

IQBAL DAY AT KARACHI

Iqbal as a poet

By

MR. FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to talk to you this morning on a rather neglected aspect of Iqbal's work, namely, the artistic aspect or what you might call the purely poetic aspect. As you are no doubt aware there are a number of studies on the thought, philosophy, message and various other aspects of Iqbal's works ; but so far as I am aware very little analysis has been done of his poetic or the secret of his poetic magic. For this the poet himself is partly responsible, because, as you are aware, there are a number of injunctions in Iqbal's works imploring his readers to ignore his poetry and to concentrate on his message. It is also due, I suppose, partly to the very low social evaluation that we put on the poet or the artist in our country. The serious people among us consider a poet to be a rather disreputable character who is not to be taken very seriously and if they want to elevate his worth then they have to classify him among the thinkers, or philosophers or the preachers or even the politicians. But a poet as such is not worth much bothering about and I suppose that Iqbal was aware of this prejudice and did not want to get confused with the decadent verifiers with which our community abounds. Anyway I am not going to quarrel with this approach today. I merely wanted to say that whatever the rights or the wrongs of this approach there is no doubt that a poet of Iqbal's calibre would be great by whatever name you call him. The one thing which I don't think will be seriously contested is that even though Iqbal was a philosopher, a thinker, an evangelist and a preacher but what gave real force to his message was his poetry. This is borne out by the fact that his prose lectures, excellent as they are, have hardly a fraction of the readers that his poetry has and hardly command a fraction of the influence that his poetry has yielded on more than one generation, in more than one country. This by itself should be a sufficient proof that in addition to his thought the supplemental excellence of his poetry is not only important but it is all-important. Therefore, I think it is worthwhile to pay some attention to the purely poetic side of his work. In the very brief time that is

available to me, I can only indicate a few focal points from which the study might be made. I have no time either to elaborate or to illustrate these points but I think most of them are so well known that my elaboration would hardly be necessary. First of all I might clarify that Iqbal himself was deadly opposed to art for art's sake and therefore we cannot study his art or his style or his theme or his other poetic qualities in isolation from his theme because even though there is steady progression in his style, even though he wrote in different styles yet all these styles were fashioned according to the themes which he was trying to put across. Therefore the evolution of his style is parallel to the evolution of his thought and it would be superficial and misleading to study one in isolation from the other. Keeping that in mind, if you look at Iqbal's works, the first thing that strikes you is a very strong contrast between the style and the expression of his earlier works and the style and expression of his nature and later works. But at the same time the second thing that strikes you is that in spite of these differences there is a continuity, I think, which is due to two reasons. Apart from his juvenile and very early works, even the things that he wrote in his youth are imbued with a sense of solemnity and earnestness which persist throughout his works. The second aspect of this continuity is the element of quest and inquiry — a persistent desire to know and to explore the secrets of reality, the secrets of existence. Now these two subjective elements provide continuity to his works while the stylistic element provides the element of evolution. Now how does this evolution take place? What are the elements in this evolution? I would say there are four elements, each determined by the progression in his thought. Firstly, the style of his earlier works, as you know, is orate, florid, Persianised, obviously under the influence of Baidil, Nazir, and Ghalib and the school of Persian poets which was popular with our intelligentsia in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. As examples of his earlier work, you have the following type- of verses :

کس قدر لذت کشود عقدہ مشکل میں ہے

لطف صد حاصل ہماری سعی ہے حاصل میں ہے

(B.D., 39)

or

(Ib., 10)

This is generally the style which is, as you can see, a bit florid, a bit diffused, a bit undefined. So you find that so far as the pure style is concerned the progression in his work is from ornamentation to austerity, from diffuseness to precision, from rhetoric to epigram. It does not require any great elaboration because it so obviously strikes one. In his later works all the ornamentation has been cut out. There is no imagery or hardly any imagery. There is hardly any element of the sensory or the perceptive which is purely cognitive, intellectual, austere and precise. This is a process of reduction, or what I might call contraction. The other is the process of expansion. This process is in the thought, in the theme ; because Iqbal begins with himself in his very early works, in the works that he wrote in his youth. He talks about himself, about his love, about his grief, about his loneliness, about his disappointments. Then from himself, he progresses to the Muslim community, to the Muslim world, in the later half of *Bang-i-Dara*. From the Muslim world he goes further to mankind and from mankind to the universe. So beginning with himself his thought progresses to the cosmos and his thought determines the style, and the expression which he uses. In his earlier works when he is talking about disjointed things, about sensations, about perceptions, about experiences, about subjective bits and pieces, the style is also disjointed ; it is varied, sometimes simple, sometimes it is ornate. Later on when his own whole thought is welded into one monolithic entity his style also becomes monolithic. It becomes almost uniform, having no ups and down, practically keeping the same pace and the same level. That is the second progression. The third progression is a process or what you might call integration. In his earlier works, for instance, there are a number of poems on the sun, the moon, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, cities, but there is no connection between these.

