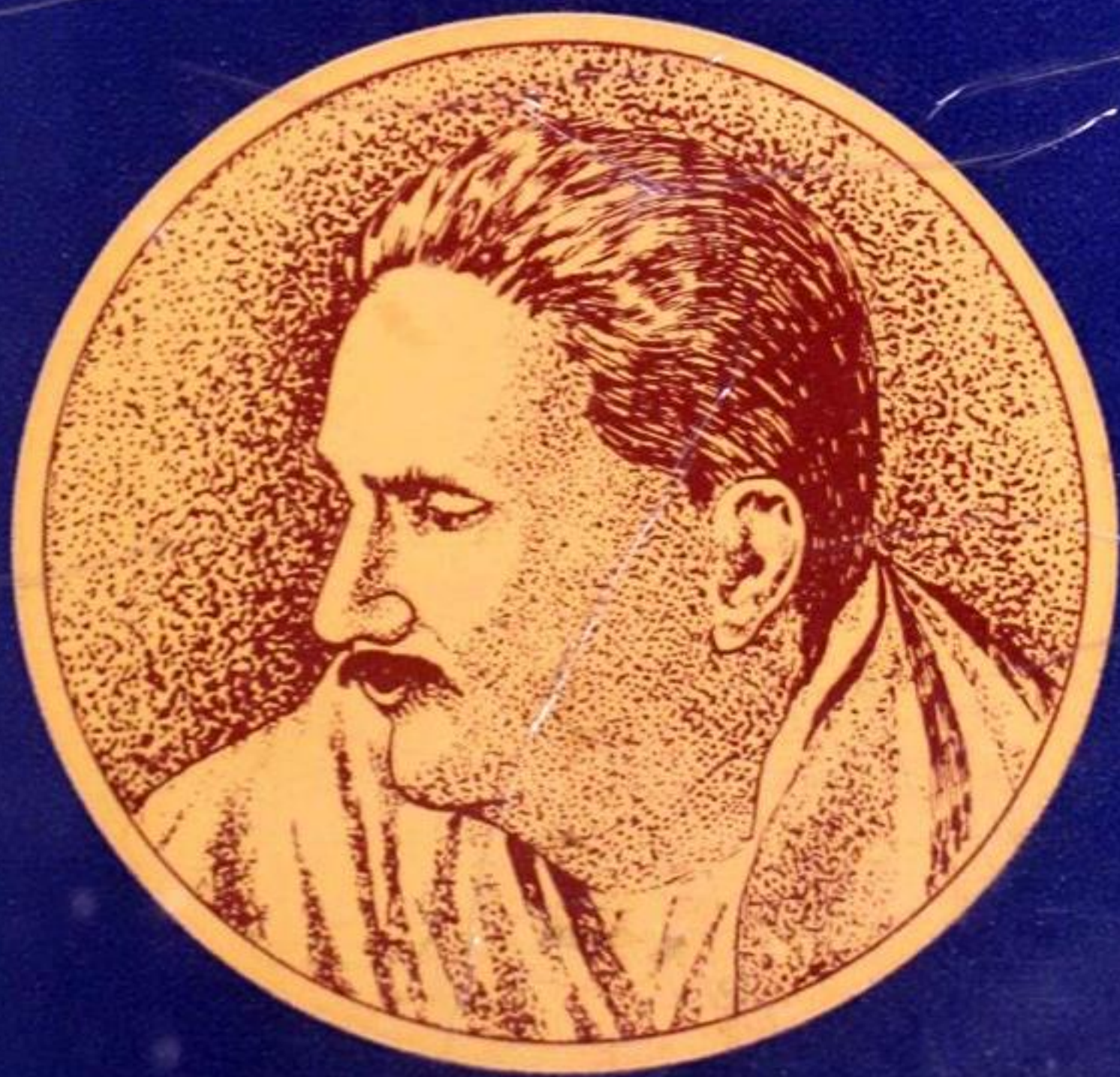

A NEW APPROACH TO

IQBAL

MOHAMMAD HASAN



1877-1938

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IQBAL

MOHAMMAD HASAN

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Dedicated
to
the sacred memory of my mother
Rizwan Fatima
with all the
fragrance of flowers of sweet past

MOHAMMAD HASAN

Publisher's Note

Iqbal was the 'nightingale' of the garden of his motherland, India, whom he considered as the torch-bearer to the world. He lived during our struggle against the imperialist British regime and his poetry reflects various moods of the times.

The present work on Iqbal by Dr Mohammad Hasan of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is a work of great literary merit and the Publications Division presents it to its readers for deeper understanding and appreciation of the works of the great poet-philosopher.

Dr Shyam Singh Shashi
Director

Preface

Iqbal once wrote, "Even Iqbal does not know Iqbal." If a pun on the word Iqbal, which also means glory, is not intended, the couplet may well be taken as referring to the difficulties of understanding one's self. Even everyman is a mystery, much more so, a poet. When understanding himself is such a complicated task for a poet himself, how much more difficult it will be for a critic, who tries to acquaint himself with the poet in a changed context.

Iqbal has often been painted in black and white. To many he is a hero — a poet-philosopher whose poetry and thought remain flawless expressions of the Bergsonian Life Force. To others, he remains a nodding Homer, whose erratic thinking led to the Partition of the Indian sub-continent. The present writer refuses to project him as either. Iqbal was much too complex a personality for such simplifications.

Undoubtedly, he ranks among the greatest poets of all ages. His melody not only vibrates with the verve and vitality of his own personality but also with the aspirations and longings of his country, desperately struggling against political enslavement and social and cultural degradation. Again, he was one of the first Indian poets who dreamt of the liberation of Asia and clearly visualised a historic role for the continent in the emancipation of mankind. For Iqbal, Asia alone could provide the spiritual guidance to a universe lost in pursuance of material happiness.

Above all, Iqbal's poetry has a world perspective. He was primarily concerned with nothing less than human predicament. Searching for the hidden laws of human development, Iqbal propounded his philosophy of Ego (*Khudi*) with certain social checks and balances (*Bekhudi*). It is in this context that his contribution to world poetic thought remains invaluable.

The present treatise seeks to study Iqbal in the framework of his personal achievements in a spatial and temporal perspective as well as the harbinger of Asian resurgence and an architect of new cosmic consciousness.

His achievements in all these fields are, undoubtedly, outstanding and nowhere he fails to pose thought-provoking questions of great significance. But he is, at times, not free from serious contradictions and shortcomings. These become all the more glaring when seen from a distance — of several decades after his death which makes this study more detached and dispassionate. Conclusions reached in this study may be disputed, but an attempt has been made to study Iqbal in a different manner and to analyse dispassionately his contribution to India and the world thought.

The present study has been divided into three main parts. Apart from the Perspective and the Epilogue—the first dealing with his Personality, the next with his Thought and the last with his Poetic Art—some short chapters have been added to substantiate the main corpus of argument.

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10 June 1987

MOHAMMAD HASAN

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CHAPTER I

Biographical

Mohammed Iqbal was born in Sialkot (now in Pakistan) on November 9, 1877.¹ He was younger of the two sons of his father, Sheikh Noor Mohammad alias Sheikh Natthu² who was a tailor by profession and belonged to a family of immigrant Kashmiris.³ Though himself not educated, his father was fond of education and strove to give his sons the best education he could afford.

The family belonged to a small village near Srinagar in Kashmir, remains of which are still found. A Brahmin⁴ family of Sapru *gotra* embraced Islam and the head of the family was rechristened Baba Saleh. After 1857 War of Independence, Syed Saleh and his son, Iqbal's great grandfather, Sheikh Jamaluddin, migrated to Sialkot. His son Rafiq, or Sheikh Mohammad Rafiq, traded in Kashmiri *dussas* and woollens. Sheikh Rafiq had two sons, Sheikh Ghulam Qadir (who was employed in the Department of Irrigation and died in Rupal (now Roop Nagar), and Iqbal's father, Sheikh Noor Mohammad.

-
1. Scholars differ about his date of birth. S.A. Vahid in 'Iqbal: Art & Thought' (John Murray, London 1959), for instance, mentions 22 February 1873 (p. 3), but the consensus seems to be that 1873 was the birth year of one of Iqbal's brothers who died in infancy and entry in the Municipal Record of Births and Deaths refers to his, not to Iqbal's birth.
 2. About profession of Iqbal's father, please see details in *Seerat-e-Iqbal* by Abdul Majeed Salik.
 3. Iqbal takes pride in his association with Kashmir. He writes: I love the orchards of Kashmir. I am a *bulbul* enchanted by this garden. We have inherited Adam's *jagir* for we have a homeland which has no peer excepting the Paradise.
 4. Iqbal also takes pride in his Brahminical ancestry:
Look at me, for in Hind thou wilt not see again,
Son of a Brahmin so well-versed in the mystic knowledge of Rum and Tabriz.

(Translation: S.A. Vahid:
Iqbal: Art & Thought, p. 3)

Sheikh Noor Mohammad was a handsome youngman with fair complexion and was simple minded, illiterate though, intelligent and keenly interested in problems of religion, ethics and mysticism. He took up the job of a tailor under one Deputy Collector, Deputy Wazir Ali, which the Sheikh relinquished after some time and started the tailoring of headgears of *burqas*. The trade flourished and the shop was, later on supervised by his son-in-law, Ghulam Mohammad.

Iqbal's elder brother, Sheikh Ata Mohammad, received elementary education and was married in the family of Rathore converts. As his in-laws had military background, he too got enrolled in the army for sometime but was, later on, admitted to Roorkee Engineering College and appointed an overseer after getting MES degree. He died in 1940 at the ripe age of 82 years and was buried in Sialkot. He is said to have joined the Ahmadiya Order. He was succeeded by his two sons—Aijaz Ahmad and Mukhtar Ahmad. The former held many important positions under the Pakistan Government.

Iqbal's father died in 1930 at the age of 90 years while his mother had died in 1914. Both were buried in Imam Sahib's graveyard in Sialkot.

Iqbal got his early education in the private *madrasa* of Maulvi Syed Mir Hasan, who lived near the residence of Iqbal's parents in Sadar, a name which was later changed to "Do Darwaze Walla Bazar" and then to Iqbal Street. Adjoining this was Kucha Mir Hasamuddin, named after Mir Hasan's Cousin, where the famous *madrasa* of Mir Hasan was situated.

Iqbal was soon admitted to Scotch Mission High School on the advice of Maulana Mir Hasan, who continued coaching him in oriental and religious education even after his admission to the School. Iqbal passed Entrance Examination in 1893 with distinction and was awarded scholarship with medal. Earlier, he won scholarships in Primary and Middle examinations. Even before he passed Entrance Examination, he was married to the elder daughter of Khan Bahadur Dr Ata Muhammad Khan of Gujarat (Punjab). Though a daughter, Mariam and a son, Aftab Iqbal were born in this wedlock, the marriage did not succeed. The daughter died at an early age and was buried in Sialkot.

