

# IQBAL: THOUGHT AND PRAXIS

**Fateh Muhammad Malik Bazm-i-Iqbal, Lahore, pp.52, Rs.22.00**

Mohammad Iqbal (d. 1938) was undoubtedly of the most brilliant and innovative thinkers of twentieth century Islam. His ideas on the reconstruction of Islamic religious thought have shaped the course of intellectual debate for over sixty years in the world of Islam. Many books have been written to understand, interpret and analyze the richness and versatility of his idea. Most works of Urdu criticism, however, are grotesquely unequal to the task of illuminating the quality and depth of Iqbal's many-sided and multi-layered thought. It is only occasionally that a book arrives upon the literary scene, witty, elegant and lucid in style, and capable of engaging the reader with its highly provocative and perceptive analysis. Such a work is Fateh Mohammad Malik's Iqbal-Thought and praxis.

Few interpretations of Iqbal are more imaginative and thoughtful than the present work by this Pakistani literary and cultural critic. A significant aspect of Malik's work is its attempt to take an integral view of Iqbal's ideas and praxis. He goes beyond the traditional, cliché-ridden Iqbalian scholarship and offers new insights into the creative thought of the greatest Muslim poet-philosopher of our time.

Malik addresses three major questions with regard to Iqbal's relevance for today's Pakistan. First, he re-opens the pre-1947 debate on the relationship between Islam and the demand for Pakistan as a "national" homeland for the Indian Muslims. Second, he analyses the post-independence controversies associated with the role of Islam in the public life of the new nation. And, finally, he investigates the extent to which Islam has manifested itself in the creative literature of Pakistan and how far the Pakistani intelligentsia have carried out the Iqbalian mission of the reconstruction of modern intellectual thought within the framework of Islam.

In general, Malik finds Pakistani intellectuals and creative writers deficient in their duty to strengthen the ideological moorings of the new nation and to help build a just and equitable social order based on the

teachings of Islam. He reproves the artistic, social and political elite of Pakistan for their intellectual waywardness and philosophical skepticism with regard to value statements and moral judgements.

Malik's approach throughout is critical and historical. Some of us may not subscribe to some specific judgement about authors and events in the book but, at the same time, the general validity of Malik's overall model remains unquestionable.

One of the most important themes that runs through Malik's works is what Sir Hamilton Gibb once called 'Islamic patriotism,' i.e., a passionate love for Islam and Pakistan. As a matter of fact, these two loves constitute a single experience in Malik's consciousness and thus tend to become indistinguishable in his works. One must also add here that this love for Islam and Pakistan is much more than the rhetoric of a politician and the Self-righteousness of a mulla. In term of the depth of this "Islamic-patriotic" experience, Malik can only be compared with Mohammad Hasan Askari, Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, Salim Ahmad, and Muzaffar Ali Seyyed. Askari, Salim, Seyyed and Malik are distinct from others in their overall framework defined by the larger issues of Indo-Islamic culture. Malik thus represents the best in Urdu literary criticism. He demonstrates what words like "artist" and 'intellectual' should really mean. He combines literary criticism with literary sociology and the sociology of cultural phenomena in a manner that is rare in the tradition of Urdu criticism. His confident use of historical data, conceptual analysis and techniques of sociological inquiry set him apart from most of his contemporaries. His intellectual equipment and analytic apparatus, though heavily embedded in historico-structural mythology, remains nevertheless integrally linked to the realm of creative literature. Malik is therefore eminently qualified to undertake the study of the ideas of a giant like Iqbal. He has given us an invaluable book on Iqbal which is sure to find its place among the major works in the field.

**Mumtaz Ahmad**