

A STUDY OF IQBAL'S POETICAL PRAYERS

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The great artists and poets have usually expressed their free and spontaneous religious feelings in the form of poetry. There are many prayers which are written as poems. This does not show that all poetry is prayer or that all prayers are poetry, but simply that they share many common aspects. Wordsworth defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling." This statement seems to include many personal prayers of great artists and poets. Their prayers are "... a simple expression of whatever touches the heart, of need and longing, of moral struggle and artistic effort ... In impulsive, unrestricted words the great geniuses pour out their hearts before God." Iqbal, as one of the great poets of his time, also expressed his strong religious feelings in the form of poetical prayers. Perhaps, he is the only religious poet in twentieth century, who successfully unify his life with his prayer and poetry. He writes:

*Every moment is my prayer
That I may yet further fare,
Till my folly's governor
Says there no desert more.*

We select and analyze some of his poetical prayers in order to show clearly the place and function of prayer in the poems of Iqbal.

Iqbal's poetical masterpiece work is *Javid Nama*. The book begins with the *Poet's Prayer*. Iqbal here prays to God to be freed from the chain of serial time and to become eternal.

*Thou gavest me reason, give me madness too,
Show me the way to inward ecstasy.
I am a momentary thing: make me eternal,
Out of earthiness make me celestial.*

In another poem, he begs that he may be emancipated from the consciousness of finite time;

*O Saki! arise and pour wine into the cup,
Clear the vexation of time from my heart!*

According to Iqbal, prayer is not only a physical activity, but also spiritual. Body and spirit walk side by side in prayer. He articulates the meaning of prayer as follows;

*The call to prayer signalizes the two kinds of birth,
The first uttered by the lips, the second by the very soul.*

The Secrets of the Self ends with “An Invocation” in which Iqbal prays for “the sleepless eye and the passionate heart,” and “the strong faith of Abraham.” He also prays for “one old comrade” who could be “the mirror of mine, all-burning Love.”

*Give us the sleepless eye and the passionate heart,
Give us again the nature of quick-silver!
Show unto us one of thy manifest signs,
That the necks of our enemies may be bowed!*

...

*We are travellers; give us resignation as our goal!
Give us the strong faith of Abraham!
Make us know the meaning of ‘There is no God.’
Make us acquainted with the mystery of ‘except Allah!’
I who burn like a candle for the sake of others
Teach myself to weep like that candle.
O God! A tear that is heart-enkindling,
Passionful, wrong forth by pain, peace-consuming.*

...

*Or give me one old comrade
To be the mirror of mine all mine all -burning love!*

...

*In the midst of a company I am alone.
I beg of Thy grace a sympathising friend,
And adept in the mysteries of my nature,
A friend endowed with madness and wisdom,
One that knoweth not phantom of vain things,*

...

In another poem, Iqbal urges the Muslim to work hard. He reminds them not to seek their daily bread from the charity of other people, even though they may be indigent and miserable. He encourages the Muslim to pray to God to give them courage to face the blows of fortune. God loves anybody who earns his living by his effort, not by destitution. Iqbal is aware of the

fact that asking or begging, dependence on others weakens the Self. The individual and society should have self-reliance and self-confidence.

*By asking, poverty is made more abject;
By begging, the beggar is made poorer,
Asking disintegrates the Self,
And deprives of illumination of the Sinai-bush of the self.*

...

Seek not thy daily bread from the bounty of another,
Seek not water from the fountain of the sun,

...

Pray God for courage ! Wrestle with Fortune!
Do not sully the honour of the pure religion!
He who swept the rubbish of idols out of the Ka'ba
Said that God loves a man that earns his living.
Woe to him that accepts bounty from another's table.
And lets his neck be bent with benefits!
He hath consumed himself with the lightning of the favours bestowed
on him,
He hath sold his honour for a paltry coin,
Happy the man who is thirsting in the sun.
Does not crave of Khizr a cup of water
His brow is not moist with the shame of beggary;
He is a man still, not a piece of clay.
That noble youth walks under heaven
With his head erect like the pine.
Are his hands empty? The more is he master of himself.
Do his fortunes languish? The more alert is he.

Creativity is the key concept of Iqbal's thought. According to him, a creative life is worth living, because life is about to create and act. Iqbal says that "In action lies the secret of life, Longing for creation is the law of life." Muslims are no longer creative in fields of life, such as philosophy, science, art, social and universal matters; therefore, they are not considered the creator of history and life in the modern world. This deadly state is entirely against the dynamic spirit of Islam from Iqbalian perspective. Carlyle argues that "The essence of originality is not novelty but sincerity." This statement expresses an important attitude of Muslims towards life, because they face the dilemma being sincere in their religion and being creative in their life.

