From Young to Old: a Comparative Study of Iqbal and T. S. Eliot

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ABSTRACT

Eliot's first professionally published poem appeared in Munroe's magazine in June 1915. The title was 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. It was the time when Iqbal was reading the final proofs of *his* first "professionally published" poem, 'The Secrets of the Self' (*Asrar-i-Khudi*), in Persian. His poem appeared soon afterwards in September. The two poems, each cataclysmic in its own way, could not have come at a more critical moment. In 1915, the world was just beginning to realize, painfully, that the war started last year might not end soon and might even merit to be called a "World War". Hence, it was a fateful year when the British Empire was compelled to make, among other choices, a choice between two poets: Iqbal and Eliot, both of whom would live and die as citizens of the British Empire. Almost necessarily, the legacies of these two poets were destined to be different. Iqbal's poems were quoted and are still quoted, diversely but Eliot did not seek such popularity and did not get it. This article gives a comparison of the both poets that the "morning breeze" fulfilling Iqbal's poetic desire, approaching the "the Western sage" is a call to reconcile reason with love, and intellect with heart, and to rebuild the world in a new fashion. The Western sage, if he turns out to be none other than Eliot, may respond to this by saying: We are the hollow men, we are the stuffed men… headpiece filled with straw.

The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine—may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his ample genius!

This is how the American patron of arts, Harriet Munroe (1860-1936), described her mission statement while launching her elitist magazine, *Poetry,* from Chicago in 1912. The "great poet" she was looking for appeared only three years later. He was, of course, the young American T. S. Eliot (1888-1965). Eliot's first professionally published poem appeared in Munroe's magazine in June 1915. The title was 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

Quite interestingly, June 1915 was the time when Iqbal was reading the final proofs of *his* first "professionally published" poem, 'The Secrets of the Self' (Asrar-i-Khudi), in Persian (although he had been a leading poet since the beginning of the century, he had never got his poems collected or published "professionally"). His poem appeared soon afterwards in September. Unlike Eliot, Iqbal's poem was self-published. It came out in the form of a little book, of which only 500 copies were printed in the first round.

The two poems, each cataclysmic in its own way, could not have come at a more critical moment. In 1915, the world was just beginning to realize, painfully, that the war started last year might not end soon and might even merit to be called a "World War" (or at least the "Great European War"). Hence, it was a fateful year when the British Empire was compelled to make, among other choices, a choice between two poets: Iqbal and Eliot, both of whom would live and die as citizens of the British Empire (Iqbal was a citizen of the Empire since he was born in the British India, while Eliot became a naturalized citizen of Britain in 1927). Paradoxically, no two poets may have been more different from each other.

When starting the magazine *Poetry,* the elitist Munroe had hoped to liberate her anticipated "great poet" from "the limitations imposed by the popular magazine". She stated in a circular sent to poets:

> While the ordinary magazines must minister to a large public little interested in poetry, this magazine will appeal to, and it may be hoped, will develop, a public primarily interested in poetry as an art, as the highest, most complete expression of truth and beauty.

One needs little imagination to see how this platform, which became the launching pad for the young Eliot, was precisely the opposite of the two platforms from which Iqbal had launched his literary career some fifteen years earlier. He had recited his first long poem in the annual session of Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam in February 1900. The event was a fundraiser attended by "a large public little interested in poetry" – the sort of thing loathed by Harriet. Iqbal became a regular feature of such fundraisers, year after year, right up to the last year of his life.

His other platform was *Makhzan,* just the kind of "popular magazine" Harriet considered detrimental to the cause of the poetic art. It catered to all kind of audience, from the princes to the paupers (and an unflattering reminder of this is the diversity of paid advertisements carried by it: from the scholarly work of Iqbal on political economy to the cheap aphrodisiacs of the quacks).