Later on when he developed his thought, then everything, the whole universe, is really welded together by this single thought that Iqbal has with regard to the role of man in the universe and his destiny. When he has determined this role then everything falls into place. In his later works if you find poems about natural phenomena and external objects like his *Kirmak-i-Shab Taab, Shabeen*, the Moon, and the Sun, then they are no longer external

phenomena ; they are purely symbols to illustrate some inner subjective themes which Iqbal wanted to illustrate through these symbols. They are no longer things in themselves s. He is not interested in the Eagle as such. I don't think he has ever described how the Eagle looks like. He is not interested in the fire fly as such; does not describe what the fire fly (*Kirmak-i-Shab Taab*) or the eagle or the moon or the sun is, for they are no longer for him external objects bur merely symbols to illustrate certain themes. This is the third progression in his works and the style, the progression which integrates disjointed phenomena, disjointed experiences into a single whole which is both intellectual and emotional. And fourthly there is a transition in emotional climate. In his earlier works you will see that the word he is fond of is *Mohabbat* ; whereas in his later works, as you are all aware. his main burden of the song is *Ishq*. For instance in his earlier work: you must have probably remembered some of these lines :

محبت ہی سے پائی ہے شفا بیمار قوموں نے

o

r

شراب روح پرور ہے محبت نوع انسان

But you hardly find this word *Mohabbat* later on in his mature works where the word used is always *Ishq*. So this is the progression from sentiments to passion. A progression from a purely external attachment to something which comes from within, something which is the essence of your being, something which is not an acquired trait that merely makes you love certain things or hate certain things but which is an innate fire which is all-consuming.

I want to emphasize another point. When Iqbal attained to his matured style, a style which is unadorned, which is austere, which is unornamented, then how does he heighten the statement ? How does he compensate for the absence of the other ornaments that the poets generally use, the thrills with which the poets generally attract attention ? This, I think, is a very fascinating subject and very little study has been done on this. Three or four things are very obvious which no one has done in Urdu poetry before. For instance, one thing which is completely his addition to the poetic style in Urdu is the

use of proper names, apart from one or two names which have been traditionally used like Majnoo, Farhad, Laila and Shirin. It was Iqbal, I think, who for the first time, Popularised the use of the proper names:

گھر میرا نہ دلی نہ صفاہاں نہ سمر قند

(B.J.34)

Or

مصر و حجاز سے گزر پارس و شام سے گزر

(Ib., 24)

You will see such names as Koofa, Hijaz, Iraq, Furat, Ispahan, Samarqand, Koh-e-Adam, Nawah-i-Kazima, Qurtuba, etc. Knowing the poetic implication of these, when you come across a proper name like this, you do not need any simili or any metaphor. This word by itself evokes a sense of distance, a sense of time, a sense of remoteness and what you might call a sense of romance because romance after all is the sense of distance, of distance either in space or in time. So this use of the proper name is something which compensates for the absence of other ornamentation in Iqbal. The second thing which he does, which again is rather new, is the use of words which are simple but unfamiliar, words which are neither difficult nor obscure, words which are very crystal clear and yet were never used before — words like *Nakheel*, *Tailsan*, and *Parnian* which last in Persian is very common but is not used in Urdu. Similarly you will find a number of such words which Iqbal has deliberately introduced. Take, for instance, the famous line considered to be a masterpiece:

خطوط خمدار کی نمائش

مریز و کج دار کی نمائش

Everybody knows what *Kbutoot-i-Khaindar* is, *Marie* is rather an unfamiliar word but even so it is clear. This is his second, what you might call, a trick ; but I would not call it a trick because it is not so, rather his second weapon, I might say, to relieve the austerity of his statement and to heighten the emotive atmosphere of his verse. Then the third element which he emplo) s

is to use unfamiliar meters, as, for instance, the meter of "Masjid-i-Qurtuba". He has used at least half a dozen meters which were not used in Urdu poetry before and which he introduced for the first time. Then he creates a sense of unfamiliarity by unfamiliar sound, by unfamiliar words, by use of proper names and above all, by a very contrived pattern of sounds. I don't think any poet in Urdu has used the patterns of consonantal and vowel sounds deliberately as Iqbal has done. He does not go after the obvious tricks like onomatopoea and resonance. You will find that a sound arrangement of consonants and of vowels is very deliberate. The only other poet who does it in that way is as far as I know Hafiz. But in Urdu it was not known before. Before Iqbal, the people did use words with similar sounds, onomatopoea, resonance, and things like that but nobody has used the whole thing. These, I think, are some of the stylistic elements which are very characteristic of Iqbal. If you study Iqbal you find that this was the only style which could fit the ultimate theme which he evolved during the course of his poetic career. This ultimate theme, so far as I know, has many aspects and one can choose any aspect that he likes. But I think the final theme that Iqbal arrived at was the world of man, man and his universe, man against the universe, man in the universe or man in relation to the universe which I would call the world of man. I might point out that in spite of Iqbal's deep devotion to religion he never mentions the other world or hardly ever mentions the other world. There is no talk of the hereafter in his poetry. There is no mention of any rewards or any punishments. Rewards and punishments are here according to him, for the very simple reason that since he is the poet of struggle, of evolution, of fight against the hostile forces, the forces hostile to the spirit of man, the hereafter in which there is no action, in which there is no struggle, is entirely irrelevant to his thought and therefore he has never mentioned or hardly ever mentioned it. Anyway the final thing is this theme, the theme of man and the universe of man, of Man's loneliness and of Man's grandeur. He speaks of Man's loneliness because he is pitted against so many enemies. First against the forces within him like the forces of greed, cowardliness, of selfishness, exploitation and secondly the forces outside him like the forces of hostile nature. So he has the small atom of passion set against the entire universe. He speaks of man's greatness, in that he accepts this challenge, he accepts this microcosm of pain, accepts the challenge of stars and the moons and the suns and the universe. It is this greatness which elevates the verse of Iqbal, towards the end of his days, from the beautiful to the sublime.

IQBAL — POET & THINKER

By

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When I packed my belongings to depart from this world

They all said "We knew him well";

But no one knew this wanderer truly well,

None knew whence he came, what he said and to whom.

THUS spoke Iqbal of the contemporaries who would survive him and their possible claims to interpret the inner self of the poet on the basis of mere physical or coincidental proximity. Iqbal, who lived the life of a typical educated and devoted middle class Muslim of his days, alone knew that few of his contemporaries had penetrated the complex depths of his inner-most thoughts.

So untenable seemed the nature of the claims, that the poet himself warned that there was "no necessity to record these trivial details" in his biography because the outward trivia of humdrum existence in which there was not much to single him out from among his neighbours, could not offer a clue to his inner self. He himself explained that his personality was "a sum of contradictions" and that "the most important thing is the exposition of my thought and the tracing of the mental conflict in the evolution of my thought."

One would have imagined that thus forewarned, those who grew up with him or came after him would be wiser or at least more circumspect in summing him up with the help of the usual cliches. But far from it; both his champions and his detractors (of whom there have been not a few) have seized upon the passing and inconsequential aspects of his life and work. They have fastened upon these non-essential features in framing what purported to be an appreciation and criticism of Iqbal but which was in fact mostly a projection of their own predilections and prejudices. Some alleged confidants of Iqbal, the so called dispassionate and objective aesthetes, therefore, appear to have failed for the most part to lay bare the inner

tensions and conflicts which went to the making of Iqbal, the man, the poet and the thinker. They have failed to mirror fully and precisely the richness and complexity of his outlook which reflected the competing impulses that makes his time one of the most confused and yet stimulating transition periods of the history of the Sub-continent — in a word, they have been unable to relate him effectively to his proper setting and hence their inability to gauge his significance and stature.

I hasten to add that this stupendous task is well beyond my capacity and is not one to which I can do proper justice. At best, I can make a few general observations. I speak with diffidence as an amateur who does not even claim a working knowledge of Urdu and Persian, the main vehicles of Iqbal's verse and vision— and I hope the audience will make due allowances for this, While I have not been fortunate enough to drink deep at the fountain of his poetry and other writings, nevertheless, like the rest of my generation, I have grown up in an atmosphere charged with the leavening of his grand prophetic vision and thought. Some of us might have missed the mighty resonance of his earlier rhetoric and the latter-day austere cadence of his matured accent, but none could live in his age without breathing the air infused with the living presence of the Sage.