Iqbal rejects such a fruitless attitude and encourages Muslims to be creative without any limitation:

*Cut your path with an axe of your own
It is a sin to tread the beaten paths of others!
If you achieve something unique and original,
Even a sin becomes a virtue!*

The source of creativity is the human heart, which is the locus of human being. *Heart* is directly related to *life*, since there is no reality behind life without function of heart. To Iqbal, the state of heart makes man as *human* and his life as *human life*. Iqbal prays for an active, free, sentimental, and longing heart, which is indispensable for a constructive and creative life:

*To the Muslim's heart, give O Lord that inspiration,
That warms up heart, to soul it gives enervation.
To Farukh Vale's each atom, brighten once more,
Give fire to the faith, to desire animation.
To one in fun lacking, give eyes all piercing,
Whatever I beheld, to others make revelation.
Expanse of a desert, be for a city-inured,
To the deer deviated, take to destination.
To desolate heart give, Resurrection's stirring,
To vacant camel-saddle, give Leila's collocation.
In darkness of this age, to every aching heart,
To love give that spot, eclipsing moon's lumination.
Give self-respect of shore, freedom of the river,
Like pleiades be the objects, in their exaltation.
Let Love be undefiled, daring be the Truth.
Breast be lit with light, flask-like hearts' saturation.
Give a heart full of feeling, for those who are feeling,
For tumult of this day, give future's deliberation.
Of this deserted mead, I am nightingale moaning.
For effectiveness O God! This is supplication.*

Iqbal is aware that modern man forgets what it means being human and Muslims forget what it means being Muslim. According to Iqbal, neither being human nor being Muslim is a finished and fixed business. Human beings and Muslims must always ask the following questions: What do they mean when they say I am a human? What do they mean when they say I am a Muslim? Being human and being Muslim is a dynamic process of self-

realization. This process runs from *being* Human and Muslim to *becoming* human and Muslim. Iqbal prays for a dynamic self-realization: "In every mote's heart is this prayer: 'O Seer, see me, see me, And make me be.'"

Human being must be human, which is the ultimate aim of human life. The process of being human is a fruit of the realization of individual. The real human being has a real individual, a unique ego in Iqbalian thought. The strife for a unique ego starts from the earliest period of life, not later period. Iqbal considers every child as a unique and important ego and the period of childhood as the formative period of Ego. Children are not little and insignificant creatures, but they are the most important and the highest existents in our lives. Iqbal locates children at the centre of life, not at the periphery. He writes a poem, which is called *Child's Prayer*. In this prayer, Iqbal asks for the highest aims of life, such as true, creative, passionate, and meaningful life as a child:

*To a solemn prayer, my wish does prod,
Like a candle be, my life O God!
Lifted through my being, be the pall of gloom,
Places I sparkle, with lustre in its bloom.
All over my land, such a grace I shower,
As in an orchard, radiant is a flower.
Very like a moth, be my life O Lord!
Service my mission, to the down-trodden,
Succour my passion, to the crest-fallen.
Save me O God! from every form of evil,
Lead me to the right path, away from the devil.*

Human being strives for a true knowledge of God, universe, and man. All human activities, such as philosophy, science, religion, art and so on, are productions of this desire. Although man has achieved to produce great philosophical theories, scientific discoveries, artistic works, he fails to unify these different provinces of human knowledge. As a result of this failure, scientific, philosophical, and artistic achievements do not bring happiness and welfare to human life, but disasters, fiascos, and disappointments. In Iqbalian thought, there must be unity in human being and human knowledge. In other words, without unity of heart and head, no branch of human knowledge would provide happiness and joy to human life. Iqbal prays for unity of heart-head and real happiness as its fruit:

I pray thee, ravish not the moon gleam from my night,

*O Saqi, thou holdest in thy cup night's full bright orb.
Far distant of the vale of love, and yet sometimes,
Ever that age-long path a solitary sigh will bound;
In strife and constant search loose not thy grasp
Upon the skirt of hope because, sometimes riches
by the way are found.*

Noble dying and living is an important theme in the poems of Iqbal. According to him, death is just a stage towards the perfect Ego. There is no conflict between death and life. Although Freud considers the death instinct (*libido moriendi*) as the destructive power, Iqbal presents it as a constructive energy. Invariably, people think that the time of death is the most dreadful experience in the life of man, but the expression of Iqbal persuades us to consider the time of death as if it were the first wedding night. The harmony between life and death is one of the most important ideas of Iqbal. He regards death as a passage from one room to another, *mortem suscepit cantando*. He welcomes death in the following poem:

*The Mu'min prays to God for the death
This is followed by resurrection!
That other death, the goal of the eager quest,
The last affirmation of God's greatness on the battle-field!
The wars of the kings are but loot and destruction
The war of the Mu'min is the tradition of the Prophet!
What is the Mu'min's war? A migration towards the Beloved!
A withdrawal from the world to seek refuge with the Beloved!*

There is a deep enthusiasm in the depths of the soul of Iqbal for eternal life. He is unhappy, because of the limitations of this life. There is a strong voice of protest against finite life in the poems of Iqbal. According to him, a real homeland for his soul is its immortal dwelling place. Regarding this desire, he presents his complaint as a driving motive in the following poem, which is entitled 'Prayer':

*O you that from nature's tavern filled my cup of life
With fire of my soul, a flask to declaim for me
Let heat of my plaint become incentive for my zest
To convert my pinch of dust into fiery flame for me
From my dust when die I must, raise a rose in bloom
To represent in chequered spot, desert aflame for me.*

One of the most important poetical prayers of Iqbal is “The Prayer of ñ«riq.” ñ«riq bin Ziy«d, the Muslim general, was the conqueror of Spain and one of the most remarkable heroes in Muslim history. When his troops were at war with the Spaniards, who were superior to them in numbers and equipment, he prayed to God for help at that fateful hour. Nadwi argues that “He was following the example of the Prophet who had led the first Muslim army and, after marshalling his troops on the battle-field of Badr, withdrawn to a quiet corner, placed his forehead on the ground and cried out for divine help. ‘ O God!’ he had said. ‘If these men are killed today Thou shalt not be worshipped in the world.’ Iqbal wrote this remarkable prayer of ñ«riq as a poem.

...

*The Ghazis, these mysterious bondsmen of Thine,
To whom Thou hast granted zest for Divinity.
Deserts and oceans fold up at their kick,
And mountains shrink into mustard seeds.
Indifferent to the riches of the world it makes,
What a curious thing is the joy of love?
Martyrdom is the desired end of the Mu'min,
Not spoils of war, kingdom and rule!
For long has tulip in the garden been waiting,
It needs a robe dipped in Arab blood.*

...

*Thou made the desert-dwellers absolutely unique,
In thought, in perception, in the morning, Az«n;
What, for centuries, life had been seeking,
It found the warmth in the hearts of these men;
Death is the opener of the heart's door,
It's not the journey's end in their sight.
Revive, once again, in the heart of the Mu'min,
Lightning that was in the prayer of Leave Not.
Wake up ambition in the breasts, O Lord;
Transform the glance of the Mu'min into a sword.*

Fazlur RaÁm«n notes that Iqbal is considered by Westerners as a romanticist of the glorified past of Islam. Cragg is one of the Western writers who described Iqbal as a romanticist. In our opinion, this impression is inaccurate. For example, in the example of ñ«riq bin Ziy«d, Iqbal's

relationship with him is not merely the historical recall of a hero of the past, but a sense of concrete example, a living inspiration in life and in the lives of all Muslims through all ages. As we have seen, he proclaims a potentially glorious future for Muslims and the supreme value of Islam in their lives.

The modern situation of the Muslim world disturbs Iqbal. He expresses his feelings in his well-known prayer poem *Complaint and Answer*. Iqbal protests the passive and silenced attitude of Muslims about their modern crisis, therefore, he speaks suddenly, loudly and with strong feeling in the presence of God. He exclaims:

*Why must I forever suffer loss, oblivious to gain
Why think not upon the morrow, drowned in grief for yesterday?
Fellow-bard, am I a rose, condemned to silence all the way?
No; the burning power of song bids me be bold and not to faint;
Dust be in my mouth, but God-He is the theme of my complaint.
True, we are forever, famous for our habit to submit;
Yet we tell our tale of grief, as by our grief we are constrained.
We are but a muted lyre; yet a lament inhabits it-
If a sigh escapes our lips, no more can sorrow be contained.
God, give ear to the complaint of us, Thy servants tried and true;
Thou art used to songs of praise; now hear a note of protest*

After he has mentioned the historical struggles of Muslims for the glory of the name of God, he asks why God shows mercy to non-Muslims. Why has God forgotten the believer who cries day and night that He is the Greatest One, and who has been the torchbearer of Divine Unity for more than 1300 years? Why should the infidels possess castles and houris already here in this world whereas the poor Muslims live only in the hope of paradisaal houris and castles?

*Yet the charge is laid against us we have played the faithless part;
If disloyal we have proved, hast Thou deserved to win our heart?
Other creeds claim other peoples, and they have their sinners too;
There are lowly men among them, and men drunken with conceit;
Some are sluggards, some neglectful, some are vigilant and true;
Multitudes disdain Thy Name in loathing utter and complete;
But the showers of Thy mercy other thirsting souls assuage,
Only on the hapless Muslims falls the lightning of Thy rage.*

...