Almost necessarily, the legacies of these two poets were destined to be different. Iqbal's poems were quoted and are still quoted, diversely, by religious preachers, socialists, atheists, secularist liberals, intellectuals, scholars, students, rulers, politicians begging for votes and beggars begging for food. At least as late as 1948, the poems recited from the pulpit for motivating the believers to piety were also being sung in the red light areas by dancing girls for pleasing a debauched audience. Even today, through modern renditions, Iqbal is competing with the writers of pop songs on the charts of bestselling albums. Eliot did not seek such popularity and did not get it.

But the most remarkable difference in their legacies was that Eliot lived long enough to witness the downfall of the empire of his adopted nation, and saw it losing its possession of its territories. Iqbal died before he could see the birth of the sovereign state which he had predicted for his people, but in all likelihood he died with the certainty that his prediction would not go wrong. Subsequently, the newborn state would be proclaimed to be his brainchild and his people would often be heard saying that they might not have gained possession of the country which they won, had he not delivered the message he delivered at the crucial period of history when he delivered it. Whether the message that Eliot delivered, at the crucial period of history when he delivered it, also had a role in bringing the downfall of his adopted nation and reducing it from an empire on which the sun never set to a land where it almost does not rise for a good part of the year, is a question which the admirers of Eliot have not considered so far.

1915: From dusk till dawn

'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by T. S. Eliot was published in the American magazine, *Poetry,* in June 1915. 'Secrets of the Self' (*Asrar-i-Khudi*) was self-published by Iqbal in September the same year.

The concept of the "self" is central to both poems, with the difference that Iqbal's poem is a long treatise on the secrets of the self while Eliot's poem is much shorter and treats the subject indirectly in an impressionistic manner. However, the approach of the two poets towards the notion of the self is diametrically opposed to each other: while Iqbal openly advises his readers to the "strengthen" their "selves", and projects his own self as the harbinger of a new age, Eliot's protagonist protests meekly, "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord…"

Consistent with these differences, the two poems open with epigrams that are very different from each other. Eliot chooses lines from the *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) to be quoted at the beginning. In Dante's poem they are spoken by Guido de Montefeltro (1223-1298), eternally damned for giving evil advice to Pope Boniface VIII (c.1235-1303). The speaker has no chance of ever being released from hell: "If I thought that my answer were being made to someone who would ever return to earth, this flame would remain without further movement; but since no one has ever returned alive from this depth, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy."[1]

How different is the spirit of these lines from the verses of the *Divan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz* of Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), which Iqbal used as epigram in the definitive final edition of his poem in 1922:

دی شیخ با چراغ ہمی گشت گرد شہر
کز دام و دو ملولم و انسانم آرزوست
زین ہمرہان سست عناصر دلم گرفت
شیر خدا و رستم دستانم آرزوست
گفتم کہ یافت می نشود جستہ ایم ما
گفت آنچہ یافت می نشود آنم آرزوست

[Translation]

Last night the Elder wandered about the city with a lantern
saying, 'I am weary of demon and monster: man is my desire.'

My heart is sick of these feeble-spirited fellow-travellers;
the Lion of God and Rustam-i Dastan, are my desire.
I said, 'The thing we quested after is never attained.'
He said, 'The unattainable—that thing is my desire!'[2]

Even without this epigram, the poem in its first edition in 1915 opened with a 'Prelude' (retained in the subsequent editions), in which the poet claimed that although he did not care to be heard by his contemporaries, he was sure to be heard by the posterity, because "many a poet was born after his death… and journeyed forth again from nothingness, like roses blossoming o'er the earth of his grave." Exactly the opposite of what Guido is contemplating in the lines quoted by Eliot!

