

# LANDSCAPE IN IQBAL'S POETRY

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Ideology consists of "those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power."<sup>87</sup> Colonialism, nationalism and ideology they work much less by explicit concepts or formulated doctrines than by images, symbols, rituals, myths and folklore. A successful ideology entwines itself with the deepest unconscious roots of human psyche and engages deep-seated and arational human fears and needs. Ideas embodied in images making a direct appeal to human passions and feelings, enable an ideology to operate at every social level; intellectual elite, enlightened middle-class, religious section and the labouring class.

"Literature is an ideology"<sup>88</sup>, because though it has an autonomous existence of its own, it cannot be chopped off from history and society, and it maps its affiliations. English literature has been used, as is proved by Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory* and Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest* to shape and buttress images of English authority and nobility. Colonialism is also not simply an act of acquisition and domination. It is supported and perhaps even impelled by ideological formulations, which project images of its racial, moral, political, economic and military superiority in manufacturing grand rituals and ceremonies. Similarly, Dr, Parveen Shaukat in her book *The Political Philosophy of Iqbal* quotes from different political philosophers to bring out the ideological aspects of nationalism, which is more of a feeling than a fully logically structured system. Nationalism expresses itself in images and symbols - flags, military parades, totem animals, folk songs - "Representing a sense of belonging to one collective body of individuals essentially different

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<sup>87</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 22.

<sup>88</sup> 2. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), pp. 8.

from individuals of any other collective body which is rationally inexpressible."<sup>89</sup>

These nationalist ideas and images are as significant as the number of people in an army. To sustain and consolidate social power, or to harness patriotic feelings, both the colonial ruling elite and the insurgent natives generate a set of expressive and interpretative images of a common history of a sacred land with its own perspective, historical sense, traditions, values and structure of feelings. This strategy is at work in what many nationalist poets write during freedom movements.

Literature of awareness sparking resistance against colonialism develops quite consciously out of a desire to create and develop a sense of self-respect, national self-consciousness and freedom. Before this can be done, however, there is a pressing need for the repossession of the colonized territory which, because of the presence of the colonizing intruder, is recoverable at first only in literature through the imagination. Man is rooted in earth. The struggle to recapture the lost land involves a battle of images and ideas. One element which is radically distinguishable in the imagination of anti-imperialism is "the primacy of the geographical"<sup>90</sup> in it. Colonialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which distant lands are coveted, explored, charted and finally usurped. "For the native the history of his/her colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss to an outsider of the local place, whose concrete geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and some-how restored."<sup>91</sup> In his Poem "Mosque of Cordoba", Iqbal feels himself dispossessed of his land like the founder of the mosque, Abd-al-Rahman who had been exiled from Arabia, his birth place. In one of his letters to Quaid-e-Azam, Iqbal wrote that they were both exiles in India. A colonized person is homeless, an exile, because he has been dispossessed of his rightful land:

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<sup>89</sup> Parveen Shaukat Ali, *The Political Philosophy of Iqbal* (Lahore: Publishers United Limited, 1978), pp. 184.

<sup>90</sup> Edward W. Said, "Yeats and Decolonization," in *Literature in the*

*Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, ed., Dennis Walder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). pp. 36.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

My exile from this land so dear,  
Is full of anguish, pain and shocks  
(Rod of Meses).

From 1900 till his departure for Europe in 1905. Iqbal's poetry is full of love for his native land. He thought that India was incomparably superior to the rest of the world. He praised enthusiastically Indian civilization's achievements and longevity. In the beginning Iqbal was an ardent lover of his native land, and sang the beauty of the Indian landscape: "Each speck of dust of my native land is as holy as a country's idol" (Bang-e-Dara). At this time Iqbal took the country, a territorial unit, as the basis of national consciousness and believed that religion could be separate from politics. Iqbal's political thought was geographically oriented before he left for Europe in 1905. His idea of nationalism was soil-based and the identity of the people derived its meaning from the idea of a common homeland, a concrete geographical entity.

On his return from Europe in 1908, Iqbal rejected the Western concept of territorial nationalism. He believed that on a secular level, territorial nationalism narrows the sphere of human loyalties, breeds hostility and war among nations, and undermines prospects of international peace. On the religious level, nationalism separates religion from politics. On the political level, nationalism promotes colonialism and imperialism.

Iqbal said "Western nations are based on territory and race. Whereas the strength of your -community rests on the might of your religion". (Bang-e-Dara). Taking religion as the determining factor of his national identity, Iqbal looks across stretches of land to Arabia and claims its spirit to be the fountain head of his inspiration and strength in thought and poetry:

If my jar is Persian, does not matter, my wine is Arabian,  
If my song is Indian, does not matter, may melody is Arabian  
(*Bang-e-Dara*).