Into every heart we struck the impress of Thy Unity

*And beneath the dagger's lightning preached the Message, Lord, of Thee.
 Tell us this, and tell us truly-who uprooted Khyber's gate?
 Or who overthrew the city where great Caesar reigned in pride?
 Who destroyed the gods that the hands of others laboured to create,
 Who the marshalled armies of the unbelievers drove aside?
 Who extinguished from the altars of Iran that sacred flame,
 Who revived the dimmed remembrance of Yazdan's immortal Name?
 Strove there ever other nation in the cause of Thee alone,
 Bore there ever other people battle's anguish for Thy sake?
 Whose the sword that seized the world, and ruled it as its very own?
 Whose the loud Allahu Akbar that compelled the earth to wake?
 Whose the dread that kept the idols covering and terrified
 So that, heads cast down and humbled, 'He is God, the One.' they cried?*

...

*Who have not the wit or grace of converse in society;
 But that infidels should own the houris and the palaces, woe ! (sic.)
 While the wretched Muslims must with promises contended be.
 Now no more for us Thy favours and Thy old benevolence-
 How and where for is thy pristine kindness departed now?
 Why no more are worldly riches among Muslims to be found,
 Since Thy power is as of old beyond compute and confined.*

Then, Iqbal finds answer for his "Complaint" in his second poem "Answer". This spontaneous protest disturbs angels and stars, and God Himself responds with the reasons for the condition of the Muslims. God replies that Muslims lost the true spirit of worship; the reason for the wealth of the infidels is not their irreligious life, but their faithful work, since it is a necessity of the divine justice. According to God's answer, the fundamental reason for the decadence of the Muslim is the fact that there is neither fire of faith nor Divine love in their hearts; they are heedless of the love of the Prophet; they have transformed their universal Islamic brotherhood and egalitarianism into nationalism and tribalism; therefore, their countries, wealth, and natural resources have been colonized by imperialists.

*Listening, the ancient Sphere said, 'Someone seems to be about;'
 Cried the Planets, There is someone, in the upper ether pure;'
 'Not so lofty,' called the Moon, 'Down on the earth there, not a doubt;'
 'No,' the Milky-Way retorted. 'He is hiding here, for sure.'
 Guardian Rizwan, be if any, my complaint distinctly heard;*

'He is man, just newly driven out of Eden.' he averred.
All the angles in amazement shouted, 'Why, whose voice is it?'
Dwellers in the firmament were baffled by the mystery.

...

Hands are impotent and nerveless, hearts without faith and infidel,
The Community heartbreak to their Prophet and a shame;
Gone on idol-breakers, in their places idol-makers dwell;
Abrahams their fathers were; the children merit yzār's name.
New and strange the band of drinkers,
and their wine is strange and new,
A new shrine to house their Ka'bah, new and strange the idols too.
Once the tulip of the desert was of elegance the queen,
In the season of the roses reigned her loveliness supreme;
Then in every Muslim eye the burning love of God was seen,
The Beloved you name as fickle was the heart adoring dream.
If you will, with one more constant a new bond of service sign;
The communion of the Prophet in a narrower space confine.
Very heavy on your spirits weights the charge of morning prayer;
Lie far would you be sleeping, than rise up to worship Me.
Ramadan is too oppressive for your tempers free to bear;
Tell me now, do you consider that the law of loyalty? (sic.)
Nations come to birth by Faith; let Faith expire, and nations die;
So when gravitation ceases, the thronged stars asunder fly.

...

Did you say that Muslims must with promises contended be?
That is a complaint unfounded, and by common sense abhorred;
The Creator's law is justice, out of all eternity-
Infidels who live like Muslims surely merit Faith's reward.

...

One and common are the profit and the loss the people bear.
One and common are your Prophet, your religion, and your creed,
One the Holy Sanctuary, one Koran, one God you share;
But to act as one, and Muslims-that would every bound exceed.
Here sectarianism triumphs, class caste there rule the day;
Is it thus you hope to prosper, to regain, your ancient sway?
Who abandoned the example of the Chosen Messenger?
Who took temporal advantage as their touchstone of success?

Who are dazzled by strange customs, alien usages prefer?

For the manners of their fathers who a faint disgust profess?

It can be concluded that Iqbal did not use poetry for the sake of satisfaction of his artistic sentiments. But he expresses his individual and social ideals in his poetical prayers. Transformation of individuals and society and rebuilding a new man and a new society are the main themes of his poetical prayers. Although there can be found some mystical motives in his thought, his poetical prayers present the ‘social-prophetic voice,’ rather than the ‘individual-mystical cry.’

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