

IQBAL DAY IN CAIRO

(1)

IQBAL—THE POET OF ISLAM

*Ahmad Hasan al-Ziyyat**

In April 1938 Iqbal surrendered his soul to his Creator. This surrender was marked internally with a willing resignation and externally by a smile that illumined his whole countenance—a smile that characterises a true believer.

نشان مرد مومن با تو گویم

چو مگر آیه تبسم بر لب او

I tell you the sign of a true believer—

When death comes, there is smile on his face.

With his death the world of Islam lost a great personality who had transmitted the fire of life to its body-social and helped in its resurrection.

Born though he was in the religious atmosphere of India, he succeeded in imbibing the true spirit of Islam which imparted to

* This is the free rendering in English of an article in Arabic published in *Majalla al-Azhar* for September 1967. Help of Mr. Muhammad b. Khalil Arab is gratefully acknowledged.

him moral integrity and purity of nature. He combined in his personality the characteristics of Indian Brahmanism and Arabic Islam which gave birth to a unique poetic philosophy. This philosophy is neither after the pattern of Abu'ala al-Ma'ari which is based on doubt and agnosticism nor is it like the existentialist philosophy of Nietzsche which is based on the denial of the existence of God. What Iqbal presented was the pure Islamic philosophy of Tauhid. Its source was the divine revelation and its aim was to achieve a fruitful synthesis of spiritualism and materialism.

Iqbal was able to understand Islam as it was revealed by God, as the holy prophet understood it and conveyed it to his companions who acted upon it accordingly. To Iqbal, Islam taught that material and spiritual welfare depends upon righteous action and true happiness in this world as well as in the hereafter is the result of real faith. If the world of Islam aspires to regain its position of strength it must unite under the banner of Islam. In *Asrar-i Khudi*, Iqbal exhorts the individual to develop its selfhood through faith and dedication to the spiritual values of Islam. In *Rumuz-i Bekhudi*, he lays down basic guiding principles for the uplift of Muslim society through Jihad, in the light of Islamic ideology. In *Payam-i Mashriq* he appeals to Muslim people of the world to come together and unite for common welfare of mankind.

Physically he belonged to Kashmir and inherited the Brahminic blood while spiritually he owed allegiance to the Holy Kaaba

as the centre of Islamic faith in the desert of Arabia. The songs that he sang embodied this spirit of Islam in the language of Shiraz, the home of great Persian poets like Hafiz and Saadi. In one of his books he says:

تم گلے ز خیابان جنت کشمیر

دل از حریم حجاز و نوا ز شیراز است

Physically I am a flower from the garden of Kashmir;

My heart is from the sanctuary of Hijaz and my melody from Shiraz.

He was an ardent advocate of that oriental culture which is based on true spiritual values and denounced that western culture which was nourished on materialism and paganism. He stood for the Islam of the Past that broke the chains of slavery, brought solace to the torn heart of man and terminated the reign of tyranny of man over man; he revolted against the present plight of the Muslims who sowed the seeds of discord among themselves.

Iqbal denounced those imperialist powers which were spreading mischief on the earth and were exploiting science and Nature to enslave the people of the world. Addressing God, the poet says (Z.K. 144):

بنایا ایک ہی ابلیس آگ سے تو نے

بنائے خاک سے اس نے دو صد ہزار ابلیس

You fashioned out of fire only one Iblis

;

They have created millions of Iblis out of the earth.

If Hassan (b. Thabit) was the poet of the prophet, Iqbal is the poet of prophethood; if Hassan defended Muhammad against the attacks of enemies then without doubt Iqbal has the honour of defending the message of Muhammad.

In the ages gone by, Rumi;s poetry served to awaken the people to a new consciousness of Reality as it embodied the true spirit of Islam and the message of the Prophet. Today I can say quite confidently that there is none among the galaxy of great luminaries who can equal Iqbal in understanding the true significance of Islamic ideology; he has pondered over the meanings of the Holy Book, has studied deeply and penetratingly the life and sayings of the Prophet, and has a profound understanding of the old and new trends of thought in the East and the West and thereby able to distinguish what is valuable and what is dross in either of the two civilizations.

