

WHITMAN, MAYAKOVSKY AND IQBAL

Air Cdre. (Rtd) Inamul Haq

Prophets! The glorious messengers of Allah with open revelations, for the mankind are no more. They have but shown us the path to be followed in the light of Celestial Truths. To us come now men with dark intellects, seers who cannot observe, men who traffic and trade in rancour and injustice, and desire not peace and reconciliation. Allah hath full knowledge and is acquainted with all things but the arrogant and vainglorious do not fear sin and do not bow in humility to Him. They live only for some miserable gain.

Our little systems have their day.

They have their day and cease to be.

Their visions are but in the nature of broken lights, half-truths, mad fits or hysterical outbursts of passions and violence. Only God's Truth lasts and it will gain mastery in the end. In the Quran, the glorious book for humanity, we find a plain statement, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah to the effect that all the ways of life except the one of obedience to Him lead us to ruin and despair.

Many were the ways of Life

That have passed away

Before you; travel through

The Earth and see what was

The end of those

Who rejected Truth

قد خلت من قبلكم سنن فسيروا في الارض فانظروا كيف كان عاقبة المكذبين-

(آل عمران- 137)

And in the world again there are new creeds, philosophies of doubt and iron organizations of power, Marxist states and Democratic foes with atom bombs and dialectics. From the ignorant clash of armies in darkness are visible the gun powder-flares of passion and wrath. The messengers of this brave world are the seemingly harmless, polished and elegant scientists, poets, political and social psychologists who believe, as Iqbal puts it. in a

حکمت فرعونى

In Life's divided compartments they choose a sphere for their activity, caring only for speed and regardless of the approaching disasters that wait a collision. Democrats fooling the world by lip service to "Freedom"; dictators swollen up to the size of giants and bursting as balloons; Marxists parading starved hunger and filthy sex; Scientists nominally exploring the specialized avenues of progress in biology, but absorbed in manufacturing poison gases and super-injurious bombs; poets journeying in the valleys of thought, more in order to fill their comrades with hate and lust rather than to restore harmony to a jarringly unquiet world. And all of them glorified too at the same moment by some are denounced by others. Men with apparently clean hands, Newton's, Hegel's, Rousseau's, Darwins and Huxley's; discredited men like Bismarck's, Hitler's. Lenins and Stalins.

Roosevelts, Trumans, Churchills, or Tojos proceed all along on their triumphal march in the wasteland desert of Eliot's Civilization.

God is Divine, belief in the Christian God is unworthy, a Nietzsche is born, a sun has set. The old world seems dark, distrustful, strange and old. The shadows envelope Europe, New America's Star is on high, a ship puts out to sea, a Whitman sings chants of the democratic hymn. The horizon is open once more, granted it is not bright. His heart over-flows with gratitude and astonishment; the sea lies open as he starts from Panamanok to see the revolving Globe.

Ancestor- Continents grouped together

The present and future continents north and south with the isthmus between

He sings of Americanoes, flowing Missouriie, mighty Niagra, the buffalo herds grazing the plains. He chants of the long running Mississippi down to the Mexican sea, sings of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Minnesota. The prophetic spirit of materials shifts and flickers around him in the land of coal and iron, land of cotton, of sugar and rice, land of wheat, beef, pork etc. He accepts reality and dares not question it, the emphasis is on the present, this minute, and materialism is first and last.

Whit Whitman, a Kosmos of Manhattan the son Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding No sentimentalist.

His speech is a miracle, as the many voices surge through him; his voice goes after what his eyes cannot reach.

With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volume of worlds

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself.

Marx, more of a Jew than Freud or Einstien and less of an internationalist than Trotsky, preaches from Das capital, divides man into the bourgeois and proletariat. They arm and arm, shots are fired in the Revolution. Poetry begins with “tendenciousness” and Mayakovsky sets his heel upon the throat of his own song, eliminates sentiment from poetry and treats of man, mass movements and class war in his usual hyperbolic and sweeping style. He devotes his raucous voice and great inventive talent to the service of the Revolution in Russia. The verses are about bread prices, the New Economic Policy, the Food supply and the International events. He goes from town to town, from factory to ship, from meeting to theatre and declaims his poems direct to his audience. And at the “might of his voice” he declares,

“The streets shall be our brushes The squares our palettes”

For

150,000,000 speak through these Lips of mine.

As a proletarian poet-collectivist his role demanded from him a closer participation in the social life of his countrymen than was required from, to an equally degree.

Morally free Whitman's pen becomes the equal of a gun and is listed with iron in industry.

