

THE LIFE AND WORK OF IQBAL

Alessandro Bausani

Note: Professor Alesandro Bausani, an Italian Orientalist, published an Italian translation in prose of *Javid Nama* of Iqbal from Rome in 1952.⁶⁹ The poem was entitled "Il Poema Celeste". Prof. Bausani also wrote an introduction to his translation of which an English rendering is given below. (A.K.M.)

We present to the Italian public, for the first time, a poem of Iqbal who was a profound Muslim and who at the same time knew profoundly the philosophy and the spiritual life of the West. These two qualities which are certainly very rarely found in a single person form the main interest of his personality, perhaps unique in the opinion of the writer, in the modern Islamic Orient. He expressed ideas which may find an echo, a response and perhaps in somebody a full acceptance in modern West.

This introduction may, however, serve to give an account of the fact that his art so closely and consciously allied to theory, to the thesis and to the "Content", is not the essential and more important thing in him. Iqbal had severe critics by the side of the most fervent admirers of his poetry even in his own country and still more in the neighbouring Persia. He employed Persian —not his own language – as vehicle of his poetry. Even his real and profound Islamic religiosity rather his pan-Islamism, dyed in bold anti-European colours, have been criticised by many of his co-religionists who, being completely detached from the traditional religious world, do not follow methods of western atheism, but believe at least in certain absolute divorce between religion and a

⁶⁹ 1. The date is now considered wrong by competent Pakistani scholars. The actual date was 9th November, 1877, (A.K.M.),

sort of life still inconceivable more in Islam than in Christianity.

The society in which Iqbal was born and in which he lived was 'fish Indian of the first half of the present century. He was born in 31 and died in 1938. Three elements contributed to form the atmosphere so singular and so interesting of that region at this period. They the English culture, Islam and Hinduism.

In the preface to his interesting *Letters sur l'Inde* (Letters on India), written in 1888, James Darmesteter, a French Orientalist, thus wrote about the British officials in India, "I do not believe that it is possible to find iii a foreign Government more conscience and more professional honesty and more sincere desire to do their duty and to do good than the British officials show in general in India In spite of some scandals which notoriously appear from time to time, there has never been in Roman provinces even under Antonius the Pious, so much power and so much temptation with so little abuse. But these honest masters lack the supreme gift of sympathy that leads to overlooking the fault of overwhelming superiority."⁷⁰ Perhaps less honesty and more brotherly feeling ignoring the racial divisions would have made more sympathetic the dominating element so, rigidly separated from the "indigenous" population. And this dominant element succeeded only in forming a cultivated class of Indians speaking English but at the same time deprived of real participation in the profoundly vital elements which the English culture forged: i.e. Christianity⁷¹ and the sense of humanity.

⁷⁰ The French Orientalist was blissfully ignorant of the sinister role played by British officials in India. (A,K,M),

⁷¹ It is Imperialism that creates colour prejudices, A recent example may be cited of a cultural attache of a European country who married a talented Christian but brown girl in an eastern country. The poor attache was turned out of his job and on return to his country he was almost ostracised. Further, Christianity in spite of supreme British efforts has never been a vital element

Indian Islam having a population between 70 and 100 million souls and productive of modern and new-fangled sects did not forget, in its certain circles, the generous and universalistic attempt of pacification by an Akbar and a Dara Shikoh between different religions, but made some others particularly fanatical by living side by side with the Hindu "pagans" and the bellicose Sikhs. Further, it did not forget its role of having remained for centuries, the governing class of India from the conquest of Babar (1526) to the coming of the British. It has also been the enemy of the "caste system". It also provided the element of political unity, the unique form of a unitary and relatively modern state that India, so rich "in profound thinkers and metaphysicians and ascetics but ignorant of the spiritually organised worldliness of Islam, ever had. And further there is the great sea of Hinduism with its mass of pagan and superstitious rites at the base, of deepest pantheistic meditations among its highest votaries, perhaps of more religiosity than religion, of its inhuman system of caste and the most ardent nihilistic affirmations of its certain philosophical systems and a little abstract evangelism of Gandhi.

