

SIR THOMAS ARNOLD AND IQBAL

DR. SAEED A. DURRANI

Chairman, Iqbal Academy (UK)

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are gathered together here today to commemorate that great Orientalist, Sir Thomas Walker Arnold - who made lasting contributions to East-West relations and understanding. He was steeped in the history of Islam, its philosophy, and its cultural manifestations - especially art and painting: for instance, he was one of the first to introduce the genre of Persian miniature to the West in the early 1920s. Professor Arnold was also one of the first Westerners to bring a sympathetic as well as a penetrating comprehension to bear upon all that Islam and its followers, all over the world and through the ages, had accomplished.

Dr Christian Troll will, later today, cover more extensively those aspects of Thomas Arnold's life which are specifically related to his services to Islam, when he gives his lecture on 'Sir Thomas Arnold as a Student of Islam'. Sir Thomas's personal life will be reviewed by his two grandsons, Mr. Arnold Barfield and Dr Lawrence Barfield, whom we are very fortunate and proud to have presented here with us today. The task given to me is simply to bring out the special relationship between Sir Thomas Arnold and Iqbal. This I shall try to do in a few moments' time.

Since, however, I am the first speaker at today's seminar, perhaps it would be useful to present a very brief sketch of Sir Thomas's life and career at the outset. These have been encapsulated by Dr. Barfield in a few paragraphs printed in the leaflet that all of you have received. Perhaps you would permit me to read some of these lines to refresh your memory.

One hundred years ago, in 1888, Thomas Walker Arnold took up his appointment as teacher of philosophy in the Anglo Muhammadan College at Aligarh, where he came under the influence of the great Indian Muslim reformer and founder of the College, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. On his death in 1898 Arnold moved to Lahore as Professor of Philosophy at the renowned Government College. It was there that he came into contact with the student,

Iqbal and, as Iqbal acknowledged, Arnold had a profound influence on the course of the latter's education and thinking.

Arnold was a man of many interests, but especially of religion, art and oriental philosophy. His own background in England as the son of an ironmonger was not that of the usual administrators and colon iwasalistsabtel of the e British Raj; and perhaps for that reason he identify more readily with the Muslims of Iennditeacha, evening to at the extent of dressing in Muslim costume when Aligarh.

After his return from India in 1904 he became the Sub-Librarian of the India Office Library from 1921, and took on the responsibility of the welfare of Indian students in England. He was also teaching Arabic at University College, London, where Iqbal deputized for him for about six months (1907-08)¹. In 1921 he was appointed to the Chair of Arabic at what is now the School knighted of Oriental and African Studies, London, and was for his services to the Indian Students Department.”

Now most students of Urdu literature in general, and of Iqbal's poetry in particular, first come across the name of Thomas Arnold in a Preface written by that great savant of Urdu language and literature, and the founder of the first great Urdu magazine “Makhzan” (indeed, the English word ‘magazine’ and the French word ‘magasin’ are derived from the Arabic word ‘makhzan’: literally, treasure-house), which was founded - apparently with the active encouragement of Professor Arnold himself - at an Lahore in 1901 - namely Shaikh Sir Abdul Qadir, later a Judge (d, Lahore if my memory serves me right, a Chief Justice) of High Court. The Preface in question is that written by Abdul Qadir to Iqbal's first book of Urdu in verse entitled In this *Bang-i-Dara* (i.e. the Call of the Caravan), publish in 1924. In this Preface Sir Abdul Qadir wrote as follows:

“After his early education up to the stage of F.A., (roughly equivalent to A-level in England) [at the Scotch Mission College at Sialkot] Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal had to come to Lahore to read for his B.A. He was interested in reading philosophy; and amongst his teachers at [the Government College] Lahore he found a most kindly mentor, who, in view of Iqbal's predilection for philosophy, taught him with especial attention and care. Professor Arnold, who is now Sir Thomas Arnold and lives in England, is a man of extraordinary ability. He is an excellent writer, and is well versed

in the modern methods of research and quest for knowledge. He desired to give of his own taste and methods to his pupil; and he succeeded in this to a large extent. Earlier, during his time at Aligarh College as a professor, he had succeeded in strengthening the literary and intellectual taste of his friend and colleague, Maulana Shibli. Now he found here another gem, and he determined to polish it up. And the friendship and affection that was established between the teacher and the taught, finally took the pupil to England in the wake of his teacher. There these bonds were further strengthened, and exist to this day. Arnold is pleased that his exertions bore fruit, and his disciple is now able to bring credit to his own [i.e. Arnold's] name in the world of knowledge; and Iqbal acknowledges the fact that the foundations which were laid at Sialkot by Syed Mir Hasan, and which were solidified by contacts with the court-poet Dagh, were finally built upon to completion by the kindly guidance of Arnold.”

Incidentally, it is an intriguing sidelight to note a strange coincidence in the lives of two of Sir Thomas Arnold's greatest pupils or colleagues, mentioned by Sir Abdul Qadir in the above extract. At Aligarh, Sir Thomas polished into a brilliant gem that innately talented scholar, Maulana Shibli Nu'mani, who has written one of the greatest histories of Persian poetry, entitled “Sh'er ul 'Ajam”, published in several volumes around the turn of the last century. At the Government College, Lahore, Arnold had a similar effect on the young Iqbal. And the strange coincidence is that both their names are romantically linked with a beautiful young Indian Muslim girl, of noble extraction, who was one of the first Indian ladies to receive European education in England, namely Atiya Fyzee. She came from a Nawab family mid-western India near Bombay, and was studying at London during the time that Iqbal was at Cambridge and then in London, namely 1905-1908. Shibli has written several Persian ghazals or lyrics about her, and Iqbal corresponded with her from 1907 to 1931 (these letters were published by Atiya Begum herself, in 1947). My own interpretation is that the great religious divine, Shibli, fell in love with the young Atiya Fyzee – or at least with her image – while she fell in love with Iqbal and wanted him to marry her. Be that as it may, this is not the time or the place to analyze the intriguing psychological puzzle as to why two of Sir Thomas Arnold's best known pupils (or colleagues) should fall for the same lady – and I intend to say nothing further on this fascinating subject at present, for I do not believe

it casts any great light on Professor Arnold's methods of research into the history of Islam! (Though whether this coincidence tells us something about Sir Thomas's aesthetic faculties, which were highly refined, is another matter.)

To go back to Sir Abdul Qadir's Preface to the *Bang-i-Dara*: the writer continues, a little later in the Preface, to narrate the following fascinating incident:

During 1905-1908, there commenced a second phase of Iqbal's poetry. This is the period that he spent in Europe. Although his stay there he found relatively little time for poetry, and the number of poems that he wrote there is quite small, yet one can see a special colour given to them by his experiences and observations in Europe [at Cambridge, London and Heidelberg/Munich]. During this period that he spent in Europe. Although during his stay there he found relatively little time for poetry, and the number of poems that he wrote there is quite small, yet one can see a special colour given to them by his experiences and observations in Europe [at Cambridge, London and Heidelberg./Munich]. During this period, two major changes took place in his thinking. For two out of these three years (1905-1908), I too happened to live in England, and had frequent opportunities of meeting Iqbal. One day, Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal said to me that he had firmly decided to give up poetry. He would take an oath that he would never write poetry any more, and the time saved from that occupation he would devote to some more useful task. I said to him that his poetry was not of a type that ought to be abandoned; rather, his poetry possessed such effectiveness that there was a possibility that it might be able to offer a cure for the ills afflicting our forlorn nation and our unfortunate country. For this reason, it would not be right to render such a useful and God-given force inoperative. Shaikh Sahib (Iqbal) was partly convinced, and partly not convinced, by my argument; so it was agreed that the final decision should be left to Professor Arnold's opinion on the subject: if he agreed with me, then Shaikh Sahib should relinquish his idea of abandoning poetry; but if Arnold Sahib agreed with Iqbal, then the decision to give up poetry should be adhered to. I believe that it was a great good fortune for the world of learning that Arnold Sahib agreed with my point of view, and so it was decided that it was not correct for Iqbal to abandon poetry-writing: for the time that he devoted to this occupation was useful for both himself and for his nation and country."

