

JAVID NAMA: A STUDY OF WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

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Javid Nama,¹⁸⁷ though generally believed to be a description of the spiritual ascension of man and purports 'to give a kind of philosophy of Mi'raj,¹⁸⁸ offers a study of the various levels of civilization, the various stages through which the human civilization has passed; it depicts these civilizations as they were extant in the times of Allama Iqbal. The "Sphere of Moon" may be considered as Prologue which ushers in the four master civilizations through the four Tasins¹⁸⁹ (Tablets), viz., the civilizations of India, Persia, Arabia, and the modern Western civilization which is a corrupted form of the Christian civilization. These civilizations have been represented in the book by such great leaders of mankind as Lord Buddha, the great mystic and sage of India; Zoroaster, the Persian prophet and thinker; Christ, the founder of the Christian civilization and Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), the Founder-Prophet of the Islamic civilization originating in Arabia. The book on the whole presents an inside study of the Eastern and Western civilizations, though in the main dilating on an incisive criticism of the so-called modern civilization.

Iqbal discusses the foundations of these civilizations thus: (i) The Indian civilization is founded upon an "attitude of detachment" — that is, 'to be in the world and to escape from the world...'¹⁹⁰ It lays emphasis on the 'beauty of action and fine ideals'¹⁹¹ as the real enduring values; the only thing permanent being your own "Self" before which all else dwindles into insignificance; "Love" is a-great power.¹⁹² (ii) The Persian civilization, too, is based on the "Self", its basic principle being that Self matures with

¹⁸⁷ The title of Allama Iqbal's famous mathnavi in Persian, called his 'magnum opus' by his critics, first published in 1932.

¹⁸⁸ See "'Javid Nama' with a Note by N. M. Khan, C.S.P.", pb. in the book *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, ed. Syed Abdul Wahid, (Lahore: Ashraf, 1964), Ch. XIX, pp. 225ff.

¹⁸⁹ Arberry A. J., *Javid-Nama*, an Eng. tr. of Allama Iqbal's mathnavi, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp. 46-52.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

"suffering" which helps 'rend the veil that covers God'.¹⁹³ This civilization is "mystical" in nature, with its object being the attainment of the "Beatific Vision". It teaches that the self of man is fashioned by Love; that "Solitude" and "Company" are both facets of God: 'Solitude' is 'Pain, burning and yearning; company is vision,...'¹⁹⁴ (iii) The Western civilization is represented by 'a slim-bodied woman'.¹⁹⁵ As it is based on 'dry' empiricism, science and technology, its fruits are industrialization, hunger after wealth, 'keen eye' but a 'dead heart',¹⁹⁶ cunning and infidelity, profit-mongering and devastation — all results of misuse of science and wisdom. And (iv) The Islamic civilization which is founded upon the idea of "Tauhid" ('oneness of God'), and is marked by the destruction of 'old monarchies and kingships',¹⁹⁷ lays stress on the equality and fraternity of man; and rejects any "racial" or stratal superiority claimed by any people over the others: it turns its gaze towards the "invisible".

Javid Nama comprises of seven chapters of which first six are devoted to different "Spheres". Through these Spheres Iqbal has discussed the various facets of the aforesaid civilizations. Each Sphere is represented by the personalities relevant to the particular facet it represents, and its basic ideas and concepts are expressed through their discourses. After the Sphere of Moon which is a prologue, next comes the Sphere of Mercury, inhabited by men like Sa'id Halim Pasha, the Turk leader, and Jamal ud-Din Afghani, an Afghan Scholar. According to Iqbal, the Sphere is the abode of saints and sufis like Fudait¹⁹⁸ (d. 803), Bu Sa'id¹⁹⁹ (d. 1049) Junaid al-Baghdadi²⁰⁰ (d. 910) and Ba Yazid²⁰¹ (877) all mystics of the traditional school. Generally speaking, this sphere offers an incisive criticism of the present state of civilization, both in the East and in the West, while also delineating a civilization having for its fundamental principle the beauty of action and fine ideals. Both Sa'id Halim Pasha and Jamal ud-Din Afghani were men of action

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., see the Martian Damsel in "The Sphere of Mars", pp. 67-69.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., He has sung of the destruction of Caesar and Chosroes, ..., p. 51.

¹⁹⁸ A famous ascetic (d. 803).

