

THE *SAQI NAMAH* (URDU): A METAPHYSICAL POEM ANALYZED

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["Man's consciousness of himself as the centre of the world, bearing within himself the secret of the world, and rising above all the things of the world, is a prerequisite of all philosophy: without it one could not dare to philosophize."--Nicholas Berdyaev³³]

If I were asked to choose the greatest poem in Urdu, in the genre of long poems, my unhesitating choice would be Iqbal's *Saqi Namah*, the one in Urdu and not the one in Persian included in the *Payam-i Mashriq*. Although the latter commences with the same part pastoral, part lyrical motif, it is of too immediate an interest to compel even the slightest of comparisons with *Saqi Namah*, the Urdu which will never date.

The classical style not only involves a heightened expression, but also rejects the ephemeral, the trivial, and in describing the particular symbolizes the universal. Iqbal takes the idyllic natural surroundings of his locale, Kashmir, and builds from them the concept of regeneration. The regeneration implied is that of Islam, of course; but this should not detract from the classicism of the poem, since for Iqbal, orthodox Muslim that he is, Islam is the religion of mankind, the religion of nature, the true religion.

³³ 1. Nicholas Berdyaev ; *The Moaning of the Creative Act*: translation by Donald A. Lowrie, (N. Y; 1962); pp. 56 -57,

The genre of *mathnavi* is a Persian invention. It has been variously employed, e.g. to narrate allegorical episodes and parables (as in Rumi's *Mathnavi*) or to express mystical ideas in the imagery of profane love (as in the *Saqi Namahs* I and II of Hafiz). *Saqi Namahs* at which most Persian poets have tried their hands are almost always in the *mathnavi* form.

The motif of the *Saqi Namah*, however, varies from one poet to another. Iqbal's Urdu *Saqi Namah* is, for example, antipodal to Hafiz's *Saqi Namahs*. Take the opening verse of Hafiz's *Saqi Namah*'I:

سرفتنه دارد دگر روز گار من و مستی و فتنه چشم یار

"Life is again up to mischief against me. Here am I, far gone in intoxication, and there, in front of me, are my beloved's eyes, promising me some new trouble."

The poem goes on in this pessimistic strain, relieved only by epi-curean expressions of a longing for the "liquid ruby" (wine) and the rebec (music). *Saqi Namah* II is even more pessimistic, bewailing as I does all the time the fleeting and insubstantial nature of life. Only later does it move towards the mystical theme of the knowledge of reality as the true goal of human endeavour.

بیا ساقی از مئے اندام گریز بیک جام ساقی مرا دستگیر
 که از دور گردون بجان آمدم دوان سوئے دیر مغان آمدم
 بیا ساقی آن جام ساقی صفت که بردل کشاید در معرف

"O Saqi! I cannot do without wine. Strengthen me with a up of it; for, sore with suffering at the hands of the revolving eavens, I have come running to the Magi's tavern. Come, Saqi, give me that cup which has all thy goodness in it, so that it may open to my mind the door of true knowledge."

It is obvious that Hafiz's *Saqi Namahs* cannot be regarded as meta-physical. To be metaphysical a poem requires something more than the merely lyrical. "Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term", writes Grierson, "is a poetry which, like that of the *Divina Commedia*, In *De Natura Rerum*, perhaps Goethe's Faust, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence. These poems were mitten because a definite interpretation of the riddle, the atoms of Epicurus rushing through infinite empty space, the theology of the schoolmen as elaborated in the catechetical disquisitions of St. Thomas, Spinoza's vision of life *subspecie aeternitatis*, beyond good and evil, laid hold on the mind and imagination of a great poet, unified and "mined his comprehension of life, intensified and heightened his personal consciousness of joy and sorrow, of hope and fear, by broadening their significance, revealing to him in the history of his own soul a brief abstract of the drama of human destiny..."³⁴

If we adopt the comprehensive yardstick proposed by Grierson, we can certainly class the Urdu Saqi Namah of Iqbal as

³⁴ Herbert J. C. Grierson, *Introduction, Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. xiii.

a major metaphysical poem within the corpus not only of Urdu but of world literature. A trite poet catechizes and preaches by emphasizing a certain proposition; a major poet digests experience and distils it symbolic abstracts. This is why a great poet implies; he does state. *King Lear and Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonos* do arraign *hubris* and preach *Saphrosyne* (humility); they leave the audience free to interpret the climax and the denouement in any manner it wishes. Aristotle emphasizes in the *Poetics* that a poet, in order to be must have mastered the art of metaphorization, that is, of transmuting through the alchemy of his poetry, the part into the whole, the particular into the universal, the domestic into the cosmic (as Milton done in *Paradise Lost*). Gilbert Highet examines this point and rightly claims:

"The material and the media of art are the human soul and activities. The human soul may change, but it does not appear grow any greater or more complex from generation to generation, nor does our knowledge of it increase very markedly from age to age. one of his finest poems Housman comforts himself by the sad reflection Watching the storm blowing over Wenlock Edge, he remembers that the Romans once had a city there "³⁵

In more poetic words, A. E. Housman says that the gale plies 'the sapling double," and that the Roman faced the same life that t Englishman faces:

There, like the wind through woods in riot,

³⁵ 1. Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press I p. 266.

Through him the gale of life blew high;

The tree of man was never quiet:

Then 't was the Roman, now 't is I.

The river Wrekin, Wenlock Edge, in fact, the Shropshire vi of the Midland England, have been vouchsafed a universal no this is how the art of metaphor is employed by good poets.