Whatever I have said about Iqbal is based on the contents of his poetry, the thought that he wishes to convey, the message that he delivered, in short, his philosophy. But he is also a poet and it is said, a poet and artist of great stature, equalling the greatest in the world literature. We are proud that we read him

and understand him but only those can truly appreciate the charm and beauty of his message who are privileged to read it in original. We must express our gratitude to the late Abdul Wahhab Azzam through whose efforts we are able to enjoy, to some extent, the charm of Iqbal's art and yet I must confess that whatever we read in Arabic is only a partial glimpse of the real which is far more beautiful. The few books, perhaps two, one of which is *Asrar-i Khudi*, that he has translated for us have enriched the modern Arabic literature and opened quite a new and refreshing horizon for Arabic speaking people. I hope and pray that all of Iqbal's books are rendered into Arabic to the benefit of us all. I learn that the immortal Iqbal had an ardent wish that his message be translated into Arabic so that the Arabic speaking world be fully acquainted with his dynamic message. In view of the great regard that we have for him, we feel it to be our duty to fulfil his wish, for besides satisfying his wish, it would be equally adding to the Arabic literature a message of great vitality and profound significance for our people.

Iqbal had been very fortunate in that several of his wishes had been fulfilled by the grace of God. The Muslim people of the world have arisen from a slumber of centuries and are fighting against the tyranny of the imperialist powers. Though the horizon is not yet clear of doubts and misgivings, yet the nature of struggle and the spirit with which this struggle is being carried on, is sure to lead to eventual victory. In the world of today, the Muslim people hope to become a third

power (in the near future) which will bring peace and harmony to the world torn by discord and disharmony.

May Allah bestow his blessings on Iqbal and favour us with requisite energy so that we may succeed in carrying his message to the people of the world.

(2)

IQBAL'S MESSAGE

*Uthman Amin**

Muhammad Iqbal is one of the greatest figures of the Muslim world of today. He was a leader among the thinkers of the East and stood for an enlightened approach to philosophy and religion. According to a distinguished scholar, Iqbal was a philosopher-poet who dedicated all his energies to the cause of human well-being. He stands among the greatest people of the Muslim East of the modern age like Afghani, Abduhu and Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi. He spent a lifetime in penetrating to the inner truth of Reality and then expressing this truth in a language of exquisite beauty and charm which due to the richness of its thought and beauty of its form evokes sympathetic response from the heart of the readers.

Muhammad Iqbal was born in Sialkot on February 12, 1873 in *a* middle class family, racially Brahmins and professionally

* Mr. Uthman Amin, a renowned scholar of the U.A.R., who headed the Department of philosophy in the Cairo University.

craftsmen. The family had accepted Islam in Kashmir at the hands of some eminent Sufi. After completing his early education at Sialkot, Iqbal joined the Government College, Lahore, where he had the opportunity to come under the influence of Sir Thomas Arnold, the famous orientalist. While in London, Iqbal officiated for some time as a lecturer in Arabic in place of his teacher. He then went to Germany and studied at Heidelberg and Munich. He took his Ph.D. from Munich on *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*.

On his return to his country, Iqbal devoted his life to philosophy, poetry and politics. For some time he was member of the Punjab Legislative Council. In 1931 and 1932 he went to England to attend Round Table Conferences. He was elected president of the Muslim League in 1930. He had been intimately connected for a long time with Anjuman Hamayat-i-Islam which had served the Muslim Community in a variety of ways.

It was Iqbal who suggested for the first time the possibility of a separate State for the Muslims of the Sub-continent. Elaborating it further, he said that realisation of the ideal of social justice as envisaged by Islam could take place only through the establishment of such a State consisting of the overwhelming majority of the Muslims. Very soon, the slogan of the independent Muslim State caught the imagination of the people and under the guidance of the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah the united will of the Muslims resulted in the emergence of Pakistan in August, 1947.

This great poet-philosopher died on April 21, 1938. He is buried in a grave beside the historic Badshahi Mosque of Lahore. The stone for his Masoleum was donated by the Government of Afghanistan.

Iqbal's poetry has a message to convey. To Iqbal it is the duty of a true poet that he should not just amuse his audience by the mere play of words but put before them what, according to him, they need to know and do. The message that Iqbal places before us concerns the well-being of man as a member of society; he wishes to bring about a total reorientation of the individual as well as societies so that they may be able to meet the challenge of modern times in a better way.

