

ELEGIAC NOTE IN IQBAL'S POETRY

Muhammad Iqbal

If we consider the simplest elements of poetry we find that a poem consists of a tune, a picture, a story and a feeling. These are closely related and, when fused together in proportion, they form a single artistic whole; yet there are many poems in which one particular element preponderates over others. There are poems in which sound effect is more important, or pictorial representation is more important, or description and narrative are given precedence over other qualities, or the subjective element dominates. As civilisation advanced and life became more and more complicated, man's appreciation and understanding of Nature, environmental conditions and life problems became more sophisticated. The mysteries of Nature were, to a sizeable extent, solved by scientists, naturalists, physiologists and physicists. Men of letters, thinkers and poets became more concerned with human life and subjective poetry superseded other forms of poetry; but emotions and feelings depicted in these poems were of a complex nature and poets and men of letters had to offer more technical and more erudite interpretations. Instinctive impulses and cherished longings were replaced by values such as beauty, truth, goodness and the ultimate end of man. Poets became deeply involved with the highest ideals of life, and poetry was thus brought nearer to life.

The modern poets feel intensely about life, and, when so many adjuncts of life appear unintelligible to his naked reason, he becomes more intrigued about them. Death is a phenomenon which, in some form or the other, has impressed modern thinkers, philosophers and poets. It is a mystery and takes the shape of an adventure greater than life itself. Elegies have been written in their various forms in every language of the world. If we turn to English literature we observe that the elegies written by Milton, Gray, Shelley, Tennyson and Arnold have the basic qualities of sincerity of emotions coupled with an exalted tone and expression of sorrow over the sad lot of man. Studied against the vast expanses of the universe man looks so small, so vulnerable and totally at the mercy of myriads of elemental forces, none of which is favourable for his growth and survival. Did he come into being through fantastic stages of evolution and is just another example of kaliedoscopic shapes taken by matter? Is he just a handful of dust and finally

becomes dust? Or has he been created by a Superior Agency and sent for a temporary sojourn on this earth? If he has been created by God and blessed with a soul, what happens to him after death? The English poets have generally bypassed these tantalising issues.

In English literature, elegy has evolved through many stages of development and change. Spencer's "Astrophel," Ben Jonson's famous poem written on the death of Shakespeare, "Memory of My Beloved—Mr. William Shakespeare," Milton's "Lycidas," Arnold's "Rugby Chapel" and "Thrysis" are elegies of a type in which memorial and encomiastic note is most pronounced, while the elegy by Sir William Watson, "Wordsworth's Grave," is memorial and critical. These poems are, in a sense, tributes paid by poets to poets and men of letters who are dead. These poems present studies of lives and character and poetic worth. Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and Shelley's "Adonais" are written on a different pattern. The poet, in each case, is tormented by a sense of personal loss and gives it expression in the poem. Generally speaking, all English elegies pass from the particular to the general and universal. The sense of personal loss merges itself into an expression of feeling of sorrow over the lot of humanity in general.

Poetic truth, however, does not mean total fidelity to facts in the general acceptance of that term, because this type of objective representation we associate with science. By poetic truth we mean fidelity to our emotional apprehension of facts, to the effect they have upon us, to the feelings of hope and fear, pleasure or pain, wonder or religious reverence which they arouse. Thus, it is a subjective realisation of the world around us. The worth of any poetic truth is determined by its accuracy in representing, not only what these facts are objectively, but also by the beauty, picturesqueness, mystery and truth that we associate with them by observing them imaginatively. The real significance of poetry lies in its interpretation and representation of Nature and life through imagination and feelings. Elegiac poetry is lyric poetry and the subjective element in it is effectively projected by giving expression to personal sorrow and associating it with universal values. A good elegy is not darkened by an all-pervading sadness or pessimism. The dark clouds of personal loss and sorrow are there, but beyond these dark shadows life goes on with all its Divine effulgence. This is particularly so in the case of Iqbal for whom death is a change and the human ego does not suffer extinction through death:

فرشتہ موت کا چھوتا ہے گو بدن تیرا
تیرے وجود کے مرکز سے دور رہتا ہے!²⁵

[Though the angel of death does touch your physical self,
yet it stays away from the nucleus of your being.]

Iqbal had studied English literature and his poetic genius and critical acumen justly evaluated its real worth and significance. He appears to owe no debt to any of the poets who wrote elegies. He had read *marthiyahs* written by Anīs and Dabīr, but the genius of Iqbal and his philosophy of life did not have much in common with these poets, great in their own field, but not affined to Iqbal. Iqbal has written three elegies: one on the death of Dāgh, one on the death of his mother and one on the death of Ross Masud. The three poems express a sense of deep personal loss, but, except in the elegy written on the death of Dāgh, in the other two philosophic and speculative elements become prominent at an early stage and the personal interest becomes subordinated to general and universal interests. As the poet broods on his subject his meditations urge him on to the discussion of the deepest problems of life. In this respect Iqbal has more points of similarity with Gray and Shelley than with the writers of Urdu elegies of traditionally conventional pattern. His elegies are not dirges steeped in all-permeating sadness.