II

The *Saqi Namah* commences with an idyllic setting. In put, German approach to poetry — especially that of Holderlin — is visible the early verses. Faust commences, on the other hand, with awesome cosmic approach. Holderlin adopts broadly the same kind of regenerative symbolism, as Iqbal adopts later in the Saqi Namah, in *To a Rose*:

In the mother-womb eternal,

Sweetest queen of every lea.

Still the living and supernal

Nature carries thee and me.

Little rose, the tempest dire

Strips our petals, ages us;

Yet the deathless seeds aspire

To new blooms miraculous.³⁶

However, there is a great difference between Holderlin and Iqbal. For Holderlin in the seed there is "eternal germination and renewal, a potential life that has everything before it, containing in itself all possibilities of realization without his having to submit to the labour of giving them shape."³⁷ The *Saqi Namah*, despite this slight resemblance, is wholly devoid of any sexual symbolism. Iqbal does not see regeneration or the seizure of potential joys in the arms of the beloved: his regeneration is in terms of the spiralling evolution of the intellect, for he, as an intuitive poet, had realized what has been universally accepted, namely, that man's evolution will not be physical but mental.

In the event, Iqbal's close study of German poetry and philosophy conferred upon him a breadth of vision not shared by any Urdu poet before or since. He, in part, adopted a musical view of life. But he did not go as far as Fichte in making man as the reflection of the Cosmos. Fichte says, for instance, "In all the forms that surround me I behold the reflection of my own being, broken up into countless diversified shapes," and further: "The dead heavy mass, which only ad up space, has vanished; and in its place there flows onward, with the rushing movement of mighty

³⁶ Gedichte, p 53 [as translated in the Hinkle (1916) edn], quoted by C. J Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), translated by R. F. C. Hall, p. 398.

³⁷ C. J. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, p. 398.

waves, an eternal stream of life and power and action which issues from the original source of all life."³⁸

Such a view has resulted in the development of an existential approach towards philosophy and religion. This has resulted in certain excesses tinged with considerable cynicism. The Franco-Rumanian mist, E. M. Cioran, for example, holds that man, by his very nature, is prone to evil, and good is, at best, something pallid and incapable 'of creating or generating a creative act. But, insofar as the German of life is more musical than mathematical is concerned, Iqbal was more by the German approach. Christopher Dawson, in context, says:

The unity of existence is a kind of vital rhythm which reconciles opposite and apparently irreconcilable realities into an ultimate harmony...

Hence an entirely new attitude to history and society. A people is not an accumulation of separate individuals artificially united by conscious agreement for their mutual advantages, as Locke and the French philosophers had taught ; it is a spiritual unity for which and by which its members exist.³⁹

Iqbal's approach is non-empirical but there is a complete departure from the German approach in that Iqbal accepts the Quranic verities and examines the cosmic environment from a thoroughly Islamic view-point. In the *Saqi Namah* the very basis

³⁸ J. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, tr. W. Smith, p. 172 (Ed. Ritchie, 1906).

³⁹ Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion* (New York: Image January 1960), pp 30-31.

which he adopts is that of *istighna*. This he elaborates elsewhere by stating:

Nature, then, must be as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i. e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole. As the Quran says: "And verily unto thy Lord is the limit" (53:4). Thus the view that we have taken gives a fresh spiritual meaning to physical science. The knowledge of Nature is the knowledge of God's behaviour. In our observation of Nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego ; and this is only another kind of worship.⁴⁰

As we shall now see, the *Saqi Namah* is a poetic elaboration of the same view. The symbols that Iqbal has employed, spring, variegated flowers, stream of life, ash, and so on, are age-old symbols but their implications and symbolism have been completely transformed.

⁴⁰ M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sh, Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), pp. 56-57.

III

As I have pointed out earlier, Iqbal does not begin the *Saqi Namah* on a personal or esoteric note but imbues his environment with universalism:

ہوا خیمہ زن کاروان بہار ارم بن گیا دامن کوہسار
گل و نرگس و سوسن و نسترن شہید ازل لالہ خونیں کفن
جہاں چھپ گیا پردہ رنگ میں لہو کی بے گردش رگ سنگ میں!
فضا نیلی نیلی، ہوا میں سرور ٹھہرتے نہیں آشیاں میں طیور

The caravan of spring has pitched

Its tents ; these hillsides are bewitched

Lily, narcissus, and rose have come,

And poppy from age-old martyrdom

Red shrouded, with colours to hide earth's face;

Through rock itself hot pulses race;

Blue, blue the skies, with calm winds blest,

No winged thing loiters in its nest.⁴¹

"Caravan," Iram (an artificial Eden built by Shaddad), the flowers, the birds, the riot of colour, and even the rocks are all symbols of regeneration. Even the rock crystals are not devoid of

⁴¹Translation by V.S. Kiernon, p. 46.

the processes of catabolism (breakdown) and anabolism (build up). Streams are washing and burnishing the pebbly surfaces. It is from this process of regeneration, of constant death and rebirth with the scales tilting in favour of the latter, that the poet visualizes that stage of progress when the tiny sparrow (symbolizing both man's soul or ego and the Muslim world) would dare to defy the falcon (the material environment which is an inhibitory factor in his progress or the West):

اٹھا ساقیا پردہ اس راز سے لڑا دے ممولے کو شہباز سے

Oh, Saqi, raise

The secret's curtain and let this weak

Sparrow challenge the falcon's beak.⁴²

The Saqi is invoked for the bibulation not of the earthy but the divine wine, to induct the poet into the mysteries of this incessant activity which we call life. The pastoral motif has been extremely cleverly wrought, and one could only wish that Iqbal had done this oftener. The poet's liberation from the particular is complete: he has fully identified himself with the universal. The symbol of the falcon has, for instance, been inverted here; mostly the falcon is employed as the symbol of dynamism, as in *Javaid Ke Nam* (To Javaid):

ہوئی نہ زارغ میں پیدا بلند پروازی خراب کر گئی شاہیں بچے کو صحبت

⁴² Ibid

زاغ

"The jackdaw cannot cultivate the skill of flying high in the skies ; on the contrary, its company has told on the majestic flight of the falcon".