As the well-known Iqbal scholar, Dr Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, noted in an early article on Arnold (written in 1956, and based largely on the very comprehensive appreciation of Sir Thomas Arnold published in 1932 by his life-long friend, Sir Marc Aurel Stein, in the Proc. Brit. Acad., Vol. Xvi), which Dr Batalvi has very kindly just sent me: "In the light of the incident quoted above [from Sir Abdul Qadir's Preface] one can see what a great burden of gratitude we owe to Arnold, under which our head must remain bowed for ever. If, God forbid, Arnold had advised Iqbal to give up poetry, no-one today would have heard of Iqbal's name."

I mentioned a little earlier that most students of Iqbal know something about Sir Thomas Arnold because of Sir Abdul Qadir's Preface to Bang-i-Dara. Indeed, if I may interject here a sentence or two about my own experience: When I first met Dr Lawrence Barfield, here at the University of Birmingham, where he teaches in the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology and I in the Department of Physics, some fifteen or eighteen years ago, he said to me - on my telling him that I came from Lahore in Pakistan - that his own maternal grandfather had, he believed, also taught at Lahore at the beginning of this century. With great modesty - an endearing characteristic of Lawrence's, most probably inherited from his illustrious maternal grandfather - Dr Barfield went on to say: "But I don't suppose you would have heard of him." When I he said he was called asked him to tell me his name anyway, "But Sir Thomas Arnold Thomas Arnold. I immediately exclaimed, is fantastically well known in India and Thomas' Arnold Anyone who And knows anything about Iqbal, knows thereupon I proceeded to tell him about Sir Abdul Qadir's Preface to the Bang-i-Dara - and indeed the two extracts to that I hhBarave st read out are the translated it was thisadiscuspon about Sir Thomas July 1973. In some ways, researches into the life of Arnold that put me on the road of my in my book of that Iqbal in Europe, which are collected together Pakistan, at Lahore in title (published in Urdu2 by Iqbal Academy.

Hence, today's function is a fitting climax of that first 1985). some fifteen years ago. discussion between Lawrence and myself Going back to Arnold's influence on Iqbal and the early

ht processes: As Sir Abdul Qadir

development of the Tatter's thoug P it was Thomas

has stated, and is attested from other sources, Philosophy at Arnold who first aroused Iqbal's interest in reading

the Government College, Lahore, where Arnold was the Professor of Philosophy from February 1898 to February 1904. and subsequently

then

took his M.A. degree in that subject in 1899,

joined the staff of that College (in 1903) as an Assistant Professor to teach English and Philosophy. A few years earlier (in 1899), Professor Arnold, who was simultaneously the a Principal of

the Readership

nearby Oriental College, Lahore, had got where he

McLeod Readership in Arabic) at the latter College, Iqbal

he

Here, amongst other things, served for about three years.

wrote, and published in 1903, his first book entitled 'Science of Economics') - a book which is largely derivative

("The English works on the subject. In its Preface

of the then-prevalent remarks I wish to Iqbal states: "Before closing these prefatory Mr Arnold Sahib,

thank my respected and revered teacher, urged Arnold to Sahib, me write Professor Government College, Lahore, who this book, and to whose fruitful association these pages are owed."

It is also documented (see the book Letters from India by Anna B. Stratton, London 1908, p. 131, based on the correspondence of her husband - who died very young -, namely Professor Alfred Stratton, Professor of Sanskrit at the Oriental College and simultaneously the Registrar, University of the Punjab), it was Professor Arnold who -persuaded Iqbal to go to Cambridge (Arnold's old University) for higher studies in Philosophy in 1905 (soon after Arnold had returned to England in 1904): for originally Iqbal had been considering going to the USA for this purpose, where Professor Stratton, a Canadian by birth, had himself been educated.