While reading him we often feel that the poet is legitimately upset on noticing the malaise from which mankind is suffering. He protests against this very strongly and yet there is a limit to it. I feel that his protestations never cross the boundry of decency; he is never vulgar in his diatribes. One finds, for example, in Iqbal's books criticism of Plato, Michaeveli and Karl Marx, but on deeper study it appears that the object of his criticism is not to attack the individual but a particular principle which that individual symbolises. In the first edition of *Asrar-i-Khudi*, for example, there were certain verses containing severe criticism of Hafiz. Later on when there were strong protests, Iqbal wrote in one of the articles written in his defence, that the object of these verses was not to attack the person of Hafiz; its purpose was rather to bring into clear relief the principles of literary criticism.

Similarly his criticism of Plato symbolises his disapproval of preference for mere contemplation, passive resignation and lack of activity. When criticising Michaelaevelli, Iqbal had before him those politicians who do not accept the relevance of moral principles in political life and are wedded to personal self-interest. Note the verses of Iqbal about Michaelaevelli:

آن فلارنساوئی باطل - پرست

سرمه او دیده مردم شکست

نسخه بهر شهنشاہان نوشت

در گل ما دانه پیکار کشت

مملکت را دین او معبود ساخت

فکر او مذموم را محمود ساخت

باطل از تعلیم او بالیده است

حیله اندازی فتنه گر دیده است

That Satan; messenger, the Florentine

Who worshipped falsehood, whose collyrium

Shattered the sight of men. He wrote a scroll

For Princes, and so scattered in our clay
The seed of conflict; his novel faith
Proclaimed the State the only worshipful;
His thoughts the ignoble turned to praiseworthy.
His doctrine caused
Falsehood to flourish; plotting stratagems
Became an art.

Along with political dishonesty, Iqbal is equally vehemently critical of religious hypocrisy which is perhaps more harmful for a healthy growth of society. In one of his poems in *Bal-i-Jibril* (159) entitled “Mulla and Paradise” he says:

نہیں فردوس مقام جدل و قال و اقول
بحث و تکرار اس اللہ کے بندے کی سرشت
ہے بد آموزی اقوام و ملل کام اس کا
اور جنت می ن نہ مسجد نہ کلیسا نہ کنشت

Paradise is not a place for arguments and debates,
While the Mulla is prone to these weaknesses;
His job is to breed ill-will between nations,

But in Paradise there would be neither mosque
nor church nor synagogue.

And hence, Iqbal concludes, the Paradise cannot be a fit
place for him.

Iqbal also criticised the Qadyani movement in the Sub-
continent which preached loyalty to the (foreign) rulers and
held that Jihad was no longer necessary for the Muslims. In a
poem "Jihad" in *Zarb-i-Kalim* (22-3). He says:

فتویٰ بے شیخ کا یہ زمانہ قلم کا ہے

دنیا میں اب رہی نہیں تلوار کارگر

لیکن جناب شیخ کو معلوم کیا نہیں؟

مسجد میں اب یہ وعظ ہے بے سود و بے اثر

تیغ و تفنگ دست مسلمان م میں بے کہاں؟

باطل کے فال و فر کی حفاظت کے واسطے

یورپ زرہ م میں ڈوب گیا دوش تا کمر

ہم پوچھتے ہیں شیخ کلیسا نواز سے

مشرق میں جنگ شر ہے تو مغرب میں بھی ہے شر

The *fatwa* of the Shaikh is that this is the age of pen:

Sword is no longer of any use in the world.

But does the Shaikh not know

That this preaching is no longer relevant in the Mosque?

For the Muslims have no access to the firearms.

Europe has armed herself to teeth,

To protect a false system of life.

We wish to ask the Shaikh who favours

Christian power:

If war is evil in the East, is it not evil in the West?

In another place, Iqbal criticises those persons who mould their life, material as well as spiritual, after the ideals of the West. In a poem entitled "Europeanised" in *Zarb-i-Kalim* (28), he says:

ترا وجود سراپا تجلیءِ افرنگ

کہ تو وہاں کے عمارت گروں کی ہے تعمیر

مگر یہ پیکر خاکی خودی سے بے خالی

فقط نیام ہ مے تو زرنگار و بے شمشیر

Your being is a mere reflection of Europe;

For you are the creature of their architects.