I, however, have a suspicion that the symbol here has been inverted deliberately and skilfully. Since falcon connotes dynamism, it is, Iqbal in effect implies, the West that is dynamic, and it is the Muslim world that has yielded to hebetude. When, however, the sparrow challenges the falcon, their roles will be reversed, and the sparrow will emerge as the super falcon, as it were.

The second stanza of the *Saqi Namah* represents, in part, a ream to his posture in the *Tulu-i-Islam* but the ordonnances are now in the hands of a more skilled Iqbal. Gone is that unbridled optimism: its place has been taken up by a through-and-through melioristic attitude Iqbal could well see that in addition to pragmatism and utopianism (arrayed against each other), the Europe of his day did have a considerable tinge of cynicism and pessimism. The exemplars of the named attitude were Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler. Nietzsche mirrors the hopelessness of the situation when he says, "God is dead, implying that the image-making capacity of man to visualize God been lost, and also when comes out with a devastating attack on Europe of his time in *Beyond Good and Evil*."

Today, conversely, when only the herd animal is honoured dispenses honours in Europe, and when "equality of rights" could

too easily be converted into an equality in violating rights — by that I mean, into a common war on all that is, rare, strange, or privileged, on the higher man, the higher soul, the higher duty, the higher responsibility, and on the wealth of creative power and mastery — today concept of "greatness" entails being noble, wanting to be by o being capable of being different, standing alone, and having to independently; and the philosopher will betray something of his own' when he posits. "He shall be the greatest who can be the loneliest, most hidden, the most deviating, the human being beyond good and the master of his virtues, he that is overrich in will. Precisely this be called *greatness*: to be capable of being as manifold as whole wide as full." And to ask this once more: today—is greatness possible.⁴³

It is this solipsism which is present even in a profound Christain like Rudolph Otto and spurts out like an uncontrollable geyzser in Spengler, with the life cycle of every civilization fixed without possibility of any supervention of reprieve. About Nietzsche's of eternal recurrence Iqbal says:

It is only a more rigid kind of mechanism, based not on ascertained fact but only on a working hypothesis of science. Nor .does Nietzsche seriously grapple with the question of time. He takes it objectively and regards it merely as an infinite events returning to itself over and over again. Now time, regarded as a perpetual circular movement, makes immortality absolute in

⁴³ Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: The Press, 1963), p. 446.

tolerable...It is the expectation that a recurrence of the combination of energy centers which constitutes my personal existence is a necessary factor in the birth of that ideal combination which he calls "superman." But the superman has been an infinite number of times before. His birth is inevitable; how can the prospect give me any aspiration? We can aspire only for what is absolutely new, and the absolutely new is unthinkable in Nietzsche's view which is nothing more than a Fatalism worse than the one summed up in the word "Qismat". Such a doctrine, far from keying up the human organism for the fight of life, tends to destroy its action-tendencies and relaxes the tension of ego.⁴⁴

Solipsism, if it cultivates any ego, would generate an individual ego; Islam would create multiple egos, so that the development of ego would not be the prerogative of an individual but of a whole people, here of the *Dar-ul-Haram*. The development of ego is not a racial tempt as for Otto and Spengler ; every Muslim is enjoined to its development and progress.

Iqbal, therefore, felt convinced that some sort of historical pattern was emerging. The Revolution of 1911 under the great Sunyat Sen had liven China a new lease of life, and, when human beings quaff the liquor of vigour, the environment also bubbles with life.

پیرانی سیاست گری خوار ہے زمیں می رو سلطان سے بیزار ہے

⁴⁴ M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sh, Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), pp. 115-116.

گیا دور سرمایہ داری گیا دکھا کر تماشا مداری گیا

The hoary arts of politics sink,
In earth's nostrils kings and sultans stink,
The cycle of capitalism is done,
The juggler has shown his tricks and gone.⁴⁵

At the end of the stanza Iqbal employs the symbol of the hearth here also, symbolizes regeneration:

بجھ ہی عشق کی آگ اندھیر ہے! مسلمان نہیں راکھ کا ڈھیر ہے

Quenched is devotion's burning spark,
Islam an ash-heap, cold and dark.

Whether Iqbal has employed the concept of the "world-ash" which Jung discusses in *Symbols of Transformation* or not, the symbol has something in common with the world-ash Yggdrasil of Nordic mythology and it has been employed as a symbol of regeneration. Rake the ash and you may find a cinder or two to set the hearth afire again.

A superb poet will vary the metrical arrangement of a according to the theme, motif, and the mood of the poem. The metrical" arrangement in *L'Allegro and II' Penseroso* of Milton is basically de same (iambic pentameter); the verses of the former are dancing and swift, while those of the latter are slower and heavier in keeping with the solemnity of the poem. The metrical

⁴⁵ Translation by V.S. Kievnnon, p. 47.

arrangement of the *Saqi Namah* is the same. The second stanza abounds in گئے (gaiay), گیا (gaya), لگے (lagay). The abundance of 'و', 's', 'م', 'دیا' etc. at the end of the second heristich confers the overall effect of stretch. In the third stanza where the poet especially acquires an overpowering effect, there is a recurrence of the metrical swiftness of the first stain. In the overall musical effect, the first stanza builds up *accelerando*, with the second stanza serving as *poco ritenuto*.