The majority of the Muslim territories and Asian countries were under the English colonial domination. For colonialism all the Muslim lands were an image of an antagonistic culture which had to be controlled and subjugated. Therefore, Iqbal's reply to Western aggression is continental in its breadth. He proclaims spokespersonship for the whole of the East, and sends a message to the West: "In this our ancient dust I find the pure gold of the soul:

Each atom of it is a star's eye with the power to see.

In every grain of sand lodged in the womb of mother earth

I see the promise of-a many-branched fruit-laden tree

*(Message from the East).*

His concept of Pan-Islamism, like the concept of Negritude aiming at the freedom of the entire African continent, aims at freeing all the Muslim lands from colonial possession. He thus takes up arms to restore all the lost Muslim possessions, and this widens the framework of his geographical references.

The shift from the Indian landscape to the Arabian desert is a marked change in his poetry after his return from Europe in 1908. the landscape becomes a mental inscape. Arabic influence starts increasing from the third section his first collection of poems *Bang-i-Dara*, and it persists till the last of Iqbal's books, *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*. The contours of his landscape change and expand and a new iconography emerges, the Arabian desert, the abode of camelherds. His poetry becomes preoccupied with references to rivers, mountains and places in the Middle East to the exclusion of references to rivers and mountains in India. The native peasant never makes his appearance in Iqbal's poetry. He populates his landscape with an idealised version of camel - drivers. The Arabic spirit pervades his work through "Similes, metaphors, proverbs, figures of speech and images which carry the reader unconsciously to the Arabian surroundings."<sup>92</sup> The images of "carefree loiterings of deer on sand-dunes" (*Bang-i-Dara*), caravans stopping at pools

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<sup>92</sup> Prof. Muhammad Munawwar, *Iqbal: Poet Philosopher of Islam* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1992), pp. 16.

of water surrounded by palm trees, journeys without milestones, remains of burnt-out fire and pieces of tent robe on the soft velvet-like desert sand become frequent. The poem entitled 'Mosque of Cordoba' was composed in Spain about a Spanish mosque, and yet it is suffused with the Arabian spirit. The columns of the mosque are compared to a thick grove of Syrian desert date-palms.

The names of the nations used in the words - Irish, English, Arabian, Japanese, Pakistani, Indian - are only geographic terms and in this sense do not come into conflict with any ideology. But in the political literature of the present day, the word "country" has not only a geographical connotation but also an idea, a principle governing the form of human society that has a history and tradition of thought, iconography and vocabulary that give reality, and is, from this point of view, a political concept. One of the methods that Iqbal uses to identify national concern is to stud his poetry with the names of Muslim places. This use of precise geographical locations is a manifestation of his allegiance to Islam.

Iqbal could at times complain of the blind bitter undisciplined country he was living in. He denounced ignorant crowds, and lamented lack of leadership among his people but he never flinched from an unstinted commitment to his ideology, and land becomes an emblem of his ideology: separate identity, pride, an ideal of life and civilization, a dignified image counter to the insult hurled at him by colonialism. This imaginatively projected base helps him to free his people from foreign political and cultural control.

A study of colonial writer's landscape descriptions strikes one by the entirely foreign terms of reference.<sup>93</sup> They aimed to create an empathy between them and the colonial milieu. Their focus was on their individual experience and their home- sickness. The scenic details that they depicted emphasized the exotic element and bore little relationship to the actual landscape. Landscape was observed to study its material influence on the indigenous traits of the natives, who were either condescended to, or made fun of. Colonial eyes could not see any beauty in the native scenery. Kipling

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<sup>93</sup> Hugh Ridley, *Images of Imperial Rule* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1983), pp. 63-72.

asserted that in "India there are no half tints worth noticing"<sup>94</sup> Frequently there was a negative account of colonial scenery. Indo-Pak Subcontinent's vast stretches of land and Arabia's desert were shown as without scruple or sympathy for the English settlers who were the heroes in colonial literature. Colonized forests, deserts and mountains became nightmarish, merciless and harsh. This emphasis on the extraordinarily cruel aspect of the native land and weather helped to preserve the strongly idealistic belief in colonialism. The native country itself was held responsible for the crimes of the settlers. The suggestion was that the colonists had succumbed to the barbarism of the native land rather than to the inherent cruelty of colonialism. Colonial writers harsh scene - setting aimed at suspending normal moral judgement in their readers. Their argument was that nobody could be a saint in such hellish scenes.