¹⁹⁹ A pioneer of Persian mystic poetry, d. 1049.

²⁰⁰ A central figure in the Baghdad School of "sober" mystics, d. 910.

²⁰¹ A leader of the Khorasan 'intoxicated' mystics, d. 877.

and high ideals. Afghani subjects to deep criticism both the East and the West, rejecting both as one-sided: 'For Westerners intelligence is the stuff of life, for Easterners love is the mystery of all being'.²⁰² He rejects both Capitalism and Communism as again one-sided. What is needed is an amalgamation of the love and intelligence, only then can we hope to design a new. World worthy of man's habitation.²⁰³ At least Islam promises such a World, a World 'without distinction of race and colour, its evening is brighter than Europe's dawn; a world cleansed of monarchs and of slaves, a world unbounded'.²⁰⁴ The fundamentals of this world are the worth of man, establishment of the Divine Government, the belief that the means of production belong to God, and that wisdom is a Great Good.²⁰⁵ Afghani was a great advocate of Pan-Islamism in the Muslim World, he was rather the originator of this idea as a political concept.²⁰⁶ He also subjected Russian Communistic system to a searching criticism, making some very useful recommendations.

The Sphere of Venus takes the mind back to the ancient cultures of the world. It is the Sphere of old deities and gods, like the Persian god Mardukh and Arabian god Bal, etc. Thus, Mardukh says, 'Man has fled from God, fled from church and sanctuary, lamenting, and augment his vision and perception turns his gaze backwards to the past age. He takes delight in ancient relics, makes speeches about, our theophanies'.²⁰⁷ Ba'l adds, 'His soul takes repose in the sensible; would that the past image might return'.²⁰⁸ He announces joyfully, 'Behold the ring of the unity is broken, Abraham's people have lost the joy of Alast; its company is scattered, its cue is in fragments,... Free man has fallen into the bonds of directions, joined up with fatherland and parted from God; his blood is cold of the glory of the ancients,...'²⁰⁹ He adds, '... religion has been routed by sovereignty and lineage'.²¹⁰ Introducing the Sphere of Venus, Rumi tells Iqbal, "This is the place of power-drunk

²⁰² Arberry, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 59-65.

²⁰⁶ Dar B. A., ed. Letters and Writings of Iqbal, (Karachi: Iqbal Academy, 1967), pp. 55-57.

²⁰⁷ Arberry, op. cit., p. 74.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 24.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

arrogants denying the Unseen, worshipping the seen; ...²¹¹ The inhabitants of the Sphere are Pharaoh and Kitchener of Khartoum; 'both at war and blows with the man of God'.²¹² Iqbal here condemns Imperialism through the agency of Pharaoh, who remarks, 'Woe to a people blinded by avarice who have robbed the tomb of rubies and pearls'²¹³ (reference is to the European peoples). He discloses that the chief contrivance of imperialism is 'division': 'to seek security by contriving division'.²¹⁴ He adds, rulership is strong 'through the weakness of the subjects, its roots are firm through the deprivation of the deprived . . . Armies, prisons, chains are banditry; he is the true ruler who needs not such apparatus'.²¹⁵ Lord Kitchener offers an apology for the Europeans thus: 'The goal of the people of Europe is lofty, they excavate not any grave for rubies and pearls...'²¹⁶ Their object is historical curiosity. However, his apology fails before Mandi Sudanese.

The spirit of Mahdi bids 'Fouad, Feisal, Ibn Saud to 'Revive in the breast that fire which has departed, bring back to the world the days that have gone'.²¹⁷ He regrets that the Muslims have fallen a prey to prosperity and as such have gone away from their centre: 'My soul wails of the pain of separation; take the road where fewer grasses grow'.²¹⁸ Thus, prosperity has rendered the Muslim soft and listless, he regrets.

The Sphere of Mars depicts the scientific and technological advancements and achievements of the Western civilization. The Sphere opens with an astrological observatory in which a Martian astronomer carries on his research work. Iqbal, in the company of Rumi and led by the Martian astronomer, comes upon a big gathering of men, women and children. In the middle they see a damsel who claims to be a Prophetess. She is tall, slim, whitefaced, flat-chested, hair trimmed, having a 'keen eye' but a 'dead heart'; she represents the corrupted modern Western civilization. She boasts of her 'magical' achievements in the fields of science and technology. As she

²¹¹ Ibid., "p. 76.