The third stanza builds up a sort of *crescendo*, with Iqbal the affirmationist Muslim launching an onslaught on and against scepticism. Any scepticism that arises in his mind he suppresses through the burning zeal for the greatest of religions as bequeathed to man by the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). That doubts and radical questions do harass him at times he does confess, but he stanches their flow by means of the dam of his faith.

امیدیں مری، جستجوئیں مری!	امیــنــگیــں مری، آرزوئیں مری!
غزالان افکار کا مرغزار!	میری فطرت آئینہ روزگارا!
گمانوں کا لشکر یقین کا ثبات!	میرا دل مری رزم گاہ حیات!
اسی سے فقیری میں ہوں میں امیر	یہی کچھ ہے متاع ساقی متاع فقیر

These throbbings, these long hauntings, these

Far questing hopes and anguries,

My nature. Creation's looking-glass,

Parks through which like gazelles thought pass,

My heart, life's battleground, where eager

Armies of doubt break on faith's leaguer:-

These the world-wanderer's wealth by which

I, saqi! scorning the world am rich.⁴⁶

The poet has projected the duality of man's intellect: belief scepticism. The one is synthetic, based on axioms (here Islam), other, if not properly controlled and managed, chaotic. The symbolize the loftiness of thought. In fact, the gazelles here for grace and beauty, and from their fleeing sound, while escaping the hunter, derives the origin of the genre of *ghazal* itself. By using the word, *murghzar* (park) Iqbal symbolizes controlled thought. Just lithe parkland for gazelles can be laid out, so also one can regulate the parkland of thought.

In one of his famous *ghazals* Ghalib says:

ممکن نہیں میں بھول کر بھی آرمید ہوں
میں دشت غم میں آھوئے صیاد دیدہ ہوں

(For me no rest is possible even by a fleeting chance ; for I am le the gazelle who has seen the hunter and spends his life in fleeing from him).

One can see how beautifully Iqbal has regulated the image of the gazelle to denote multiple symbolism. For the gazelle here stands both scepticism and rejuvenation of faith. The gazelles of

⁴⁶ 1. Translation by V,S. Kiernon, p. 47.

thought rejuvenate the power of his faith through graceful imaginings and the intrusion by doubts has been warded off.

From the fourth stanza onwards the poem becomes rather difficult. Although imagery gives way, for the most part, to statements, the motif is principally philosophical, and it is the Muslim concept on the organic nature of life that is poetized:

دہمادام رواں ہے یہم زندگی ہر اک شے سے پیدا م زندگی
یہ ثابت بھی ہے اور سیار بھی! عناصر کے پنہدوں سے بیزار بھی
یہ وحدت ہے کثرت میں ہر دم اسیر مگر ہر کہیں بے چگون، بے نظیر

The sea of life flows on, great in its vastness, conferring on every living; being the zest for life,

The sea of life, through quiet, yet hides in its bosom the fervour might at one stroke remove the decoy cast round it by the elements.

It is the unity present in every diversity, and yet everywhere its manifestations are different ; everywhere it is unique.

One might, if he seeks parallels, get one from William Blake:

To see the world in a grain of sand

And the heaven in a wild flower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand

And eternity in an hour. (*Auguries of Innocence*)

While Blake resorts to images, Iqbal invokes statements within the of the symbol of the river of life (*Yam-i-zindagi*). This

symbol is aptly chosen, for Iqbal believes that the net flow of life overwhelms the barricades of death. Now it has been established that if today through the application of modern biological techniques — cryogeny, transplantation of organs and tissues and storage of tissues in dimethyl sulphoxide (DMSO), hormonal treatment and so on—it were possible to breed Methuselahs, procreation and human progress would be stifled; for through death alone is the evolution of new species possible. And the continuity of life is guaranteed by the transmission of genes from the parent to the offspring, in the birth of lateral and collateral descendents. If the original anthropoid from whom man evolved wen living today, there would be no man. If the reptiles from which birth evolved were alive today, there would be no birds. The cosmic mechanism may be simplified as:

Anabolism + Catabolism = Metabolism

(build-up) (break-down) (net result)

And metabolism is operative everywhere — in the body of micro-organisms, in crystals (where the growth is surfacial, as in stalactites), and man. Matter, therefore, becomes metamorphosed and the stream of life runs through the tiny viruses (simple protein particles) down to man. For Goethe, in the *Prologue in Heaven in Faust* (Part I) the net result of this on the cosmic plane appeared to be what it was in the beginning — a circular concept of recurrence. Raphael says:

The day-star, sonorous as of old,

Goes his predestined way along,
 And round his path is thunder rolled,
 While sister-spheres join rival song,
 New strength have angels at the sight
 Though none may scent the infinitude,
 And splendid, as in primal light,
 The high works of the world are viewed.⁴⁷

For Iqbal, on the other hand, birth results in something new, alchemy whereby the old yields something fresh and new. In the stanza he says:

تڑپتے ————— ہے ہر ذرہ کائنات	فریب نظر ہے سکون و ثبات
کہ ہر لحظہ ہے تازہ شان وجود	ٹھہرتا نہیں کاروان وجود
فقط ذوق پرواز ہے زندگی	سمجھتا ہے تو راز ہے زندگی
سفر ہے حقیقت، حضر ہے مجاز	سفر زندگی کے لیے سوز و ساز
کٹھن تھا بڑا تھامنا موت کا	ہوا جب اسے سامنا موت کا
رہی زندگی موت کی گھات میں	اتر کر جہان مکانات میں
اٹھی دشت و کہسار سے فوج فوج	مذاق دوئی سے بنی زوج زوج
اسی شاخ سے پھوٹتے بھی رہے	گل اس شاخ سے ٹوٹتے بھی رہے

⁴⁷ Goeth, Faust, (Part One), translated by Philip Wayen (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: The Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), p. 39

سمجھتے ہیں ناداں اسے بے ثبات ابھرتا ہے مٹ مٹ کے نقش حیات
زمانہ کہ زنجیر ایام ہے دموں کے الٹ پھیر کا نام ہے

"Habitude and inertia are the illusions of appearance ; the tiniest particle of the cosmic order is restless and moving.