Iqbal means many things to many people and this is as it should be, considering his many-faceted genius, his multi-dimensional personality, his absorbing interest in every aspect of his life and thought of his time and generation. It has been the same with another luminary in our cultural firmament, Qazi Nazrul Islam, considered by many as the great poet of national awakening in the sub-continent who blew, the poisoned flute calling his people to arms against the forces of tyranny and oppression that stalked the land. With equal justification some regard him as the poet of world Muslim resurgence, inspiring the followers of the Holy Prophet to recapture their lost glory ; others as the most significant voice of his time and a true mirror of the conflicting social and intellectual forces prevalent in his age and yet there are some purists who relegate him to the rank of second-rate indifferent poets, while grudgingly conceding his undisputed position as an inspired song-writer and music-smaker. All this is partly true and yet none of these assessments represent the totality that is Nazrul Islam. Even the appellation of "the Rebel Poet" is not applicable to his entire work because

he too has preached the doctrine of freedom that comes from total surrender to the Lover and the Master.

This invariably is the lot of many a creative artist and poet of any distinction or stature. We seek them out in the light of our most poignant needs, which is quite legitimate, but to evaluate them in terms of our own beliefs and prejudices is to cut them down to a puny size in the image of our mundane desires and needs. What ensues is the spectacle of barren controversies waged so noisily around great poets like Iqbal which serve only to cloud their genius and to belittle the significance of such architects of the human soul and shapers of the destiny of nations. First then let us consider Iqbal against his contemporary back-ground. But even his background was conditioned by historical events well ahead of his time.

As a starting point, we may record the impact of Islam on predominantly Hindu India. K. M. Pannikar in his *Survey of Indian History* puts it succinctly:

"The main social result of the introduction of Islam as a religion into India was the division of society on a vertical basis. Before the thirteenth century, Hindu society was divided horizontally, and neither Buddhism nor Jainism affected this division. They were not unassimilable elements and fitted in easily with the existing divisions. Islam, on the other hand, split Indian society into two sections from top to bottom and what has now come to be known in the phraseology of today, two separate nations came into being from the beginning. It was two parallel societies vertically established on the same soil. At all stages they were different and hardly any social communication or intermingling of life existed between them. There was, of course, a continuous process of conversion from Hinduism to Islam, but also a continuous strengthening of the Hindu social body, both by the rise of new doctrines and sects as well as by a defensive feeling of security."

The political and economic unseating of Muslim power had its germs in the confusion and internecine strife that followed the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. The failure of the First War of Independence in 1857 sealed the hopes of any resurgence of Muslim power and proclaimed the establishment of British authority all over the sub-continent. The Muslims suddenly found themselves bereft of all power and authority and the lowest point of their fortunes was reached between 1833 and 1864. Persian was dislodged by

English as the official language in 1833 and since Muslims, out of deep-seated frustration, did not take to the New Learning readily, they were deprived of their high places in the administration of the country. Muslim Criminal Law was scrapped and replaced by the Code of Macaulay and the Anglo-Muslim law amended the Shariat Law. To this challenge Muslims reacted in a variety of ways from Wahabi puritanism to cultural non-cooperation, supercilious contempt and even open hostility.

The resultant mood of depression and incompatibility with the new environment from which the Muslims of Iqbal's generation suffered was glaringly manifested in their attitude towards religion. For their broken spirits religion provided a solace and no longer a guide to action. No more was it an instrument to establish the Kingdom of God on earth but an escape to the Kingdom of God in heavens. This deep sense of emotional crisis in which Muslim India was engulfed, was hardly experienced by Hindu India for whom British advent meant a mere change of masters. Unlike the Muslims they did not pine for the vanished glory of the Court of Delhi. The process of adjustment for them was much easier and more profitable. For the Muslims compromise with the British was tantamount to further humiliation. They reacted sharply against the cultural infiltration of the West particularly in the sphere of education, which inevitably meant a denial of opportunity in government service and to no small extent in the field of commerce.