If we take his elegies one by one, we observe that the elegy written on the death of Dāgh is the only poem in which the elegiac note is maintained right up to the end and each verse gives expression to the mood of sadness at the death of a great poet:

عظمتِ غالب ہے اک مدت سے پیوندِ زمیں
مہدیٰ مجروح ہے شہرِ خموشاں کا مکین!²⁶

[Ghālib's grandeur lies buried with him and so much time has elapsed, and Mandī Majrūh too is now a denizen of the dead.]

This poem was written by Iqbal quite early in his career and he appears to be overwhelmed by the death of Dāgh and the note of sadness runs right up to

²⁵ *Darb-i Kalim*, p. 65. References to Iqbal's poetic works (both Persian and Urdu) are from the editions published by Sh. Ghulam All & Sons, Lahore, as *Kulliyāt*.

²⁶ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 89.

the end:

ایک ہی قانونِ عالمگیر کے ہیں سب اثر
بوئے گل کا باغ سے، گلچیں کا دنیا سے سفر²⁷

[These are all manifestations of the one universal law
that the odour departs from the flower and the flower-picker leaves the world.]

In the case of the other two elegies, viz. “On the Death of My Mother”
and on the death of “Sir Ross Masud,” the first few verses are elegiac and
express the mood of sadness and feeling of loss. Addressing his dead mother
he says:

کس کو اب ہوگا وطن میں آہ! میرا انتظار؟
کون میرا خط نہ آنے سے رہے گا بے قرار
عمر بھر تیری محبت میری خدمت گر رہی
میں تیری خدمت کے قابل جب ہوا، تو چل بسی²⁸

[Who would now wait for me at home
and who would be anxious for the arrival of my letter?
All your life you lavished loving care on me,
but when I became capable of your service you passed away.]

The two verses that follow are in the same strain, but then there is a change
and the poet becomes involved in a philosophical discussion of problems of
life and death. For Iqbal man is a glorious creature. Man alone can think, talk
and pray. He alone has aspirations for a better state of things, he alone can
conceive about God and aspire for union with Him. Death cannot be the
final aim of life. Such a glorious being is destined for better things; he must
have a better and more befitting end to his sojourn on earth. Indeed,
contradictions in life are hard to reconcile and have to be faced with courage:

کتنی مشکل زندگی ہے! کس قدر آسان موت!

²⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 228, 229.

گلشنِ ہستی میں مانندِ نسیمِ ارزاں ہے موت!
 زلزلے ہیں، بجلیاں ہیں، قحط ہیں، آلام ہیں
 کیسی کیسی دخترانِ مادرِ ایام ہیں²⁹

[How hard it is to be and how easy not to be,
 in the garden of life death is as easy to find as the Zypher.
 Earthquakes, thunderbolts, famines and miseries—
 how fearful are these offsprings of mother-time.]

All things created come to an end and apparently death is the end of human life as well. Iqbal, however, is sure that the human ego does not suffer extinction with death:

زندگی محبوب ایسی دیدۂ قدرت میں ہے
 ذوقِ حفظِ زندگی پر چیز کی فطرت میں ہے
 موت کے ہاتھوں سے مٹ سکتا اگر نقشِ حیات
 عام یوں اس کو نہ کر دیتا نظامِ کائنات³⁰

[Nature holds life so dear
 that desire for survival is in the nature of all creation.
 If life were to suffer extinction at the hands of death,
 then in the world-order death would not have been so common.]

پھر نہ کر سکتی حباب اپنا اگر پیدا ہوا
 توڑنے میں اس کے یوں ہوتی نہ بے پروا ہوا³¹

[If the air had no capacity for forming new bubbles,
 it would not have been so careless in destroying it.]

²⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 231.

³¹ Ibid., p. 232.

جوہرِ انسانِ عدم سے آشنا ہوتا نہیں
آنکھ سے غائب تو ہوتا ہے، فنا ہوتا نہیں³²

[The essence of man (ego) is never destroyed,
it may disappear from sight but is never extinct.]

Iqbal broods over the death of his mother and these musings give birth to new trains of ideas. Death is not the final end of the ego, but the pain and sufferings caused to the bereaved are of a permanent nature. Time does not heal the wounds caused by the death of the dear ones; it may cover them up, but with the passage of time memory of the dead and departed becomes more and more poignant:

کہتے ہیں اہلِ جہاں دردِ اجل ہے لا دوا
زخمِ فرقت وقت کے مرہم سے پاتا ہے شفا³³

[They say that the pangs of death are incurable
and time is the antidote for such wounds.]

وقت کے افسوں سے تہمتا نالہ ماتم نہیں
وقت زخمِ تیغِ فرقت کا کوئی مرہم نہیں³⁴

[The magic of fleeting time cannot stop the lamentations of the bereaved,
because the ointment of time cannot heal wounds caused by the sword of
separation.]

