

IQBAL DAY FUNCTION AT ROME

EVERY year Iqbal Day function was celebrated under the auspices of ISMEO (The Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East). In April, 1955, the Italo-Pakistan Association came into being and this function was henceforth celebrated under its auspices. On this occasion, Professor G. Tucci, President of the Association, spoke as follows :

We are here gathered today in order to celebrate together, according to a custom established since some years, Muhammed Iqbal, that Pakistan honours as her greatest Poet, and for the purpose of inaugurating at our Institute, the Italo-Pakistani Association. There is a reason for this double ceremony : the Association which starts its life today, in this very day also inherits from ISMEO the welcome task of carrying out this celebration. No more befitting start could be imagined, than by placing the Association under the auspices of the Poet who more than others was eagerly advocating brotherly love in work and the service of God.

The Association pursues a simple and very lofty end: that of making easier, more efficient and fruitful the meetings and the contacts of the spirit and among individuals, from which are to derive greater strength and efficacy the friendly bonds that already unite Pakistan and Italy. Every work or initiative tending to consolidate the sympathetic comprehension among men and nations, and to favour a more open mutual understanding, greatly contributes to soothing the unrest of hard and soured times. Our Institute is certain that under the wise guidance of its President, Ambassador Cerulli — whom we honour as an outstanding scholar of the Islamic world—and the author of works that have added to the prestige of Italian orientalist science —, the Italo-Pakistani Association that starts its activities today will stimulate and enhance the friendship which already binds us to the Pakistani nation. To the strengthening of this friendship a most remarkable contribution has been made through the earnest, and I would say daily work, carried on by H. E. Husain, whom I am glad to be able to thank once more, for his unflinching help and tireless co-operation.

Given below is the introductory speech by Professor Tucci on another and later Iqbal Day function in Rome.

ADDRESS

by

PROFESSOR G. TUCCI

This year also, Pakistan is honouring her great Poet, and following a custom which we gratefully acknowledge, it is desired that he should be recalled, to us Italians, in this Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, which aims at making men of culture of our country share in the universal values of the spiritual tradition of the East.

I feel especially happy at this welcome occasion of reviving in memory the figure of this Poet, and of paying tribute to him once more, as I have been privileged by his friendship, and have learnt so much from my talks with him: and the ISMEO and all its family are equally glad to join in the honours that Pakistan is rendering to her bard. It is not by chance that we have published in Italy for the first time the translation of that Celestial Poem by Professor Bausani, a poem made so luminous by new and striking imagery, and fraught with such deep thought. In this homage paid in common to the Poet of a friendly nation, who belongs to us all through the universal appeal of art, we feel a revival of the ancient bonds that unite us to this spiritual world of which Iqbal was the singer and the interpreter: I mean, that Islamic culture that has left deep vestiges in our country, its history and its thought. It was through Islamic interpreters that Aristotle was able to transfuse himself in our medieval thought, while the impress of Islamic art lies clear and forceful on many an outstanding monument of Italy. It was in Italy that as far back as the Thirteenth century the great figure of Frederic II endeavoured to realize an efficient collaboration between Islam and Christianity. Well aware of this tradition, Italy has fostered a great number of scholars of Islamism, that in recent times could boast of names such as those of Amari, of the Guidis, and of Nallino; while among our living contemporaries it has no less famed and talented followers.

We therefore cannot help participating in a large measure in the homage paid to a Poet whom we are able to understand perhaps better than other peoples, and who has a forceful message of his own to spread, not only meant for cultivated minds, but for all that have not lost hope in the destinies of humanity.

In a world as restless as the one in which it is now our lot to live, when humanity is renewing itself much faster than in stretches of time more

restful, or set in customary ways, a voice such as Iqbal's brings us inspiration no less than consolation. So is it for ever with the words of poets, who do not teach solitary fancies, but interpret in the loneliness of their own soul the agonized struggles of a people or of an age. In this way does Iqbal appear to me; so fast in the spiritual traditions of his faith and his people, and at the same time so keen on detecting the slightest vibrations Iqbal's that stir the vault of history and thought.

And Iqbal's message is indeed a message of human brotherly love, of a unity, it is understood, of the soul and not of the flesh, because as he says in an admirable way: "Brotherly love has its seat in the heart; in the heart does its root lie, not in water and mud" (p. 71).

It is a counsel of mutual understanding and peace, but not through mystical and lonely surrenders of self, rather through the struggle that ennobles and exalts the believer, as Iqbal calls the man that does not choose—to quote Leonardo's words—to act as a mere conveyance of food, a struggle that does not oppose him to those that were in contrast with him, nor to those that follow another path, but makes him worthier of the divine commandment. I mean the struggle against oneself, because the believer is alive, and the war he is waging is against himself, and himself must he attack, in the way of a panther pouncing on a gazelle (p. 531). This means a tension constantly alert and never relaxed, in order to realize a fullness of human life and divine life, illumined by three indissoluble lights, that bear witness to it: to see oneself through one's own light, to see oneself by other people's light, to see oneself in the light of divine essence (p. 37). This means unity of action joined to passion and clear-sightedness, which today seems shattered, and which Iqbal proposed to restore, for the benefit and the glory of humanity, that bears the guilt for its own sorrows.