While studying in Intermediate classes in the upgraded Scotch Mission College, Iqbal started writing poetry and sought advice on

his poetic compositions from the celebrated poet, Dagh Dehlavi, through correspondence, which continued for a short while.

After passing Intermediate examination, Iqbal was sent to Lahore in 1895 where he was admitted to B.A. in Government College with English, Philosophy and Arabic as his subjects. He passed B.A. with distinction, got scholarship and gold medals for obtaining highest marks in English and Arabic. It was here that he came into contact with Sir Thomas Arnold who had joined Government College, Lahore as a teacher after relinquishing his job in the M.A.O. College, Aligarh. Iqbal passed his M.A. in Philosophy in 1899 and was awarded a gold medal for standing first in the Punjab University.

During his stay in Lahore in student days, he was mainly a resident student putting up in Room No. 1 of the Quadrangle. It was here that he started reciting poems in *mushairas*. In one of the early *mushairas*, he recited the couplet:

موتی سمجھ کے شانِ کریمی نے چُن لیے قطرے جو تھے مرے عرقِ انفعال کے

(Divine Forgiveness picked up deeming them pearls, the drops of my repentance and remorse) which startled master of poetic art, Mirza Arshad Gorgani who applauded him wholeheartedly.

The first available printed *ghazal* of Iqbal was published in a literary journal *Zaban*, Delhi, a year before his passing of Matric (Entrance) Examination and three years before his participation in Bhati Darwaza *mushaira* referred to above.

This recognition was followed by invitation to recite poems in the annual functions of the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, an organisation devoted to the spread of education among Muslims and working for their social uplift.

In 1901, Sir Sheikh Abdul Qadir started his epoch-making monthly journal, *Makhzan*, which published Iqbal's celebrated poem on the Himalayas. Two years later, when he was working as Assistant Professor in the Government College, Lahore, he published his first book—a treatise on economics entitled *Ilmul-Iqtasad*. Next year, in 1904 he wrote his famous poem *Sare Jahan se Achchha Hindostan Hamara* which is India's popular patriotic song and provides the signature tune to the Indian TV network.

But 1905 was a turning point in his art and thought so much so that Iqbal's poetry has been neatly classified as pre-1905 and post-1905 poetry. It was in September this year that he sailed for Europe from Bombay and was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge as a student of Philosophy. Professor Thomas Arnold had joined the staff of the college a little earlier along with Professor McTaggart and Whitehead. Iqbal took his degree at Cambridge, obtained a doctorate at Munich, where he submitted his research thesis on the Metaphysics of Persia and qualified as a barrister. He delivered a series of lectures in London, the first of which was held at Caxton Hall and was reported at length in all the leading papers. S.A. Vahid rightly points out:

'His outlook of life underwent two important changes about this time (during his stay in Europe) he conceived (developed) an utter dislike for the narrow and selfish nationalism which was the root cause of most political troubles in Europe, and his admiration for a life of action and struggle became more pronounced'.

Iqbal returned to Lahore in August 1908 after three-year stay in Europe. He joined Government College, Lahore as a part-time Professor of Philosophy and English Literature and was allowed to practise in Lahore Chief Court as a lawyer simultaneously. But after a year and a half, he resigned the Government College post and concentrated on law, presumably in order to feel free from Government service rules and to give vent to the ideas which might not find favour with the foreign rulers.

Next ten or twelve years were perhaps the golden period of Iqbal's poetry. He wrote incessantly against ruthless imperialist exploitation of African and Asian countries. In November 1914 he wrote a heart-rending elegy of his mother, Imami Bibi. He not only gave vent to his grief but also organised his thoughts on Death. His mind was already working on the theme of Man's role in the Universe. A year later, he developed the theme in his epoch-making Persian *masnavi*, *Asrar-i-Khudi*. For the first time, he tried to evolve a philosophy of his own and, what was more, gave it poetic expression par excellence. Three years later, *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* followed as a continuation of *Asrar*, which for all time to come, presented the spectrum of his thought, reflected in myriad shapes in the wonderland of his Urdu and Persian poetry. *Asrar* and *Rumuz* provide testament of faith, inevitable for understanding Iqbal.

Iqbal was married thrice.¹ The first marriage ended in separation due to some misunderstanding. From the second marriage, a son, Javed Iqbal (now a Judge in Punjab High Court, Lahore and a significant Urdu playwright) and daughter, Munira, were born in 1924 and 1930 respectively. In December 1914 he was married to Mukhtar Begum of Ludhiana.

The poet Iqbal had now found his style. Though not very successful at the Bar, he was concentrating on poetry. In 1923 another collection of Persian verses entitled *Pyam-e-Mashriq* appeared in print, as a rejoinder to Goethe's *Westosthicher Divan*.

In 1927, another collection of Persian poems, *Zabur-e-Ajam* were published continuing the same theme. The same year he delivered six lectures on "The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought" in Madras, Hyderabad and Aligarh. In March 1924, the first collection of Urdu poems was published under the title, *Bang-e-Dra* with an introduction by Sir Abdul Qadir who equated him with Ghalib:

"Who ever knew that after late Ghalib, there will ever be born someone in India who could give new life to Urdu poetry and revive the peerless imagination and unique expression of Ghalib

1. About Iqbal's marriage, see Abdul Majeed Salik's *Zikr-e-Iqbal* as well as *Arsa-e-Hayat*.

Iqbal was not even 20 years old that Sheikh Noor Mohammad married him into a highly respectable family, perhaps in 1893. She was Iqbal's first wife who was brought to Iqbal's home by his parents and she was the only one to have lived with his parents. She was born in Hejaz (Saudi Arabia) where her parents lived for ten years and had proficiency in Arabic (Quoted in *Nuqoosh*, Lahore: Iqbal Number I-1977, p. 421).

Information regarding his first marriage is scanty but his first wife seems to belong to a rich family. Iqbal's son, Aftab Iqbal, and daughter Miraj Begum were from his first wife. Though later Iqbal severed all connections with his wife and son and deprived his son from inheriting all his property, yet Dr Aftab Iqbal, who led a successful life till his death in Pakistan recently, bore practically no grudge on this score. Mr Hamid Jalali in his book *Allama Iqbal aur Unki Pahli Begum* (Allama Iqbal and his first wife) ascribes this estrangement between Iqbal and his first wife and son to the machinations of Iqbal's elder brother, Ata Mohammad, who wanted his own son to be the centre of Iqbal's attention and bounties and used to belabour Aftab Iqbal and kept Iqbal away from his first wife. His machinations resulted in divorce and as Iqbal was indebted to his brother, an emotional tension ensued.

once again to cause new freshness in Urdu literature.”¹

The only other kind of activity, apart from poetry and law, which attracted his attention was politics—not so much of his choice as due to the compulsion of the circumstances. His bosom friends, Jogendra Singh, Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Khawaja Shahabuddin were in politics and it was at the instance of these friends that he contested election for the Legislative Council and was declared elected. In 1931, he was nominated a member of the Second Round Table Conference and in course of his trip to London, he visited Paris and met the famous French philosopher, Henri Bergson and the eminent orientalist, M. Massignon. Earlier in 1930, he gave evidence before the Simon Commission and presided over the annual session of the Muslim League the same year. In his presidential address he elaborated his scheme for the solution of the political deadlock in India. He writes:

“ ‘Man,’ says Renan, ‘is enslaved neither by his race, nor by his religion, nor by the course of rivers, nor by the direction of mountain ranges. A great aggregation of men, sane of mind and warm of heart, creates a *moral* consciousness which is called a nation.’ Such a formation is quite possible, though it involves the long and arduous process of practically re-making men and furnishing them with fresh emotional equipment. It might have been a fact in India if the teachings of Kabir and the ‘Divine Faith’ of Akbar had seized the imagination of the masses of this country. Experience, however, shows that the various caste-units and religious units in India have shown no inclination to sink their respective individualities in a larger whole. Each group is intensely jealous of its collective existence. The formation of the kind of moral consciousness

کیسے خبر تھی کہ غالب مرحوم کے بعد ہندوستان میں پھر کوئی ایسا شخص
پیدا ہوگا جو اردو شاعری کے جسم میں ایک نئی رُوح پھونک دے گا اور جسکی بدولت
غالب کلبے نظیر تخیل اور نیرالا اندازِ بیان پھر وجود میں آئے گا اور ادبِ اردو
کے فروغ کا باعث ہوگا۔

¹Bang-e-Dra: Preface.

which constitutes the essence of a nation in Renan's sense demands a price which the people of India are not prepared to pay. *The Unity of India, therefore, must be sought, not in the negation, but in the mutual harmony and co-operation of the many.* The statesmanship cannot ignore facts, however unpleasant they may be. The only practical course is not to assume the existence of a state of things which does not exist, but to recognise facts as they are and to exploit them to our greatest advantage. And it is on the discovery of Indian Unity in the direction that the fate of India as well as of Asia really depends. India is Asia in miniature. Part of her people have cultural affinities with nations in the East and West with nations in the middle west of Asia. If an effective principle of co-operation is discovered in India, it will bring peace and mutual goodwill to this ancient land which has suffered so long, more because of her situation in historic space than because of any inherent incapacity of her people.

“It is, however, painful to observe that our attempts to discover such a principle of internal harmony have so far failed. Why have they failed? Perhaps we suspect each others' intentions and inwardly aim at dominating each other. Perhaps in the higher interest of mutual co-operation, we cannot afford to part with the monopolies which circumstances have placed in our hands, and conceal our egoism under the cloak of a nationalism, outwardly simulating a large-hearted patriotism, but inwardly as narrow-minded as a caste or a tribe. Perhaps we are unwilling to recognise that each group has a right to free development according to its own cultural traditions. But whatever may be the causes of our failure, I still feel hopeful.” (Emphasis added as quoted by S.A. Vahid, p. 20-21).

This rather long quotation clearly indicates that the prime concern of Iqbal was the unity of an Indian Nation based not on negation but on mutual harmony and co-operation of the many, and realising the difficulties of such a large hearted emotional integration suggested, a redistribution of the country on the basis of racial, religious and linguistic affinities. It is not, however, clear whether the redistribution he visualised was in terms of various units forming a single but loose federal structure or as separate sovereign states.¹ This has

1. Please refer to articles of Raza Ansari and Adil Abbasi in the *Daily Quami Awaz*, Lucknow, weekly edition, 1975 and Dr Hasan Ahmad's article read as Multi-Disciplinary Approach, Iqbal Symposium held in Delhi, 1977.

been a subject of controversy but he did consider religion, rather than region, to be the basis of nationhood, as evident from his later day controversy with Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, the famous Muslim divine and Nationalist leader.