The boulevard squares, the bustle of the street, the polish of the asphalt, the noise of machines, the work of man, the rhythm of revolution and the struggle of society appear in a poetic form. The verse is tuned and set to the very speedy measure of a Left March. The British and other intervention armies are attacking the young Soviet State.

Does the eye of the eagle fade?

Shall we stare back to the old?

Proletarian fingers grip tighter

The throat of the world

Chests out Shoulders straight

Stick to the sky red flags adrift

Who is marching there with the right

Left Left Left

In 1930 just as the five years plan was beginning to make possible the realization of the new society, Mayakovsky the vigorous man and a grown and socially developed personality committed suicide. Exhaustion, illness, a tragic love affair and attacks on the part of his enemies seemed to have contributed to his end. As for Whitman, whose poetry is a new composite orchestra, expressive of the pulsations of life, solemn hymns, passionate heart chants, sorrowful appeals, a diapason of earth, of winds, woods and mighty ocean waves, we should turn to a verdict on him by G.M. Hopkin's the Jesuit-Poet.

"I always know in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's living. As he is a very great scoundrel, this is not a pleasant confession".

The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferred till his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it. Though Whitman's songs breathe a vast elemental sympathy which only the human soul is 'capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless floods, the looseness of his character and absence of any restraint find an expression everywhere. Apparently he lets himself adrift.

The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves.

The American contempt for statues and ceremonies the bounds as restraint of impatience.

The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types.

All these charm him, but what of the consequence. Matthew Arnold had said that the gods exact a price for our songs and make us what we sing and Whitman perhaps did not realize what he wrote when he sang.

The song is to the singer and comes back most to him The teaching is to the teacher and comes back most to him

The murder is to the murderer and comes back most to him

The love is to the lover and comes back most to him.

The America of which he sang became rich in variety, the thud of machinery, the shrill steam - whistle undismayed, the drain-pipes, the artificial fertilizers, the healthy human poems, the waltz and dance-music, all came into a existence, but the world remained broken and the continent of glory remained in the whirl of evil. The democracy whose praise he sang become corrupt and a mockery of the good life. He only saw the mosque, was impressed by it and did never know what Islam was and to whom did the Mussalmans pray and why?

I hear from the Mussalman's mosque the Muezzin calling

I see the worshippers within, nor form nor sermon argument nor word

But silent, strange, devout raised, glowing heads, ecstatic faces.

and these ecstatic faces were for him those of the “worshippers” like the faces of those who listen to dance music, the waltz or some delicious measure and are bathed in bliss and no more. Poor Walt Whitman, the Poet of democracy - the Poet of American bankruptcy.

And poor Mayakovsky the poet of Russian Revolution committed suicide for the much derided passion of love. But his real tragedy as a poet had been the negation and neglect of his poetic gift. He had to pay the price of the songs which he did not sing.

But I

Mastered myself

And crushed under foot The throat

Of my very own songs.

Sentiment eliminated from poetry proved a suicidal obsession in life. The artistic suicide was complete. He did not know God’s forgiveness and Mercy.

Transistorizes thus sings a song again and again. Philosophers, poets, champions of new social orders consider darkness as their light; ardent for logic, they are lost in the labyrinth of intellect. Psychologists the soul diviners, ransack the forest of the sub-conscious. Painters with their patch work of colour imitate the variegated light and shade of the world and the hues of its mountains, scenery and vegetation. Men are filled for the time being with exultation. In the consciousness of their strength they forget themselves. Their desires become their gods. The true world is suppressed. But Infinite and Infinitely creative God lives, men and their social orders - decay; new poets play on new reeds. His universe has power of eternal renewal. His laws do not change.

And the Mussalman, firm as a rock against the ‘breakers, distinguishing between good and evil, accepting not the Western notions of Power, Money and Nationality sticks to his faith. He knows that darkness cannot be his light and the day is distinct from night. He repels doubt with faith,

گمان آباد ہستی میں یقین مرد مسلمان کا
بیابان کی شب تاریک میں قندیل رہبانی

(In this illusionary existence the faith of a Muslim is like a guiding torch in the dark forest night).

He struggles in the world to prove amongst the sterile his vigorous love. The belief in Tauhid makes him perform righteous deeds. He spends of his substance of love for Him; he is stead-fast in prayer and fulfils covenants which he has made; he is firm and patient in pain or suffering and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Iqbal as a poet proclaimed to the world the glorious message of the Prophets of God, who came to guide men. In the major part of his verse he gives to the world again the lesson of Honesty, Courage and Justice. He wants again in the modern world the truly democratic state of the Second Caliph Hazrat Omar. Today “freedom” is a misnomer and democracy meaningless.