In this context, it may be of interest to quote a few lines from the poem Iqbal wrote at that time, which is included in his above-mentioned first book of Urdu poetry, Bang-i-Dara. This poem is entitled (VJ'JL' - i.e. 'Cry of Separation' (in memory of Arnold). The following lines, out of a poem consisting of five-stanzas, will give the flavour of the poem and of Iqbal's thoughts at the time.

Urdu Poem by IQBAL
Cry of Separation
(in memory of Arnold)

1. He shifted his dwelling place to the West at last Alas! The land of the East he did not find agreeable My heart today has understood the truth

That the light of the day of separation is darker than the darkest night.

“Since it has received the searing wound of separation of a loved one like a snuffed out candle my glance lies asleep within my eyes.”

3. The atom of my heart was about to become bright as Sun

My broken mirror was about to reflect the entire universe

The tree of my ambitions was about to flourish Alas! No-one will know what I was about to become from naught.

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“The cloud of blessing passed by my garden and
flew away hopes, and left.”

A little it rained on the blossoms of my h

5. restless hshand will hatter the untie the knot of Fate

I shall shatter of the Punjab and become
free

My wondering eyes look at thy portrait

But alas! He who would like to hear your speech remains unsatisfied.

“The mouth of a picture has no power of speech

The speech of a picture is naught but complete silence.”

So finally Iqbal reached Cambridge in September
enrolled

the behest or with the encouragement of Arnold, and Atiya
in Trinity College, Cambridge. In her book 'Iqbal' (1947), Begum narrates
several occasions when Iqbal r viwesited

Professor Arnold in London or when Arnold guests.
together in Cambridge while

hyperbolic styleasshesmen onsshowe in June Indeed, in her rather hype
held in London to visit

1907 Arnold persuaded Iqbal during a party there. Germany to decipher
a rare Arabic ~ ~n n~ tQtsend Shtheree "Professor Arnold said, 'Iqbal,

you are the right man for this responsible in comparison When snIw al
demurred by saying that he was a mere

his teacher, Arnold replied; 'I am sure that in this case, the pupil All
this was expressed with so much will surpass his teacher.'

that it constituted a perfect finesse and in such courteous language
specimen of the art of verbal duelling between intellectual and cultivated
people." of

Iqbal completed his studies at Cambridge in the spring
degree, by dissertation, in June 1907.

1907, and took a B.A. no programme for the degree of

Since, as I discovered in 1977, at any other British
Ph.D. was offered at Cambridge - or probably

e university - at that time (the first Ph.D.

the University of Mun gh being issued after 1921), Iqbal went
for that purpose.

It is a long story, which I do not have the time to go into at this
moment; but as I fully explain in my book (Iqbal in Europe, Lahore 1985),
Iqbal obtained his Ph.D. in November 1907 on the basis of the same

dissertation that he had prepared and submitted at Cambridge earlier in that year, namely 'Development of Metaphysics in Persia'. Now I had read somewhere in Professor Annemarie Schimmel's writings (probably in her book Gabriel 's Wing, 1963) that his thesis supervisor (or Doktorvater) at the University of Munich, Professor Fritz Hommel, was a specialist in Semitic/Hebrew studies. Since Sir Thomas was also a scholar of a semitic language, viz. Arabic, it had appeared probable to me that it was Arnold who might have recommended Iqbal to Professor Hommel at Munich - and I have said so in the Preface to my book. My belief had also been strengthened by the observation that Iqbal had dedicated the published version of his dissertation (viz., Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Luzac & Co., London 1908) - though not the original dissertation preserved in the Munich University Library - to Sir Thomas Arnold. This dedication reads as follows:

DEDICATION

To

Professor T.W. ARNOLD M.A. My dear MR. ARNOLD,

This little book is the first-fruit of that literary and philosophical training which I have been receiving from you for the last ten years, and as an expression of gratitude I beg to dedicate it to your name. You have always judged me liberally; I hope you will judge these pages in the same spirit.

