

IQBAL'S "MESSAGE OF THE EAST" (PAYAM-I-MASHRIQ)'

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Amongst Indian Moslem poets of to-day Iqbal stands on a hill by himself. In him there are two voices of power. One speaks in Urdu and appeals to Indian patriotism, though Iqbal is not a nationalist in politics, the other, which uses the beautiful and melodious language of Persia, sings to a Moslem audience — and it is indeed a new and inspiring song, a fiery incantation scattering ashes and sparks and bidding fair to be " the trumpet of a prophecy ".

Born in the Punjab, Iqbal completed his education in England and Germany. East and West met, it would be too much to say that they were united. No one, however gifted, can hope to partake on equal terms and in full measure of two civilisations which have sprung from different roots. While Iqbal has been profoundly influenced by Western culture, his spirit remains essentially Oriental. He knows Goethe, Byron, and Shelley; he is as familiar with *Also sprach Zarathustra*¹ and *L'evolution creatrice* as he with the *Qur'an* and the *Mathnwi*. But with the Humanistic foundations of European culture he appears to be less intimately acquainted and we feel that his criticism, though never superficial, is sometimes lacking in breadth.

¹ First published at Lahore in 1923. The second edition (1924) includes a number of new poems and the author has expanded some of the old ones. The references in the article are to the second edition.

The leading idea of his philosophy, which is indicated rather than expounded in the *Asrar-i-Khudi*² and the *Rumuz-i-Be-Khudi*, may be briefly stated here, as without some knowledge of them it is not easy to understand his poetry.

He regards Reality as a process of becoming, not as an eternal state. The *templa scrota* of the Absolute find no place in his scheme of things: all is in flux. His universe is an association of individuals, headed by the most unique Individual, i.e., God. Their life consists in the formation and cultivation of personality. The perfect man "not only absorbs the world of matter by mastering it; he absorbs God himself into his Ego by assimilating Divine attributes". Hence the essence of life is Love, which in its highest form is "the creation of desires and ideals, and the endeavour to realise them". Desires are good or bad according as they strengthen or weaken personality, and all values must be determined by this standard.

The affinities with NIETZSCHE and BERGSON need not be emphasised. It is less clear, however, why Iqbal identifies his ideal society with Mohammad's conception of [Islam, or why membership of that society should be a privilege reserved for Moslems. Here the religious enthusiast seems to have knocked out the philosopher — a result which is logically wrong but poetically right. Iqbal, the poet, has a proper contempt for intellectualism. He contrasts Ibn Sina with Jalalu'ddin Rumi:

This one plunged deep and to the Pearl attained ;

The other floating like a weed remained.

² An introduction by the present writer appeared in 1920 under the title of *The Secrets of the Self*. The introduction includes an account of the philosophical background of the poem, contributed by the author,

Truth, flameless, is Philosophy, which turns

To Poesy when from the heart it burns.³

The *Payam-i-Mashriq* was written as a response to GOETHE'S *West-ostlicher Divans*. In the dedicatory poem, addressed to the Amir of Afghanistan, Iqbal says:

The Sage of the West, the German poet who was fascinated by the charms of Persia,
Depicted those coy and winsome beauties and gave the East a greeting from Europe.

In reply to him I have composed the *Payam-i-Mashriq*:

I have shed moonbeams o'er the evening of the East.⁴

Although the *Payam* resembles the *Divan* in form, since both contain short poems arranged in sections which bear separate titles,⁵ and also in its general motive, there is no correspondence as regards the subject-matter. "Madchen and Dichter" and "Mahomet's Gesang" are the only poems of Goethe (and these do not belong to the *Divan*) which are directly imitated.⁶ In the piece entitled "Jalal and Goethe", Iqbal imagines Jalalu'ddin Rumi, for whom he has the greatest admiration, meeting Goethe in

³ *Payam*, p. 122.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵ The poems in the *Payam* are grouped under the following heads: *Lala-i-Tur* (163 ruba'is); *Afkar* (miscellaneous pieces) ; *Ma'ay-i-Baqi* (ghazals); *Naqsh-i-Firang* (a criticism of European life and thought); *Khurda* (fragments),

⁶ The counterpart to "Madchen und Dichter" is "Hur-u-Shai'ir". (p.147) While "*Juy-i-ab*" (p. 151) is a fine, though very free, rendering of "Mahomet's Gesang".

Paradise⁷ After hearing him read *Faust*, Rumi speaks as follows:

Your thought into your heart's deep shrine withdrew,

And there created this old world anew,

You saw the spirit in the bosom swell,

You saw the pearl still forming in the shell.

Love's mystery not every one can read,

This holy threshold few are fit to tread.