Regarding Eliot's use of this epigram, the critics Frank Kermode and John Hollander have observed that the persona of the poem, i.e. the fictitious "J. Alfred Prufrock" through whom Eliot speaks in the poem, "also tries to speak—though of a much less dramatic life—with a similar candor; on the assumption that whatever hell he is in, the reader is there also; or expecting… that to give such importance to his plight would simply gain him a rebuff."[3]

Just like Eliot, Iqbal also uses a fictitious persona as his mouthpiece. In the chapter where he intends to offer direct advice to his readers, he introduces "Mir Nijat Naqshband, a.k.a. Baba-i-Sihrai". However, while Eliot's Prufrock is a young man feeling old before his time, Iqbal's Baba is an old man feeling eternally youthful. Like Prufrock, Baba has also been in a hell and perceives the reader to be in a living hell as well ("You have cast knowledge of God behind you and squandered your religion for the sake of a loaf"), but unlike Prufrock and Montefeltro, Baba escaped from his hell and is now determined to rescue the reader.

To be fair on Eliot, it may be observed that he had behind him a new "tradition" initiated in 1857 with the publication of *The Flowers of Evil* by the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). In the prefatory poem addressed to the reader, Baudelaire had exclaimed, "Hypocrite reader! My likeness, my brother!" The poetry contained in that volume, and the new tradition emerging from it, was "hypocritical" in the sense that it remained non-committal while presenting "the flowers of evil", pre-requiring a similar outlook on life on part of the audience (and also, curiously enough, the writers of this new school became rather pharisaical in looking down upon the general public – something which a Rumi, a Shakespeare or a Goethe would never do).

However, Iqbal's theory of literature took care of this issue as well – the theory he propounded in the same poem which is being

discussed here, further expanding it in the revised edition three years later. According to this theory, societies thrived by listening to poets who presented beauty, idealism and hope; they perished by poets who presented ugliness and despair. Realism was no excuse ("Painters who submit before Nature depict Nature but lose thereby their own self," Iqbal would later say in *Persian Psalms*. "Their today has no reflection of tomorrow. It is wrong to seek beauty outside one's self since what ought to be is not before us.").

The first twelve lines of both poems are being given below as a starter for more detailed comparison by those who may be interested. Eliot's poem opens famously with the description of a diseased evening while Iqbal's poem opens with just the opposite: a bright dawn. Curious readers are encouraged to see what other points of contrast exist "between the lines".

Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

اسرار خودی

راہ شب چون مہر عالمتاب زد
گریۂ من بر رخ گل، آب زد
اشک من از چشم نرگس خواب شست
سبزۂ از ہنگامہ ام بیدار رست
باغبان زور کلامم آزمود
مصرعے کارید و شمشیرے درود
در چمن جز دانۂ اشکم نکشت
تار افغانم بہ پود باغ رشت
ذرہ ام مہر منیر آن من است
صد سحر اندر گریبان من است

خاک من روشن تر از جام جم است
محرم از نازادہائے عالم است

[Translation: Secrets of the Self]

When the world-illuming sun rushed upon Night like a brigand,
My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.
My tears washed away sleep from the eye of the narcissus,
My passion wakened the grass and made it grow.
The Gardener tried the power of my song,
He sowed my verse and reaped a sword.
In the soil he planted only the seed of my tears
And wove my lament with the garden, as warp and woof.
Tho' I am but a mote, the radiant sun is mine:
Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.
My dust is brighter than Jamshid's cup
It knows things that are yet unborn in the world.[4]

1917-19: Critical appreciations

The publication of 'Secrets of the Self' raised an outcry from certain quarters in the sub-continent, especially against Iqbal's criticism of decadent mysticism, the Greek philosopher Plato and the Persian poet Hafez of Shiraz. In about three years, Iqbal retracted from his criticism of Hafez altogether and modified his position on some of the Sufi masters, though he retained his position on the philosophy of Plato. In the meanwhile, he penned down a number of argumentative essays. Some of these, especially those concerning the principle of literary criticism, may be regarded as representative of ideas that were going to stay with him.

Interestingly, this was the period when Eliot was also busy writing essays on literary topics and formulating his theory of criticism, most famously in the essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', which was first published in *The Egoist* in 1919, and then included in *The Sacred Wood* the next year.

The following is a passage from Iqbal's most representative essay from this period, 'Our Prophet's Criticism of Contemporary Arabic Poetry' followed by a passage from Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. It might be interesting to see the contrasts between the literary theories propounded in these two passages.