We cannot forget them; they are dead and for all intents and purposes are separated from us. They have left their abode on earth and we may never meet them again: but they have not suffered annihilation, because death is just a change:

³² Ibid., p. 234.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

یہ اگر آئینِ ہستی ہے کہ ہو پر شام صبح
مرقدِ انساں کی شب کا کیوں نہ ہو انجام صبح؟³⁵

[If this is the law of life that evening is followed by morning,
then why should the dark night of grave be not followed by the bright morning
of a new life.]

These ideas are expressed in more detail by Iqbal in his Lecture: “The Human Ego—His Freedom and Immortality”. He says: “Whatever may be the final fate of man it does not mean the loss of individuality. The Quran does not contemplate complete liberation from finitude as the highest state of human bliss. The ‘increasing reward’ of man consists in his gradual growth in self-possession, in uniqueness, and intensity of his activity as an ego.”³⁶

خودی ہے زندہ تو ہے موت ایک مقام حیات
کہ عشقِ موت سے کرتا ہے امتحانِ ثبات³⁷

[If the ego is powerful and alive, death becomes another stage of life,
and love tests immortality through death.]

If we take up the third elegy, the one written on the death of Sir Ross Masud, we find that the pattern is almost the same. The death of a friend, whom the poet held in great esteem and regard, moved him deeply. He feels that the loss was irreparable and the opening verses give expression to this sad mood:

زوالِ علم و ہنر مرگِ ناگہاں اُس کی
وہ کاروانِ کامتاعِ گراں بہا، مسعود³⁸

[His unexpected death will bring decline of learning and arts because Masūd
was the most precious item in the caravan.]

³⁵ Ibid., p. 235.

³⁶ *Reconstruction*, p. 117.

³⁷ *Armaghān-i Hijāz*, p. 25.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

This elegiac tone and expression of personal grief is kept up for a few more verses and after that Iqbal becomes involved in discussing universal truths about life and death, the ego and the survival after death:

خودی ہے زندہ تو دریا ہے پیکر انہ ترا
 ترے فراق میں مضطر ہے موج نیل و فرات!³⁹

[If you possess a strong and living self (ego), you are like a limitless river, and the Nile and Euphrates are waiting to meet you.]

Life is a living reality and is universal and Divine in essence. The soul is a bright nucleus in man and the possibilities of this living reality are fully awakened and realised when man, through striving and effort, puts into operation the potential powers of the ego. The aspiring ego succeeds in converting his potentialities into actualities. The attainment of this perfection is the source of immortality. In *Reconstruction*, Iqbal has said:

“Even the scene of ‘Universal Destruction’ immediately pre-ceding the Day of Judgment cannot affect the perfect calm of a full-grown ego. . . . Who can be the subject of this exception but those in whom the ego has reached the very highest point of intensity? And the climax of this development is reached when the ego is able to retain full self-possession, even in the case of a direct contact with the all-embracing Ego.”⁴⁰

There are quite a few poems of Iqbal in which the elegiac note is markedly noticeable. A mild note of sadness permeates these poems, but more emphasis is laid on the discussion of general and universal truths about life, death, destiny of man and other problems which humanity has faced since the day of creation. In his poem addressed to the “Dead Asleep under the Earth” (خفتگانِ خاک سے استفسار) he begins with a description of the scene of desolation spread out before him. The second verse is truly elegiac and this note of sadness is maintained up to the seventh verse:

³⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁰ *Reconstruction*, pp. 117-18.

یہ سیہ پوشی کی تیاری کسی کے غم میں ہے
محفلِ قدرت مگر خورشید کے ماتم میں ہے⁴¹

[All objects are draped in black (of dusk),
and the entire Nature is mourning for the sun (which is going to set)].

تھم ذرا بیتابی دل! بیٹھ جانے دے مجھے
اور اس بستی پہ چار آنسو گرانے دے مجھے⁴²

[O, my distressed heart, be a bit calm. Let me sit here
and shed a few tears on this abode of the dead.]

In the eighth verse the mood of sadness is replaced by the spirit of questioning. The poet wants to know where man came from and where he will go. The mysteries of life are tantalising. Life on earth, life after death, love, beauty, Hell and Heaven, good and evil, sin and virtue are all shrouded and no categorical and concrete interpretation is available:

اے مئے غفلت کے سرمستو! کہاں رہتے ہو تم؟
کچھ کہو کہ آگس دیس کی آخر جہاں رہتے ہو تم⁴³

[O, you, who have drunk an opiate and have lost awareness,
tell us something about the place which is now your home.]

کیا وہاں بجلی بھی ہے، دہقان بھی ہے، خرمن بھی ہے؟
قافلے والے بھی ہیں؟ اندیشہٴ ریزن بھی ہے⁴⁴

[Are there thunderbolts in that world too and does the tiller build up a heap,
and do caravans go beset by fear of robbers?]