'The blest initiates know and need not prove

From Satan logic, and from Adam love'.⁸

Much in the *Payam* is hard to comprehend and harder to translate. Subtle emotions and abstruse philosophical ideas, often couched in the conventional imagery of Persian poetry, yet expressed originally, make large demands on our intelligence — and even more on our sympathy. The following extract from a letter written to the poet by a Mohammedan friend, evidently a man of high culture and sensibility, goes to the root of the matter: "One must have read much, pondered much, doubted much, to be able to soar in thought to the heights to which you, in your easy manner, wish to take your readers. The work is only for those who are deeply conversant with the game of getting one's self wilfully entangled, for those who make it an article of faith to go on from one trap to another. You, it seems, have explored the

⁷ *Payam*, p. 246.

⁸ The final couplet, which sums up the lesson of *Faust*, is a quotation from the *Mathnawi*.

whole world of human emotions from the highest ecstasy to the darkest doubts. In your case it may be said with perfect truth:

دست از یک بند تا افتاد در بند دگر

We others, who have neither felt as much nor seem as much, have not the courage or qualifications to abide in this super-spiritual world. Still, occasionally we peer in".

All I can attempt here is to give glimpses of the poet's thought in the hope that some who read my translations may be induced to study this remarkable volume as a whole. It is worth while to become acquainted with Iqbal's rich and forceful personality. Granted that the difficulties are great, so is the reward; and LUCRETIUS said long ago: *Ardua dum metuunt amittunt vera vial*.

For Iqbal self-consciousness, individuality, is all in all. He never tires of preaching the gospel of self-knowledge, self-affirmation, and self-development. The pith of life is action, its end is the spiritual and moral power which grows from obedience and self-control. By conquering matter we become free, by living intensely and losing the spatial conception of time we gain immortality.

(1)

I asked a lofty sage what Life might be.

"The wine whose bitterest cup is best", said he.

Said I, "A vile worm rearing head from mire".

Said he, "A salamander born of fire".

"Its nature steeped in evil", I pursued.

Said he, "'Tis just this evil makes it good".

"It wins not to the goal, though it aspire".

"The goal", said he, "lies hid in that desire".

Said I, "Of earth it comes, to earth it goes".

Said he, "The seed bursts earth, and is the rose".

(Payam, p. 145)

(2)

A stranger to yourself, the Vision yonder

You sought, to Sinai ran.

Nay, 'tis in search of Man your feet must wander:

God too is seeking Man.

Ibid., p. 34

(3)

Feast not on the shore, for there

Softly breathes the tune of Life.

Grapple with the waves and dare!

Immortality is strife.

Ibid., p. 41

(4)

Think not I grieve to die:

The riddle of body and soul I have read plain.

What care though one world vanish from mine eye,

When hundreds in my consciousness remain ?

Ibid., p. 67

(5)

Our infinite world----of old

Time's ocean swallows it up.

Look once in thy heart, and behold

Time's ocean sunk in a cup.

Ibid., p. 45

(6)

Of Life, O brother, I give thee a token to hold and keep

Sleep is, a lighter death, and Death is a heavier sleep.

Ibid., p. 261

(7)

Agony in every atom of our being,

Every breath of us a rising from the dead,

To Sikandar lost amidst the Land of Darkness,

"Hard is Death, but Life is harder", Khidar said.

Ibid., p. 259

(8)

EVERLASTING LIFE

Know'st thou Life's secret ? Neither seek nor take
A heart unwounded by the thorn, Desire.
Live as the mountain, self-secure and strong,
Not as the stieks and straws that dance along;
For fierce is wind and merciless is fire.

Ibid., p. 108

(9)

Sad moaned the cloud of Spring,
"This life's a long weeping".
Cried the lightning, flashing and leaping,
""Tis a laugh on the wing."

Ibid., p. 110

(10)

LIFE AND ACTION

"I have lived a long, long while", said the fallen shore;
"What I am I know as ill as I knew of yore".
Then swiftly advanced a wave from the Sea upshot:

"If I roll, I am", it said ; "if I rest, I am not".

Ibid., p. 150

(A reply to Heine's poem, "Fragen", which begins:

"Am Meer, am wusten, nachtlichen Meer Steht ein Jungling---
Mann!").

(11)

THE SONG OF TIME*

Sun and stars in my bosom I hold;
By me, who am nothing, thou art ensouled.
In light and in darkness, in city and wold,
I am pain, I am balm, I am life manifold.
Destroyer and Quickener I from of old.
Chingiz, Timur—specks of my dust they came,
And Europe's turmoil is a spark of my flame.
Man and his world I fashion and frame,
Blood of his heart my spring flowers claim.
Hell-fire and Paradise I, be it told.