In this society Iqbal was born on February 22, 1873⁷² at Sialkot in the North Punjab in an old Brahmin family of Kashmir, converted to Islam about three centuries earlier. After his early studies made in his native city, he went to Lahore, a very important centre of Indo-Muslim culture, to complete his education at the local University. He had already commenced to write poetry at a very young age in his native city but at Lahore in

in India, Lord Curzon, a former, Viceroy of India, in his rectorial address at the Edinburgh University in 1910 said that Christianity had failed in Asia. Also Indian civilization in pre-British days did not lack humanism. (A.K.M.),

⁷² 1. The correct date is 9-X11877. (A.K.M.),

a society more developed and more cultivated he developed more and more his innate passion for writing poetry, entering even into contact with one of the most famous Urdu poets of the time, Dagh of Delhi. He also participated in literary gatherings where poems were recited. His poem *Himala* (Himalaya) recited in 1899 at a literary gathering of Lahore was so much appreciated that Iqbal over-coming his instinctive reserve for publicity had to give permission to publish it in 1901 in the Urdu review 'Makhzan' to which later on he contributed regularly. At Lahore Iqbal felt much the influence of Sir Thomas Arnold, Professor of Philosophy at the Government College, who introduced him to Western culture. He studied Islam with Sir Thomas, who encouraged him to continue writing poetry. It was at Lahore that Iqbal published his first book "*Ilmul Iqtisad*" (The Science of Economics, Lahore, 1901). It was the first book on Economics written in Urdu. After having obtained his M.A. degree in Literature, he left for England in 1905, on the advice of Sir Thomas Arnold, for further studies. There he remained for three years and read voraciously all what he could in the rich library of Cambridge where he studied philosophy with the noted Hegelian, Prof. McTaggart of Cambridge and London.

That this period of assimilation of European culture did not pass in vain is proved by the acuteness of some of his judgements expressed in his lectures on the "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" of which we shall speak later on. This work demonstrated a knowledge, certainly not superficial, of European thought. In 1908 after having taken a law degree in England, he took a degree in Philosophy and Literature from the University of Munich in Bavaria with a the published later on in London and entitled "The Development Metaphysics in Persia." The same year he returned to India.

During his stay in Europe he was mostly influenced by two

things. He developed a great antipathy for narrow-minded and imperialistic nationalism. And the other thing was his admiration for a more active and more deserving life worth the name. On return from London, Iqbal taught Philosophy and English Literature at the Government College, Lahore, and at the same time began his practice as an advocate to which he gave his full time professionally. Later on he resigned his chair of professorship at the University. The legal profession, however, did not deter him from his poetic activity.

In 1915 at the age of 38 he published his first Poem in Persian, *Asrar-i-Khudi*, (The Secrets of Self). This poem, translated in 1920 in English by Prof. R. A. Nicholson, gave rise to a very strong criticism of the author, specially in the traditional Muslim Society of India, for its doctrine of Self or certain Nietzschean aspect or still more for his severe criticism of a great Classical Persian poet, Hafiz, so dear to all the lovers of the Persian language. Iqbal criticised Hafiz as a personification of a world drunk with decadent mysticism of the Muslim society of his time, a mysticism that leads to the destruction of Self, to weakness before the invader and to surrender to injustice under the pretext of universal love. Some of his criticisms and such attitude may remind one of the violent protests of a Marxist.