In a word, Muslim India after the loss of political power behaved very much like China which, after the incursion of the Western Powers both before and after the Opium Wars, turned its face against modern aggressive civilisation and withdrew into its own shell, while the Hindus reacted very much like the forward looking warrior class of Japan after Commodore Perry's bombardment. Unlike the Chinese or the Indian Muslims who refused to face the realities of life, the Samurai turned to master the new techniques and technology of the superior invaders and ended by beating them at their own game of industrial and technological achievements. And the Hindu followed the same path of hard-headed realism.

Muslims of India had reached a dead-end. A way out had to be found from this desperate situation. The Aligarh movement was aimed at ending Muslim isolation from modern life. Later, the movement split into two, the older following Sir Syed Ahmad in his almost exclusive pre-occupation with modern education for Muslims and unconcerned with Islam outside the sub-

continent, while the more radical and younger section pursuing an avowedly anti-British policy because they found British imperialism pitted against Islam everywhere in the world.

This is how Edward Thompson and G. T. Garratt sum up the situation:

"British foreign policy during these pre-War years added to Muslim discontent. One Mohammedan country after another was being absorbed by European Powers and the British were either privy to the arrangement, as in Morocco and Persia, or made no protest, as in Tripoli. The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 were considered part of a general attack upon Islam. Meanwhile, the younger Indian Mohammedans were increasingly affected by the racial nationalism of the educated classes, and their co-religionists in other countries. Money was collected for a Turkish Red Crescent Fund, while a common enmity brought a few Muslims into the extremist movement, which had lost most of its old Hindu bias."

Iqbal threw himself wholeheartedly into the movement. The crisis of Islam found poignant and restive echo in his work. In the "Nala-e-Yatim" (The Orphan's Cry) he had given expression to the prevalent sense of frustration and disinheritance felt by his community. But as Western imperialism bared its fangs and aimed at the very heart of the Muslim world, Iqbal raised a Job's lament and joined issue with God, who appeared to have abandoned the Faithful in their darkest hour of trial and tribulation :

The idols in the temple say : 'Muslims are gone.'

And they rejoice that the guardian of the Ka'ba are no more.

They say : 'The world's stage is cleared of the camel drivers ;

They have fled with the Qur'an in their arm-pits.

The worshippers of many gods laugh at us.

Have you no feeling?

Have you no regard for your Unity?

You bestow grace on their habitation

And your thunderbolts strike only our dwellings.

His was, however, not a counsel of despair. Through revitalization of faith the darkness that had enveloped Muslim India could be dispelled and the lamps which had gone out could be lighted again. By firing the imagination of his generation with new hopes and ambitions he assured for himself a pre-eminent position among Muslim thinkers in recent decades. He set about locating the point of departure from the pristine glory that was Islam and which alone in his opinion could adequately explain the plight of Muslims the world over. He found that it was the Hellenic ideas imported into the cultural and intellectual world of Islam during the time of Mamun which lay at the root of contemporary aberrations. Under the impact of Greek influences such as Plato's, Islam had undergone a transformation from its dynamic positivism to a passive meditative creed, which often degenerated into a pessimistic and etiolating fatalism. He denounced Plato as "leader of the old herd of sheep", and launched a scathing attack on Sufism, which, basing itself on Plato and Vedanta, had evolved the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (the pantheistic belief that God is immanent and the entire world merely an emanation). If he was to extricate his people out of this Dead Sea, he could not possibly spare the tendency towards passivity and Nirvana. This was the reason behind his virulent onslaught on the doyen of Sufism, Hafiz : "Beware of Hafiz — the wine dealer — whose cup contains nothing but deadly poison. He, the leader of the drunkards, is a sheep and has learned to sing and bewitch people. Shun his goblet of wine for there's poison in it."

In *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), Iqbal laid emphasis on the Self, the centre of all activity and action, the core of personality, the Ego. Man should do everything possible to develop his Ego and bring it to perfection. "The moral and religious ideal of man is not self-negation but self-affirmation," he asserted, "and he attains to this ideal by becoming more and more individual, more and more unique.

The Prophetsaid *Takbalaqu b'akhlaq Allah* (Create in yourselves the attributes of God). Thus man achieves more and more uniqueness. What then of life? It is individual ; "its highest form, so far, is that Ego (Khudi) in which the individual becomes a self-contained exclusive centre. Physically as well as spiritually man is a self-contained centre, but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater his distance from God, the lesser his individuality. He who comes nearest to God is the complete person. Not that he is finally absorbed in God. On the contrary, he absorbs God into himself."