Iqbal looked around with loving eyes, and found the landscape of his country beautiful and soul-refreshing. Iqbal does not feel himself scorched by the implacable sun of the Arabian desert. It is a pleasure for him to see the sun rising and setting in the silence of the desert. In his poem "Khizr-e-Rah" Iqbal compares the morning star in the desert to Gabriel's brow, and the caravaneers around the pool of water are like the faithful around the fountain Salsabil in paradise. The desert air is clean, there are no dust particles in it. Leaves of date palms are washed, and the sand is soft like velvet. Iqbal's camel-drivers are silhouetted as dignified, brave, freedom-loving figures against Arabian landscape.

Colonial literature in its description of the occupied country's landscape used language suggestive of "a fantasy of dominance and appropriation".<sup>95</sup> The captive country uncontestedly presents itself to the colonial eye. However, native land as it spreads before the eyes of Iqbal challenges foreign presence. Awesome peaks of mountains, turbulent rivers and majestic deserts defy invasion. the "winds of the wilderness" which sweep through Iqbal's landscape "temper the sword/that soldiers of righteousness draw in the field" (Gabriel's Wing). Iqbal calls the majestic Himalaya "rampart of Hindustan's

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>95</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 60.

domain" (Bang-i-Dara). The snow-capped mountains have awesome grandeur. It is the guardian which blocked the

onslaught of many invaders in the past. He inhabits his landscape with an idealised version of crusaders, who are ever on the alert, and bid defiance to the enemies. These "sentinels of nature" (Bang-i-Dara) live dangerously, hurl a challenge to the infidels and face the danger fearlessly with laughing lips. They are like an eagle which scorns ease, and is ever ready to swoop upon the enemy.

In colonial literature, the crossing of a river, or climbing mountain was mentioned without any reference to their political or cultural significance. To Iqbal, the appearance of native landscape did not convey only delight, but was bound up, with the idea of a glorious past. This secondary and derived interest in place supersedes the primary and simple physical delight in the scene. He establishes a connection between place, history and native traditions.

In his address to Himalaah, Iqbal uses the antiquity and the scenic beauty of the Himalayas as background to project his love for his country. In his patriotic fervour, Iqbal increases its stature more than mount Sinai. These mountains rank so high in his esteem that Iqbal lands the boat of Noah on its heights rather than on any other mountain in the Mediterranean ocean.

The values of the old history of India are imprinted on the majestic peaks of. Himalayas. The poem 'Himalaya' is an investigation into origins, roots and native authenticity. Iqbal extols the ancient Indian culture which like a beacon glowed and illumined the rest of the world. He wants the passage of time to take a reverse course so that he could see with his own eyes the past grandeur of India.

Fancy, bring back to life the same old morn and eve,  
changing time, more swiftly back to ancient past"

*(Bang-e-Dara).*

The scenic beauty of the landscape in Iqbal is not simply an idyllic description of appreciation of the purely aesthetic charm of nature. the

movement that Iqbal makes from the landscape to the past reassures him that he belongs to a culture which can boast of a grand ancient heritage, second to none. Iqbal recalls the days when the Muslims landed on the banks of Ganges!

The waters of the ganges! Do you still remember

The days when our caravan halted by your banks

*(Bang-i-Dara)*

Sicily, Spain, Samarkand and Bokhara evoke memories of the throne-shaking power of the Muslims in the past. Sight and memory are interwoven. He feels that the breeze of Cordova is still fragrant with the perfume of Hejaz and Yemen.

It is natural that in the construction of national consciousness, different components would be stressed by different people in different times at different places-Iqbal philosophizes the concept of country; Iqbal's concept is that country is neither a material object to be deified nor an inert fact of nature. Men make their own history and what they make, they extend it to geography. As both geographical and cultural entities, regions are man-made. Geographical rootedness can deter individual and national progress This dynamic concept of territorial unit helps Iqbal to transcend an adherence to a petrified constricting past. Moreover, it facilitates a move away from parochial ties to cosmopolitanism:

Now Brotherhood has been so cut to shreds

That instead of the Community

The Country has been given pride of place

(Mysteries of Selflessness).

According to Iqbal's belief, "Islam is not earthbound. It aims at shaping a human society by the commingling of races and nationalities".<sup>96</sup> Iqbal

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<sup>96</sup> Quoted by Professor Muhammad Munawwar in Iqbal: Poet Philosopher of Islam (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1992), pp. 97.)

ultimately transcends space and soars high to roam in the ethereal regions  
(Javid Nama) transcending all the animosities and hostilities, eliminating all  
the racial, religious and territorial distinctions:

I have seen, the contrivings of West and East-

Prevent the destinies of West and East ...

Abandon the East, be not spellbound by the West

(Javid Nama).