Our Prophet's Criticism of Contemporary Arabic Poetry

Again the following verse of Antra of the tribe of Abs was read to our Prophet: "Verily I pass through whole nights of toil to merit a livelihood worth of an honourable man." The Prophet whose mission was to glorify life and to beautify all its trials was immensely pleased, and said to his companions: "The praise of an Arabian has

never kindled in me a desire to see him, but I tell you I do wish to meet the author of this verse."

Imagine the man, a single look at whose face was a source of infinite bliss to the looker desiring to meet an infidel Arab for his verse! What is the secret of this unusual honour which the Prophet wished to give to the poet? It is because the verse is so healthful and vitalising, it is because the poet idealises the pain of honourable labour. The Prophet's appreciation of this verse indicates to us another art-principle of great value – that that art is subordinate to life, not superior to it. The ultimate end of all human activity is Life-glorious, powerful, exuberant. All human art must be subordinated to this final purpose and the value of everything must be determined in reference to its life-yielding capacity. The highest art is that which awakens our dormant will-force, and nerves us to face the trials of life manfully. All that brings drowsiness and makes us shut our eyes to reality around – on the mastery of which alone life depends – is a message of decay and death. There should be no opium-eating in Art. The dogma of Art for the sake of Art is a clever invention of decadence to cheat us out of life and power.

Thus the Prophet's appreciation of Antra's verse gives us the ultimate principle for the proper evaluation of all arts.

Tradition and the Individual Talent

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism.

1917-1920: Shakespeare and Goethe

In 1910, Iqbal wrote in his private notebook, *Stray Reflections,* "To explain the deepest truths of life in the form of homely parables requires extraordinary genius. Shakespeare, Maulana Rum (Jalaluddin) and Jesus Christ are probably the only illustrations of this rare type of genius." Six years later, on the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, he contributed a poem in Urdu with English translation to the *Book of Homage to Shakespeare.* The poem, titled 'Shakespeare', is considered to be one of the greatest tributes ever presented to the Bard, and was permanently placed on a commemorative plaque at Shakespeare's Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 21, 2009.

In 1917, Iqbal offered a brief comparison of Shakespeare and Goethe in a series he was contributing under the heading 'Stray Thoughts' for *New Era,* a newspaper published from Lucknow (this

was also written originally in the private notebook in 1910 and later modified for publication). Three years later, Eliot also wrote about Shakespeare and Goethe in his essay 'Hamlet and His Problems', which appeared in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), a collection of his prose writings on literary topics.

The brief reflection of Iqbal and the opening sentences from Eliot's essay are given below. Although too brief to fully explain the thought, the passages still show us how much the two writers differed in their estimation of Shakespeare and Goethe – and quite remarkably, the Muslim thinker appears here as the best hope of the two European geniuses who are about to be displaced by the European critic.

Stray Thoughts

Both Shakespeare and Goethe rethink the thought of Divine Creation. There is, however, one important difference between them. The realist Englishmen rethinks the individual; the Idealist German, the universal. Faust is a seeming individual only. In reality, he is humanity individualised.

Hamlet and His Problems

Few critics have even admitted that *Hamlet* the play is the primary problem, and Hamlet the character only secondary. And Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order, but which through some weakness in creative power exercises itself in criticism instead. These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization. Such a mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge, who made of Hamlet a Coleridge; and probably neither of these men in writing about Hamlet remembered that his first business was to study a work of art. The kind of criticism that Goethe and Coleridge produced, in writing of Hamlet, is the most misleading kind possible.