The political role Iqbal played at the Round Table Conference in London and outside need not be gone into at this stage but it was clear that nationalism based on fidelity to a particular region did not satisfy him. In the course of his address to the Conference in 1932 he observed, "Patriotism is a perfectly natural virtue and has a place in the moral life of man. Yet that which really matters is a man's faith, his culture, his historical tradition. These are the things which in my eyes are worth living for or dying for, and not the piece of earth with which the spirit of man happens to be temporarily associated."

Here the poet overwhelms the politician, who easily forgets that usually it is this little piece of earth which to a considerable extent, shapes cultural and historical tradition.

In 1932, he attended the Third Round Table Conference in London. By that time Rahmat Ali and his associates had already propounded their idea of Pakistan as a country carved out of Muslim majority states of the Indian sub-continent. Iqbal categorically disassociated himself from their idea.

The following year he made a short trip to Afghanistan at the invitation of the Afghan Government along with Syed Sulaiman Nadvi and Sir Ross Masud to draft an educational plan for that country. His Persian *masnavi*, *Musafir* was based on his travel experiences.

In 1934, he was awarded D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) by the Punjab University. The same year saw the death of his second wife and the accentuation of his own illness which proved to be fatal. His second collection of Urdu poems, *Bal-e-Jibril* was published providing much needed economic relief.

From 1935 to 1938 he paid several visits to Bhopal at the invitation of his friend, Sir Ross Masud and necessary medical care was provided but the end was drawing near. Jawaharlal Nehru writes about his meeting:

"During his last years, Iqbal turned more and more towards socialism. The great progress that Soviet Russia had made attracted him. Even his poetry took a different turn. A few months before his death, as he lay on his sick bed, he sent for me and I gladly obeyed the summons. As I talked to him about many

things I felt how much we have common in spite of differences, and how easy it would be to get on with him. He was in reminiscent mood and wandered from one subject to another, and I listened to him talking little myself. I admired him and his poetry, and it pleased me greatly to feel that he liked me and had a good opinion of me. A little before I left him he said to me, 'What is there in common between Jinnah and you? He is a politician, you are patriot'."¹

In 1935, he was invited to Oxford for Rhodes lectures but ill health compelled him to refuse this invitation. In 1937, a cataract developed in his eyes and while he was still planning to write a treatise on the Reconstruction of Muslim Jurisprudence and the book: *A Forgotten Prophet*, in English, shadows of death were fast approaching him. He, however, continued composing poems. Even a few days before his death he dictated a *rubai* which was on his lips when he breathed his last on 21 April 1938:

“The departed melody may recur or not,
The Zephyr may blow from Hejaz or not,
The days of this Faqir have come to an end,
Another seer may come or not.”²

His last collection of Urdu and Persian Poetry *Armughan-e-Hejaz* was published posthumously. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, in his condolence message observed, “The death of Sir Muhammad Iqbal creates a void in literature. This, like a mortal wound will take a long time to heal. India, whose place in the world is too narrow can ill afford to miss a poet whose poetry had such universal value.”

He was given a funeral which kings might envy and his remains were buried near the gate of the historic Shahi Mosque in Lahore. The mausoleum has now been provided with military guards as a mark of respect to the departed poet.

1. Discovery of India, p. 355.

سرودِ رفتہ باز آید کہ ناید
سرآمد روزگارے ایس فقیرے
نسیے از حجاز آید کہ ناید
دیگر دانائے راز آید کہ ناید

2. (English Tr: A. Vahid)

CHAPTER II

Personality

Before taking leave of the poet Iqbal, for the time being, let us also meet Iqbal, the man. All who knew him describe him as a warm-hearted, joyous person of simple habits and an alert mind. He loved good things of life and liked to lead a full life rather than that of a puritan. In his youth, he had been an ardent lover. During his sojourn in Europe, his relationship with Atiya Faizi was much closer than cordial and his letters addressed to her reflect the anguish of his soul. He confides with her:

“As a human being I have every right to get happiness and joy and if society refuses to give it to me, I shall openly challenge. . . (it). The only solution appears to be that I leave this blasted country for ever and proceed abroad or find escape in liquor which makes suicide easier.”

Abdul Majeed Salik narrates a tale of his amorous advances to a princess. It was for one of her consorts that the famous poem *On seeing a cat in one's lap* was composed.

He was a lively soul and liked good companions. Jogendra Singh and Zulfiqar Ali Khan were not men of his mental calibre but for quite a long time, the trio pulled on very well and the friends enjoyed each other's company so much so that Iqbal immortalised this companionship in several of his poems. A poem starts with the couplet:

کیسے مزے کی بات جگندر نے کل کہی موڑ ہے ذوالفقار علی خاں کا کیا خموش

(What an interesting point Jogendra made yesterday. How quiet is the car of Zulfiqar Ali Khan?) And concludes that “all fast moving things in the world are quiet.”

Far from being an ascetic, he was a full blooded youngman with highly developed aesthetic sense, full of emotions and zest of living.

His daily life was simple. Dressed usually in *bunyan* and *tahmad* he was seen at home, with his *huqqa* in his circle of fast friends cutting jokes with them or discussing problems of mutual interest. His jokes and humorous anecdotes stand witness to his sociable temperament. It was in fact this sharp sense of humour which manifested itself in his humorous verses included in the concluding pages of his first collection of Urdu poems, *Bang-e-Dra*. A few anecdotes will bear this out:

Iqbal, when he was student, came to his class late, whereupon his teacher chastised him. Iqbal replied, "Sir, Iqbal (also meaning glory) comes late."

Iqbal's fast friend, Chaudhury Shahabuddin, was of jet black complexion. He arrived in a dinner dressed in black dinner suit. Iqbal remarked, "What! Shahabuddin! You have come to the dinner naked."

At the peak of the Khilafat Movement, some one asked Iqbal why was he not himself participating in the political movement and confining himself only to writing poems enthusing people for the sacred cause. Iqbal replied, "Poets are like singers (*Qawwals*) to a nation. It is fit and proper that people get in a trance at their song but it is not proper for the *Qawwal* himself to start dancing to his own tunes."

Extracts from writings of those intellectuals who had personally met Iqbal in various stages of his life may be of some interest in this connection.

The validity and veracity of all those statements can hardly be vouchsafed but these do project a lively portrait of the man and the poet.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand writes:

"On his big brow there was an anxious knot. His eyes, though raised beyond the immediate environment, were dipped, as though turned inwards. The cast of his solemn face was relieved by a delicate smile, which rose above the determined chin. As he caressed his brief moustache and spoke a verse, the total face became animated into a discreet good humoured indulgence of wisdom and folly as well.

"I recall the sensation of Dr Iqbal's vivid personality from my very first visit to him as a young student aspirant to poetry. As I sat shyly away, after saluting him, he looked at me furtively, in between his talk with Sir Abdul Qadir, who was dressed in English

suit and Fez cap. After some banter with Muhammad Din Tasir, the young poet, he asked his son, Javed, to get some *nimboo pani*. And he pulled me up on to the dais and sat me down beside Tasir. I said, I had a friend and his sister-in-law waiting outside. Whereupon he himself got up and fetched them. 'The young need not hide in corners and leave the stage only to Sir Abdul Qadir', he said".¹

Professor Muhammad Mujib writes:

"I had the privilege of meeting late Dr Iqbal in March 1927. I was running a press in those days. Dr Iqbal wanted to get new edition of *Pyam-e-Mashriq* printed and a friend Syed Nazeer Niyazi had promised to introduce me and recommend my press to him. I took advantage of this opportunity and proceeded to Lahore. At that time Iqbal resided in a house at Mcleod Road. Though the house had a gate and a separate road of its own, the gate was situated by the side of a few dilapidated hutments. A board was on the gate which had neither the black background nor the brightness of the painted letters on it excepting big spots of dust and rust.

"(Dressed in) blue shirt in a *shalwar* which was neither too clean nor dirty. His hair cut according to a barbar's whim, dissipated complexion, eyes sunken due to sitting in the sun, moustaches protruding to the lips, wide mouth with wrinkles on both sides (such was Iqbal). He was speaking a mixture of Punjabi and Urdu. This was not the image of a poet and, in fact, this was not the real face of Dr Iqbal, but was just his daily appearance which, like *shalwar* and shirt, used to be hung like a curtain and saved his real person from the dust and dirt of everyday life which covers all of us. This curtain of appearance was soon removed after a few sentences when he started talking about the present plight of the Muslims."—Nigarishat, Maktaba Jamia, 1974 (p. 213).

Sajjad Zaheer met him for seeking his blessings and support for the Progressive Writers Movement in 1935. He writes:

"We arrived at his residence in the afternoon. It was summer and Iqbal was half reclining against his rolled bedding on his uncovered cot outside his residence. He was smoking *huqqa*. He

1. Multidisciplinary Approach to Iqbal; ed. Mohd. Hasan (Iqbal centenary symposium), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. 1977. p. 9.

met Dr Ashraf and myself quite warmly. On the cane *mundhas* placed by his cot we seated ourselves both of us to his right. On his left was seated someone even before our arrival and Dr Saheb did not introduce him to us which surprised me. . . .

“Iqbal’s attitude towards us was so encouraging and kind that I dared present at the very outset our differences and complaints before him instead of paying formal tribute to him. I talked about new socialist thought. . . . He listened to me with rapt attention and seriousness. It even occurred to me as if he was encouraging me to talk more. Then he said ‘Tasir had some talk with me on the Progressive Writers Movement and I was interested. . . . I may be mistaken in my understanding of socialism. I had asked Tasir to provide some authentic books on the subject. He promised but did not fulfil his promise. You know my viewpoint. . . . Obviously my sympathies are with the movement for socialism and progressive literature. . . . You may keep in touch with me’.” (p. 201).

Such was the unassuming personality of the poet who can truly claim to have changed the world of letters.