Iqbal knows that forces of creation and destruction exist side by side. He asks the dead if conditions are the same in their world. The final verse of the

⁴¹ *Bang-i Darā*, p, 38.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

poem poses the question about the mystery of life and death:

تم بتا دوراز جو اس گنبدِ گرداں میں ہے؟
موت اک چھبتا ہوا کانٹا دلِ انسان میں ہے⁴⁵

[Please unravel to me that secret which lurks under this revolving sky.
Death is a thorn which ever pricks the human heart.]

The 'Royal Graveyard' (گورستانِ شاہی), one of the many remarkable poems in Bāng-i Darā, has marked affinities with elegiac poetry though it is not written on the death of any one person. It portrays the feelings of grief which swarm the poet's mind as he looks at the graves of dead emperors. The poem opens with beautiful descriptions of Nature which are vivid and realistic as well as accurate and detailed. But by the time we reach the seventeenth verse we find the poet overpowered by the feeling of anguish provoked by that scene of desolation and fallen grandeur:

سوتے ہیں خاموش، آبادی کے ہنگاموں سے دور
مضطرب رکھتی تھی جن کو آرزوئے ناصبور⁴⁶

[They sleep away from the pageantry of life.
yet their lives passed in distress over unfulfilled yearnings.]

In the twenty-first verse the mood of sadness matures and the poet appears to be deeply affected by the sense of desolation which prevailed all over the graveyard:

بادشاہوں کی بھی کشتِ عمر کا حاصل ہے گور
جادۂ عظمت کو گویا آخری منزل ہے گور⁴⁷

[The harvest gathered by kings too is a grave,
and the paths of glory lead to the grave.]

This poem was written by Iqbal after 1908 when his genius as a thinker and a poet had matured and he had formed his ideas about the human ego

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 150

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.

and self-consciousness and death was now for him:

زندگی سے یہ پرانا خاکدان معمور ہے
موت میں بھی زندگی کی تڑپ مستور ہے⁴⁸

Even the old graves bustle with signs of life
and in death lies hidden the palpitating flame of life.]

The dead lay in their graves under heavy heaps of earth and these mounds showed no signs of physical life, but Nature was alive. Flowing canals flanked by grass, trees and flowers told a different tale. Nothing was dead and static. If environmental conditions were in a flux, the human ego must surely be alive. Death cannot touch the ego if the state of aspiring tension is kept up.

بگنڈراز مر گئے کہ سازد بالحد
زانکہ ایس مرگ است مرگِ دام و ددا!
مردِ مومن خواهد از یزدان پاک
آن دگر مر گئے کہ برگیرد ز خاک⁴⁹

[Step away from the death which makes you one with the grave
because such a death befits lower forms of creation.
The perfect man asks from the Creator
such a death as would lift him up and away from the earth.]

Iqbal observed everything, in all its minute details, and the multifarious aspects of life attracted him most. Man was a unique form of creation and there was every reason to believe that he did not stumble into this world through some freak of Nature or by some chance happening. He was created for specific purposes and has about him a touch of divinity but the environment in which he had to live was more hostile than favourable to his survival—physical as well as spiritual. Natural calamities, diseases, accidents—all spelled destruction. Yet life was so glorious, picturesque and attractive. Iqbal knew that life was a curious admixture of joys and sorrows

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 152

⁴⁹ *Jāvid Nāmāh*, p. 185.

and perhaps joys are outnumbered by sorrows:

گوسراپاکیفِ عشرت ہے شرابِ زندگی
اشک بھی رکھتا ہے دامن میں سحابِ زندگی⁵⁰

[The wine of life is an intoxicating luxury,
but the cloud of life carries in its folds tears as well]

Tears are an expression of that nobler part of the human self from which emanate love and sympathy which distinguish him from brutes. If there were no grief and sorrows, so many fine feelings and noble sentiments would go out of life. Sorrows and sufferings have a chastening effect on human temperament. They bring about an emotional and intellectual catharsis and we come out of such experiences better and nobler beings. Iqbal knew full well that life is not all roses; there are thorns as well. In fact, every pretty flower is encircled by thorns. The above given verse and the one given below are taken from the poem “Philosophy of Sorrow” (فلسفہ غم) addressed to late Sir Fazl-i Husain and in it Iqbal has propounded his views on sorrow most effectively:

کلفتِ غم گرچہ اُس کے روز و شب سے دور ہے
زندگی کا راز اُس کی آنکھ سے مستور ہے⁵¹

[The ephemeral bubbles of life dance on the waves of sorrow and grief is a vital chapter of the book of life.]

The human ego aspires for perfection and yearns to learn the secrets of life. His efforts are occasionally crowned with success, but more often these end in failure. These failures spur him on to further efforts and qualitatively increase the intensity of the self and reveal to him the secrets of his being:

کلفتِ غم گرچہ اُس کے روز و شب سے دور ہے
زندگی کا راز اُس کی آنکھ سے مستور ہے⁵²

[The nights and days of such a man never know the pangs of misery, but he is

⁵⁰ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 155.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.,

never able to divine the secrets of life.]