1920-22: Two old men

'Gerontion' literally means "little old man" and is the title of a poem Eliot published in his anthology, *Poems* (1920). The protagonist is an old man, who, according to Frank Kermode and John Hollander, "is obviously in some ways the image of a moribund civilization."[5]

Two years later, Iqbal recited his poem 'Khizr of the Way' to an enthusiastic crowd at the annual fundraising event of Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore. The protagonist, like Gerontion, is an old man, but of a very different type: he is the ever-living guide who has drunk from the Fountain of Life and now, revealing the mysteries of

life, calls upon the meek to inherit the earth for their hour has come. If Gerontion is "the image of a moribund civilization", Khizr also reminisces about the calamities which Islam is facing throughout the world, but unlike Gerontion, he foresees an impending resurrection of his civilization in the immediate future. While Eliot's poem begins with a quote from Shakespeare, Iqbal's Khizr quotes from Rumi towards the end of the poem – both quotations are similar in spirit but have been used for very different purposes by Iqbal and Eliot respectively.

The first stanza of 'Gerontion' and the first stanza of Khizr's dialogue (which actually happens to be the third stanza of the poem) are given below.

Gerontion

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

خضر راہ

کیوں تعجب ہے مری صحرانوردی پر تجھے
یہ تگا پوئے دمادم زندگی کی ہے دلیل
اے رہین خانہ تو نے وہ سماں دیکھا نہیں
گونجتی ہے جب فضائے دشت میں بانگ رحیل
ریت کے ٹیلے پہ وہ آہو کا بے پروا خرام
وہ حضر بے برگ و ساماں، وہ سفر بے سنگ و میل
وہ نمود اختر سیماب پا ہنگام صبح
یا نمایاں بام گردوں سے جبین جبرئیل

وہ سکوت شام صحرا میں غروب آفتاب
جس سے روشن تر ہوئی چشم جہاں بین خلیل
اور وہ پانی کے چشمے پر مقام کارواں
اہل ایماں جس طرح جنت میں گرد سلسبیل
تازہ ویرانے کی سودائے محبت کو تلاش
اور آبادی میں تو زنجیری کشت و نخیل
پختہ تر ہے گردش پیہم سے جام زندگی
ہے یہی اے بے خبر راز دوام زندگی

[Translation: Khizr of the Way]

What is it to make you wonder, if I roam the desert waste?
Witness of enduring life is this unending toil and haste!
You, shut in by walls, have never known that moment when shrill
Bugle-call that sounds the march goes echoing over wood and hill,
Never known the wild deer's careless walk across its sandy plain,
Never halt unroofed, uncumbered, on the trail no milestones chain,
Never fleeting vision of that star that crowns the daybreak hour,
Never Gabriel's radiant brow effulgent from heaven's topmost tower,
Nor the going-down of suns in stillness of desert ways,
Twilight splendour such as brightened Abraham's world-beholding gaze,
Nor those springs of running water where the caravans take rest
As in heaven bright spirits cluster round the Fountain of the Blest!
Wildernesses ever new love's fever seeks and thirsts to roams—
You the furrowed field and palm-groves fetter to one poor home;
Mellow grows the wind of life when hand to hand the cup goes round
Foolish one! In this alone is life's eternal secret found.

1922-23: Resurrection, good or bad?

The Waste Land, published by Eliot in 1922, has been regarded as one of the most important poems of the twentieth century by many, such as Andrew Motion (b. 1952), the poet laureate from 1999 to 2009.[6]

For the sake of keeping the record straight, it may to be added here that such opinions are voiced on behalf of those critics who developed the "acquired taste" for the poem; these opinions do not take into account the general public as well as those of the "elite" who, despite their highest educational and social background, might have remained "uninitiated" – such as the Queen Mother, who famously recalled a recital of the poem by Eliot to the Royal Family

during the Second World War in the following words: "We had this rather lugubrious man in a suit, and he read a poem... I think it was called The Desert. And first the girls [Elizabeth and Margaret] got the giggles and then I did and then even the King."[7]

Iqbal's poem 'The Dawn of Islam', which came a year later, is shorter (consisting of 144 lines as compared to Eliot's 434), and unlike 'The Waste Land', it became instantly popular among all segments of the society and still remains the most popular long poem ever written in Urdu.