CHAPTER III

Iqbal Calendar

- 1877 Birth at Sialkot. (November 9).
- 1895 Migrated to Lahore after passing Intermediate Examination from Scotch Mission College, Sialkot.
Started writing poems and sent them for correction to Dagh.
- 1896 Recited first poem in a *mushaira* inside Bhati Darwaza.
- 1897 Passed B.A. with English, Philosophy and Arabic in the Second Division from the Government College, Lahore and was awarded Khan Bahadur F.S. Jalaluddin Medal for standing first in Arabic.
- 1899 Passed M.A. in Philosophy from Government College, Lahore and was awarded Khan Bahadur Sheikh Nanak Baksh Medal for being the only successful candidate in Philosophy.
Got an appointment in Oriental College.
- 1900 Birth of first son, Aftab Iqbal.
Recited *Nala-e-Yatim* (An Orphan's Complaint) in the annual session of Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, Lahore.
- 1901 His poem *Himala* appeared in Sir Abdul Qadir's *Makhzan*, Lahore.
Appointed lecturer in English in Islamia College, Lahore for six months.
- 1903 *Ilmul Iqtasad*, a treatise in Urdu on Economics, published.
- 1904 Composed India's popular patriotic song *Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara*.
- 1905 Sailed to London from Bombay, admitted to

- Trinity College, Cambridge as a student of Philosophy.
- 1907 Was awarded Ph.D. Degree by Munich University on his thesis "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia".
- 1908 Taught Arabic for six months at London University and delivered a series of lectures in London, was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn. Returned to Lahore. Appointed part-time Professor of Philosophy and English Literature at Government College, Lahore and started practising law in Chief Court, Lahore. Was elected Secretary of Kashmiri Muslim Association, Lahore.
- 1911 Resigned his post from Government College, Lahore.
- 1912 Recited poem *Shama-o-Shair* at a public meeting in Lahore.
- 1914 Death of Iqbal's mother. Composed elegy on her death.
Iqbal's second marriage with Sardar Begum, mother of Javed Iqbal.
Third marriage (December) with Mukhtar Begum.
- 1915 First poetical work masnavi *Asrar-e-khudi* in Persian published.
- 1916 First attack of kidney ailment.
- 1918 *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi* (Persian) published.
- 1920 Publication of Nicholson's English Translation of *Asrar*.
- 1922 Recited *Khizr-e-Rah*, at a public gathering.
- 1923 Knighthood conferred.
Pyam-e-Mashriq (Persian) published.
- 1924 Published first poetic collection in Urdu, *Bang-e-Dra*.
Birth of son, Javed Iqbal, and death of the third wife.
- 1926 Elected member of Punjab Legislative Council.
- 1927 *Zubur-e-Ajam* (Persian) published.
- 1928 Second attack of kidney ailment.

- 1929 Lectures in Madras, Hyderabad and Aligarh on "Reconstruction of Islamic Thought".
- 1930 Death of Iqbal's father.
Birth of Iqbal's daughter, Munira.
- 1931 Attended Second Round Table Conference.
Met Bergson and Massignon in Europe.
- 1932 *Javed Nama* (Persian) published.
Attended Third Round Table Conference in London.
Met Mussolini in Italy.
Visited Cordova Mosque in Spain, also Egypt and Palestine.
- 1933 Visited Cordova Mosque and delivered lecture in Madrid University.
Visited Afghanistan on State invitation.
Was awarded honorary D.Litt. degree by Punjab University.
- 1934 Death of his second wife.
- 1935 *Bal-e-Jibril* (Second Urdu Collection) published.
Visited Bhopal at the invitation of Sir Ross Masud, Education Minister.
Zarb-e-Kalim (Third Urdu Collection) published.
- 1936 Aggravation of Ailments.
- 1938 Meeting with Nehru (January).
- 1938 Death of Iqbal (April 21).

Armaghan-e-Hejaz (Collection of Urdu and Persian poems) published posthumously.

CHAPTER IV

Perspective

The advent of the 20th century marked the consolidation of national States based on regional fidelities. Reason replaced religion as the focal point of culture and civilization. Minor states merged into powerful nations and soon evolved a common outlook based on affinities of historical, cultural and linguistic traditions. These nation-states guided mainly by their selfish interests entered a race for profit, power and prestige, which soon resulted in a bitter conflict between them in a bid to redistribute backward areas of the world as their colonies. The radical nationalism which emerged as the new rallying force for humanity eradicating all differentiation of religious beliefs and petty parochial interests, soon turned out to be a dangerous gospel of hatred and narrow self-interest which finally led to world wars.

The rise of nation-states coincided with the development of the parliamentary system of government replacing the divine right of kings. For a short time, it appeared as if the era of human oppression was over and mankind had after all learnt to live in peace and to rule themselves with common consent and co-operation. But the hopes were soon shattered and the parliamentary democracy revealed its glaring defects. Elections were only for the rich and political parties were mostly concerned with their own horse-trading, coaxing the common man only to content himself with casting his vote in favour of given candidates. Parliament and its various organs soon became yet another set of engines of oppression.

With the growing pace of industrialisation, huge cities soon developed into busy hives of industrial and commercial activity. Old fidelities withered away and the sanctity of social relationships gave way to the almighty cash nexus. Families and social circles broke down and the individual, lonely and forlorn, found himself a robot in the heartless machine of human existence. This mad race of individual competition for material gains completely threw over-

board all tender emotions and higher values of ethics and morality and turned man into a beast. Rationalism and science instead of liberating human mind subjected themselves to the requirements of the exploiting classes. The dream of human emancipation was shattered.

Another aspect of this new phenomenon was opening of inconceivable opportunities for mankind, and yet exploitation reached new dimensions and men and women in affluent countries were subjected to inhuman atrocities in the process of unending social and economic exploitation. In colonies, imperialist exploitation knew no bounds. Everywhere, subject nations were being ruthlessly plundered and their economic backwardness used for providing affluence to the ruling imperialist nations.

There was, however, another dimension of the Asian predicament. In Muslim Asian countries, particularly in Arab countries and Afghanistan as well as Central Asia, the intelligentsia was busy exploring new panaceas of their downfall. Various thinkers at various stages sought to analyse the situation and offered conflicting solutions. These, however, may be divided into two broad categories; one, those who advised a return to the pristine purity of the past and sought to relink politics with religion on the pattern of revivalists of early days. To them, political slavery and ethical and intellectual degradation was the result of our heretical departure from the true teachings of religion. In India, Hindu thinkers like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati and Tilak tried to reinterpret Hinduism in modern times. Muslims, particularly Arab countries, called for the common hegemony of the religious and political central authority of the Caliphate. This assertion of religious identity at the universal level also served the purpose of achieving anti-imperialist unity in countries occupied by the Christian powers of the West. To achieve this, attempts were made by Muslim thinkers to reorient and reinterpret basic tenets of Islam in the light of latest scientific discoveries and to find ways and means to bring Islamic teachings up to date so as to provide solutions to contemporary problems. Thinkers like Jamaluddin Afghani, Mohammad Abduhu and the pan-Islamists were the pioneers in the field.

Incidentally, the opportunity for mustering of all such forces was provided soon by the British who weakened the Turkish Empire by encouraging nationalist movements in the lands occupied by them.

In Saudi Arabia, Syria, Levant and the Arab lands, then under Turkish rule, nationalist movements gained momentum. The Turkish Empire was the best descendant of the Islamic Caliphate, which was to provide political and religious centralisation to the Islamic world and hence any move to dislodge it was construed as a blow to the basic concept of Islamic polity. The Khilafat Movement in India evoked enthusiastic response from the Indian Muslims and provided a basis for Hindu-Muslim unity in their anti-British struggle.

But despite all enthusiasm, the young Turks led by Kamal Atatürk themselves overthrew the Caliphate and withdrew from occupied lands to pitch their tents firmly on the national frontiers of Turkey. This was a clear indication of the fact that a parallel ideology in Muslim countries existed side by side with the Puritanist, which firmly upholds nationalism as the new path of reconstruction. Adherents of this approach then were not unaware of the inadequacy of the religious and ideological identity as a politically unifying force. Instead their emphasis was on modernising their own social set up so as to catch up with the more advanced Western nations which alone could liberate them from slavery. In post-Khilafat era, this consciousness became more and more widespread and finally triumphed against pan-Islamic idealism. It was this shift which influenced Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others in India who started as crusaders for the revival of early Islamic ideals by organising societies like Hizbullah and turned to be the champions of nationalism.

In a country like India which was not predominantly peopled by Muslims and yet had a sizeable Muslim population living side by side with Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and brethren professing different faiths, the situation was much more complicated. Here Muslims could not think of gaining political power or carving out a State run according to the Quranic concepts without evoking opposition from the non-Muslim majority. The success of anti-imperialist countries with Muslim majorities would automatically bring suzerainty and power to Muslims. While in India, freedom from British rule only meant its replacement by the non-Muslim majority rule. Minorities the world over have certain apprehensions and sensitivities about the preservation of their identity. These apprehensions haunted the Muslim middle class in the 20th century. It was eager to retain its own identity in an independent India.

The problem of the rejuvenation of Islamic world, the stabilisation of anti-British movements in West Asian Muslim countries and

participation of Indian Muslims in the struggle against the British were inter-related as parts of the same indivisible anti-imperialist front and were of vital significance to our national movement.

Dr Raj Bahadur Gour writes:

“However, the overthrow of British rule and reorganisation of Indian society were the two objectives that had to be achieved. And all the conflict in the Indian social political thought, including that in the Muslim thought, in this period, has to be viewed from this angle.

“Ever since 1857, the British became more ruthless in their exploitation. They tightened up their administration and their repressive machinery. India was the diamond *Koh-i-Noor* (Mountain of Light) in the British Crown and even as such it occupied a key position in their global strategy to preserve their empire where the ‘sun never sets’.

“Just as east of Suez lay the ‘mountain of light’, Suez occupied an important position in the predatory policies of the British imperialists. This along with oil, determined the British policies in West Asia populated mainly by Muslims.

“Indian nationalism, in its struggle against the British and its desire to reorganise Indian society must, therefore, find a path that would unite all the people of India, must work out a blue print of future India in whose achievements the overwhelming majority of Indian people would be interested and in this struggle the Muslim Middle East would be our close ally.”¹

The last quarter of the last century saw the consolidation of imperialism in various parts of the world. The pride of place among these emergent imperialist powers was occupied by Great Britain, whose dominions stretched from Africa to the Far East. Imperialism, by its very logic, had to be fed by impoverished colonies and affluent colonising countries. The one provided the other with raw material, cheap labour and exclusive markets. But behind this ruthless economic exploitation and political slavery, there also ran a concurrent torment of social backwardness and sense of intellectual subjugation and inferiority.

The stamp of this torment was nowhere more marked than in Africa and Asia. Continents once proved for being the cradles of

1. Iqbal: Heritage and Limitations, Party Line, Delhi Vol XI No. 9, 22 May 1975 pp. 28-29.

civilization and torch bearers to mankind were now undergoing the torture of being reduced to areas of barbarian darkness. These areas, though diverse and far away, had a common exploiter who was clever enough to use the resources, geographical position and military potential of one colony to enslave another. Hence there was a direct link between the enslavement of one colony with the slavery of the other.

Conversely, therefore, liberation struggle in one colony was inevitably linked up with similar struggles in other colonies. Hence, the entire West Asia and India formed one big chain of enslaved countries, for liberation of which it was essential to forge a unified link. It is in this context that the attitude of the Indian National Movement towards West Asian Movement, in general, and of Islamic countries of these parts, in particular, should be viewed. Right from the moment of its inception, Indian National Movement realised the need of solidarity with West Asian struggles and particularly underscored the significant role of the Suez Canal and the adjoining countries could play in the enslavement or liberation of British colonies in Asia and Africa.