After this verse Iqbal's ideas take a turn. He feels hopeful about regeneration which would follow death. The ego is indestructible. Death brings separation which is temporary but we deem it to be permanent and cry over it. Yet, continuity of the stream of life is never broken:

ایک اصلیت میں ہے بہرِ روانِ زندگی
گر کے رفعت سے ہجومِ نوعِ انساں بن گئی
پستیءِ عالم میں ملنے کو جدا ہوتے ہیں ہم
عارضی فرقت کو دائم جان کر روتے ہیں ہم⁵³

[The continuity of the river of life is never broken, however, when it fell from the heavens it converted itself into a crowd of human beings.

We part in this mundane world to meet again, but we take this temporary separation to be permanent and lament.]

The title of the poem and its theme give expression to an important trend in Iqbal's thought and philosophy. He knows that life is a blend of sorrows and joys and one complements the other and both act as formative forces in perfecting the ego. It is the impact of the ego on environmental conditions and the counter impact of environment on the ego which generates that evolutionary process leading to perfection. Since griefs and sorrows have a deeper and more lasting effect, they exert a more potent influence on the ego and are more beneficial and chasten and ennoble the ego. In a life full of pleasures and luxuries and without any traumatic experiences, the development of the ego, not only becomes retarded, it also becomes lop-sided. In this very poem ("Philosophy of Sorrow") he has said:

شام جس کی آشنائے نالہ "یارب! نہیں
جلوہ پیرا جس کی شب میں اشک کے کوکب نہیں
جس کا جامِ دل شکستِ غم سے ہے نا آشنا
جو سدا مستِ شرابِ عیش و عشرت ہی رہا

⁵³ Ibid., p. 157.

باتھ جس گلچیں کا ہے محفوظ نوکِ خار سے عشقِ جس
 کا بے خبر ہے ہجر کے آزار سے
 کلفتِ غم گرچہ اُس کے روز و شب سے دور ہے
 زندگی کا راز اُس کی آنکھ سے مستور ہے⁵⁴

(One whose evenings are not familiar with the anguished cry “O God” and in whose nights tears do not glisten like stars,
 One whose heart is not broken by grief
 and who ever remained lost in a life of pleasures and luxury,
 The flower-picker whose hand was never pricked by thorns,
 and the lover who never knew the pangs of separation,
 The nights and days of such a man never know the pangs of misery,
 but he is never able to divine the secrets of life.]

The finitude of man vis-a-vis the quantitative and qualitative vastness of Time and Space does not give: man a very advantageous position on this earth. Juxtaposed against environmental conditions he is in many respects helpless and the only retrieving unit in his make-up is his ego. In this world of contrarities we find beauty as well as ugliness, good as well as evil, sometimes conditions are favourable but more often hostile, and man has to carve out a place for himself through his own exertions and efforts. He may succeed, but there is a greater likelihood that he would fail. His duty, however, is to wage a continuous struggle against adverse circumstances and in this constant involvement with life-forces lies his betterment and salvation.

بدریا و غلط با موجش در آویز
 حیاتِ جاوداں اندر ستیز است⁵⁵

[Plunge in the sea and grapple with the waves,
 because immortal life consists in continuous struggle.]

This constant involvement with life and perpetual struggle against unfavourable conditions is the keynote of Iqbal’s message in respect of the human ego’s efforts to gain control over the world of Nature where he has to

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 156,

⁵⁵ *Payam-i Mashriq*, p. 45.

exist. The ego will not be at the mercy of external forces and agencies because of his will-power and consciousness of his existence as a vital and dynamic entity. This struggle is a permanent feature waged by the ego with varying results. The realisation of man's finitude and the serious efforts made by him for survival gave anxious moments of deep contemplation to Iqbal and this pensiveness found expression in his poems. In an untitled poem in *Bāng-i Darā*, we find two verses in which this mood of meditative sadness is noticeable. The poem was written by Iqbal quite early in his life, but his anxiety over the lot of man is remarkably quite evident:

آدمی واں بھی حصارِ غم میں ہے محصور کیا؟
 اُس ولایت میں بھی ہے انسان کا دل مجبور کیا؟
 واں بھی کیا فریادِ بلبَل پر چمن روتا نہیں
 اس جہاں کی طرح واں بھی دردِ دل ہوتا نہیں⁵⁶

[Is man a captive of sorrow in that world too
 and his heart helpless as it is here ? .. .

Does no one shed tears of sympathy at the plaintive song of the nightingale
 and is the human heart as callous as it is here ?]