The caravan of life moves on and on ; and every moment there is a display of newer creations. You think that life is a secret ; only it is the desire to rise to loftier heights than ever before ; that is life.

This journey is the wherewithal of life ; its movement is reality, its inertia is an illusion.

When it came face to face with death, life was faced with a great a challenge.

But, descending into this world of retribution, life built up an attacking position to tackle death.

Because it is conjugal by temperament, it became paired ; and from deserts and mountains it heaved itself into magnificence like the mightiest of mighty armies.

Flowers effloresced and sprouted from the same branch of life ; they also fell down from the self-same branch.

Only the ignorant would call it an illusion ; the etchings of life wear after erasure, and defy it.

What is time ? Naught but the chain of days and nights ; it is her name for the constant change in the manifestations of life".

The singularity of Iqbal's intuitive approach can be well appreciated the fact that the *Saqi Namah* was indited at a time when the atom's structure was not so well known as it is today and the existence of fundamental particles was but hazily known. The neutron, neutrino, and antiparticles like positrons were not at all known. But the orbital structure had been elucidated by Rutherford and Bohr.

We may take here the liberty of quoting from Bertrand Russell:

Genuine laws, in advanced sciences, are practically always quantitative laws of *tendency*. I will try to illustrate by taking the simplest possible case in physics.

Imagine a hydrogen atom, in which the electron is revolving not in the maximum orbit, but in the next, which has four times the maximum radius. *So long as this state continues, the atom has no external effects*, apart from its infinitesimal gravitational action ; we cannot, therefore, obtain any evidence of its existence except when it changes its state. In fact, our knowledge of atoms is like that which a ticket collector has of the population of his town: he knows nothing of those who stay quietly at home. Now at some moment, according to laws of which we have only statistical knowledge, the electrons in ow atom jumps to a smaller orbit, and the energy lost to the atom travels outward in a light-wave. We

have no causal law as to when the electron will jump, though we know how far it will jump and exactly what will happen in the neighbourhood when it does...⁴⁸

We may stand by the side of a lake and think that the environment around us is quiescent. But if we examine a small cross section of the environment by means of an electron microscope, with magnification of, say, 400,000, the picture would be entirely different. What appears to us as vacuum will be full of tiny particles, with aerosols and tiny particles wafting in the medium of air. Within the type of material known as the colloid, there is all the time what we term the "Brownian motion." And so what we take to be static is actually dynamic, and we really see "the world in a grain of sand," as it were.

Now billions of years ago life appeared on the planet, earth. That is to say, through the alchemy of the mixture of the air. The Quran clearly points out that life was created in water (30:21), a point which I have discussed earlier.⁴⁹ And so from one many appeared. One *Amoeba* splits up into two, and so life is one, being continuous, and dual, comprising, as it were, billions of organisms. Taken individually, thus an individual life has a limited span ; collectively it may be regarded as non-mortal.

⁴⁸ Bertrand Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (London: Allen & Union Ltd., 8th impression, 1961), pp. 150 – 151.

⁴⁹ Kamal M. Habib, *The Reconciliation between Islam and Evolution in the Thought of Khalifa Abdul Hakim, Iqbal Review*, October 1965, pp. 111–123.

The fourth verse embodies within it far more than what appears on the surface. Here is an attack on the Platonic concept of ideas and on the Platonic First Cause. The Demiurge of Plato does not create *en nibilo*; he only records the matters that already existed.

Now, according to the Quran, the cosmic order was created by the mind of God *ex nibilo*, and once matter has been created, it will keep on evolving. This happens in the case of non-living matter as well. Radioactive decay of radium, for example, leads to the production of lead: the process may be long or short, depending on the nature of the element, but it is there. Similarly, by means of addition of thermal neutrons, it is possible to obtain superheavy elements which do not at in Nature.

Now, Plato is the first philosopher to have come out with the there of "ideas" or "forms." The phenomenal world, according to to, is an imitation of the ideal world. "The cat is real ; particular cats are only apparent." But, since Plato's concept, both of cosmogeny ad of phenomenology, was static, he could not have foreseen that Ideas" may vanish. Where are Trilobites (or the fossil crustaceans) or Diplodocus or Pterodactyl) today? Similarly, a beautiful flowery plant ay disappear today and with it its idea.

One thing, Iqbal seems to argue, is real: this is the state of flux or evolution. God created the cosmic order and with the natural laws: evolution is one of such laws. The useless is rejected: the dynamic lames more dynamic and scales still higher rungs of progress.

Now Iqbal believes that the evolution of man has been deliberate and not accidental. Tennyson, on the other hand, in *The Memoriam* believes differently:

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careful of the type ? But no !
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries: A thousand types are gone,
I care for nothing, all must go.