Indian Perspective

In India, this period marked the emergence of a new generation brought up under the Macaulay's educational set up introduced in 1835. The age-old oriental system of education was scrapped. Gone were the days of Sanskrit and Arabic learning which was geared to rear Pundits and Qazis well versed in Hindu and Islamic jurisprudence and personal law. The new system aimed at imparting useful knowledge and tried to shape young generation of bureaucrats and allied functionaries. The medium of this new 'useful' modern westernised knowledge was English, which was not merely another language but an index to an altogether new style of living as yet unknown to India. The first generation which came into contact with this new climate was much too dazzled to form any objective opinion but their descendants were not only wondering at the marvels of the new civilization but were already comparing their own sad plight with the Rights of Man enunciated by Western Liberalism. An agonising quest for identity and self-confidence led to heart-searching. Hence, India was desperately in search of its identity. India was a geographical entity but was made up of diverse regions, inhabited by

people speaking different languages, professing different faiths. It had but one uniting force—a common oppressor and this bound them into a bond of communion.

In its quest for self-confidence and dignity, the Indian intelligentsia started to reassure itself about its viability as a 'nation' with a glorious past. It sought to find its moorings in history so as to provide an assurance for its bright future.

But, unfortunately, for a people divided amongst themselves, past presented a different picture for different people. With strong religious overtones, the re-discovery of the past invariably meant a cry for revivalism and obscurantism. Given to its devotion to religious phraseology, India of the late 19th and early 20th century could only think of combating the Western challenge of Rationalism and Science with the re-interpretation of its religious or semi-religious achievements in various spheres of thought and action. Hence, religion or re-interpretation of religion was an instrument for refuting the Western challenge by the rediscovery of past glory of India, an attempt to confront the material West with the treasures of the spiritual East and thus prove our own superiority over our enslavers.

Another aspect of this war of nerves was the emergence of political consciousness in India in the wake of the starting of industries in the country. The new middle class was now seeking to share power with their masters at some level. Demands for Indian recruitment to services were raised. Indian representations in local bodies were demanded and every session of the Indian National Congress and other political or semi-political organisations clamoured for more administrative and bureaucratic participation, which finally led to the demand for Home Rule, Dominion Status and several other formulae for political emancipation of the country.

The country was yet to evolve a strategy for the realisation of its objectives. Launching of mass movements was a far cry. Armed resistance was an impossibility. Hence, the only possibility which presented itself was that of building up pressures through deputations and memoranda. The entire mode of struggle at this juncture appears to be highly individualistic and typical of the liberalism of the age.

New Vistas

As the present century progressed, the anti-imperialist struggles sharpened and new vistas began to open up for the suffering nations

of the East. Islam, which was incidentally the religion professed by the enslaved Arab and Muslim nations, played a pivotal role and hence its reinterpretation as a living force even in changed circumstances of the 20th century could rejuvenate a sizeable number of the subjugated nations. The several shades of pan-Islamic movements—for example of Mohammad Abduhu, Jamaluddin Afghani and others—may be viewed in this context as an attempt of reinterpreting Islam as a liberating force for the slave nations of the East. This endeavour was all the more significant as it provided a supernational force to combat the international phenomenon of imperialism.

Mohammed Iqbal was born in 1877 and breathed his last in 1938. During this period the whole complexion of the political life in Asia and India underwent great transformation. The First World War openly exposed the major contradictions between imperialist and expansionist powers and the ensuing conflagration temporarily weakened the imperialist grip over the colonies, resulting in a sudden spurt in the industrial development in the colonies. Dr Bipan Chandra remarks:

“In India’s case foreign trade and the inflow of foreign capital were reduced or interrupted thrice during the 20th century, i.e., during the two world wars and the Great Depression 1929-34. Yet on each occasion, far from production being checked, there occurred its further development; in fact the roots of the industrial capitalist class reached deeper.”¹

But the First World War, which gave a fillip to indigenous industrialisation in the colonies, was in itself the result of a major crisis between imperialist powers of Europe—a crisis which Lenin characterised as the last stage of capitalism. Above all, the First World War was a war for the redistribution of colonies and areas of influence between major imperialist powers but in the process, it laid bare the weakness of the entire political system described as parliamentary democracy and its social and cultural superstructure which claimed to have restored liberty, equality and fraternity to all mankind and brought back a sense of dignity and self-respect to the common man.

Even before the First World War, intellectuals in Europe were busy in a critical reappraisal of the democratic ideas and institutions.

1. Colonialism and Modernisation, Presidential Address: Indian History Congress, Modern Indian History Section, Jabalpur 1970.

To critics like Nietzsche, democracy was inadequate as it created artificial equality among men, reduced them to robots and curbed the creative urge of the individual to cast society into an ideal mould while Marx and Engels and, later on, Lenin criticized Western Democracy as a cover for the rule of the bourgeoisie since poorer sections of the society had neither money nor organisation to contest elections and withstand the violent onslaught of the ruling classes on them. Then there were philosophers like Spengler whose 'Decline of the West' exposed the decay in the value system of the affluent Europe.

Thus Europe was passing through a crisis of values. All that was promised to mankind by the Renaissance, and the French and Industrial Revolutions and the development of Science and Industry was being denied. It began with Rousseau's declaration in his Social Contract: "Man was born free but everywhere he is in chains." The very system was denying all freedom not only to the poorer section of its own people but mercilessly exploiting the millions living in the colonies under inhuman conditions. The dreams of Romanticism and Humanism were shattered. The scene may well be described in the words of world historian, W.N. Weech:

"In England, Huxley believed in the evolutionist theories of his friend Darwin. Herbert Spencer, with his Methodist and school-teacher upbringing, evolved a brilliant self-made bourgeois gospel of the 'survival of the fittest'. This theory devalued into that of the superman in the harsher German hands of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche; both of them died mad and the latter by his own hand, though both perpetrated a creed which did much to break up German democracy. At the same time grew up the philosophy of the Liberal Comte who justified capitalism under the guise of positivism.

"In the art and literature of the nineteenth century there was the same struggle as in religion: the trend of their evolution being from romance to realism. Thus the great Victorian literature culminated in the concern with social and political problems of H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw as also the great Russian literature in the proletarian writings of Gorky. In France, Flaubert, Zola and Anatole France, in their various ways, dealt realistically with the problems of society. This also constituted the importance of the plays written by the Norwegian Ibsen.

“The visual arts, too, discarded subject matter. In France, the realism of Courbet was followed by a new and quasi-scientific interest in colour and light with the paintings of Monet, Manet and Pissario. Impressionism, as this was called, became the most important movement of the century. Its offshoot was post-Impressionism, a loose term descriptive of the work of Cezanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh, whose influence on the 20th century has been very great. Music ran a parallel course. The development of a social consciousness in architecture craftsmanship was late in showing itself and has not even yet reached a conclusive stage.”¹

In the world of art, a conflict between Romanticism and Realism seemed to be developing along with an anti-Rationalism trend in philosophy along with social content and commitment. Europe was experiencing a great dilemma of either forsaking scientific rationalism as the sheet anchor of its value system or face the consequences of extending the same not only to the downtrodden masses of their mainland but also run the risk of rousing the zest for achieving the same ideals in the subject races of their colonies.

Iqbal, therefore, lived in a period of receding Romanticism and growing anti-Rationalism, the so-called age of Science. He lived in a period of resurgent nationalism in subjugated colonies, which tried to rejuvenate their thinking to gain self-confidence. In India, Iqbal witnessed the emergence of national consciousness in its varied aspects and manifold contradictions as well as the birth of passive resistance to British Imperialism under Gandhiji and its violent overtones as manifested in the terrorist movement led by Bhagat Singh and others. He also saw the close collaboration between Non-cooperation Movement led by Gandhiji and the anti-British movement for the restoration of Khilafat led by Ali Brothers, which was the realisation of the necessity of linking up the struggle for Indian Independence with the struggle of the liberation of the Arab and West Asian countries. The Khilafat Movement failed giving place to the emergence of the Young Turks which avowed allegiance to Nationalism. But Iqbal, till his last, firmly held his ground. He addressed himself to the consolidated Liberation Movement of the Arab and Islamic and Asian countries, which, to him, provided beacon light to the future of mankind.

1. History of the World, Odhams Press, London, p. 838.

For Iqbal, poetry was a mission. It was motivated by the socio-economic factors of his age and, should, therefore, be understood in the context of his times. His poetry and the message it conveys retains its significance and aesthetic appeal to this day for Iqbal addressed to the task of exploring the laws governing the evolution of human progress regardless of given framework of any particular country or age. Nevertheless his thought and art, both bear an indelible mark of his country and his time which may explain not only the nature of his mode of expression but also limitations and contradictions of his art and thought.

CHAPTER V

Iqbal in Evolution

Iqbal's art and thought is no rigid aesthetic or ideological entity. It evolved in a long process, with direct bearings on his individual and social development. Iqbal lived in an era of great social turmoil. In India, it was a period of anti-imperialist struggle for political independence, which needed (i) integration between various communities in India and (ii) consolidation of anti-imperialist forces in India, West and Central Asia. In these parts, a battle was on—a battle between two alternatives to social regeneration—puritanism versus modernism.

Perhaps, it was more vehemently manifested in the Wahabi capture of Saudi Arabia and the demand for the restoration of the Caliphate in Turkey, on the one hand, and Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan and the Jadidi Movement in Central Asia, on the other. Iqbal could very well see that Islamic society in these areas was rejecting the puritanical alternative in preference to modernism. It is not, therefore, surprising that Iqbal's work does not show any great enthusiasm for the movement for the restoration of Khilafat while he was full of praise for Ataturk and dedicated *Payam-e-Mashriq* to Amanullah Khan, not merely because he was an anti-imperialist but also a great exponent of modernism and social revolution in the Islamic world. His passion for modernisation was so strong that he welcomed even Mussolini as its symbol. Iqbal's opposition to Mulla and Sufi and his dedication to the norms of Western philosophy marks a break from mediaevalism.

In India, too, during the period, several battles were being fought. The struggle for emancipation from foreign rule which necessitated firstly, the consolidation of all diverse communities into a well-integrated anti-imperialist front (Hindu-Muslim Unity being only one aspect of it); and secondly, fraternisation with the anti-imperialist forces in Central and West Asia, and, thirdly, a solution of the problems about the strategy and tactics of the Indian revolution,

e.g., the problem of parliamentarianism, armed struggle, passive resistance and *Ahimsa* (non-violence).

Into this whirlpool of Asian and Indian politics enters a youngman well-versed in Western thought, particularly philosophical thought, coming from a family of middle class artisan, Noor Mohammad, who used to tailor and sell *burqa* caps for *purdah* women. This youngman was not wholly indifferent to the glamour of the Indian elite and despite his father's puritanical habits was nonetheless a jolly person spending his time in college hostel and sharing and enjoying the pleasures of life within his reach.