The first four lines of each poem are given below. The contrasts are striking: while April is "the cruellest month" for Eliot, who loathes the stirring of "dull roots", Iqbal rejoices at similar notions of rebirth and celebrates them whole-heartedly.

The Waste Land

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

طلوع اسلام

دلیل صبح روشن ہے ستاروں کی تنک تابی
افق سے آفتاب اُبھرا، گیا دور گراں خوابی
عروق مردہء مشرق میں خون زندگی دوڑا
سمجھ سکتے نہیں اس راز کو سینا و فارابی

[Translation: The Dawn of Islam]
The dimness of the stars is evidence of the bright morning.
The sun has risen over the horizon; the time of deep slumber has passed.
The blood of life runs in the veins of the dead East:
Avicenna and Farabi cannot understand this secret.[8]

1923-1925: East is West and West is East (and never the twain shall meet)

East is stereotyped as pessimistic, inactive and otherworldly. The West is usually seen as geared towards happiness, enjoyment and practical pursuits. These generalizations begin to fade when we compare the literary career of Eliot, the spokesperson of "the mind of Europe", with that of Iqbal, the commonly-acclaimed "Poet of the East". Here, perhaps, one must remember how Iqbal had foreseen the future development of literary trends in the two cultures

as early as 1923 when he wrote in the preface to *The Message of the East* (*Payam-i-Mashriq)*:

> Regarded from a purely literary standpoint, the debilitation of the forces of life in Europe after the ordeal of the war is unfavourable to the development of a correct and mature literary ideal. Indeed, the fear is that the minds of the nations may be gripped by that slow-pulsed Magianism which runs away from life's difficulties and which fails to distinguish between the sentiments of the heart and the thoughts of the brain… The East, and especially the Muslim East, has opened its eyes after a centuries-long slumber.[9]

Several decades later, Iqbal's prediction about European literature was corroborated, unknowingly, by the leading British historian A. J. P. Taylor, who observed about the British writers of the interwar period (1919-1938):

> To judge from all leading writers, the barbarians were breaking in. The decline and fall of the Roman empire were being repeated. Civilized men could only lament and withdraw, as the writers did to their considerable profit. The writers were almost alone in feeling like this, and it is not easy to understand why they thus cut themselves off. By any more prosaic standard, this was the best time mankind, or at any rate Englishmen, had known.[10]

Hence, by 1920s, the cultures of the East and the West had already reversed roles. The Western intellectual had become pessimistic and eager to rehabilitate the "slow-pulsed Magianism" displaced from its Oriental residence by the awakening of the East.

'The Message' ('Payam'), addressed by Iqbal to the Western intellectual in *The Message of the East,* offers an interesting comparison with 'The Hollow Men', composed by Eliot around the same time and published in 1925. The two poems have a common theme: the moral decline in the West. However, while Iqbal approaches the subject with discretion, Eliot's poem merely depicts it in a manner that borders on celebrating the very same depravity which is supposed to be loathed.

The comparison can be amusing if one imagines the "morning breeze" to be fulfilling Iqbal's poetic desire, approaching the "the Western sage" and delivering the message from Iqbal message – a call to reconcile reason with love, and intellect with heart, and to rebuild the world in a new fashion. The Western sage, if he turns out to be none other than Eliot, may respond to this by saying, "We are the hollow men, we are the stuffed men… headpiece filled with straw." One may end up wondering whether these two writers could have even carried out a serious conversation each other without one of them feeling very stupid for having it.

When 'The Hollow Men' was first published, the American critic John Orley Allen Tate (1899-1979) wrote: "The 'continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity' that is so characteristic of [Eliot's] mythical method remains in fine form." From the perspective of Iqbal, however, a more important question may be whether the writer of this poem is not a classic example of the kind of mind "which fails to distinguish between the sentiments of the heart and the thoughts of the brain"?

The first stanzas of both poems are given below.