No material forces can over-power the Momin who has spiritual power and believes in the Ayat:-

وعد الله الذين آمنوا منكم و عملوا الصلحت يستخلفنهم في الارض كما استخلف الذين
من قبلهم

(النور-55)

“With those among you who believe and perform righteous deeds God has made a promise to make them inheritors and rulers of the world as he made men before them”.

For Iqbal the cure for evils, the way out of all difficulties and the keys to power and sovereignty were all in Iman.

پھر سیاست چھوڑ کر داخل حصار دیں میں ہو
ملک و دولت ہے فقط حفظ حرم کا اک ثمر

Leave the world of politics and seek the secure fort of deen. If you protect the Harem you will acquire might, power and wealth.

From the gilded Western World he escaped to the tulip blossoming mountains of Afghanistan. He liked the Syrian dusk more than the wines and women that came from the West. He turned to the faqr of Free Man. The memories of the pious Caliphate inspire him. He prays again for God's favours on those who believe.

تڑپنے پھوکنے کی توفیق دے
دل مرتضیٰ، سوز صدیق دے

Give me a zest and ecstasy, the heart of Murtaza, the fervour of Siddique.

In the confusion and darkness that envelopes all things, he looks around and calls for an answer.

“Where is thou, O! Momin?”

WHITMAN, MAYAKOVSKY AND IQBAL

And he turns with love to question the soul of the Holy prophet

شیرازہ ہوا ملت مرحوم کا ابتر
اب تو ہی بتا، تیرا مسلمان کدھر جائے!

This blessed ummat has disintegrated; you please tell the Mussalman where to seek shelter.

But despair he knows not, neither weariness nor fatigue. Clearly he sees the decline of the West, the greed of the warring nations bringing to them their God's own destruction and the Soviet revolutionaries forgetting in a whirlwind of passion and violence and thus dooming decay. *Faqr* will again rule over the world and all the political structures crumble to dust.

اب ترا درد بھی آنے کو ہے اے فقر غیور
کہا گئی روح فرنگی کو ہوائے سیم و زر

O Self respecting poor! you will gain power, for the soul of West has been destroyed by gold and sever.

raises of the Mussalman are sung again. The They splendour; in speech Momin shines every moment in mew s his sweetness and or in deed he is God's sharp delicacy is akin to the tenderness of the dew on the tulip and his wrath makes the oceans tremble with fear.

Walt Whitman, Mayakovsky and Iqbal - three poets with a message, three bards of passion not of mirth, poets triumphant over self, men of heroic stature, intent to create and to see a new world order, interpret their age. They are the poets of life's great movements. Whitman accepting all, embracing everything even guilt and wickedness, marching ahead with his loving comrades towards democracy, hysterically exultant, singing of American prosperity. Mayakovsky, a Messiah, a poet dictator driving his art armies to an onward march, a champion, deep chested and broad shouldered, the futurist poet of Soviet Russia and Construction. And Iqbal, the poet of Islam, the lover of humanity, denouncing the oppression of man by man in the-man made systems of the west with a Zarbi Kalimi and Bangs Israfil rousing the Mussalmans from the night-mare of a sleep. Mayakovsky's vision ends in disillusionment and suicide; Whitman's green leaves wither and turn pale, turn into poisonous weeds, the field being flooded with toxic wealth. The Western systems melt in the heat of War resulting from economic imperialism and capitalistic rivalries, but Iqbal's echoes peal through the

skies; his hopes are still unrealised; his prophecies only half fulfilled. When will the Memar-i-Haram rise again to bless his troubled soul?

مومنان را گفت آن سلطان دین
مسجد من این همه روئے زمین
الاماں از گردش نہ آسمان
مسجد مومن بدست دیگران
سخت کو شد بندہ پاکیزہ کیش
تابگیرد مسجد مولائے خویش

The Prophet has said to the Momins

The whole world is my mosque

Alas with the revolution of skies this mosque has been occupied by others

The true believer strives hard

To regain the mosque of his Prophet.

There is but one path for the Mussalman, all the other creeds and systems will lead him with other men to ruin.

اتبع ما اوحى اليك من ربك لا اله الا هو و اعوض عن المشكرين-

(الانعام- 106)

Follow what thou art taught

By inspiration from thy Lord

There is no God but He

And turn away from those who

Join gods with God.