He had an ear for music and an eye for beauty, natural and human; he could be inspired by the majesty of the Himalayas, moved to tears by the tunes of a *qawwal* boy at the tomb of Mirza Ghalib, could fall in love with beautiful women and enjoy the company of friends like Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Jogendra Singh.

He could be moved and could move his listeners to tears while reciting his poems on the plight of the orphans in mammoth gatherings of Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam for he had a tender heart going out at every suffering and seeking solace in the dreamy visions of the Romantics. He would long to forget himself in wilderness on the banks of a river and could write poems on pretty damsels. And then, he had at his disposal, the treasure of sensuous delight, as well as the cleverness to combine it with mystical suggestions.

This, perhaps, completes the outline of pre-1905 Iqbal. He begins his poetic journey by writing descriptive poetry, though he supplants it and often blends it with mystical suggestions. If Iqbal's entire poetry is treated as one huge canvas, it will start with landscapes, mostly without any human figures.

The first phase of Iqbal's poetry—particularly Urdu poetry—may, therefore, be characterised as descriptive poetry mainly relating to nature—sun, moon, clouds, morning, evening—but full of mystical symbolism. He paints nature in lyrical modes and draws heavily from poetic similes and metaphors taken from *ghazal* imagery and makes frequent use of sensual observation and imagination. His poetic talent manifests itself in correlating these natural phenomena with metaphysical or mystic consciousness, which will be discussed later on.

Incidentally, his dedication to his country and to the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* (which to my mind, along with *Bhakti*, provided an ideological basis for national integration) is evident during this period. But even here, he can hardly be described as a poet of human

relationships. He is much more interested in the relationship between Man and Nature, often emphasizing their unity in the usual *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* (or Sri Sankaracharya's *Advaitvada*) style.

The most intense passion in this period is reserved for the plight of the glorious 'Indian' nation in *Tasveer-e-Dard*. Incidentally *Dard* or sorrow is the word not frequently used by Iqbal but it has been used for the largest number of times, during this period.

Then we enter the second period in which *Dard* or sorrow seems to be writ large. Incidentally, this was the period when Iqbal was suffering great mental anguish and romantic agony, as evident from his letters addressed to Atiya Faizi. On 9 April, 1909, he wrote:—

“Yes, I have refused to accept Philosophy chair in Aligarh (Muslim University—M.H.) and a few days before that also refused to accept a professorship in History in the Lahore Government College. I do not want to take up any kind of employment. My objective is to flee the country at my earliest. You know the reason. I owe a moral debt to my brother and it is only this which is a hinderance. My life is a great ordeal. He wants to impose a wife on me forcibly. I have written to my father that he had no right to settle a match for me specially (as) I had refused to enter such alliance. I am ready to provide for her but I refuse to make my life a hell by living with her. As a human being, I have every right to happiness and joy and if society refuses that right to me, I shall resist both of them openly. The only solution seems to be to flee this blasted country or to find escape in wine which makes suicide easy. The dead and barren leaves of books cannot give any joy to me. There is enough fire hidden in my soul to burn them up and with them all the social conventions. You will perhaps say that all things here were created by a loving and just God. May be so, but the events of life lead me to a different conclusion. Instead of a just God, it is easier to believe in an Almighty Satan.”

Again, he writes in 1911:

“These days, I do not converse with others. My life is a mine of tormenting thoughts which emerge like snakes from the dark and deep cockpits of my soul. I think I should turn into a snake-charmer and start roaming in the street followed by a group of inquisitive street urchins. Misfortune is shadowing me like a faithful dog and I have learnt to like this body due to her untiring loyalty to her unfortunate and tragic master.”

This clearly shows that Iqbal's art was seeking avenues of escape. Goaded by his terrible intellectual and emotional tribulations, Iqbal undertook to transform his art from private and personal to an impersonal plane. The poetry of this period, however, remains a quest for realisation of self through love and pleasure of which he writes: "Please do not take me to be a pessimist. I tell you sorrow is very delicious and I enjoy my misfortune, and laugh at those who think themselves happy. You see how surreptitiously I enjoy my pleasures." If we refer to his biographers, we learn that the gay and joyous youngman has been married and the marriage has run into troubles. Reasons we do not know. May be sex, lack of physical attraction or intellectual, perhaps, social incompatibility? The young poet is in turmoil. Even without referring to his letters addressed to Atiya Faizi, inference from the tenor of his poems remains obvious. In his famous letter, he declares the Universe as a machination of a merciless Devil and contemplates migration, heavy drinking and suicide and significantly enough, confides this to Miss Atiya Faizi, to whom he had put the eternal question of a lover—*Diwana banun ya na banun* (Should I or should I not go mad in love?). His heart is full of sorrow. His vision is enchanting and his emotions tender, perhaps more tender than expressed in any other period of his poetry. He describes Love as a compound of all things beautiful. His imagery becomes more lyrical, words more melodious. Landscape seems to be receding to the background to lend majesty to the warmth of human emotions. The Flesh and Blood hold the centre of the Stage, in a short interlude, causing much misery and tribulations. Iqbal was torn between two different personalities—that of a faithful youngman of a rather conservative middle class Muslim family of immigrant Kashmiris and a joyous cavalier youth of Punjabi educated class. Iqbal's first wife suited the former, and Atiya, the latter.

Torn between the two personalities, Iqbal turned stoic as evident from Atiya's account of the days they spent together in London and Hiedelberg. Iqbal was in a state of tension and mostly kept himself aloof from all sorts of intellectual and social activity, shunning even books and poetry, for "he had enough fire in him to burn these barren leaves".

During this period, his poetry, however, had a brief spell of sensuousness leaving mere observation and imagination far behind. Emotion appears to have come into it without any metaphysical or mystical overtones. Iqbal does not reject *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* during

this period. Nor does he write about it as he did earlier. His romanticism gets more intimate and personal and *ghazal* makes an appearance on the horizon of his poetry in a different manner—not merely as a conventional form or stylised diction as in couplets like:

نہ آتے ہمیں اس میں تکرار کیا تھی مگر وعدہ کرتے ہوئے عار کیا تھی

(Who were we to object if you had not come, but why did you not at least promise to come.)

This time *ghazal* appears as an expression of a tender experience. Similes and metaphors from Nature are replaced by similes and metaphors from social life though the drawing-room imagery is still in command.

The period continues for sometime till at least as far as Urdu poetry of Iqbal is concerned, the elegy of his mother marks a change in mood. The poem is about an event which provided a great shock. The romantic sensualist succeeded in 'sublimating' himself to a higher level. Iqbal's mother is to him what Beatrice was to Dante, for her death unfolded before him a new panorama of profound questions about Life and Death before his eyes. Life ceased to mean personal life to him, only life with capital L remained real. The series of poems marking the transformation include *Shama-o-Shair*, *Shikwa*, *Jawab-e-Shikwa* and *Khizr-e-Rah*.

Even at this stage, Iqbal refrains from rejecting totally *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*, though he strays from it. He, however, finds himself interested in Socialism—a sort of new *Hama Ust* (Absolute Monism) which cuts across all barriers of colour, creed or nation and unites all the exploited people under common banner. Iqbal of *Khizr-e-Rah* and *Pyam-e-Mashriq* is perhaps closest to Socialism. This also prompted him to link himself with the modernist movements in West and Central Asia and to strike a balance between Islam and Marxian Socialism. Events of the last phase also drew him closer to God and politics. His class interests led him to championing the cause of the peasant proprietorship of land consistently from his first collection to the last.

In politics, he tried to find a political creed of his own in a period when the country was passing through communal upheavals. Religion had become a political weapon. Iqbal, too, readily accepted

it as a vehicle of expression. Just like Sri Aurobindo or Tilak, Iqbal gave new interpretation to his own religion and found in it not only his own sublimation but also the sublimation of the East and the key to its gaining supremacy over the West.

The period of *Saqi Nama*, *Zauq-o-Shauq* and *Ruh-e-Arzi* tends to replace emotion with idea, sensuousness with sensibility, wonder with awareness. Again, the intimacy of human relationship vanishes. The warmth and tenderness of fellow-feeling is gone. What replaces it is a deep-rooted interest in human destiny. The question which now interests Iqbal is not "Who am I?" but "What is the reason behind the rise and fall of nations?" He projects the problem in a manner so as to coalesce areas of both philosophy and political science.

His answer is simple and to a great extent in conformity with the three major thinkers who had given the problem their single-minded devotion—Darwin, Marx and Bergson. Iqbal too believes in the Will which provides leverage to creative evolution and the social will of the community or a vast majority of its exploited masses determining the course of history. To accept this position, he had to reject *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* as advocating annihilation of Self. Conversely, he had to accept *Wahdat-us-Shahud* or the ritualistic and more rigid form as an alternative. Ibn-e-Arabi and the Persian Poet Hafiz became *persona non grata* while Syed Ahmad Shahid and Aurangzeb became his heroes.

In terms of poetic diction, the period marks an era of impersonalisation. The human figure seems to be receding from the panoramic drama of elemental forces of Evolution. The poet falls back upon intellectual concepts rather than on personal experience. In his diction, he is more and more attracted by similes and metaphors from under the open sky—the rugged mountains, the wild spans of deserts traversed by unknown caravans and the eagles flying high in the vastness of the sky. The focus is changed from Man to the Creative Life Force revealing itself as a sheath of Gold—a handiwork of God, the Designer and Man, the artisan and the executor of the Divine Will.

Perhaps the most eloquent example of the period remains *Masjid-e-Qartaba* where Time assumes the main role revealing itself through various arts—architecture, painting and music—and History—Renaissance, Reformation and Industrial and French Revolutions—and the Islamic contribution to world culture particularly in Spain—

and Man and his actions provide proper perspective to the theme of eternal drama of Time.

Iqbal also underwent a change in regard to descriptive poetry. Unlike earlier phases, the description of events, men and places assume a different pattern. Iqbal practically ignores all "objective" descriptions. For instance, the poem on Cordova mosque contains only four lines of description of the mosque itself.

Changing attitude towards woman is also noteworthy. In this period, his poetry is almost devoid of any mention of feminine charm. On the other hand, he criticises his contemporary artists for their obsession with women and feminine charm.¹

The period also marks Iqbal's disillusionment with Marxian Socialism, on the one hand, and Kamal Ataturk's modernism on the other. He attacks the atheism and the "retention" of old state authoritarianism in the former and lack of idealism in the latter. These reactions became sharper in the last phase. Jawaharlal Nehru has mentioned his turning more and more towards Socialism in his last phase. On the contrary, he was turning more and more towards mediaevalism in this phase of sharpening class contradictions.