Hardly two years after, another poem *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi* (The Secrets of non-Self) was published in 1918, and recently translated in English by Prof. Arberry. It is on the same subject. At that time Iqbal was thinking to narrate the story of *Ramayna* in Urdu verses but the project could not materialise. Instead, in 1923 came out a collection of beautiful poems in Persian, entitled "*Payam-e-Mashriq*" (The Message of the Orient) in reply to the West—Oaestlicher Divan of Goethe for whom Iqbal like many other Indian Muslims had a particular admiration. *Payam-i-Mashriq* was translated in Arabic by A.W. Azzam, cousin of the President of

the Arab League, and now ambassador of Egypt in Pakistan. The collection contains poems of extreme cultural interest. There are descriptions of Einstein, Nietzsche, etc., with very acute judgements on the West, expressed in Persian in an elegant poetic style. A part of the collection, entitled "*Lala-i-Tur*" (The Tulip of Sinai) was translated in English in 1947 by Prof. Arberry. It contains splendid Rubaiyat that express, in the language and style of Omar Khayyam, ideas and passions typically modern. A year later in 1924 was published *Bang-i-Dara* (The Tolling of Caravan Bell). It contains a collection of long and short poems in Urdu already published before.

The esteem and fame that he acquired with his art was never considered by him an end itself but he just looked to them as a means to wake up his co-religionists from a deep slumber of centuries. They also carried significant political meaning. In 1922 he was knighted by the Government. He was member of the Provincial Legislative Council of the Punjab from 1924 to 1927 and in 1930 was called to preside over the annual session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad. In his address Iqbal for the first time proposed for the solution of the politico-religious problem of India, divided between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority, the scheme of Pakistan which was later on adopted by the Muslim League and recently realised and brought into force. The scheme reunites the India Muslims in a single separate state i.e. Pakistan.

In 1931-32 Iqbal was present at the Round Table Conference, held in London for the solution of the Indian problem. After returning from London and before participating in the Muslim Congress of Jerusalem which selected him its Vice-President, he stopped for a brief visit in Italy. At Rome he visited the Academy of Italy where he made a discourse on an ethico-religious subject. He, however, continued his poetic activity. In 1929 he published

Zabur-i-Ajam, a collection of poems in Persian, published at Lahore and translated partly in English by Prof. Arberry. And in 1930 he published *Javid Nama* whose translation is offered herewith. In 1930 he also published at Lahore a series of six lectures given at Madras, Hyderabad, and Aligarh on the request of the Madras Muslim Association on the religious thought of Islam. *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* was published in a revised edition also from Oxford in 1934. It is a very important book, an acute and dispassionate apology of genuine and renovated Islam. In the opinion of this writer, it is the best philosophical apology and defence of Islam that has ever been written. In 1933 Iqbal was invited to Kabul to advise the Afghan Government on cultural affairs. After his return from Afghanistan he suffered in 1934 from a throat disease which appeared to be cancer and which after four years carried him to the grave.

During this period he stayed briefly at Bhopal with whose Maharaja⁷³ he was on terms of profound friendship and mutual esteem. Some have compared this friendly relation with that of Goethe and Duke Karl August of Weimer. Although his health was in a bad condition so as to prevent him from writing theoretical works of high importance which he intended, for example, "The Reconstruction of Muslim Jurisprudence", yet this could not exhaust his poetic inspiration which during the last period of his life preferred Urdu to Persian. After the publication in 1934 of the Persian poem *Musafir* (The Traveller), there came out two collections of Urdu, poems, *Bal-i-Jibril* (1935) (The Wings of Gabriel) and *Zarb-i-Kalim* (The Stroke of Moses).

⁷³ Except in one case, the title of Maharaja was always bestowed Hindu ruler. The ruler of Bhopal who was a Muslim was, however designated as Nawab, (A.K.M.).

In 1937 another Persian poem *Pas Che Bayad Kard* (What To Do) came out from his pen. Another collection of beautiful poems, brief in general, specially in the form of Rubaiyat, in Persian and Urdu came out posthumously, entitled *Armaghan-i-Hijaz* (The Gift of Hedjaz). A little before his death Iqbal foresaw in verses the realisation of his dream of performing pilgrimage to Mecca. The verses full of this desire expressed:

At this advanced age, I have taken the way
To Medina, singing the song of love...
Like the bird, in the desert when the
Evening shadows fall, which
Lowers down its wings to the sweet
thought for the nest.