But, as Iqbal has emphasized in his prose writings, the birth of Adam represents the appearance of conscious experience *sui generis*; and from that time to the advent of Islam the spiritual experience of man underwent a process of evolution. In a sense, Iqbal is closer to the *elan vital* of Bergson but, in Bergson's philosophy, Bertrand Russell says:

Separate things, beginnings and endings are mere convenient fictions: there is only smooth, unbroken transition. The beliefs of to-day may count as true today, if they carry us along the stream; but tomorrow they will be false, and must be replaced by our beliefs to meet the new situation. All our thinking consists of convenient fictions, imaginary congealing of the stream: reality flows on in spite of all our fictions, and though it can be lived, it

cannot be conceived in thought. Somehow, without explicit statement, the assurance is slipped in that the future, though we cannot foresee it, will be better than the past or the present: the reader is like the child who expects a sweet because it has been told to open its mouth and shut its eyes. Logic, mathematics, physics disappear in this philosophy, because they, are too "static"; what is real is an impulse and movement towards a goal which, like the rainbow, recedes as we advance, and makes every place different from what it appeared to be at a distance."⁵⁰

Now in Iqbal's philosophy the goal "cannot recede as we advance since an experience like the *Mairaj* of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) represents the very zenith of spiritual experience. To look at the issue from Iqbal's viewpoint, that would be the ideal, enshrined in reality and not in mere idealism. And this ideal also is the net result of evolution in revelatory experience and so the evolutionary impulse, if correctly regulated, should result in progress. While Kant seeks synthetic or extra-sensory experience in geometry, space, and time, Iqbal takes revelatory experience to be the yardstick of synthetic experience. This for our poet represents reality ; inertia would, as the other hand, plug the vents of the receipt of the breeze of progress.'

Now what does Iqbal mean when he says that life took up attacking position against death and lay in its wait ? This pr Iqbal

⁵⁰ Bertrand, Russell. *Our Knowledge of the External World* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), P. 25.

implies, commenced in the birth of Adam or the birth of conscious experience, and reached its perfection in Islam. He says

Life offers a scope for ego-activity, and death is the first stage the synthetic activity of the ego. There are no pleasure-giving pain-giving acts ; there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts. It is the deed that prepares the ego for dissolution, or disciplines hill for future cause. The principle of the ego-sustaining deed is respect for the ego in myself as well as in others. Personal immortality. the, is not ours as of right ; it is to be achieved by personal efforts. Man is only a candidate for it. The most depressing error of Materialism is the supposition that finite consciousness exhausts that object.⁵¹

In another exquisite Persian poem, the Nawa-i-Waqt (The Voice Time), he voices man's challenge to death:

دریادۀ امروز کیفیت فردا ہیں	آسودہ و سیارم، ایس طرفہ تماشا
_____ ہیں	_____ ہیں
صد کوب غلطان ہیں، صد گنبد خضرا	پنہاں بہ ضمیرمن، صد عالم غلطان
_____ ہیں	_____ ہیں

I rest still, I move—wondrous sight for thine eyes,

In the glass of Today see Tomorrow arise,

⁵¹ M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore. Sh Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), p. 119.

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 behold.

(Translation by Reynold A. Nicholson)

And so the challenge to death is the birth of life. For, if there no life, there would be no death. Death was challenged with birth of Adam and Eve when duality out of unity was generated the level of conscious experience. And the final triumph was in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The religious experience of Islam, according to the Holy Prophet, consists creation of Divine attributes in man." Further, Iqbal, elaborating the continuity of life, goes on to say:

However, according to the teaching of the Quran, the ego's re-emergence brings him a sharp sight (50:21) whereby he clearly sees his self-birth "fate fastened round his neck." Heaven and Hell are states not localities. The descriptions in the Quran are visual representations of an inner fact, i.e., character. Hell, in the words of Quran, is "God's kindled fire which mounts above the hearts.... the painful realization of one's failure as a man. Heaven is the joy; of over the forces of disintegration. There is no such thing eternal damnation in Islam. The word "eternity" used in certain relating to Hell, is explained by the Quran itself to mean only of time (78:23). Time cannot be wholly irrelevant to the development of personality. *Character tends to become permanent; its must require time.* Hell, therefore, is a corrective experience which

may make a hardened ego once more sensitive to the breeze of Divine Grace. Nor is Heaven a holiday. *Life is one and continuous.* Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illumination from an Infinite Reality which "every moment appears new glory." And the recipient of Divine illumination is not merely a passive recipient. Every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding.¹⁵²

And, while Western poetry seeks diversity within unity in the gar of mythology, Iqbal discards all mythological frills. Iqbal derives the concepts that drive the vessel of poetry irresistibly onward from the Quran. He does not employ the medium of love, as physical love to him would restrict man's journey towards evolution. In all Western poetry there is nothing so exquisite as Shakespeare's *Phoenix and Turtle* to express a slightly corresponding idea:

Property was thus appalled,
That the self was not the same ;
Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was called.

Reason, in itself confounded,

⁵² 1. M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), p. 123.

Saw division grow together,
To themselves yet either neither
Simple were so well compounded.

That it cried, How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one!
Love hath reason, reason none,
If what parts can so remain.

But, as I have remarked already, Iqbal has rejected the prop mythology. He has enlarged upon the metaphor of rejuvenation through the first idyllic stanza. His *Weltanschauung* is Quranic.

The closing verse of the stanza is perhaps, though seemingly s' extremely difficult to comment upon, as Iqbal brings in the question of time. On the physical level time is serial—a succession of events. And yet such a simple explanation is hardly satisfying. man, through a shock, may suddenly age and decades may be crushed into the concentrate of a few minutes. Similarly, the time consciousness of a polype may be different from that of a snail or man. But how! would the concept of causal time apply to, for instance, the most unto, of spiritual experiences like the *Mairaj* (Ascension) of the Holy Prophet ? It is an experience that embodies immortality within immortality. Divine space and divine time are entirely different from our concepts of physical space and

time. Says the Quran: "We created man, and We know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are closer to him than his neck-vein" (50:15). The comparison of life to a tree is an absolute *tour de force*, for life is like a tree with the branches denoting the lateral and collateral dichotomy of life and the flowers the transience of life.