* Iqbal uses "Time" in the sense of BERGSON's *la-duree*, "the very stuff of which life and consciousness are made". Cf. *Asrar-i-Khudi*, translation, p. 134 and foll,

I rest still, I move—wondrous sight for thine eyes!
In the glass of To-day see To-morrow arise,
See a thousand fair worlds where my thought deep lies,
See a thousand swift stars, a thousand blue skies!
Man's garment am I, God I enfold.
Fate is my spell, freewill is thy chant.
O lover of Laila, thy frenzy I haunt;
As the spirit pure, I transcend thy vaunt.
Thou and I are each other's innermost wan:
Thou showest me forth, hid'st me too in thy mould.
Thou my journey's end, thou my harvest-grain,
The assembly's glow and the music's strain,
O wanderer, home to thy heart again!
Behold in a cup the shoreless main!
From the lofty wave my ocean rolled.

Ibid., p. 102 -3

(12)

"THE SONG OF THE STARS

Our being is our Law,

Our rapture is our Bond;
Our ceaseless revolution
Is our everlasting life.
The Heavens roll on: rejoicing
We behold and go our ways.
The theatre of Manifestation,
The pagoda of Appearance,
The war of Being and Not-being,
The struggle of Existence,
The world of Fast and Slow
We behold, and go our ways.
The heat of battle,
The folly of ripest plans,
Crowns, thrones, and palaces,
The fall of kings,
The game of Fortune
We behold, and go our ways.
The prince hath passed from power,
The slave from servitude.

Past are subjugation and empire,

Past is the day of Caesarism,

Past is the fashion of idolatry:

We behold and go our ways.

The silent dust that weepeth so loud,

The frail dust that striveth so hard,

Now feasting with music and revelry.

Now borne aloft on the bier--

Him, lord of the world and bonds slave,

We behold, and go our ways.

Thou art sealed with questionings,

Thy mind is set on problem and solution.

Like a noosed deer

Thou art wretched and sorrowful.

We, in our high abode,

We behold, and go our ways.

Wherefore the Veil? What is Appearance ?

What is the source of darkness and light?

What are eye and-mind and consciousness?

What is unquiet Nature ?
What is all this Near and Far?—
We behold, and go our ways.
To us thy much is but little,
To us thy years are but moments.
O thou that hast a Sea in thy bosom,
Thou art content with a dewdrop.
We, in quest of a Universe,
We behold, and go our ways.

Ibid., p. 112

The concluding section, entitled "A Picture of Europe" (*Naqsh-i Firang*), is intended to give the Oriental reader a notion of some of the more important aspects of European thought as these are viewed by the poet. It is good to see ourselves as others see us, and better still if we take to heart the eloquent message (*payam*) in which Iqbal bids us throw off the fetus of an arid intellectualism and emerge into our inner world of Life and Love.

(13)

Amassing lore, thou bast lost thy heart to-day.
Ah, what a precious boon thou bast given away!
Philosophy's an endless maze: the rule

Of Love was ne'er admitted to her school,
Her eye, with every fascination armed,
Robs of their hearts the sages whom she charmed.
Pointed with every charm her glances dart,
But hold no hidden joy: they cannot thrill the heart.
Never a deer on hill or plain she found,
Not one rose gathered all the garden round.
Then let us beg of Love to make us whole,
Bow down in prayer to Love and seek a goal!

Ibid., p. 226

Open thine eyes, if thou hast eyes to see !
Life is the building of the world to be.

Ibid., p. 231

Life is a flowing stream, and it will flow;
This ancient world is young, and young will grow.
What was and should not be will vanish here,
What should have been and is not will appear.
Love, from delight of seeing, is all eyes;
Beauty would fain be shown and forth will rise.

The land where I wept blood — when I depart,
My tears will turn to rubies in its heart.
In this dark night I hear the news of Dawn;
Lamps out, now come the signs of Sunrise on.

Ibid., p. 232

Iqbal does not believe in political short cuts to the Muslim faith. His lines on the League of Nations are characteristic of him.

(14)

To the end that wars may cease on this old planet,
the suffering peoples of the world have founded a new institution.
So far as I see, it amounts to this: a number of undertakers
have formed a company to allot the graves.

Ibid., p. 233

(15)

Philosopher with statesman weigh not thou:
Those are sun-blinded, these are tearless eyes.
One shapes a feeble argument for his truth,
The other a block of logic for his lies.

Ibid., p. 255

But the philosophers themselves get some stinging blows — particularly HEGEL, whose soaring mind is called

ماکیان کز زور مستثر خایه گژرد بی خروس

"a hen that by dint of enthusiasm lays eggs without assistance from the cock (Ibid., p. 245)"

As an example of the author's method of introducing his Moslem readers to European philosophy, I translate his verses on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

(16)

A bird flew from its nest and ranged about the garden; its soft breast was pierced by a rose-thorn.

It reviled the nature of Time's garden ; it throbbed with its own pain and the pain of others.

It thought the tulip was branded with the blood of innocents ; in the closed bud it saw guile of Spring.