But perhaps in an involuntary manner he meant another kind of nest. Iqbal died on April 21, 1938, at the age of 65 years.⁷⁴ A few minutes before breathing his last, he recited the following verses:

سرود رفتہ باز آید کہ ناید نیسمے از حجاز آید کہ ناید
سر آمد روزگار ایس فقیرے دگر دانائے راز آید کہ ناید

The songs sung in the past may or may not return,
Thus may or may not come a breath of zypher to
me from the Hedjaz,

⁷⁴ According to his date of birth now considered to be authentic tha the 9.X1.77, he was 61 years old at his death.

The mortal life of this fakir is at an end,

There may or may not come another knower of mystery.

He died with a smile on his lips as if to realise one of his favourite ideas:

To you I say the sign of the faithful,

When death comes to him, there is a smile on his lips.

Whatever we said about the art of Iqbal, the same holds good for his philosophy. He was a renovator but not an anarchical rebel. And in his art he sticks solidly without an irritatingly rebellious and sterile attitude to the classical mould of artistic technique of that Arabo-Persian traditional poetry which the revolutionaries of Persia call today with contempt, the "Gul-o-bulbul" poetry, i.e. Rose and Nightingale theme. He introduced in it new and disturbing concepts. So also in his religious philosophy he never cut himself away from Islam, even when putting forward propositions of ardent nature bordering on heresy. "A revolutionary who knew how to express his enthusiasm within the framework of harmony of Form". This is a definition which can well be applied to the art and philosophy of Iqbal.

The evolution of his spirit that passed from elementary orthodoxy of adolescence to a more or less vague pantheism during his stay in England and later on matured in an originally profound reinterpretation of old dogmas,⁷⁵ can be understood only in the light of Islam. In simple words we reproduce here with pleasure the contents of the first verses of the second chapter of the Quran that define clearly the "faithful".

⁷⁵ There is no dogma in Islam except the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. (A.K M.)

"This is the Book; in its guidance, sure, without doubt, to those who fear God ; who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them" (II-1-3).

It is a robust faith in beyond, understood as a transcendent personality; a realisation of this faith in practical institutions of extreme simplicity but of precise and normative (by worship, Salat, here is meant the religious worship with its determined movements and not personal prayer) organisation of wealth on the basis of common contribution under the obligatory form of taxes, on the one side, on the capital and, on the other, on the property of each faithful. Islam is not a religion that imposes a too much complicated dogma on its believers. It requires its followers to believe in the unity of God and His capacity to reveal Himself to humanity through chosen great Men and through Prophets, the last of them being (Prophet) Muhammad, and to believe also in its rituals, devoid of any traces of sacrament, which are a simple system of prostration and movement in the course of religious worship five times a day. Its ideal government is a kind of great democratic theocracy in which all are equal before the unique and absolute sovereignty of God, understood in a manner more similar to Jehova of the old Testament than to the Father of the Bible. Within these limits the theoretical and practical liberty of the faithful is rather great and there is not the same facility of technical classification to declare one as a " heretic" which is found in theological systems so well connected and precisely formulated as, for example, in the Catholic system.

The oscillation and eventual contradiction found in the thought of Iqbal which his various critics have pointed out are such as to enable them to forget this fundamental fact that Iqbal was always a believing Muslim. To a young student of modernist

tendency who, with a certain stupor asked Iqbal how it was possible for a person so cultivated like him to believe still in God, he replied "I see God, and I feel Him, and He is for me a matter of practical experience." Iqbal never withdrew from this faith and his oscillations and evolutions are of a secondary nature. He has ever been attached to "the solid rope" of God, to use a Quranic expression. He made excursions even upto the edge of most dangerous depths. But the affirmations and the propositions apparently Nietzschean that came out from his pen have always been subordinate to that "Lord of Justice and Injustice" who was always the true Lord of his spirit.

The religious philosophy of Iqbal is based on his particular emphasis on the idea of Self. In a letter that his teacher in Cambridge, Prof. McTaggart, the great Hegelian, wrote to him in 1920 after reading the English translation of his *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets of Self), the following interesting passage appears there: "Have you not much changed your position? Certainly at the time in which we discussed together the problems of philosophy you were more of a pantheist and a mystic and this attitude you don't show at present." In fact his emphasis on Self is a reaction, adopted from a most noble "practical motive". It is love for his decadent co-religionists oppressed by the foreigner. It is a reaction against the ascetic other-worldly and fatalistic mysticism in which the people of the Orient and particularly the Muslims have fallen.