Your earthly body is devoid of personality (Khudi):

It is a gold-studded sheath without a sword.

Iqbal was conscious of the hundred and one amenities that the Western civilization has provided to man and lessend his toils and labours but he was equally aware of its defects. The glittering external of the West did not hide from his eyes the dark abysses of its inner life. In his poem “Lenin” in *Bal-i-Jibril* (146), he says:

بیکاری و عریانی و مے خواری و افلاس

کیا کم ہیں فرنگی مدنیت کے فتوحات

وہ قوم کہ فیضان سماوی سے ہو محروم

حد اس کی کمالات کی ہے برق و بخارات

Unemployment, nudity, drunkenness and poverty—

Are not these worthy conquests of Western civilization?

A people devoid of heavenly revelations

Cannot rise higher than material conquests.

Iqbal tries to explain the characteristics of Western culture through the usual polarity of reason and love, so common among mystics of Islam and especially in Rumi. It is due, according to him, to emphasis on reason to the exclusion of love which leads to imbalance and lopsidedness in the life of the modern man. In a poem "Man of the Modern Age," in *Zarb-i-Kalim* (67), he bewails of the absence of love and abundance of reason due to which man does not find any opportunity to look within himself and experience the pangs of love that alone can bring about harmony to his otherwise discordant life. Reason no doubt gives him mastery over the forces of nature but it affords him no anchor to his tumultuous life as a result of which his life remains meaningless and vacant. True peace and harmony in life can be had only through love.

اپنی حکمت کے خم و پیچ میں الجھا ایسا

آج تک فیصلہ نفع و ضرر کر نہ سکا

جس نے سورج کی شعاعوں کو گرفتار کیا

زندگی کی شب تاریک سحر کر نہ سکا

He is so engrossed in the cobweb of his Reason

That he could not determine wherein lies his gain or loss;

He who controls the rays of the sun

Could not illumine the dark night of his life.

Thus it is clear that Iqbal's criticism of the West means that in spite of her phenomenal advance in technology and science, she has failed miserably to solve problems of social and moral life.

But this does not mean that Iqbal is against reason. Inspired as he was by the message of the Quran, he could not shut his eyes to the significance of reason and its place in human life. The Quran emphasises time and again the importance of rational approach and appeals to the readers to look at things and judge matters by the criterion of reason. Thus when Iqbal criticises reason in the west, it is not denunciation of reason as such but denunciation of an attitude of mind which relies on reason to the exclusion of love, which regards bodily comforts as of more consideration than observance of moral principles.

Thus we see that Iqbal's poetry and its manifold facets reflect his basic objective, viz. to communicate a particular message to the people of the world. This is a message of dynamism and creative activity for which he asks the people to develop self-confidence and self-respect, the *sine qua non* of a great personality. It is an invitation to individuals to prepare

themselves for search for Beauty and Perfection which is indeed a noble task albiet involving constant effort.

(3)

IQBAL IN ARABIC

So far the following books of Iqbal have been rendered into Arabic:

1. Asrar-u Rumuz (Persian),
2. Payam-i Mashriq (Persian),
3. Zarb-i Kaleem (Urdu).

All these were rendered into Arabic by the late Dr. Abdul Wahab Azzam, former Ambassador of U. A. R. in Pakistan.

4. Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.
It was translated by Dr. Abbas Mahmud.

Several books on Iqbal;s life, philosophy and poetry have been publised in Arabic by eminent Arab scholars and poets. One is by the late Dr. Azzam which was first printed in Egypt and later published by the Pakistan Publications in 1954. The other is *Iqbal;s Philosophy* compiled jointly by Muhammad Hasan al-Azami and al-Sawi Ali Sha'lan. It contains translations into Arabic verse of different poems of Iqbal, like Shikwa, Jawab-i Shikwa, Tarana-i Milli, etc. done by Shaikh Sha'lan. These versified translations became very popular in the Arab world. When Umm Kalthum, the world famous singer of U.A.R., decided to sing Iqbal;s Shikwa on the Cairo Radio, she selected Shaikh Sawi; translation as the best.