Finally, we come to the last phase which may be said to have begun from poems of the latter part of *Bal-e-Jibril*. The poetic inspiration seems to be on the wane and the poetry of statement takes over. In *Zarb-e-Kalim* and *Armughan-e-Hejaz* barring a few jewels like *Shua-e-Ummeed* and *Mehrab Gul Afghan Ke Afkar*, Iqbal has contented himself with versified statement of his ideas on men, matters and institutions. The depth of vision and lyrical sublimity of expression has given way to terse versified lines, mostly without any creative fire behind them.

Maikash Akbarabadi in his *Naqd-e-Iqbal*, has expressed the view that it was during this period that he came to realise that his understanding of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* was erroneous and that the mystic philosophy is not necessarily linked up with the negation of Self or propagation of inaction. He quotes extracts from his letters and poems to substantiate his conclusions. This may be debatable but Iqbal does seem to turn to mediaeval religiosity more and more

ہند کے شاعر و صورت گرد افسانہ نویس آہ بیچاروں کے اعصاب پر عورت ہے سوار 1.

during this period. Similes and metaphors lose their lyrical quality and the expression of his buoyant and virile personality appears bogged down by mediaeval scholasticism. Even *Iblis ki Majlis-e-Shura* does not provide an exception.

Hence, in the course of the evolution of his art and thought Iqbal clearly manifests all the major limitations of his class and its social contradictions. To understand them better, we shall have to examine his thought pattern as it evolved through a period of time.

CHAPTER VI

Thought

*To sing, to sing, to sing
So that the shadow becomes human
As Sunday blesses the week
And as hope sweetens truth.*

Lious Aragon: Les Poetes

What is the essence of Iqbal's poetic thought?

As we all know, Iqbal, like any other poet, passed through several stages of development. He started in the traditions of Dagh, the language purist, who sang of love and simple joys of life. Then, he inherited the social perspective of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Hali. Poetry, to him was a part of mission for social reform, which along with a deep sense of patriotism and fidelity to his community, formed the basic tenets of his personality. Iqbal's evolution from a poet of linguistic purity of simple joy of life like Dagh or from a poet of social reform and patriotic passion like Hali to that of a poet of new world-outlook is too obvious to need any emphasis. However popular the first stage of his poetic evolution may appear to many of us, there can hardly be two opinions about the fact that pre-1905 poetry does not truly represent Iqbal. It is not, in fact, the real Iqbal. It is not the essence of his poetic thought.

It was in post-1905 era that Iqbal was confronted with the basic question which haunted him all his life. What makes nations great? Is it mere chance that in course of history, certain nations prosper and acquire distinction and glory while others are subjugated, or fade out? Or some pattern can be traced in this strange panorama of rise and fall of nations? Is this explanation in any way connected with certain qualities imbibed by certain nations or their leaders in course of struggle for survival?

Obviously these were questions which needed deep probe into areas far from poetry. For answers to these queries, only philosophy was not enough. A close scrutiny of history, sociology and other disciplines of social and natural sciences was also necessary. Fortunately for Iqbal, he was scrutinising these questions at a time when Darwin, on one end, and Bergson, on the other, had already delved deep into them and the conclusions reached by them had greatly influenced our times. Darwin clearly defined his theory of the 'survival of the fittest' as the only principle which governs the rise and fall of all species. He writes:

"It follows that any being, if it varies, however slightly, in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and will thus be naturally selected. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form."

He elaborates it by an interesting illustration:

"Let us take the case of a wolf which preys on various animals securing some by craft, some by strength, and some by fleetness; and let us suppose that the fleetest prey a deer, for instance—had from any change in the country increased its numbers, or that other prey had decreased in numbers during that season of the year when the wolf is hardest pressed for food. I can, under such circumstances, see no reason to doubt that the swiftest and the slimmest wolves would have the best chance of surviving and so be preserved or selected."

Thus, it will be seen that Darwin recognised two causes of evolution: (i) the inheritance of characters acquired by the ancestors, and (ii) natural selection. Darwin laid stress on the second of these causes, and his explanation of the process of evaluation by means of natural selection was the triumph of his work.¹

Thus the struggle for existence not only guarantees the survival of any species but also effects internal changes in the structure of the species itself so as to make it much more adaptable and effective. Building on the Darwinian concept, philosophers and social scientists tried to detect a pattern in human history and to find a pattern in the rise and fall of nations. Bergson worked out his theory of creative

1. *The Book of Scientific Discovery* by D.M. Turner, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1933, pp. 216-17.

evaluation and in our own times, historian Toynbee explained the entire course of human civilization in not too disparate terms of challenge and response.

In sum, the human knowledge pointed out to the possibility that rise and fall of nations may not, after all, be purely accidental. In fact, it suggested that the will to survive and capacity to adaptation to changing environment largely determines the fate of nations. Hence, survival depends on one's ardent desire to survive. Desire keeps them alive. It alone gives them fillip to progress. It only makes or mars their future. Iqbal, as a wide-awake thinker, did realise that all human knowledge was pointing out to Desire and Passion as the life force of nations.

The conclusions reached by the scientists and philosophers on the basis of reason and sense-data could not be easily brushed aside. Yet Iqbal accepted them according to his own light. His acceptance of these conclusions were as an idealist philosopher who firmly believed in the primacy of thought over matter. Again, he accepted these conclusions as a member of a subject race inhabiting an undeveloped country ruled by alien western rulers and, thirdly, he accepted these conclusions as a resident of Asia, a continent striving for its liberation not only from political slavery and a feeling of intellectual inferiority but also trying to regain lost self-confidence and dignity.

These limitations left their impact on his outlook. As a member of an enslaved nation, Darwin's theory of Survival of the Fittest could only be accepted as a bitter lesson of history. The Western nations were not born great nor were they genetically more advanced. What made them great was their passion for living, zest for conquest of nature. Hence, if any single motivation common to all developed nations could be traced, it shall first and foremost be the will to live. Conversely, the real cause for the downfall of the defeated Asian nations shall have to be found out in their defective outlook towards life, in their lack of this passion for living. The idea ideally suited Iqbal, as an idealist philosopher. Idea and not matter (or action) came first and here he was successfully diagnosing the disease of the enslaved nations to the defective idea which ruled their lives and shaped their destinies.

Now ideas occur to individuals and individuals transmit them to societies and nations. If ideas shape the world, it is heroes who give the universe these ideas which change their destiny. Hence, the pivotal significance of the individual, who cannot possibly be just a

commoner but some sort of a superman—nay, a prophet or a seer in his own way. For an idealist philosopher, this dominating role of an individual appealed to be an epoch-making idea.

But to reach new ideas which could liberate the slave nations of Asia, it was pertinent to question and challenge ideas responsible for their enslavement and decline. These Iqbal readily identified in the corpus of values and concepts embodied in oriental mysticism. He draws a parallel between Islamic and Hindu mysticism for both preach annihilation of desire, both stand for negation of self, both adhere to the cult of introspection—*samadhi* and *Muraqba*—and discard action and the conquest of nature. In the preface to *Asrar-e-Khudi*, he clearly equates Ibn-e-Arabi's concept of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* with the *Advaitvad* of Sankaracharya and draws close parallels between Indian and Iranian thought with the sole exception of Sri Krishna, whose *Gita* he mentions as a glorious embodiment of positive thinking.

Iqbal's opposition to mystic thought emanates from his abhorance of negation of self and idealisation of inaction.¹ But mysticism, even Islamic Sufism, was of myriad shapes. *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* believed in the final annihilation of fragmentary human existence in the Divine whole. Hence their line of thinking led to the final union between God and Man, thus practically eliminating the line demarcating the two, for Man becomes God after losing his identity in him. Even before that, in Man resides a particle of Divine Existence which reveals itself in ecstatic utterance of *Anal Haq* (I am the Truth) through the lips of a Mansur Hallaj who was hanged because of uttering these 'sacrilegious' words. The annihilation of Desire recompensates the mystic with the promise of eternal life in God himself and denies the very duality of matter and spirit, of Desire and the life around to be shaped according to one's desire, thus snapping the very links which bind Man with the chariot wheels of action and response.

Iqbal was, therefore, compelled to take the opposite position of upholding the primacy of desire, which alone can provide firm basis for action and urge to conquer Nature. Desire, then, may be the

1. There has been severe criticism of Iqbal's understanding of mysticism. Perhaps the most preceptive among such books is Maikash Akbarabadi's *Naqd-e-Iqbal*, Agra, 1961 which points out that Islamic mysticism does not preach negation of self or inaction but only urges pre-disciplining of desire which may lead to selfless action.

cause of human suffering, as Buddha¹ held, but what is much more significant to Iqbal is the fact that it is Desire and Desire alone which leads Man to ceaseless action and progress which kindles hope. The zest for life thus generated guarantees the survival of the fittest. According to Iqbal, the only man who truly serves mankind is the person who burns with this zest for living. This sacred discontent with the present state of things, evokes an urge to bring about transformation of society. This alone guarantees the continuance of human existence in a world of ruthless competition among various species.

Iqbal, therefore, could only accept that variety of mystic thought which could provide scope for desire and action, for matter and spirit, for separate or near-separate existence of Man and God. He found his brand of mysticism in Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, whom he interpreted according to his light, and, accepted as his teacher and leader. It may be doubted whether Rumi really differed from his other mystic companions as radically as Iqbal would like him to, for, after all, Rumi was an ardent disciple of the ascetic Shams Tabrezi, who was skinned alive for his ecstatic utterances.

But Rumi provided only a bridge between Iqbal's philosophy and his religion, which may be discussed at a later stage. Philosophically, Iqbal was more interested in finding the reasons of the decline of the East, which he found in the acceptance of oriental mysticism and its philosophy of negation, inaction and annihilation of desire. As a counterblast, he preached a life full of desire and action. This burning desire alone could liberate the subjugated nations of Asia, he concluded.

It is perhaps necessary at this stage to appreciate that the call for revival of desire and action given to a subjugated nation should be taken in a different context. In fact, differentiation should be made between a call given to the subjugated nations and that given to the affluent European nations. For the latter, such a call would be a call for imperialist expansion and ruthless domination over the rest of the world while a similar call in the case of the subjugated nations would only mean a call for self-assertion and liberation, for resistance to

1. Iqbal devoted a whole poem to Gautama Buddha in *Javed Nama*. He paints him as a seer who has surpassed the lure of material happiness but despite all appreciation he does not seem to accept the philosophical proposition of Gautama, the Buddha.

exploitation and resolute fight for regaining their self-confidence. Appreciation of his symbol of *Shahin* (the falcon) or his conception of superman, suffer from this lack of proper perspective.

In his scale of values, Iqbal places angels at the lowest ladder of existence as they are only faithful worshippers of God and are free from all desire. Lucifer, he places at a superior level for in him burns bright the eternal flame of desire, which led him to refuse obeisance to Adam even when ordered to do so by the almighty God Himself. At the pain of being thrown into divine disfavour as an eternal exile, Lucifer dares retain his dignity, reiterates his self and suffers for his disobedience. This may be by the connivance of God Himself, Iqbal wonders, for without Lucifer the universe would have been without the burning flame of Desire, and, without it, how colourless would have been this planet called Earth.