Particularly the Muslims because — and it is the discovery of Iqbal as a result of his reading of the Quran — the early spirit of Islam is altogether different from asceticism and other-worldliness. "The Quran", — it is the first sentence of his *Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*—"is a book that puts emphasis on deed rather than on idea."

This is the *leit-motif* from which his religious reform proceeds.

The "true" religions are Semitic, theistic, Hebrew, Christian and crowning all these, is Islam, which conceives the Divine as the vortex of "personality", i.e. the summit of "Self, and from this connection flow forth the ideas of activism, liberty, and personality, ignoring pantheistic fatalism. In Quran we read:

"Soon will God produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him—lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of God, and never afraid of the reproaches." (V—57).

However, quite early in its career Islam fell under the influence of Greek thought, of Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas according to which this world is pure illusion and no field for struggle. Here is the enemy, the cause of all decadence and debility of great Semitic religions. It is also the case pointing to the actual impotence of the Muslim peoples i.e. mystic Platonism of a pantheistic nature. In a letter to Prof. Nicholson, translator in English of his 'Secrets of Self,' there is an interesting passage as follows: "The man, physically or spiritually, is a self-contained centre but he is not yet a complete individual. The greater is his distance from God, the less is his individuality. The person nearer to God has a complete personality in a greater degree. Although he is definitely absorbed in God yet it is he who absorbs God in himself. The true 'person' not only absorbs the world of matter, dominating it, but he absorbs also God in his Self. Life is a progressive movement of assimilation. It clears all obstacles that oppose its march forward and at the same time assimilates them. Its essence is the continuous creation of desire and ideals, with the object of preserving and expanding itself; it has invented and developed certain instruments from within, i.e. the senses, the intellect, etc. that help it in the assimilation of obstacles. The great

obstacle in the way of life is matter, the Nature. However, the Nature is not bad, because it makes possible for internal powers of life to develop themselves. The Self attains liberty, removing all the obstacles that lie in its way. And partly free and partly determined, it reaches nearer the Most Free of All Individuals, i.e. God."

The idea of God as "the most free individual that can be called" is typically Quranic and, if one likes to call it, also biblical God from whom "it is not possible to demand the reason for what He does". He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. Certainly not the God-Principle, the God-Being, the God-Original Force of different pantheistic schools. Iqbal is one of the small number of modern philosophers, Oriental or Western, who has understood deeply and who has very elegantly expressed in his various works the modern and liberating value of a correct reevaluation of the Semitic anti-classical and anti-pantheistic concept of the Divine-Being. The interesting side of Iqbal is his defence of this type of religiosity even from practical and pragmatic point of view. Iqbal demonstrates through all his works that God of all the mystics like that of Ibn Arabi (1240) who wrote: "There is none else but God; nothing exists except through Him. There is not even one here and one there from which the essence of all things is One," is that type of "God" that many modern Europeans see as a suppression of the biblical God, but who is radically rather anti-progressive, fatalistic, slave driving than God understood in the light of the Quran as a perfect, and absolute and infinite individual taken not spatially but in His unlimited and most liberal creative activity. According to Iqbal God so understood with whom man can enter in a dialogue in prayer is a great giver of power to human Self. The modern world is still unaware of the great potential energy pent up in the heart of man who declares it in contact with this Supreme Individual

and further calls himself as "the slave of God". One such individual comes out of the chain of time and space and becomes immortal and unrepeatable and thus *unique*.