Your affectionate pupil.
IQBAL

My speculations in the Preface (published in 1985) were fully vindicated last year - i.e. in October 1987 - when I discovered

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the file on S.M. Iqbal at the University Archives of the Maximilians-Universität,

Munich. There lay, for all these 80 yeen ars,

a fascinating collection of intellectual notes and Philosophical Faculty of what the various professors of this university. Professor Rommel was that the subject matter of

thesis, the main thrust of which is In Persia Iqbal's thesis - namely and Manic seen through the centuries from Greek, Christian

of Islamic dominance - was outside the area of his own competence, which was near-Eastern sees it clearly emerged, who however, that fortunately there existed

could attest to the value and originality of Professor's former teacher, Professor had Arabic at the University of London, whose letter Iqbal forwarded to Professor Hommel. In this letter Professor Arnold says:

Whitehall, India Office, Oct. 2nd 1907 • I have read Prof. Muhammad Iqbal's (sic) dissertation interest. So the Development of Metaphysics in Persia" with much

as I am aware, it is the first attempt that has been made to trace the continuous development of ancient Iranian and so bring out the have survived in Muhammadan philosophy phases of Muslim thought. distinctively Persian character of many

phases and "The writer has made use of much material hitherto to unpublished and little known in Europe, and his

contribution to the history of Muhammadan philosophy.

T.W. Arnold, Prof. of Arabic

University of London.

So Professor Hommel concludes in October 1907 that he is fully satisfied that the thesis is the Faculty after an oral recommendation for acceptance by

examination for the Ph.D. degree. a future

The file then goes to Professor von Hertling, Chancellor of Germany, and at that time Professor von Hertling (Catholic)

von Hertling

-- „o T'nivP,TSitV o of Munich.

remarks that: “I have inspected Professor Iqbal’s thesis with interest. It represents itself as the work of a man with an extensive education. Here ends what I can say about it.” (He then explains that his own knowledge of the subject is confined to medieval Latin sources, whereas Iqbal has made extensive use of Persian and Arabic sources, of which he knows nothing): He goes on to say: “However, since a favourable judgement by a competent source [viz., Professor Arnold] is lying before us, I will support the

Proposal of my colleague Hommel to admit the author to the oral Ph.D. examination.”

So, once again, it is Thomas Arnold whose recommendation saves the day for Iqbal in view of the lack of expertise in his chosen field then prevailing at the University of Munich. Other professors concurred with Professors Hommel and von Herding - and finally Iqbal got his Ph.D. degree from Munich (although it is a separate and fascinating story how the German Professors -decided to give Iqbal oral examinations in Arabic and English philologies, with philosophy merely a minor subject, in view of their reluctance to examine him in the philosophy and

metaphysics of Persia, where they felt themselves to be on shaky ground!).

Incidentally, Iqbal had been invited by Professor Arnold to deputize for him in teaching Arabic at the University of London during his own absence in Egypt for several months in 1907-08. Iqbal had thus emphasized to Munich University that he must return to London by 10th November. It was in view of this fact that his oral examination was fixed hurriedly for 4th November 1907. Eventually Iqbal left for London on 5th November 1907, where he took over from Professor Arnold as the Professor of

Arabic (his duties there being to give two lectures a week until the late spring/early summer of 1908)³.

No wonder, under these circumstances, that Iqbal felt sufficiently grateful to Professor Arnold to dedicate his first book to be published in Europe to Professor T.W. Arnold, as stated above.