پیام

از من اے باد صبا گوے با دانائے فرنگ
عقل تا بال کشود است گرفتار تر است
برق را این با جگر میزند آن رام کند
عشق از عقل فسون پیشہ جگردار تر است
چشم جز رنگ گل و لالہ نبیند ورنہ
آنچہ در پردۂ رنگ است پدیدار تر است
عجب آن نیست کہ اعجاز مسیحا داری
عجب این است کہ بیمار تو بیمار تر است
دانش اندوختہ ئی دل ز کف انداختہ ئی
آہ زان نقد گرانمایہ کہ در باختہ ئی

[Translation: The Message]

O morning breeze, convey this to the Western sage from me:
With wings unfolded, Wisdom is a captive all the more.
It tames the lightning, but Love lets it strike its very heart:
In courage Love excels that clever sorcerer by far.
The eye sees just the colour of the tulip and the rose;
But far more obvious, could we see it, is the flower's core.
It is not strange that you have the Messiah's healing touch:
What is strange is your patient is the more sick for your cure.
Though you have gathered knowledge, you have thrown away the heart;
With what a precious treasure you have thought it fit to part![11]

The Hollow Men

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;
Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us – if at all – not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

1927-30: The sacred

زبور عجم

می شود پردۂ چشمم پر کاہے گاہے
دیدہ ام ہر دو جہان را با نگاہے گاہے
وادیء عشق بسے دور و دراز است ولے
طے شود جادۂ صد سالہ بہ آہے گاہے
در طلب کوش و مدہ دامن امید زدست
دولتے ہست کہ یابے سر راہے گاہے

[Translation: *Persian Psalms*]

A straw, at times, becomes the screen of my eye;
And with one look, at times, I have seen both the worlds.
The Valley of Love is a long way away, and yet, at times,
The journey of a hundred years is covered in a sigh.
Persist in your search, and do not let go of the hem of hope—
There is a treasure that, at times, you will find by the way.[12]

Ash Wednesday
Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

1930-48: Islam and the West

It is quite interesting to note that just as Iqbal is credited with outlining the ideological foundations of a modern Muslim state, Eliot also became preoccupied with the idea of "a Christian society" (although much later than Iqbal) – and just like Iqbal, he also talked about some sort of reconstruction.

Iqbal's definitive statements in this regard are *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930/1934) and the presidential address delivered at the annual session of All-India Muslim League at Allahabad on December 30, 1930, popularly known as the *Allahabad Address*. Eliot's most lucid reflections on the matter appear in his book *Christianity and Culture* (1939/1948), which consists of his lecture 'The Idea of a Christian Society', delivered in March 1939 at the invitation of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christie College, Cambridge, 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture' and the transcript of a radio address to the people of West Germany after the Second World War (1939-45) in 1946.

The following selection offers three passages each from the *Allahabad Address* by Iqbal and 'The Unity of European Culture' by Eliot. It may be asked while comparing these two passages: what are practical implications of each of these for cultural pluralism?

1

Allahabad Address

It is, then, this mistaken separation of spiritual and temporal which has largely influenced European religious and political thought, and has resulted practically in the total exclusion of Christianity from the life of European states. The result is a set of mutually ill-adjusted states dominated by interests, not human but national. And these mutually ill-adjusted states, after trampling over the moral and religious convictions of Christianity, are to-day feeling the need of a federated Europe, i.e. the need of a unity which the Christian Church-organisation originally gave them, but which, instead of reconstructing in the light of Christ's vision of human brotherhood, they considered it fit to destroy under the inspiration of Luther.

Christianity and Culture

Relevant to my work are the writings of Christian sociologists—those writers who criticize our economic system in the light of Christian ethics... Many of the changes which such writers advocate, while deducible from Christian principles, can recommend themselves to any intelligent and disinterested person, and do not require a Christian society to carry them into effect, or Christian belief to render them acceptable: though they are changes which would make it more possible for the individual Christian to live out his Christianity. I am concerned

here only secondarily with changes in economic organization, and only secondarily with the life of a devout Christian: my primary interest is a change in our social attitude, such a change only as could bring about anything worthy to be called a Christian Society.[13]

2

Allahabad Address

At the present moment the national idea is racialising the outlook of Muslims, and thus materially counteracting the humanising work of Islam. And the growth of racial consciousness may mean the growth of standards different and even opposed to the standards of Islam... Never in our history Islam has had to stand a greater trial than the one which confronts it today.