There are two ways of struggle of the human Self. The one is the struggle against the social set-up and the hostile Nature (which nestles itself in the intimate part of his being). This struggle carries him to the realisation of maximum liberty in going near God. The other is the struggle for maintainiug that state of tension which leads us to immortality. From this double-sided struggle there will be born on earth a new type of man who, to use a Nietzschean phrase, could be called "Superman". But Iqbal, and here it is very interesting to point out, translates him with the word "Mumin", i.e. a faithful believer. The perfect believer of this type of God-personality-perfection (and hence potentiater of any personality) has not yet existed. All such believers have finished by re-interpreting God in neo-Platonic terms. And thus the great religious communities have fallen into a form of religiosity which the Marxists have described as "opium of the people". Iqbal's criticism of the decadent conditions of actual Islam in relation to his co-citizens and co-religionists has been particularly hard and severe. Because Iqbal was a practical and a political person, he felt this valuation of his as genuine Islam as a political mission also. Let me add here that his re-valuation of Islam coincides with genuine Hebraism and genuine Christianity.⁷⁶ It is to wake up his co-religionists from the dream of Non-Self and slavery to an

⁷⁶ If the spirit of Islam is anti-classical and if Christian theology, as Prof. Bausani points out elsewhere in this article, has become the palladium of Aristotle's philosophy, how could Islam coincide with genuine Christianity? There appears to be something contradictory in Prof. Bausani's statement unless genuine Christianity and Aristotle's philosophy are two things radically different. If so, how could one become the palladium of the other? (A.K.M.).

active and struggling life of prophetic Self.

In this struggle Iqbal for practical considerations is evidently anti-European or perhaps too much anti-European.⁷⁷ In my opinion a weakness occurs in his thought when he yields to the very facile and un-real generalization which makes the Orient (one may ask what Orient?) a symbol of heart and the West a symbol of intellect and thus sees in the Orient even a renunciatory spiritualism and mysticism and in the West absolute materialistic pragmatism. Again he sees in the Orient religion and in the West reason; in the Orient dreaming and in the Occident realism. It is

⁷⁷ It may be a paradox to say yet it is true that there are no Europeans in Europe. There are Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen, Italians, Poles, Dutch, etc. Even some of the top thinkers in Europe like Heine, Nietzsche, Max Nordau, etc. have severely criticised some aspects of thought and civilization of the people living in Europe. But nobody styled them as anti-European, Similarly a considerable number of Americans consider the people of Europe as very narrow-minded and given to the adoration and idealisation of remote past and traditions of their individual countries. But none in Europe calls them anti-European. On the other hand they are ever ready to take millions of dollars as loans from U.S.A. But when Iqbal makes his criticism of thought and institutions in Europe, which is certainly not so severe as that of Heine or Nietzsche, he is at once dubbed as anti-European. Why? The reason is not far to seek, It is because some weaker nations constantly harp on the idea of Europe and anti-Europe, especially in matters of colonial and Afro-Asian matters in order to claim equality of status with stronger powers in Europe in those Afro-Asian matters. They even whip up sometimes hate campaigns in a very subtle and indirect way by trying to revive the spirit of the Crusades, then creating prejudices among the people of Europe against non-Europeans, Further, Iqbal's criticism of foreign domination was not something new. In the past the French wrote against the German occupation of Alsace-Lorraine; the Italians against Spanish, French and Austrian domination; the Poles against the Russian. but none of them was styled as anti European. Why should Iqbal be so styled then as anti-European? (A. K. M.).

certainly a little hazardous, if not otherwise, to consider as materialist a cultural cycle which gave a St. Augustine, and a Saint John of the Cross and to talk of the world that gave a Tamerlane and a Changez Khan as dreaming and spiritualistic. And when he indulges in thinking that in Europe "the banks are more beautiful and better kept than the churches", I think it is due to his very noble motive that inspires him to a struggle against the deteriorating West. But this makes him forget the infinite number of religious and spiritual movements that sprout now in the present so "materialist" a century from the inexhaustible source of European religiosity even in the most westernised America.