This note of meditative pensiveness in Iqbal should not be confused with the pessimism of Tennyson which is the outcome of want of faith and a Godless concept of the universe, nor with the anguished cries of Shelley who falls upon the thorns of life and bleeds because for him the objective realities of life were ethereal that he lost his moorings with the matter-of-fact world in which he lived. It is not the melancholy which haunts all the poems of Arnold and is the logical result of his agnosticism. Iqbal never denied the importance of the objective world of matter; he admits the significant role which Nature and environment play in human life and for him God—the Creator of the universe—is a Living Reality. Man is for him a unique creation and he is ever hopeful about his destiny, and he is optimistic that man will finally emerge with a more perfect ego capable of maintaining his finitude in time and space. Yet his optimism is not the makebelieve optimism of Browning arrived at by a pragmatic belief in a monotheistic concept of God

⁵⁶ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 39.

Whom the poet makes analogous to a potter with his clay. Browning groped about in the dark searching for a faith, while Iqbal's path was blazoned by the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and guidance provided by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). This pensiveness is to some extent the outcome of dissatisfaction with existing conditions.

The note of pensive sadness was further deepened as Iqbal realised the dangers that lurked in the decadence which prevailed in the world of Islam. During his stay in Europe he made a close study of the European ideal of nationalism based on geographical, racial and linguistic considerations and found it much inferior to the concept of *millat* as envisaged in the Holy Qur'an which transcended geographical limits and did not recognise differences of race, colour or language. The socio-economic set-up of European countries was capitalistic though socialist and communist ideas were finding credence with the rising generation of thinkers. Iqbal again went to the Holy Qur'an and found that the socio-economic system advocated in it was much more equitable and, being simpler, could be easily implemented. He also observed that Western society being atheistic and without any moral and ethical values could not replace Islam:

تو نے کیا دیکھا نہیں مغرب کا جمہوری نظام؟
چہرہ روشن، اندروں چنگیز سے تاریک تر!⁵⁷

[Have you not looked at the democratic set-up in the West:
its exterior is bright but inside it is dark like Chingiz.]

The Church and the Clergy had degraded themselves and there was no possibility of a regeneration and rehabilitation. Christ's religion had been debased into blind worship of gods of wealth and brute force. Iqbal was disgusted by this naked materialism and was ultimately convinced that the whole of the Western world with all its wealth and much-vaunted culture was poised on the edge of a precipice and was heading towards a cataclysmic end. His premonitions came true and the First World War (1914-18) shook the very foundations of the socio-economic and political edifice of the West.

Having a superior religion, a superior culture and a superior code of law regulating not only human behaviour but also owner-ship of land and wealth, why were Muslims all over the world living under such degrading conditions?

⁵⁷ *Armaghān-i Hijāz*, p.8.

Politically they were slaves of Western powers, their economic condition was the worst and their culture and civilisation decadent. Islam had fallen on evil days and Iqbal grieved over it:

غم نصیب اقبال کو بخشا گیا ماتم ترا
چن لیا تقدیر نے وہ دل کہ تھا محرم ترا⁵⁸

[Grief-stricken Iqbal laments over your lot
and destiny chose him because he knew the reason of this downfall.]

Iqbal brooded over this state of affairs and the conclusions he had already formed became confirmed. Muslims recited the Holy Qur'an, but were ignorant of the spirit of Qur'anic teachings; they vociferously proclaimed their love for the Holy Prophet but never cared to practise his precepts and follow his way of life:

محبت کا جنوں باقی نہ ہیں ہے
مسلمانوں میں خوب باقی نہ ہیں ہے
صفیں کج، دل پریشان، سجدے بے ذوق
کہ جذبِ اندرون باقی نہ ہیں ہے⁵⁹

[Muslims are no longer possessed of that frenzied love
and have become weak;
Their rows are curved, their hearts distressed and prayers without fervour
because their inner faith is gone.

رگوں میں وہ لہو باقی نہ ہیں ہے!
وہ دل، وہ آرزو باقی نہ ہیں ہے!
نمناز و روز و قربانی و حج
یہ سب باقی ہیں تو باقی نہیں ہے⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 134.

⁵⁹ *Bāl-i Jibrīl*, p. 85.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[The same fiery blood does not course in their veins
and they have not that heart full of yearnings!
Prayer, fast, sacrifice and *Hajj* are there,
but the true Muslim is not there.]

Long moments of sad meditations convinced Iqbal that things could change and the panacea for all the evils from which the world of Islam suffered was a resuscitation and revival of the Islamic spirit by making the Muslims realise the true significance of the Prophet and the Qur'ān. Muslims should be revitalised and should learn to act upon the teachings of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Book, but he was disappointed with Muslims all over the world, who cared for the shell and ignored the kernel.

زائرنِ کعبہ سے اقبال یہ پوچھے کوئی
کیا حرم کا تحفہ زمزم کے سوا کچھ بھی نہیں⁶¹

[May someone ask pilgrims returning from the holy Ka'bah
why they got nothing as a gift from the holy places except the Zamzam (water
?)]

