

IQBAL

Dr. Yahya Al-Khash-shab.

Al-Abram of May 26, 1972, published an article on "Iqbal" by Dr. Yahya Al-Khash-shab, the translation of which follows.

Iqbal is the most prolific among the contemporary Muslim poets. He composed his poetry in Urdu, Persian and English.

Iqbal is the most prominent personality in his country. There is an academy and a periodical in Pakistan both of which carry his name. Moreover, his death anniversary is regularly observed all over Pakistan. Tens of books and hundreds of articles are written on him by his fellow-countrymen and his private letters to his friends and followers have been compiled in the form of books.

Iqbal was the most cultured among the contemporary Muslim poets. He learned literature and Islamic subjects in Lahore and went to England to study law and philosophy. He obtained a doctorate from Germany and had contacts with Western intellectuals. They exchanged writings about each other. He learned a lot from his tours of the East and the West and is one of the mystics who talked of heaven's secrets.

Iqbal had dedicated his poetry and oratory to the awakening of the Indian Muslims because he felt that he himself had been awakened and that his duty, therefore, was to awaken others. He has also involved himself in politics, which was not his profession. He was the first politician who drew the attention of the Muslims to the necessity of establishing an independent Muslim state in India as a solution to the problems of the Muslim minority there.

Though he was a "Sufi", he strongly condemned "sufism" which put people to sleep whatever the "Imam" might be. For this reason, Iqbal unhesitatingly criticised the poems of Hafiz Al-Shirazi which is at the top of Persian mysticism. Iqbal wanted man not to be lost in his self and he should always try to lead a better life. If such a man creates for himself an ego, he would be worthy of being God's regent on earth. Iqbal also criticised the "Mullas" who gathered a following and traded with religion without trying to discover the needs of any nation which wants to lead a better and pure life.

To Iqbal, Jalaluddin Al-Rumi was a master. From him he knew love and intoxication in life as well as the secrets of both life and death. Iqbal saw Rumi in his dream and asked him to wake and work. It was this active and practical sufism which Iqbal admired.

As Rumi liked Shams Tabriz, Iqbal liked Rumi. From Rumi Iqbal got his inspiration.

Iqbal delved into the secrets of man's existence, his own self, another man's self, and, lastly, Allah's Light. He also discussed the "Ascension" and made himself go up with Rumi to the heavens. There he listened to the angels' hymns and met "Ztruwan", the god who was introduced by Ardashir in Persia before the advent of Islam. He had talks with him after which Iqbal and Rumi went to the Zodiac to meet "Wishvamitra", the Indian sage. The sage asked Iqbal about the world, man and god, and to this question Iqbal replied, "Man is a sword, God is a sword-player, and the world is the touchstone of the sword."

Later, Iqbal and Rumi had audience with Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus and Muhammad. He read all the divine Scriptures and to him Buddha and Zoroaster were prophets.

Near Mercury, Iqbal and Rumi met with Jamaluddin Al-Afghani and Saeed Halim Pasha who were, to Rumi, the best two that the East had produced. From Afghani Iqbal listened to words condemning all forces of imperialism, and from Saeed Halim he knew what difference there was between East and West. Halim reaffirmed to Iqbal that man would never get his salvation unless he imbibes from the civilisation and culture of both East and West. Iqbal was convinced that Islam was a law, a social system and a culture. If the Muslims follow their true religion, they would certainly become "the best nation raised among all peoples "

Afghani went on to explain to Iqbal the Quranic picture of the world and how man has become God's regent on earth. Later, Afghani gave Iqbal a message and asked him to deliver it to the Russians. The message exposed the basic defects of communism.

Then Iqbal went to Venus and to Mars where he met a man and woman who talked like prophets.

In the heavens, Iqbal did not forget the Muslim woman; he talked of Hazrat Fatima and Aisha. Iqbal wanted all the women to follow the path of these two great ladies so that they would promote the Muslim family and society. The Muslim woman has to be an assistance to man, not a liability.

Then, Iqbal went to Jupiter where he met two "sufis", Al-Hallaj and Tahira, who were martyred for the sake of righteousness.

He had also a meeting with Ghaleb, the greatest of the poets of Delhi in the 19th century. Iqbal admired Ghaleb immensely.

Then, Iqbal and Rumi went to Saturn where he saw the souls of the criminals who betrayed the nation. The scene was terrible.

In the seventh heaven, Iqbal saw Nietzsche who tried to know God but failed because in this he depended only on reason

Later, Iqbal and his companion visited Paradise where he found, among others, Sharafun Nisa, Waliullah Hamadani and Taher Ghani, Kahmir's poet. Ghani gave Iqbal a message asking him to deliver it to the League of Nations which "sold" the peasants, the harvests, the rivers and the gardens and even whole nations. In Paradise, Iqbal met Nadir Shah, who ruled Persia in the 18th century and invaded India, capturing Delhi.

Before leaving Paradise, the "Huris" asked Iqbal to recite before them some of his verses. This he did.

Iqbal was permitted to go near Allah and beseeched Him to inform him of the nations, and India in particular. Allah's Light showed Iqbal all that was hidden, but "it deprived me of my power of speech."

Iqbal, the "Sufi", wrote 9 books in Persian, 5 in Urdu and 2 in English. He had a big following among the Indian Muslims. Describing him as a politician, the Quaid-i-Azam said that to him he was a friend, a guide and a philosopher.

Explaining the reason why he involved himself in politics, Iqbal said that he did so when he realised that the attempt to apply Western democracy to the whole of India taking the status of Muslims as a minority into consideration would certainly affect the Muslim society which was bound by Islamic culture, traditions and beliefs, and make it impossible for this minority to co-exist with the majority in one nationalism. For the cause of man's belief and culture, one has to strive either to survive or to die. The belonging to land did not count in this respect and the basic dispute in India was not between the Indians and the British, but between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority.

It was Iqbal who first called for an Islamic state in India. This proposal was made by him when he presided over the annual session of the All-India Muslim League in Alahabad in 1930. He asked for the creation of an Islamic state of the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. The idea was old and was

proposed at the Commons by John Bright in 1858. In 1883, Blunt also proposed that the northern Indian states should be placed under an Islamic government, and the southern states under an Indian government. Again, in 1907, two Turkish leaders, who were on a visit to India, frightened by fighting between the Hindus and Muslims, proposed that India should be divided into a Hindu India and a Muslim India. Later, there were so many such proposals, but Iqbal's suggestion was the first political suggestion of its kind which was made by an India Muslim. The proposal had created a sensational reaction at that time but it was not taken as a basis for the solution of problems except after 10 years during which time the name of "Pakistan" had never been spelt out either by Iqbal or by any other politician. The name of Pakistan was coined by Rahmat Ali in a memorandum he circulated in Cambridge under the title "Now or Never".

Iqbal, as a Sufi poet, is unique and has no parallel among the contemporary Muslim poets. Till now, his works are being studied. He belongs to a type which should always remain at the top ; he is second to none.

Iqbal's Persian poetry had been selected by Dr. Safa, professor of the Persian literature at the Tehran University to be kept by the Unesco among the best of world literary masterpieces. Iqbal's poetry is a match to those of Hali, Saadi and Rumi. His Urdu works occupy the highest place in that language.