Iqbal in reality is profoundly attached to Oriental culture and if in his reconstruction of religious thought he had taken much from Nietzsche, Bergson and McTaggart⁷⁸ and other Europeans, his mind is still more linked to the Quran, and to his anti-Greek and anti-classical interpretations like those of Ibn Taimaiya and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi of India, on the one hand, and to the great personality of Persian mystic Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, on the other, whom he has repeatedly called his more important and more fundamental teacher. Rumi is considered by many superficial observers as a *tout court*, a kind of great master of that

⁷⁸. When Prof. Bausani penned down these lines, probably he had not all the writings of Iqbal before him. It is commonly but erroneously supposed by western critics of Iqbal that he was indebted, in his idea of Superman, to Nietzsche or that in his philosophy he was influenced by McTaggart. In reality nothing could be farther from truth. There is a great deal of difference between the Superman of Nietzsche and the Superman or "Insan-i-Kamil" of Iqbal. Nietzsche's view is political without any religious basis while Iqbal's view is ethical and religious. Also Iqbal's view of God is wholly different from that of McTaggart, (See Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal-edited with notes by Syed Abdul Wahid, p. 238-244; 116-127—Lahore 1964.)
(A,K.M.)

type of vague mysticism which has inspired all the poetry (but for Iqbal it is decadent) of post-Mongolian Persia, and which has penetrated more or less even in certain European circles which adore it as "sufi" poetry.

It is not one of the minor merits of Iqbal to have acutely understood the differences between true and proper pantheism and the complicated religious philosophy of that great master. The greatest European student of Rumi, Prof. Nicholson, who has translated and commented upon the immense *masnavi* in English, wrote in 1923... "I know well whatever concerns Jalaluddin. This judgement (i.e. negation of his pantheism) may appear to be questionable to those who have read certain pages of the *Divan-i Shams-i-Tabriz* where he described his union with God in terms which at first sight appear to be pantheistic. And that I myself understood them in the pantheistic sense at a time when I knew the history of Sufism less than what I know now." Rumi was a Muslim and his God is the God of the Quran who, according to the verse *كل يوم هو في شان* ("He is busy every day in creating new things") said that for man in search for Him even "a useless trial is better than a sleep of inaction" (Rumi).

It is true that a person who has understood the Quran and Rumi may well understand the philosophy of Iqbal. Even our poet expresses himself in forms and in view of modern exigencies in a manner that may have raised doubts if the Islam of Iqbal is genuine and original Islam. Besides, he wants and he explicitly admits not to return to the past but "to re-construct" in the modern spirit the religious thought of Islam due to the present exigency. if in fact Islam, as we said in the beginning, has in its essence its simple dogma and simple rituals, the traditions growing with time have made it painfully heavy and corrupt. In

his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal tries to remove what is old and anti-Quranic in the traditions. However, he sticks to the genuine spirit of the Quran which he attempts to revive. His struggle is above all against the conceptions which have made religion "a body of doctrines" rather than a vital fact. Therefore he is severely critical of the Grecising thought of Averroes and of similar other great philosophers of Islam, and tends to revalue the more interesting and in certain sense the more modern sides of the orthodox Asharite theology which, with the difference of Christian orthodoxy which became the palladium of Aristotle's philosophy, always maintained a strong diffidence towards Greek thought, attaching itself strictly to the conception of personal God of the Quran.

As we have pointed out before, certain interpretations of some Quranic passages given by Iqbal may not exactly be considered corresponding to the sense in which the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad could understand it. Here is one example. For Iqbal the following passage from the Quran: (XXIII - 12-24)

"Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed. Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature..." (XXIII, 12 -14)

signifies the organic evolution and the announcement of future race of superman who will possess the highest sense of Self, i.e. perfect "individuals". However, if sometimes the literal sense of the Quran is given a forced interpretation, the spirit is never distorted as sometimes happens in the neo-Platonic "*tawil*" of

various heterodox currents. Iqbal knew how to make acute and substantially and religiously exact interpretations, having potentiality of further development even from simple poetic images which were perhaps in the beginning not different from this.