Plato calls time to be "the moving likeness of eternity", and in the *Timaeus* adopts a remarkable old Testament-like stance (cf. The Genesis): the approach is typically anthropomorphic.

For there were no days and nights, months and years, before the Heaven came into being; 'but he planned that they should now come to be at the same time that the Heaven was framed. All these are parts "Time, and "was" and "shall be" are forms of time that have come to be; we are wrong to transfer them unthinkingly to eternal being. We say that it was and is and shall be; but "is" alone really belongs to it and describes it truly; "was" and "shall be" are properly used of becoming which proceeds in time, for they are motions. But that 'is' is for ever in the same state immovably cannot be becoming older or younger by lapse of time, nor can it ever become so ; neither it now have been nor will it be in the future; and in general nothing belongs to it of all that Becoming attaches to the moving things of sense; but these have come into being as forms of time, which images eternity and revolves according to number....

Be that as it may, Time came into being together with the Heaven, order that, as they were brought into being together, so

they may dissolved together, if ever their dissolution should come to pass ; and is made after the pattern of the ever-enduring nature, in order that may be as like that pattern as possible; for the pattern is a thing that has being for all eternity, whereas the Heaven has been and is and shall be perpetually through all time.⁵³

Time, according to Plato and Aristotle, is to be measured in terms of "Numbers" or planetary motions. But could psychic and divine time be measured thus ? An ordinary life, according to Islam, can Outscale this measure through religious experience or submission of life for a noble cause. This idea Iqbal has elaborated in the *Nawa-i-Waqat*. More, for instance, than what Christianity could achieve within half a millennium, Islam achieved, immediately after its inception, in My years. The time scale with regard to the evolution of an ecumenical idea underwent a devastating revolution. F. H. Bradley, who subjects reality to a searching analysis, says:

To transcend experience and to reach a world of Things-in-the-selves, I agree, is impossible. But does it follow that the whole universe in every sense is a possible object of my experience ? Is the collect' of things and persons, which makes my world, the sum total of existence? I know no ground for an affirmative answer to this question. That many material systems should exist, without a material centre point, and with no relation in space—where is the self-contradiction? That various worlds of experience

⁵³ Plato, *The Timaeus*, 37E and 38B.C, quoted from F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 98.99.

should be distinct, and, for themselves selves, fail to enter into the other—where is the impossibility? That arises only when we endorse, and take our stand, upon a prejudice."⁵⁴

And yet Bradley concedes that the ego has some kind of reality. Iqbal, in this context, asserts:

Yet, in spite of the fact that his ruthless logic has shown the ego to be a mass of confusion, Bradley has to admit that the self must be "in some sense real"...We may easily grant that the ego, in its finitude, is imperfect as a unity of life. Indeed, its nature is wholly aspiration after a unity more inclusive, more effective, more balanced, more unique. Who knows how many different kinds of environment it needs for its organization as a perfect unity?⁵⁵

Once the environment of Islam, holds Iqbal in the *Saqi Namba*, comes into being, the efflorescence of egohood will have a congenial ground for achieving all-around development. This point he elaborates in the sixth stanza:

خود کی کیا ہے راز درون حیات خودی کی ہے بیہداری کائنات
ازل سے ہے یہ کشمکش میں اسیر ہوئی خاک آدم میں صورت پذیر

Selfhood is the innermost secret of life. What else but it animates the cosmic order.

⁵⁴ F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London: Swann Sonnenschein & Ltd, 1908), pp. 215-16

⁵⁵ M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore' Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1965), p, 98.

Ever has it been pulsating with movement till at last it appeared in the form of Adam.

So from life Iqbal has moved on — rather logically — to egohood. Would one say that Oblomov, who constantly slept, to have really lived ? Would the human beings who fritter away their energies after short-sighted pursuits be regarded as anything else but the living dead? Purposiveness is what confers on man the uniqueness of conscious experience. It is the uniqueness of such conscious experience that appears as *belles lettres*, philosophical works, creative poetry, scientific - h, and so on. Short-sighted sollipsism is death-in-life, while the sharpening of the ego is life-in-death. In an extremely exquisite 'let towards the end of the stanza Iqbal says:

خودی کا نشیمن ترے دل میں ہے فلک جس طرح آنکھ کے تل میں ہے

The mansion of the ego is within your heart just as the pupil of the eye scans the infinitude of the sky.

It is also no coincidence that Iqbal has employed the pantheistic symbols of the drop and the ocean. As far as possible, the images have been used as *double entendres*; that is, on the surfaces they are similes but deep down they symbolise infinitude. The subject, one has to admit, is extremely difficult to poetize upon ; and no one but Iqbal could. have handled it so cleverly. Just imagine the majesty of the two verses in the same stanza which, if anything, are demeaned by translation:

سفر اس کا انجام و آغاز ہے یہی اس کی تقویم کا راز ہے

یہ عالم، یہ بتخانہ چشم و گوش جہاں زندگی ہے فقط خورو نوش
خوید کی ہے یہ منزلیں اولیں مسافر! یہ تیرانشیمن نہیں
یہ ہے مقصد گردش روزگار کہ تیری خودی تجھ پہ ہو آشکار

Bread earned by any servitude,
For the watchman soul is poisoned food;
If you can eat and hold your head
High among men, you eat good bread...
Kneel to God only: that prostration
Forbids as impious such oblation
To other. Earth's bright panoply,
This vale subject to death's decree,
This idol house of eye and ear,
Whose life is only belly-cheer,
This is the self's first halting place,
Wayfarer, not your homel...
Time's revolutions have one goal,
To show what is in your own soul.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ 1. J.A.K. Thompson, *Classical Influences on English Poetry* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 32.