The resuscitation and revitalisation was not an easy thing to accomplish because it meant a change in outlook and a weaning away from the alluring charms of the Western ways of life. Muslims had lost their mental and spiritual bearings. They were Muslims in name only and Iqbal felt sorry for them and grieved over their fall. How could that zest and enthusiasm for their religion be revived in their hearts? This gave birth to those wavering moods of hopefulness and desperation which are repeated again and again in his 'epoch-making poem *Shikwah*:

حوصلے وہ نہ رہے، ہم نہ رہے، دل نہ رہا
گھر یہ اُجڑا ہے کہ تُو رونقِ محفل نہ رہا⁶²

[We are not (what we were), our hearts are changed and we are no longer that
courageous;
the ruin of this house is due to 'Thine absence.]

⁶¹ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 135.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

وائے ناکامی متاعِ کارواں جاتا رہا
کارواں کے دل سے احساسِ زیاں جاتا رہا⁶³

[The caravan lost its most valued possession
and, O the pity of it, it lost the feeling for that loss]

It is bad to lose something but it is worse not to realise the after-effects of that loss. Muslims had lost their past glory and grandeur and had become slaves of others, but they were satisfied with what they had become and felt proud of emulating the ways of their masters:

ترے صوفے ہیں افرنگی، ترے قالین ہیں ایرانی
لہو مجھ کو لاتسی ہے جوانوں کی تن آسانی⁶⁴

[Your sofas come from England and your rugs from Iran;
I shed tears of blood over the new generation's love for ease.]

Iqbal appears to be particularly worried about the younger generation who seemed to have arrived at a compromise with the existing state of affairs:

نوجوانان تشنہ لب، خالی ایباغ
شستہ رو، تاریک جان، روشن دماغ!⁶⁵

[The young have parched lips, empty cups,
clean faces, dark souls and enlightened minds.]

Conditions had to be changed, and how this change could be brought about gave Iqbal some of the most anxious moments of his life. If things were allowed to continue as they were, the fate of the Muslim world and with it of Islam as a way of life would be sealed for all times to come. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Ḥālī and Shiblī had set the ball rolling and Iqbal did what none else had ever done before; he gave a clarion call to the new generation to be awake and alert and sec things for themselves. He turns to them and says:

⁶³ Ibid., p. 187.

⁶⁴ *Bāl-i Jibrīl*, p. 119.

⁶⁵ *Jāvid Nāmāh*, p. 202.

<p>مرا عشق، میری نظر بخش دے یہ ثابت ہے تو اس کو سیار کر!</p> <p>مرے دل کی پوشیدہ بے تابیاں میری خلوت و انجمن کا گداز! امیدیں مری، جستجوئیں مری!</p> <p>گمانوں کے لشکر، یقین کا ثبات! اسی سے فقیری میں ہوں امیر! لٹا دے، ٹھکانے لگا دے اسے⁶⁶</p>	<p>جوانوں کو سوزِ جگر بخش دے میری ناؤ گرداب سے پار کر</p> <p>مرے دیدہ تر کی بے خوابیاں! مرے نالہ نیم شب کا نیاز! اُمنگیں مری، آرزوئیں مری</p> <p>مرا دل، مری رزم گاہِ حیات! یہی کچھ ہے ساقی متاعِ فقیر! مرے قافلے میں لٹا دے اسے!</p>
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[O God ! bless the young with keen sensibilities,
give them my love (for humanity) and my insight too.
Bring my boat out of the whirlpool;
it is static, O God, activate it... .

The sleeplessness of my tear-wet eyes
and the hidden restlessness of my heart,
The sincerity of my late night lamentations
and the sympathy that I feel when alone or in company,
My yearning, desires and hopes
and all that I am searching for... .
My heart which is a battlefield
of doubts and my firm faith;
These are all that my poor self has
and these make me rich in my destitution;
Scatter all these among the members of my caravan
and thus put these to a proper use.]

These verses are an exhortation urging the youth to come forth and, through faith and action, change the fate of the East. They should give up

⁶⁶ *Bal-i Jibril*, pp. 124-25.

blind imitation of the West and turn to the Holy Qur'ān and the Prophet for inspiration and guidance. The general trend among the Muslims to emulate the West was tantamount to courting disaster. The Godless West had become a blind follower of Satan and Iqbal makes the fifth adviser of Satan say:

میرے آقا! وہ جہاں زیر و زیر ہونے کو ہے
جس جہاں کا ہے فقط تیری سیادت پر مدار⁶⁷

[O master, that world will soon be topsy-turvy
which relies on your politics.]