For Iqbal the following is the practical means for fortifying and deepening the sense of Self so as to become always more "individual" hence always going nearer God, (here I follow the enunciation of a learned Indian student of Iqbal, Sayyid Abdul Wahid:

a) Love (*Ishq*), understood in its simple terms, is "the spirit regenerating the world".

b) Disinterestedness (*Faqr*) a term which does not mean ascetism (*Faqr* literally means poverty) but stoical domination of the things of the world that are used for our advantage without becoming slaves to them.

c) Courage — Iqbal wrote more than once and made the famous phrase his own that "it is better to live as a lion for a day than to live 100 years as a goat."

d) Toleration - "The basic principle of action sustaining the Self", wrote Iqbal, "is the respect of self in me as in others".

e) *Kasb-i halal* — means literally "lawful earning", but Iqbal means by it knowledge and virtue acquired through personal study and effort and not simply from traditions. This virtue is typically Quranic (in the Quran the polytheists complained to Prophet Muhammad for his having taken away their old habit inherited from their forefathers).

f) *Creative activity*. More than once (and it is already mentioned in the last part of his *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*) Iqbal points out that in the Quran God has been styled as "*Absanul Khaliqin*" (The best of Creators). Thus he concludes that the creative activity of pure and perfect men and of men tout court,

and of "individuals" is just and proper but in certain ways and forms less precise and less perfect than that of God. God loves creative and "original" man and it is for this that He has created man, according to the Quran. as his vicegerent:

Now it is easy to see the philosophy of Iqbal from this brief summary but his philosophy is far from being a precise and decisive system. Expressed in a poetical and fragmentary form, changing through the slow process of the mental evolution of the author who is not always perfectly coherent from one point of view but strictly logical from the other, his philosophy works all the more on a clear and precise centre i.e. action is superior to contemplation. God is the source of the force of action. Man is the receptacle of this transforming force.

The faith in God is essential in the vitalism of Iqbal which is apparently near certain aspects of contemporary European Existentialism but let me point out here that this vitalism is elaborated by a person who prostrated himself five times a day for Muslim canonical prayers and who put among his highest desires the desire to go to Mecca as a pilgrim. The question here is of an organised faith, placated and powered by simple but robust theoretical institutions completely lacking even as a vague aspiration in the Western existentialists.

Parallel to this, one can speak of his art. Iqbal the renovator, uses the Persian classical quantitative metre and follows imitatively the more typical and traditional forms of poetic art. Iqbal put this artistic technique at service of ideas, repudiating the decadent concept of "art for the sake of art". This is least for those who cannot read the original text.

In our Western culture what can be said perhaps similar to it is the artistic technique of rhymes of Provence or 'dolce stil nuovo' (sweet new style) of some writers. Here the idea immediately expressed is depreciated without any variegated veil

of the poetic concept of "art for art": and if the enduring equilibrium between form and content destroys every emotive ferment, it reaches the highest peak of refined grace and solemn majesty. Iqbal partly breaks but in no way liberates himself completely from the clearest and most elegant chilliness. There is something "romantic" in him. However, the habit of having a full and rarified view of things which may be due to artistic technique or his Islamic religiosity (in my view both are joined together) has gone into his blood and prevented him — and it was fortunate — from exploding into disordered poetic expressions typical of a topsy turvy world. And certainly Iqbal's revolutionary content, his classical equilibrium, constructive and balanced even in his most fervid invectives against ideas inimical to him, are a matter of great value and originality. The precise long and short rhythm, and the regulated harmony of rhymes canalise the flow of his discourse towards an objective just as the tumult of his most ardent philosophical thought leads to the peaceful shore of his prayers five times a day, the strong pillar of his faith. The river has an end and that is God. Both art and life of Iqbal were of a religious man. On this account his art in the eyes of many critics, even oriental, is incomplete and lacks something. And also his philosophy for this is too much mixed with life and God. But seen from a height on a general view from the point of view of God, the personality of Iqbal has an accomplishment which after the Middle Ages, our world has forgotten. The accomplishment of those who believe that Evolution and History have a meaning and a direction beyond man and the world has an objective to whose attainment we all contribute. It is a Divine work for which all of us are responsible.