the Muslim's inner spiritual power :

وہ سحر جس سے لرزتا ہے شبستان وجود

ہوتی ہے بندۂ مومن کی اذان سے پیدا

That morning which gives shivers to the Night of Being

Is the product of the *adhan* (call to prayers) of the Momin.

The cultivation of *Khudi,* however, is not just a solution for the temporary difficulties of the Indian Muslims but the means by which all Islam will be enabled to fulfil its destiny and attain perfection:

کیمیا پیدا کن از مشت گلے

بوسہ زن بر آستان کاملے

Transmute thy handful of dust into gold

By submitting before a Perfect Man.

There can be no doubt that the views that Iqbal was propounding were startling, seen in the context of the views and attitudes prevalent at that time ; however, one must be wary of overstressing their revolutionariness. Iqbal's philosophy was aimed at fulfilling the Quranic conception of man's duty as a God's vicegerent on earth.

This leads us to one of the main themes of Iqbal's work : the reinterpretation of Islamic principles to fit modern conditions. Iqbal rejected orthodox interpretations, largely based on conditions in the 19th century C.E. In the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought of Islam* he claimed that "the teaching of the Quran that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems." His whole philosophy of *Khudi* is in one regard a reinterpretation of the Quranic ideas in accordance with the facts of modern life. The idea of the individual's responsibility towards himself and his obligation towards God are both drawn from the Quran. Iqbal believed that by giving these ideas the emphasis

that had been lost under the influence of Quietistic doctrines, the Muslims could re-capture the spirit of scientific adventurousness that had, as he believed, led the West to world dominance. To those trained in modern historical interpretation, largely based on Marxtst materialism, Iqbal's interpretation of history may well appear grossly over-idealistic. To take a relevant example, the British were driven out of India, not by any mass adoption of *Khudi* by the Muslims, but by the fact that the Second World War had exhusted them financially. Nevertheless, their financial difficulties would not have forced them to leave had not idealistically motivated organisations like the Muslim_ League been prepared to take advantage of such difficulties. To this extent alone Iqbal's interpretation can be said to be true.

Iqbal's political views were a reflection of his philosophical principles. In the Urdu introduction to *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* (Mysteries of Selflessness) he wrote: "The secret of the life of a nation lies in the preservation, development and strengthening of the 'national self'."

From such a position, his acceptance of the necessity for partition of the country for the preservation of the cultural entity of the Muslims is clear. Long before he was convinced of the need for Partition, he had said that "each group has a right to free development according to its own cultural traditions." When it became clear that Partition was the only way of saving the Muslims of India from cultural, and possibly religious, absorption into what one writer has called a "grey mush" of Hinduism, he became a firm advocate of partition.

Another aspect of Iqbal's political thought was his concern with social injustice; for example, in "God's Order" (فرمان خدا) [B. J., 149] he makes God decree to his angels:

Get up and rouse the poor people of my world from sleep,

Shake the walls and gates of the palaces of the rich.

Warm the blood of my slaves with the ardour of Truth,

Let the humble sparrow contend with the eagle.

The age of democratic rule is drawing near,

Destroy all the old pictures wherever you find them.

Burn up the wheat on the fields

Which yield no bread to the farmer.

It can be argued that poetry of such nature, especially pieces with so specific a subject as "To the Punjab Farmer" (B. J., 204) can be of no real lasting value, as compared with Iqbal's religious and philosophical work. Nevertheless, it is an aspect of Iqbal's function as he conceived it: in exposing social injustice and examining political problems, he is acting as the nation's consciousness, ever though his revelations are of a temporary value and addressed to a limited and temporary audience.

It will be obvious from the conception of the poet so far outlined that ideas of "art for art's sake" are completely foreign to Iqbal. Unfortunately the musical qualities of the Urdu and Persian languages have tended to mislead even the greatest poets into seeking abstract beauty of sound at the expense of content. Many poems of great beauty of sound range in meaning from the trivial or escapist at best to the most maudlin drivel at worst. Iqbal criticized Hafiz for this when he wrote : "If we accept the principle that beauty is beauty whether its consequences are good or harmful, then Khwaja is one of the best poets of the world." It will be recalled that the Muslim intellectuals of the 19th century had turned to abstract beauty in literature instead of defending the Muslim community, which had thus fallen into passivity and resignation. Therefore the idea of beautiful form with worthless content is in every sense antithetical to Iqbal's thought. The following extract shows Iqbal managed to provide meaningful content, while not losing any beauty form, and bringing a new robustness and inner vibrancy to Urdu-Persian poetry (P. M., 98-99) :

A tumultous life is better than perpetual peace,

A dove becomes a falcon due to agitation in being entrapped.

You do not know anything except prostration,

Stand up like a cyprus, you slow in activity.

You hardly realise yet, desire dies with union ;

What is everlasting life ? It is undying striving.

What then is the significance of Iqbal's views on the role of the poet? Like his philosophy of *Khudi,* they provide us with an instructive contrast with older ideas. Iqbal, while acknowledging the worth of beauty of form, clearly emphasises the poet's more exacting and more worthwhile task : to instruct, interpret, and criticise. He has shown us the importance of the poet's position as the national consciousness; it is therefore for the nation's own good that it must learn to reject poetry, however beautiful, which is of trivial or escapist content, and must accept that which fulfils the true function of a consciousness, and faces reality and points to a better way.

SOLITUDE*

By

LT.-COL. K. A. RASHID

Walking to the sea, **I** asked the restless waves,

What ails thee, O moving ones! thou always seem in some quest?

A thousand pearls adorn thine bossom,

Hast thou a pearl akin to the one in my breast?

It quietly wreathed, and withdrew from the coastal rim and disappeared !

Moving to the mountains to ask the ailing hills,

Why art thou gloomy — thine sighs scale the skies?

Art thine stones Ruby, fashioned out of thine drops of blood?

Come, talk to me awhile, and see how oppressed **I** am.

It silently shrank within itself, staring with a ghastly look!

Making a long journey to the Moon,

I asked: O traveller! art thou not destined to rest awhile?

The world is brightened by thine silvery radiance,

Thine brilliance is not sprung of the scar in thine heart?

Looking enviously at the stars, it stealthily slipped away!

Crossing the realm of the Moon and the Sun, to question the Almighty one:

There isn't an Atom in thine Universe aware of Me;

Thy World is devoid of feeling and my dust is full with emotion,

Thine garden indeed is charming, but isn't in tune with my commotion.

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* English translation of Iqbal's poem in *Payam-i-Mashriq* (pp. 136-137).

A smile sprang from his lips, and he too quietly turned aside!