Shaikh Sawi Shalan is a poet of great eminence and has a natural aptitude for poetry. His first attempt was versified translation into Arabic of the first part of Rumi's Mathnavi which was appreciated by his teachers.

At present he is in Pakistan as guest of the Government of Pakistan. The Ministry of Education decided to request him to translate into Arabic poetry Iqbal's *Pas Che Bayad Kard ai Aqwam-i Sharq?* (What should be done, O countries of the East?) He has almost finished the translation and hopes to present it to the President in the very near future.

He was assisted in his work by Mr. Muhammad b. Khalil Arab who is fully conversant with Urdu, Persian, English and Arabic.'

On his arrival in Pakistan in October 1968, the Iqbal Academy gave a lunch in his honour in Karachi. He had been kind enough to visit Iqbal Academy on different occasions during his stay in Karachi.

He visited Iqbal's tomb in Lahore and composed extempore some verses which we are reproducing here with an English rendering.

لمحة على صريخ اقبال

عجبت لنجم مشرقٍ و هو غاربٌ

و محتجبٌ مازال يبدو و يظهر

ولم ار نجما قط بعد احتجابه

يزيد ضياء في العون و يبهر

سل الجواهر المكنون في باطن الشرى'

متى عاد لاصدا ف قبلك جوهر

ضريحك يا اقبال بالمجد حافل

فلورام كبراً كان الكبير يعذر

تخف به الازهار فواحة الشذى

وازهارك الاخرى اجل وانضر

البي على النسيان حتى على البلى

وكم من بنى الاحياء مثلك يذكر

فذكراك بعث للعلی و قیامة

بهاميت الاحياء في الدهر نيشر

يقولون هذا شاعر او مصور

فقلت لهم بل قاتد و محرر
وعدت الى نفسى عشية زرتها
اراجع ماشاهدته و افكر
هنا مسجد عال و نهر و قلعة
و ثمت بستان ندى و مزهر
رايت بها من روح اقبال منظر
هو الحسن فردا لا يدانيه منظر
ففى القلعة الشمائى هممة عزمه
و ايمانه عن شاهى مسجد يظهر
و فى شالامار سحره و عبيره
تعلم منه الطير كيف يعبر
ولا تعجبوا ان سمى النهر راوياً
فعن شعره يروى لنا وهو كوثر

عليك من التاريخ أو في ثنائح

فان ثنائى عن مقامك اقصر

الشيخ الصافي على محمد شعلان

A MOMENT ON IQBAL'S TOMB

I wonder at the Star;

It has set and yet shines;

It is hid and yet is before the eyes.

I haven;t seen a star which after setting

Continues to shine with added brilliance

And casts its glow around.

May I ask the gem hidden within the bossom of the earth?
earth:

Has ever a pearl returned to the mother-of-the-Pearl?

O Iqbal, your grave has a glory and grandeur;
How justifiably proud it is!

Your grave is surrounded by fragrant buds:
Your poetry is far more fragrant and fresh.

O Iqbal, you are unforgettable,
You are alive though dead:
Very few living person are there
Who are remembered as you are.

Your remembrance imparts new life to greatness;
The Day devoted to your remembrance is a Day of Reckoning
When the living dead are rusurrected on this earth.

People say that Iqbal was a poet or an artist;
No; he was a great leader and a man of vision.

Returning home from the grave, the impressions of the day
Overwhelmed me in the darkness of the night;
My thoughts once again turned
To the grandeur and sweetness of the grave.

I could see before me a majestic mosque,
A river and a fort and a garden too
Full of greenery and blooming flowers;

The soul of Iqbal manifests itself everywhere;
Making the place charming and unique.
The Fort symbolises Iqbal's unflinching determination,
And the Mosque represents his faith.

The Shalamar enshrines the magic of his poetry;

The birds learned to interpret his thought in their own
language.

There is nothing strange if the river is named Ravi

For it is the narrator (*ravi*) of his verses and in grandeur is like

Kauther (the Paradisal Stream).

Your name, O Iqbal, shall ever remain alive in the pages of history:

My words of praise hardly convey the magnitude of your greatness.