This process of the perfection and development of the Ego has to take place not outside time and space but through struggle and striving in the world of time and space. "Life," for Iqbal, "is a forward assimilative movement. It removes all obstructions in its march by assimilating them. Its essence is the continual creation of desires and ideals and for the purpose of its preservation and expansion it has invented or developed out of itself certain instruments, e.g., senses, intellect, etc., which help it to assimilate obstructions. The greatest obstacle in the way of life is matter, nature; yet nature is not evil, since it enables the inner powers of life to unfold themselves. The ego attains to freedom by the removal of all obstructions in its way. It is partly free, partly determined; and reaches fuller freedom by approaching the individual who is most free—God. In one word, life is an endeavour for freedom.

This philosophy of dynamism, this ideal of the development to the utmost limits beyond the Ego or Self, were precisely the intellectual and spiritual stimuli, which Indian Muslims needed to pull themselves out of the mire of fatalism and passivity, and to regain confidence in themselves for the struggle to achieve their destiny.

Presiding over the session of the Muslim Conference in 1932, Iqbal told his compatriots:

"This superb idealism of your faith, however, needs emancipation from the medieval fancies of theologians and legists. Spiritually we are living in a prison-house of thoughts and emotions which during the course of centuries we have woven round ourselves. And be it further said to the shame of us men of older generations — that we have failed to equip the younger generation for the economic, political and even religious crisis that the present age is likely to bring. The whole community needs a complete overhauling of its present mentality in order that it may again become capable of feeling the urge of fresh desires and ideals. The Indian Muslim has long ceased to explore the depths of his inner life. The result is that he has ceased to live in the full glow and colour of life, and is consequently in danger of an unmanly compromise with forces which, he is made to think, he cannot vanquish in open conflict. He who desires to change an unravourable environment must undergo a complete transformation of his inner being. God changeth not the condition of a people until they themselves take the initiative to change

their condition by constantly illuminating the zone of their daily activity in the light of a definite ideal. It is necessary in the light of this ideal to rouse the progressive forces of the community and to organise their hitherto dormant energies. The flame of life cannot be borrowed from others; it must be kindled in the temple of one's own soul."

This dynamic outlook enabled Muslims of India to cross over from their religious orthodoxy to more modern political concepts. The emergence of Pakistan was the fulfilment of his prophesy. There are few instances of a poet-philosopher intervening so directly in shaping a nation's destiny.

Critics of Iqbal are fond of mentioning his seemingly contradictory postures. A catalogue of his alleged confusions was given to me by a young intellectual in a private conversation. It ran as follows:

Just before the First World War, he was influenced by the Indian Nationalist Movement and to him "My India is better than the rest of the World." However, soon afterwards when the Nationalists opposed the demand for special safeguards for Muslims, their clamour for nomination and reservation in services, Iqbal became disgusted with the Brahmin in whose world, he felt, Muslims would be relegated to the position of second class citizens. The War exemplified to him the inadequacies of Western Nationalism, which, he thought, was aggressive expansionism and he turned for solace to Hedjaz. At the same time, he was attracted to the Russian Revolution and hailed it as *Aftab-e-Tazā*, the New Sun. Under its impetus he takes Lenin to the presence of the Heavenly Host in *Bal-e-Jibril* and quotes God's commandments to his angels:

Arise and awaken the disinherited of my earth,
Shake the dwellings of the rich to the every foundations.
That field from which the peasant derives no livelihood
Burn every ear of corn in it.

During this stage of his mental evolution he condemned racial discrimination, a culture based on alleged superiority of race and colour, the Empire and the Church, which he considered a mere appendage of capitalist society and expressed pleasure that Man has broken all these chains. Next moment he became an admirer of tribal democracy and Khilafat and

condemned the Russian Revolution as 'Materialistic and anti-spiritual.' The same critic pointed out that a few years later when Fascism representing a completely different philosophy made its appearance in Italy and Germany, Iqbal was all praise for it, and even as late as 1932 was fond of quoting Mussolini's maxim: "He who has steel has bread."

The verdict of this critical young man on Iqbal was, that the poet mirrored in himself the contradictory urges and prevailing social trends among Muslims of his day. According to the impetuous young man, Iqbal's concept of rejuvenation of Islam immortalized in his poetry is a poet's dream, not a historical reality — a revivalist concept of a starry-eyed philosopher on the strength of which one can perhaps trace a "world beyond the stars" but cannot create a paradise on earth for Man who is confronted with the hard facts of life which he has to master and shape a new one in the light of numerous contemporary challenges.