But it was not just a perfunctory dedication. Iqbal felt genuinely close to Sir Thomas. He wrote several letters to

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his family after his return to Lahore. One of and addressed to Nancy Arnold B

Pre

Professor Arnold and

these, rfoed s mother), January in 1911, London, who was then Thomas's is on mother),

display here in the Exhibition of about

Sir 'T13homyears old, is

memorabilia. In this letter he refers to her father u ~er "my humanity"

,

busy looking after the welfare of younger

in Professor who "very s Indian students in England,

(by which he means playfully, "so do act a good Arnold's charge), and adds, and the poor mortal Iqbal who is prophet between his Divinity

anxious to know all about him. I am sure he will not restraint due revelations to y course. you, which you will communicate to me from e

~~ he original of this letter is currently Ad oon loan f Quaid-e-Azam Lawrence Barfield Professor

in a letter Ahmed

Atiya Fyzee, dated

Islamabad.) to Miss Fyzee's cousins,

30th March 1910, Iqbal says (in referring he later became,

Sir Akbar Hydari,

Mr & Mrs Akbar Hydari; was - according at that time the Finance Minister of

Hyderabad to Atiya - respect for both of them.

Theirs "I have immense Tthe first being the Theirs is s the Sto: second real home that I~at,eduseen - ring his Lahore first being days, Arnold's." It was not for nothing

Arnold was called "the Saint" in his circle of friends. Thomas

Iqbal never forgot the great formative influence that Professor Arnold had on his mental and intellectual development. Indeed when Iqbal wrote:~jjd.)""6 53,1 J)

(My intellect was developed by

the lectures of

western philosophers

the company of (But) my heart was illumined by

visionaries (or 'seers') had for he fulfilled both

he probably Thomas Arnold in mind - for her, but he also possessed these roles:

the he was a western p but letter of these roles: the 'inner eye'. This is borne out by the Thomas condolence that Iqbal wrote on the

Arnold's death on 9th June 1930, to his widow Lady Arnold. T(The homas original of this rare and valuable letter is on display in our

SIR THOMAS ARNOLD AND IQBAL

Exhibition in an adjoining room, along with Sir Thomas's other memorabilia, which all of you are invited to view at the end of the speeches.) May I read it out in full?

DR. SIR MUHAMMAD IQBAL,

M.L.C. LAHORE. BARRISTER-AT-LAW

16th July 1930

My dear Lady Arnold,

It is impossible for me to tell you and Nancy of the terrible shock which came to us all when the news of the untimely death of Sir Thomas Arnold arrived in India. As you know he was loved by his pupils and all those who came into contact with him otherwise. I know words expressive of grief can bring but little consolation to you, but I assure you that your grief is shared by people in England, India and all those countries where his work as a great Orientalist was known. Indeed his death is a great loss to British scholarship as well as to the world of Islam whose thought and literature he served with unabated zeal till the last moment of his earthly life. To me his loss is personal, for it was his contact that formed my soul and put it on the road to knowledge. No doubt from our point of view that luminous flame of life is now extinguished, but it is my firm conviction that to those who, like

him, devote their life to love and service death means only 'more light'.

I earnestly pray that God may grant eternal peace to his loving soul and may give you and Nancy fortitude enough to bear with patience the loss caused by his untimely death.

Yours Sincerely,

Muhammad Iqbal

What a forceful sentence!: "To me his loss is personal, for it was his contact that formed my soul and put it on the road to knowledge", - can one pay a greater tribute to a teacher, or to any human being? And for Iqbal, himself one of the greatest visionaries of our time, and the Poet-Philosopher of the East, to say: "... it was his contact that formed my soul, and put it on the road to knowledge", demonstrates without the shadow of a doubt what a

great scholar and teacher

and Sir will therefore Thomas Arnold

stop here. I do not think I

need to say any more a

Thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen, for your attention.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. It now appears, from letters of Arnold, written from Egypt to his family and shown to me by Dr Lawrence Barfield,

that this period spanned only three months from November 1907 to the end of January 1908. -(S.A.D.)

2. " اقبال، یورپ میں "

3. As explained in the first footnote above, these probably lasted only until February 1908.