Christianity and Culture

I believe that the choice before us is between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one. Both involve radical changes; but I believe that the majority of us, if we could be faced immediately with all the changes which will only be accomplished in several generations, would prefer Christianity.[14]

3

Allahabad Address

Indeed the first practical step that Islam took towards the realization of a final combination of humanity was to call upon peoples possessing practically the same ethical ideal to come forward and combine. The Quran declares, "O people of the Book! Come let us join together on the 'word' (Unity of God), that is common to us all."[15] The wars of Islam and Christianity, and, later, European aggression in its various forms, could not allow the infinite meaning of this verse to work itself out in the world of Islam. Today it is gradually being realized in the countries of Islam in the shape of what is called Muslim Nationalism.[16]

Christianity and Culture

If Asia were converted to Christianity tomorrow, it would not thereby become a part of Europe…[17] To our Christian heritage we owe many things besides religious faith. Through it we trace the evolution of our art, through it we have our conception of Roman Law which has done so much to shape the Western World, through it we have our conceptions of private and public morality. And through it we have our common standards of literature, in literatures of Greece and Rome. The Western World has its unity in this heritage, in Christianity and in the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome and Israel, from which, owing to two thousand years of Christianity, we trace our descent.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

[1] Translation has been taken from a footnote on the poem in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (1973), edited by Frank Kermode, John Hollander, et. al. p.1972.
[2] Translation is taken from the translation of *Javid Nama* by A. J. Arberry (1969).
[3] *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (1973), p.1972
[4] Translation is taken from *Secrets of the Self* by R. A. Nicholson (1920).
[5] *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (1973), p. 1976
[6] Margate's shrine to Eliot's muse' by Vanessa Thorpe in the Main Section, p. 9, of *The Observer,* UK, July 2, 2009.
[7] Quoted on the Wikipedia page of the poem; from *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*. Ed. Elizabeth Knowles. Oxford University Press, 2008
[8] Translation from D. J. Matthews
[9] Translation from M. Hadi Husain
[10] A. J. P. Taylor, English History 1914–1945
[11] Translation from M. Hadi Husain
[12] Translation from Mustansar Mir
[13] The practical implication of Eliot's proposition undermines the very foundation on which Iqbal was hoping a healthy cultural exchange between Islam and the West. Eliot practically replaces the ethical ideal of Christianity with the aesthetics of the Western elite – what Matthew Arnold had earlier described as "high culture" (see also the last excerpt).
[14] The question is: By Christianity, does Eliot mean the message of Jesus or the thing which Iqbal has disapprovingly named as "racialising the outlook"?
[15] Quran (3:64)
[16] Iqbal seems to be proposing that comparative study of religion is not sufficient, or might be even unhelpful, unless followers of diverse faiths work together towards a "universal social reconstruction" on the basis of shared ethical ideals. He sees it happening through "what is called Muslim Nationalism."
[17] It is actually shocking to see that he could be so blatantly racist. Iqbal had anticipated this kind of mentality in his poem 'The Preaching of Islam in the West' (included in *The Blow of Moses,* published in 1936), translated by V. G. Kernin as follows:

Through all the Western politeia
Religion withers to the roots;
For the white man, ties of blood and race
Are all he knows of brotherhood—
A Brahmin, in Britannia's sight,
Ascends no higher in life's scale
Because the creed of the Messiah
Has numbered him with its recruits;
All Britain one day might embrace
Muhammad's doctrine, if she would,
And yet the Mohammedan, luckless might,
Be left as now beyond the pale.