

IQBAL'S DETERMINATION

NAJAD AL-ATTAS

Berita Harian (Malay Language Daily of Singapore) Friday 3rd March 2000 (26 Zulka'dah 1420) Page 17 reported: Iqbal's Determination should be evoked again. Is the determination of Muhammad Iqbal among us? For Professor Annemarie Schimmel, 78 years, this determination has decreased.

Seeing the situation in Pakistan and the Muslims in India today, this determination should re-emerge, she said, "Muhammad Iqbal has endowed his spirit in poems and beautiful masterpieces that deeply touch his soul. The Muslim generation of today should inculcate this spirit again," said the Professor that was attracted to the Eastern poet-philosopher since 1946

According to her, Iqbal was ahead of his time because of his strong views in most of his poems, especially those in Persian and some in Urdu. Iqbal's masterpieces in prose are limited and the most popular one is the '*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*' that was delivered in six lectures in 1930 to three universities in Madras, Hyderabad and Mysore and published later on with the addition of a seventh Lecture.

According to her, Iqbal (born 9th November 1877 and died 21st April 1938) was a modern Muslim personality who managed to absorb not only the knowledge of Islam but also Western knowledge and philosophy Iqbal's excellence was shown in his poems, compositions and thesis about the expansion of Sufism in Persia and was given a Doctorate of Philosophy from Munich University. His thesis included the ideas of Goethe (Germany's great philosopher) and William Shakespeare (English Dramatist) which interests Professor Schimmel

"From his masterpieces, you can feel the depth of Iqbal's spirit as a Muslim man who is balanced and is highly competent in his words" said Professor Schimmel in an interview at the residence of the Pakistan High Commissioner to Singapore, Mr Toheed Ahmad. He gave a speech on Iqbal on 23 February at RELC Hotel

Back to Spirit

The main problem that Muslims encounter, according to Professor Schimmel, in facing modern challenges, is the slacking spirit or 'nur Islam'. Actually, great Muslim personalities like Iqbal have pioneered the path to evoke this spirit

“Iqbal enlightened his people when the Indian sub - continent was undergoing the challenges of independence. He motivated and showed that Islam is still relevant even when being faced with the emergence of European Science” he said

According to history, Iqbal was one of the personalities that formulated the idea of the Islamic state of Pakistan, an education system that combines both Islam and Science, the eradication of illiteracy, poverty and the rights of women to education

Although a self-righteous person, he realised that the separation of Pakistan and India was a practical decision in reducing bloodshed because of prominent differences since the old days

In his three years in Europe (1905-1908) and after having obtained many awards because of his scientific excellence, Iqbal found that there was still room for success. His trip was motivated by his teacher in Lahore, Professor Thomas Arnold who later taught at Cambridge University Besides this, there were three points he made about the Europeans

Firstly, they are ravenous about progress

Secondly, Science, mentioned Iqbal, expanded life-chances

Thirdly, capitalism or competition in Europe were leading to war. His assumptions were right as World War I broke in Europe (1914-1918), as well as the second which was more terrible (1938-945)

The Strength of Islam

With a strong Islamic family background and having been exposed to European cultures, Iqbal began to form a broad vision. Besides being a Doctorate of Philosophy, he was also a lawyer from Lincoln's Inn, Britain. During his time, he was considered to be an educationist on par with

Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi and Sir Ross Masud (son of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who was from Aligarh University)

To Iqbal, said Professor Schimmel, the strength of Islam can be obtained by:

Return to Solidarity

“It is known that Muslim countries are both rich and poor. Their population is also great. However, Muslims are not united. I have experienced with the Muslims in Germany, the Turkish and non-Turkish, the conservatives and liberals. Each and everyone of them had their own ideas but in the end, nothing was achieved” said Professor Schimmel who has lived in many Muslim countries, especially Turkey, Iran and Pakistan

Creating the Arts

Iqbal used poems to express the thoughts of his people from poetry about the tears of orphans (*Nala-I-Yatim*, from Lahore in 1900) to lengthy poetry, *Javid Nama* which was regarded as great as the European poem of the 15th century, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. In his last masterpiece, *Armughan-I-Hijaz*, he bid farewell and reminded all the Muslims to be courteous as was enjoined by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)

The role of poetry is as ancient as Islam. The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) praised poets who fought in the path of Allah. However, after the invasion of the West, Islamic poetry was weakened. Iqbal was the one who lighted the fire of Islamic poetry.

Resolute and Determined

To continue to serve to the people without giving burden to the families, Iqbal led a simple life. He constantly found time to preach for the sake of inspiring especially during the independence of India.

The ruler of Bhopal sympathised and gave 500 rupees from his pension every month. With this, in 1931, he resigned from law so that he could write and meet the people at home. He placed his bed in his garden where he rested, wrote poetry and entertained guests

“Iqbal was not a business teacher like what is needed today. However in his writings especially his poetry, his future insights could be seen in depth. “He could foresee the process of test-tube babies, war and advanced communication systems. Imagine! These happened during the last century. Clearly, he wanted Muslims to have a broad vision of the future” said Professor Schimmel who urged that Iqbal’s masterpieces to be studied in the original language, Persian and Urdu, to understand the greatness of this Asian personality. *“It is known that Muslim countries are both rich and poor. Their population is also great. However, Muslims are not united. I have experienced with the Muslims in Germany, the Turkish and non-Turkish, the conservatives and liberals. Each and everyone of them had their own ideas but in the end, nothing was achieved”* – Professor Schimmel

Biography

Name: Professor Annemarie Schimmel

Birth: Erfurt Germany, 7th April 1922

Education: Doctorate of Philosophy in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Islamic Arts from University of Berlin 1941

Experiences: Taught at Marburg University, Ankara University, Bonn University, Harvard University and received honours from Pakistan, Austria, Holland and first class honours from her homeland, Germany. She was also the President of International Islamic Organization since 1980

Background: Probably due to being a descendant of generations of frequent travellers, Professor Schimmel has travelled almost all over the world

Islam was introduced to her at the age of 8 during which she read a story of a mystic Arab youth who said, “Human beings sleep. When they die, they actually live”. When Professor Schimmel was 18, she realized that those words were from the *hadith*. As an outstanding student who loved reading, she completed her studies in a short period of time. The war in Germany which led to the hatred of the Jews did not suppress her determination. During World War II, Professor Schimmel was an interpreter after mastering the Arabic Language. Her interest in Islam was spreading since then and one

of the countries which attracted her, was Pakistan, Iqbal's country of origin. Her fluency in Persian, Urdu, Arabic, German and English made her a famous interpreter and bridge joining East and West. She is also attracted to with the poetry of Jalal-ud-din Rumi, one of the greatest Sufis of Turkey.