From its cries of burning woe a hoopoe's heart caught fire. The hoopoe with his beak drew forth the thorn from its body,

Saying, "Get thee profit out of loss: the rose has created pure gold by rending her breast. If thou art wounded, make the pain thy remedy. Accustom thyself

to thorns, that thou mayst become entirely one with the garden."

While Iqbal cordially agrees with Nietzsche's "will to power" (meaning "the fullest possible realisation of a complete, self-reliant personality"), his view that Islam, considered as the ideal community, is a theocracy and democracy,⁹ brings him into conflict with "the madman in the European china-shop"¹⁰ whom he takes — unwarrantably, perhaps — to be an atheist.

(17)

If song thou crave, flee from him. Thunder roars in the reed of his pen.

He plunged a lancet into Europe's heart his hand is red with the blood of the Cross.

⁹ Cf. *The Secrets of the Self*, Introduction, p. X and p, XXIX

¹⁰ *Peyam*, p. 238, last line.

He reared a pagoda on the ruins of the Temple: his heart is a true believer, but his brain is an infidel.¹¹

Burn thyself in the fire-of that Nimrod, for the garden of Abraham is produced from fire.¹²

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It would be fair, I think, to describe the author of the *Payam* as a Mohammedan Vitalist. Certainly there is no modern philosopher with whom he is so much in sympathy as with Bergson, whose teaching he interprets in these lines:-

¹¹ Suggested by the words which the Prophet is said to have used concerning Umayya ibn Abi'l Salt:

¹² The commentators on Qur'an, XXI 69 relate that the burning pyre on which Abraham was cast by order of Nimrod was miraculously transformed into rose-garden.

(18)

BERGSON'S MESSAGE

If thou wouldst read Life as an open book,
Be not a spark divided from the brand.
Bring the familiar eye, the friendly look,
Nor visit stranger-like thy native land.
O thou by vain imaginings befooled,
Get thee a Reason which the Heart hath schooled !

Ibid., p. 247

Appreciators of witty and pungent criticism will find plenty of entertainment — Einstein, for instance, "the hierophant of Light, the descendant of Moses and Aaron who has revived the religion of Zoroaster"¹³ or LENIN proclaiming the triumph of Communism to Kaiser WILHELM, who retorts that the people have only exchanged one master for another: Shirin never lacks a lover ; if it be not King Khusrau, then it is Farhad (*Kuhkan*).¹⁴ "The Dialogue between Comte and the Workman",¹⁵ "The *Qismat-nama* of the Capitalist and the Wage-earner"¹⁶ and "The Workman's Song"¹⁷ show, as might be expected, that Iqbal is

¹³ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 255.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 257.

whole-heartedly on the side of Labour. Here are three couplets of the "Workman's Song"

(19)

Clad in cotton rags I toil as a slave for hire

To earn for an idle master his silk attire.

The Governor's ruby seal 'tis my sweat that buys,

His horse is gemmed with tears from my children's eyes.

How long must we lead this moth's life, fluttering round the
candle,

Pass how many days in exile, strangers to ourselves?

It has been said that "the current which in philosophy sets against intellectualism, in the political realm sets against the State".¹⁸ Extreme nationalists and Panislamists can quote Iqbal for their purpose, just as the Syndicalists quote Bergson. But the creative action of Life need not be based on irrational impulse. Iqbal expressly declares that self-control is "the highest form of self-consciousness", and that in the Ideal Man "reason and instinct become one"¹⁹. This, to be sure, will not satisfy his critics

¹⁸ J. A. Gunn, *Bergson and his Philosophy*, p. 110.

¹⁹ *The Secrets of the Self*, Introduction p. XXVII.

N.B.—The article was published in the *Crescent Islamia College Magazine*, Lahore, Vol. XX. No. 81, March-April 1926, pp. 9--18 Reproduced from *Islamic*, Leipzig, 1925, Vol. 1, Fasc.: I, pp, 112—124. Urdu translation of this article appeared under the caption: "*Payam-i-Mashriq*" in the *Paigham-i-Haq*, Lahore, Iqbal Number, Vol. XII, Nos. 1-3, January-March 1946, -pp 180-194.

who see clearly enough the uses to which his doctrines may be put. Let them read, then, his *Apologia pro Vitalitate Qua*:-

(20)

TO ENGLAND

An Eastern tasted once	the wine in Europe's glass;
No wonder if he broke	old vows in reckless glee
The blood came surging	in the veins of his new-born
up	thought:
Predestination's	he learned that Man is free.
bondslave,	
Let not thy soul be vexed	with the drunkards' noise and
	rout
O <i>Saqi</i> , tell me fairly,	who was't that broached this jar?

The scent of the Rose showed first the way into the Garden;

Else, how should the Nightingale have known that roses are?

Ibid.,
p. 254