Others, more kindly disposed towards him, have sought to draw a line between what he shared with his people and where he was ahead of them. They say that Iqbal was emotionally very near to the heartbeat of his people though intellectually far removed from them. He identified himself with their prides and prejudices, their hopes and aspirations. He reflected their prejudices in complete subservience to dogma at one moment, and in the next moment posed a devastating intellectual challenge to all dogma. In fact, he felt all the right and wrong, basic and ephemeral, urges of his people, including those which were instinctive and irrational and at the same time rose far above them to give the people a lead in reinterpreting Islamic thought as a key to their emancipation.

This analysis is obviously the result of sweeping generalisations and over-simplification of a phenomenon which admits of neither. Creative genius is not to be judged by the yardstick of the market nor circumscribed by the narrow code of daily commerce. If one is to take a full measure of his performance, one must follow with sympathy and understanding Iqbal's endless quest for the truth in a given situation. His integrity would not let him rest in a static position of self-complacency, in blind adherence to one particular idea. The moment he found ideas and ideals, definitions and concepts, unable to stand the test of reality and the challenge of maturity, he had no hesitation in discarding the crumbling foundations of beleaguered outposts and striking out boldly for new paths. To accuse him of inconstancy

or immaturity is like blaming Life for revealing itself anew with every shifting light and hue of experience. Iqbal is not for those who would take up final and immutable positions. There is no *worse* sin than to be dogmatic in the appraisal of men like Iqbal. The basic mistake lies in too schematic a treatment of his changing and developing thoughts and ideas. Iqbal, in his creative pilgrimage, has always gone from the small to the big and then to the bigger. From regional Nationalism, he moved to the plane of International Brotherhood of Islam. His strong support of the Pakistan Movement did not represent any falling back from that position because what Iqbal envisaged in the "Federation of Muslim Provinces", was just a microcosm of the shape of things to come on the wider horizons of the Muslim World. It was not the poet who erred but those who have painted him as merely a sort of local poet of Pakistan. His basic theme is not Pakistan nor perhaps even Islam, but the relation of Man to the Universe.

In his early books, he was mainly pre-occupied with himself, his own subjective state, or his individual experience of objective reality. Thereafter, in his great rhetorical poems he was mainly concerned with the Nationalist Movement, and later, with International Muslim Brotherhood. Then he came to the final phase where his pre-occupation was with the greatness and grandeur of Man compared to the rest of the Universe, including God Himself, who became just another stage in the evolution of Man. From *Bal-e-Jibril* onwards he sang of the greatness of Man, and of his loneliness. These are two complimentary things because great heights mean isolation from the rest and in the unequal struggle thrust upon man, the struggle against himself, against the forces of nature and society and even the challenge of the whole Universe and the whole future he must suffer from an almost unbearable sense of aloneness. Iqbal felt that Man's greatness lay in his ability to accept this stupendous challenge which he most know from the very start can never be wholly met : it had to be an unending and eternal striving to fulfil himself through struggle against himself and his enemies. This lends dimension and greatness to Iqbal's poetry at the closing stages of his career because he is dealing with the challenge faced by man of conquest which can never be finally achieved.

In his last phase, Iqbal saw an unlimited future for Man, in the unending struggle for the conquest of the Universe and victory over himself. Love was the motive force of his struggle, love for the ideal, for anything higher which

remained perpetually unattained at every stage since always there is something higher. There are worlds beyond the stars yet unexplored. Iqbal, therefore, sang of the glory and exultation and the pain inherent in the ceaseless struggle for realising his self and attaining a higher stage of fulfilment. To idolise Iqbal as a politician-philosopher is to detract from his greatness as a poet-philosopher who had a message for the whole of mankind:

O people of the West, God's world is not a shop
And that which you regard as true coin,
Will prove to be only a counterfeit.
Your civilisation will fall upon its own daggers ;
For, a nest built on a fragile bough cannot endure.
The lowly ant-caravan will build itself a boat
From a rose-petal.
And sail across the stormy waters, heedless
Of the fury of the waves. . .

Here the poet diagnoses with eagle-eyes the malady and dilemma of the dominant civilization.

The need for authentic translations of his poetry in other languages, both Pakistani and foreign, can, therefore, hardly be overemphasised. Politics was not his first love but only a by-product of philosophy of which the more the outside world knows the better it will be for Pakistan.