²¹² Ibid., p. 77.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 78.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

represents the modern empirical civilization of the West, 'Her face was radiant, but without the light of the soul, . . .; her speech lacked fire, her eyes racked tears, not intimate with the joy of desire: . . .; she knew nothing of love and the laws of love,²¹⁹ She was 'simple and free of guile, without artifice', but "Farzmarz" taught her the art of prophethood. "Farzmarz" represents the cunning and guile of politicians, i.e., political manoeuvre. In other words, science was not originally cunning and devastating; it were the politicians who made it so. The damsel claims of miracles, that is, unnatural feats wrought by her. She claims, 'The time has come when by a miracle of science it is possible to see the foetus within the body; from life's field you may gather a harvest of sons and daughters exactly as you choose, . . .'²²⁰ Then she predicts that with the progress of science it is possible that 'the foetus will take nourishment of another kind, without the night of the womb it will find the day'.²²¹ Then she advises the womanfolk to 'rise up and wage war with nature, that by your battling the maiden may be freed. Woman's unitarianism is to escape from the union of two bodies; be guardian of yourself, and tangle not with men!'²²² 'Rumi condemns this so-called 'modern' civilization, describing it as 'the harvest of irreligious education'.²²³ Iqbal points out that it is excessive empiricism and rationalism which are devouring the West.

The Sphere of Jupiter is the Sphere of 'Continuous struggled martyrdom' from the Muslim World. Iqbal calls it the Sphere of travels, endless and continuous incursions into a vast variety of experiences. Its hallmark is: 'Seeing that the signs of God are infinite where, traveller, can the high-road end?'²²⁴ In short, it is the Sphere of incessant, insatiable, continuous struggle without any desire for achievement. It is the abode of such martyrs as Mansur al-Hallaj, Mirza Ghalib and Tahira.²²⁵ It may safely be called the Sphere of Persian civilization which pivots round 'Self' and 'suffering'. The inmates of this Sphere believe that 'Life without pickings is no true life; one

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 87.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

²²¹ Ibid. 36.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid. 38.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 90.

²²⁵ Ibid. 40.

must live with a fire under one's feet'.²²⁶ They teach 'resignation and sub' mission' adding 'this garment does not suit the weaklings'. Hallaj calls them infidels who cry 'No god but God' and denied the 'Self'. He holds that the 'whole world has been founded on Selfhood'.²²⁷ He advises Iqbal to 'become drowned in the ocean of being'. His 'Servant' is the how and why of creation,²²⁸ 'His Servant' is the inward mystery of creation.²²⁹ He praises Satan as the champion of God's love and Unity: Satan's infidelity revealed to us the mystery of being and not-being.²³⁰ Hallaj says, 'The company of the radiant of heart is for a breath or two, that breath or two is the substance of being and not-being; it made love more tumultuous, and then passed, endowed reason with vision, and then passed'.²³¹ The closing portion hits upon the real object of 'suffering' which is the optimum development of the Self. "Iblis — Leader of the People of Separation",²³² declares in the end, 'I have become so saddened by my triumphs that now I come to you for recompense; I seek from you one who dares to deny me — guide me, to such a man of God. I need a man who will twist my neck, whose glance will set my body quivering,...' ²³³

The Sphere of Saturn is the abode of the traitors. Iqbal says, 'It is the lodging place of spirits that shall know no resurrection, which hell itself shrank from burning: therein live two ancient demons who slew a people's soul to save their skins,'²³⁴ He regrets that 'its manikins not intimate with their self's secrets'.²³⁵ He laments that 'they have estranged themselves from their selfhood, they have made a prison of ancient customs'.²³⁶ Due to these traitors a nation is made to suffer immensely and leads to oppression, requiring patience and 'constraint'; but Iqbal regrets that by their act they force a people to bear oppression and as a result a multitude becomes

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 94.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid., p. 105.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

²³⁶ Ibid.

'masochistic' as they become 'habituated to patience' He regrets that a free nation is rendered slaves to a foreign power who become sadistic and oppressive.