This was timely advice to escape disaster and ruin, but Muslims, instead of believing in the true Islamic spirit, believed in the advice given by Satan (v--1:l) to his followers. They not only believed in it; they also practised it. Iblīs says to his advisers:

عصرِ حاضر کے تقاضاؤں سے ہے لیکن یہ خوف
ہو نہ جائے آشکارا شرعِ پیغمبر کہیں
الحذر آئینِ پیغمبر سے سو بار الحذر
حافظِ ناموسِ زن، مردِ آزما، مردِ آفریں
چشمِ عالم سے رہے پوشیدہ یہ آئیں تو خوب
یہ غنیمت ہے کہ خود مومن ہے محرومِ یقین!
ہے یہ بہتر کہ الہیات میں الجھتا رہے
یہ کتابِ اللہ کی تاویلات میں الجھتا رہے⁶⁸

The demands of the present times may not
resuscitate and revive the teachings of the Prophet;
Beware of the teachings of the Prophet—
he provides safeguards for the honour of women, tests men and

⁶⁷ *Armaghān-i Hijāz*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

bless those with noble qualities

It is in our interest that precepts of Islam remain hidden from the world

and believer remains lost in doubts;

It would be better if he remained lost

in the labyrinths of interpretations and commentaries of the Book.)

Iblīs winds up his oration by saying:

پر نفس ڈرتا ہوں اس اُمت کی بیداری سے میں
ہے حقیقت جس کے دیں کا احتسابِ کائنات
مست رکھو ذکر و فکرِ صحیحگاہی میں اسے
پختہ ترکر دو مزاجِ خانقاہی میں اسے⁶⁹

[Every moment I fear the reawakening of this group

because its religion is based upon a system that brings to account the entire creation.

Keep him occupied in discussions

and make him perfect in following superstitious beliefs based on grave-worship.]

Iqbal felt sorry for the Muslims who professed the most perfect religion, who had a Book which could guide them at every step in life and who had before them the guidelines laid down by the Prophet and who could get inspiration from his exemplary life and yet were lost in the morass of no-faith and inactivity. They had lost self-respect and appeared to be quite forgetful and unconscious of degradation and decadence which had befallen them. They were like a rudderless ship drifting on the vast ocean of life. Iqbal's contemplations and meditations made him sad because he was, perhaps, the only person who realised the misery and ruin of the Muslim world. He closes his *Jāvid Nāmāh* with the following verse —an advice to his son, but in fact to all sons and daughters of Islam:

ہم بہ قبر اندر دعا گوئم ترا ⁷⁰	سرِ دینِ مصطفیٰ گوئم ترا
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⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰ *Jāvid Nāmāh*, p. 208.

[I bring to your notice principles of the religion of Mustafa and after death will pray for you even in my grave.]

Muslims were on the horns of a dilemma. In the race for development and acquisition of material power they had been left behind. Centuries of decadence and slavery had deprived them of self-consciousness and will power to fight against adversity and wrest from adverse conditions what was their due. Iqbal turns to God:

یا مسلمان را مدہ فرماں کہ جاں بر کف بنہ
یا دریں فرسودہ پیکر تازہ جائے آفریں
یا چنار کن یا چنیں
یا بکش در سینه من آرزوئے انقلاب
یا دگرگوں کن نہادِ ایس زمان و ایس زمیں
یا چنار کن یا چنیں!⁷¹

[Do not give these orders to the Muslims to bear their lives on their palms
or instill a new life into their time-worn and wrecked bodies;
Either do this or do that... .
Destroy the spirit for revolution enkindled in my heart
or completely change the basis of this time and space:
Either do this or do that.]

اے مسلمانانِ فغان از فتنہ ہائے علم و فن
اہرمن اندر جہاں ارزاں و یزداں دیر یاب!
انقلاب! انقلاب! انقلاب!⁷²

[O Muslims, beware of and protest against the guiles of arts
and knowledge.
Devil is easy to get and God is found late.
Revolution, Revolution, Revolution!]

⁷¹ *Zabūr-i 'Ajam*, pp. 24-25.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p, 95.

نقشِ نو آوردن او را مشکل است⁷³

بے یقینی را رعشه با اندر دل است

[One who loses faith bears a palsied heart,
and it is not possible for such a man to follow a new course.]

Iqbal was not satisfied with prevailing conditions. The ego could not flourish in unfavourable environment and conditions had to be modified and improved to enable man to attain that perfect state which was his due as the acme of creation. Unlike the English Romantics, Iqbal was not an escapist. He understood the past, was fully alive to the present and realised the importance of the future; but ushering of a new order was not a child's play. Ultimate truth and beauty were difficult to attain. He had an aspiring heart and his ego, in spite of its finitude, was restless and demanding of that perfection and realisation of beauty which he knew was the first requisite for successful living in this world and blessedness in the world to come:

چو نظر قرار گیرد به نگارِ خوبروئے
تپد آرزماں دلِ من پئے خوبتر نگارے⁷⁴

[As my eyes settle on one beautiful beloved
immediately my heart begins to yearn for a better one.]

This intense yearning for a fuller and better ideal of life is the basis of that mood of pensive meditation which heightens the poetic appeal of Iqbal's verse.

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⁷³ Ibid., p, 187.

⁷⁴ *Payam-i Mashriq*, p. 127.

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—Editor, Iqbal Review