Here is the poetry of statement at its highest ; nothing in Urdu literature can compel comparison with such masterful deployment words and measured rhetorics. Take, for instance, the technique of *anaphora*, in which a word or a phrase is repeated in clause after clause:

"Yeh alam, yeh hangama-i-rang-o-saut ...yeh alam ke hai zair-i-farman-i-maut...yeh alam, yeh butkhana-i-chashm-o-gosh."

Thompson says about Virgil's mastery of sound in Georgics IV. 511-515: "That is Virgil's impression of the nightingale's song. Because it is given only for the sound, it need not be translated. Indeed it cannot be translated, for it is sound."

Iqbal seems to have mastered the art of employing sibilants in rhyming couplets. These are especially skilfully employed in the *Kidr-i-Rab* (Khidr of the Way), *Shama-o-Shair* (the Candle and the Poet), and the Saqi Namah, as will be observed in the verses just quoted. In the result, the overall musical effect is indeed overpowering. Also see how the poet builds up the climax and then the release ; each word is a gem; nothing is superfluous. Iqbal also employs the rhetorical techniques of *synecdoche and metonymy* in the poem. They, however, appear indirectly. In the former, the part stands for the whole, as in the first stanza, for instance, where spring stands for the rejuvenation of life. The second stands for the naming of a thing by one of its attributes: in the stanzas that follow the phenomenal changes stand for life. The first stanza is almost an equivalent of the parode of the Attic darama, and the last stanza the equivalent of a stasimon. So having written as

Oriental a poem as any can be, Iqbal has been able to achieve a sensibility that is not exclusively Oriental, and its appeal should be universal.

1V

There is little doubt that most of the ideas set forth in the *Saqi Namah* lie interspersed in Iqbal's earlier poem: nevertheless it is the first and the last unified version of these ideas in Urdu. The greatness of the poem then resides in its classicism (by this I, of course, mean that a balance, a symmetry, a blending of the disparate has been achieved), suggestiveness and symbolism (its symbolism is, at times, so deep that the poem requires a detailed commentary than a short essay like this), and the loftiness of its poetry — both in terms of imagery, metrical skill, and music.

Now what Iqbal has done is to have poetized the Quranic view about some aspects of life and man's station in the cosmos. Two thousand years ago a Roman poet attempted to put down in verse Epicurus' philosophy. The result was one of the greatest poems of Western literature. Lucretius' answer in *De Rerum Natura* to the riddle of life is resignation, so that fear and despondency may no longer be, according to him, man's rewards in from what he regarded as the world of pain and injustice, although he himself committed suicide. He might have been unafraid of death but he did not achieve resignation. After describing how men seek escape from their own selves when victims of an inner conflict

and hence of misfortune, seeking vainly relief in the change of place, he says:

Each man flies from his own self ;
Yet from that self in fact he has no power
To escape: he clings to it in his own despite,
And loathes it too, because, though he is sick,
He perceives not the cause of his disease.
Which if he could but comprehend aright,
Each would put all things else aside and first
Study to learn the nature of the world,
Since't is our state during eternal time,
Not for one hour merely, that is in doubt,
That state wherein mortals will have to pass
The whole time that awaits them after death).⁵⁷

Rather remarkably, both Iqbal and Lucretius are unafraid of death; for Lucretius death is that in which all is serene. But for Iqbal death *akhirat* (after—life), *Dies Ira*, and Resurrection are all measures of how man has lived on earth. Again, in the light of modern scientific observations, e.g., quantum mechanics, electromagnetic waves, theory of Natural Selection and mutations,

⁵⁷ *De Rerum Natura*, Bk. III, 1068—78 (translation by R.C. Trevelyan).

etc., Iqbal has given a new touch to the poem altogether. This is an approach entirely at variance with that of poets whom he had earlier followed, at least broadly, or his own in the *Tulu-i-Islam* (The Dawn of Islam) and the *Shikwa* and the *Jawab-i-Shikwa* (The Complaint and Reply to the Complaint). The *Musaddus* of Hall was the first attempt to take Urdu out of the quagmire of traditionalism which was stifling the natural evolution of Urdu poetry. Indeed, Hali's *Muqaddama-i-Sheir-o-Shairi* (Prolegomena to Verse and Poetry) represents an attempt at emphasizing the limited ambit within which Urdu poetry was contained. Here, however, Iqbal has taken the Urdu poetry out of that limited orbit, although the style is conventional. The last stanza of the *Saqi Namah* reminds one of Abdul Tayyab Mutannabi's immortal verse on death:

ولا فضل فيها بلشجاعة والذى وصبر الفتى لولقاء شعوب

If the advent of death were not a sure and inexorable happening, courage, generosity, and patience would not possess the lofty stations which we accord them.

And so *khuld* (immortality) can be achieved through character. The very concept of the *Darul Haram* implies the congregation and collaboration of like-minded people believing in the same verities and the same socio-political structure.

Why has Iqbal, it may be asked, discarded the Muslim symbolism of the *Masjid-i-Qartaba* (The Mosque of Cordova) and other longer poems in the *Saqi Namah*? The answer lies, I suspect, in Iqbal's belief that Islam has to act both as a centrifugal and

centripetal force. The *Saqi Namah*, like the last of Iqbal's poems, *Hadrat-i-Insan* (Man) is unique in being an invitation to the lapsed believer and the non-believer alike to come to the fold of Islam. It might be as well recalled that the poem was written in the British Indian days and could read the Urdu-reading non-Muslims also. Pre-ordained perdition for Iqbal, as indeed it is for Islam, is non-contingent and this is a message so high and noble that it needed a lofty poem like the *Saqi Namah*.

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