Iqbal condemns, in fact, all those agencies which cause 'division' and schism in a people. He remarks, 'Whenever a nation is devastated the root of its ruin is a Sadiq or a Ja'afar. God save me from the spirit of Ja'afar, save me from the Ja'afars of the present time!²³⁷ The two ugly spirits lament that 'being' and 'not-being'²³⁸ both refused to accept them. They found no place for themselves in the East or the West, and when they reached the gates of Hell,²³⁹ 'but Hell shot not a single spark at Sadiq and Ja'afar nor even a handful of ashes hurled at our heads, saying "Sticks and straws are better for Hell; my flame is better unsullied by these two infidels."²⁴⁰ He adds, 'Even sudden death would not accept them swing, "Such a task cannot be performed by death; the traitors' soul will not find rest in death".²⁴¹ Thus, treachery is the greatest sin, according to Iqbal.

The last chapter marks the final act of 'transcendence' beyond the world of Spheres of reason and perception; it marks a 'transition' from the world of sensation and reason into the realm of 'passion' and 'ecstasy'. Iqbal's philosophical 'wings' would carry him upto this limit, and then he would 'fly' on the wings of imagination and 'passion' in the leadership of Rumi, the mystic-poet from Persia. On the threshold of the 'world of ecstasy' they come across the great German thinker Nietzsche,²⁴² whose station is between the two worlds — the man who could reach only the half-way to the truth. Iqbal remarks, that Nietzsche 'broke from God, and was snapped too from himself. He desired to see, with his external eye, the intermingling of power with love;...'²⁴³ Iqbal compares him to Moses who was seeking the vision, which Nietzsche should have found, had he lived in the times of Sheikh Ahmad of Sirhind (1564 — 1624), the great Indian Muslim reformer, better

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., pp. 111-112.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 112.

known as "Mujaddid alf-i-'Thani".²⁴⁴ Iqbal says of Nietzsche in the *Payam-i-Mashriq*.

'He who built a temple on the foundation of 'haram' (sanctuary); His heart belived, though his head was infidel'.²⁴⁵

In fact, he had a 'burning heart' in him, but his philosophical legacy kept him on the empirical earth. He regrets that there was none in Europe who could understand his 'vision'; 'He was a Hallaj who was a stranger in his own city;...'²⁴⁶ Nietzsche, in sooth, 'remained fast in "no" and did not reach "but", being a stranger to the station of "Servitude". As they cross the threshold into the "World Beyond", he calls it 'the world of ecstasy and joy' of which 'Kauthar' and 'hour' are mere reflections.²⁴⁷ Here life is the Beatific Vision, naught else, the bliss of seeing and speaking with the Beloved'.²⁴⁸ The inmates of this Place are such dignified personalities as Syed All Hamdani, Mullah Tahir Ghani of Kashmir,²⁴⁹ the former an eminent Persian mystic and the latter an eminent poet of Kashmir. Both were great nationalists' and Muslims. Next are three kings of the East, viz., Nadir Shah (d. 1747), great conqueror and founder of the short-lived Afsharid dynasty of Persia; Ahmad Shah Abdali (d. 1773), founder of the modern nation of Afghanistan; and the martyr-king, Sultan Tipu of Mysore²⁵⁰ (d. 1799), a great Muslim nationalist of India who put up the last resistance to the expanding British power in India and laid down his life in the process. They all lament over the conditions obtaining in the Muslim Asia, in particular, and of the Muslim world in general. The champions of Muslim brotherhood once have now fallen into discord and strife themselves. Iqbal regrets through Afghani that 'Man's chronicle both in the East and West narrates a single tale, the tale of war and strife for land ...'²⁵¹ The West is now too barren to 'spawn' a new age; and under the impact of the West, the Turks, Iranians and the Arabs are also

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁴⁵ *Payam-e-Mashriq*. 60.

²⁴⁶ Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63

lying quite dead.²⁵² The West with its Imperialism and Socialism has extinguished the flame of 'faith' in the East and has spiritually wrecked it. The fault of the East lies in its blindly following into the footsteps of the West. What the East needs is both the sword and the Quran, as advocated and practised by Sharf-un-Nisa, who was 'all ecstasy and yearning, anguish and burning...'²⁵³ We should not forget that the East is basically and essentially religious. What the East in general, and the Muslims of Asia in particular require is a critical attitude towards the learning's of the West and the Western civilization; for only such an attitude can help them in chalking out their own way through the labyrinth of the vast universe.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 55.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 115.