Iqbal prefers even a misguided Desire to lack of Desire and Lucifer ideally fulfils his conception of his misguided Desire. For if Desire is to be extolled unconditionally, every dacoit shall appear to be a superman and the society wedded to such blind worship of Desire shall soon land into absolute anarchy. Hence, Iqbal had to write a proviso to his *Asrar-e-Khudi* in the form of his *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi*. He tried to subject unbridled Desire to certain rules and regulations. For him the only criterion of true Ego is that it should conform not only to the dictates of the individual's own aspirations but also to the aspirations of the society, in general (*Millat*). And since, neither angels nor Lucifer have a society of their own, Man is the only species to acquire this highest stage of socially controlled Desire and, therefore, Man should be given precedence over both and deemed to be at the highest level of existence, next only to God Himself.

At this stage, it will be proper to acquaint ourselves with the phraseology used by Iqbal for his various concepts for he has cleverly made use of age-old terminology lending them new meaning and significance. *Khudi* literally means Ego but to Iqbal it means self-assertion based on Desire (*Khudi*) while the controlling power which denies unbridled freedom to individual lust and brings it in line with Social Ego has been termed *Bekhudi* and the person who possesses this socially controlled Desire has been called as Superman (*Mard-e-Kamil* or *Mard-e-Momin*).

Perhaps it will be appropriate at this stage to discuss the problem of the sources of Iqbal's terminology, particularly various probable sources of Iqbal's concept of Superman. The most thoroughly dis-

cussed remains the influence of Nietzsche. Both have certain apparent affinities. For instance, both criticise Plato. Both prescribe three stages for man to pass through in his journey to self-realization. In Nietzsche, the three stages are that of child, tiger and child while in Iqbal these are Desire, Social Control and vicegerency of God. Both idealise desire and passion for life. Iqbal seems to agree with Nietzsche that power is synonymous with truth and determines the standard of values, but does not subscribe to the iconoclastic nihilism of Nietzsche. A.H.J. Knight sums up the main characteristics of Nietzsche's superman in the following words:

"Freedom from ethical restrictions, for great ends, actions, creative greatness; joy; these shall be good. Fetters shall be thrown off and authority denied. This life shall be acceptable as the only life, and as good. All that impedes greatness, power, beauty shall be abolished. The fears of sin, hell, death, conscience shall be exorcised. As there is no soul without body, there can be no spiritual greatness where the body is sick: therefore, health is immeasurably valuable. Pity is a sickness. It hinders action, or serves to give an unhealthy pleasure to the pitier. Hardness is a virtue beyond all price."¹

Such was the culmination of Romantic Rebellion started by Rousseau's 'Social Contract' who declared that 'Man was born free but everywhere he is in chains.' Nietzsche's passion for life, his abhorance to hidebound values, his love for dynamism, initiative and drive are all appreciated and accepted by Iqbal but Nietzsche's lawlessness and destruction was entirely alien to him. Iqbal does not, for instance, share the following key sentiments of Nietzsche as expressed in 'Thus Spake Zarathustra':

- "Destroy for me, oh destroy for me, the Good and the Just."
- or "God is dead, Now let us will that the Superman live."
- or "God is dead, God died of his pity for man. Therefore be warned against pity."
- or "Must not we ourselves become gods to seem worthy of it? Never before was so great a deed performed and all those born after us will by that very fact belong to a higher form of history than any that has hitherto existed."²

Perhaps the closest parallel is the story of the diamond and coal,

1. Some Aspects of the Life and Works of Nietzsche, Cambridge University Press, p. 119.
2. Thus Spake Zarathustra (Joyful Wisdom, p. 125).

first told by Nietzsche and then adapted by Iqbal to suit his own ends. Given below are the English renderings of the story first as narrated by Nietzsche and then by Iqbal.

Nietzsche writes:

“Why so hard? said the kitchen coal once to the diamond: Are we not then near relations?

“Why so soft? O my brother, thus I ask you: are you not then my brother?

“Why so soft, so yielding and submitting? Why is so much evasion, denial in your heart? So little fate in your gaze?

And willed ye not to be relentless how could ye one day—conquer with me?

And if your hardness will not flash, and cut in pieces; how could ye one day create with me?

For all creators are hard. And delight it must seem to you, to press your hand on centuries as on wax—

Delight to write on the wall of centuries as on bronze—harder than bronze, nobler than bronze.

Only the noblest is quite hard.

This new Commandment, O my brother, I put up over you: Become Hard!”

Iqbal narrates the story of the Diamond and the Coal thus:

“Now I open one more gate of truth

I will tell thee another tale.

The coal in the mine said to the diamond,

‘O thou entrusted with splendour everlasting,

We are comrades, and our being is one;

The source of our existence is the same,

Yet while I die here in the anguish of worthlessness,

Thou art set on the crowns of emperors.

My stuff is so vile that I am valued less than earth,

Whereas the mirror’s heart is rent by thy beauty. . . .

Everyone puts the sole of his foot on my head—

And covers my stock of existence with ashes.

My fate must need be deplored;

Dost thou know what is the gist of my being?

Thou art a condensed wave of smoke,

Endowed with a single spark.

Both in feature and nature thou art star like.

Splendour rise from every side of thee.

Now thou becomest the light of monarch's eye,
 Now thou adornest the haft of a dagger.'
 'O Sagacious friend,' said the diamond,
 'Dark earth, when hardened, becomes in dignity as a bezel
 Having been at strife with its environment,
 It is ripened by the struggle and grows hard like a stone,
 'Tis this ripeness that has endowed my form with light
 And filled my bosom with radiance.
 Because thy body is soft, thou art burnt.
 Be void of fear, grief and anxiety;
 Be hard as a stone, be a diamond!
 Whosoever strives hard and grips tight,
 The two worlds are illuminated by him.
 A little earth is the origin of the Black stone
 Which puts forth its head in the Ka'ba:
 Its rank is higher than Sina,
 It is kissed by the swarthy and the fair.
 In solidity consists the glory of Life;
 Weakness is worthless and immaturity!"

Striking resemblances between the two are obvious.

Another source of Iqbal's theory of Ego and Superman has been traced by Majnu Gorakhpuri in his treatise on Iqbal. He writes: "Iqbal's theory of *Khudi*, even if not directly derived from famous German mathematician Leibnitz's theory, certainly resembles it a great deal."

The concept of Superman is not only in the air in the West but also in the East. Shri Aurobindo wrote:

"For what is supermanhood but a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man? He is made in God's image, but there is this difference between the divine and its human representative, that everything which is unlimited, spontaneous, absolute, harmonious, self-possessed, becomes in the other, limited, relative, laboured, discordant, deformed, possessed by struggle, kept by subservience to one's possessions, lost by the transience and insecurity which come from wrong holding. But in this constant imperfection there is always a craving and an inspiration towards perfection."¹

1. Superman, pp. 8-9, Ashram, Pondicherry. Quoted by S.A. Vahid: Iqbal and his Thought, p. 78.

In a different context, he observed:

“The right relation of the individual with the collectivity is neither to pursue his own material or mental progress or spiritual satiation with regard to his fellows, nor for the sake of the community, to suppress or maim his proper development, but to sum up in himself all its best and completest possibilities and pour them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings, so that the whole race may approach nearer to the attainment of its supreme possibilities.”¹

The concept of Superman in Iqbal, however, has been traced to at least three different sources—Nietzsche, Al-Jili and Rumi and finally to Quran. These may be examined at a later stage. But Aurobindo’s extracts clearly show that the Indian situation warranted such a concept not only on the philosophical plane but also as political expediency.

In general, we may say that the most dominant element in the very texture of Iqbal’s poetry is that of Rumi’s mysticism and western philosophy of idealism, in particular, belonging to those schools of thought known as determinism and activism. These pervade Iqbal’s thought all through.

But before proceeding further, it will be worthwhile to consider Iqbal’s statement on this point. Commenting on Dicken’s comments on his formulation that Iqbal’s concept of Superman has been taken from Nietzsche, Iqbal writes:

“He could not understand my concept correctly I wrote on the mystic concept of the Perfect Man about 20 years ago. And that was the time when neither the din about Nietzsche’s concept had reached my ears nor had I read any of his books. This article was published in the *Indian Antiquary* (Bombay 1902) and when in 1908, I wrote a book on Persian Mysticism the same article was included in the book.”²

This statement sets at rest many doubts about the sources of Iqbal’s philosophy of Ego and Superman. It seems that Iqbal had

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1. *Arya* Vol. II, p. 174 Ashram, quoted by S.A. Vahid: *Iqbal and his Thought*, p. 79.
 2. *Mazamin-e-Iqbal*, p. 64-65 quoted by Abdul Haq in *Iqbal Ke Ibtidai Afkar* (Urdu), Delhi 1969.

been working ceaselessly on it on his own. Dr Abdul Haq¹ has painstakingly traced the development of the concept in his earliest poems written in the beginning of the present century. But the idea was fully developed only after Iqbal imbibed the influence of Western thinkers and his mind started working on striking a balance between Western materialism and Eastern spiritualism. He readily found out justification in his interpretation of the Quran. A close scrutiny of his correspondence with Sulaiman Nadvi and Aslam Jairajpuri clearly bears out how eager he was to clothe his own thoughts with Islamic phraseology which we may ascribe to his attempt at giving a modern interpretation to Islamic concepts so as to authenticate it with new ideas of progress and power. The influences of Al-Jili or Rumi were part of the usual design and need not be discussed here at length.²

S.A. Vahid had discussed at some length the probable date when Iqbal evolved his philosophy of Ego (*Khudi*) and the consequent idea of the Superman. He writes: "...In his article in *The Indian Antiquary*...he was thinking of a superman as early as 1902". Again quoting a letter written to Iqbal by Dr H.C. Taggart in 1920, he shows that 'Iqbal still believed in pantheistic sufism when he left Cambridge in 1908. His poem *Asrar-e-Khudi*, published in 1915 must have been written in about 1914. Thus Iqbal must have developed his philosophy between 1908 and 1914.' (p. 14). Incidentally, soon afterwards the events following the Jallianwala Bagh outrage and, later on, the recall of the anti-British Non-cooperation Movement by Gandhiji after Chauri Chaura incident where violence was used against British policemen, terrorism emerged as a political alternative and emphasised the role of the individual as a catalytic agent of historical forces. Again, it was during this period that Premchand was painting images of a Superman in his novels. The cult of the Superman, therefore, appears to be not only a flight of poetic imagination but also the call of the times.

Soon after 1905, when Japan, an Asian power, defeated Russia, a European power, it is probable that Iqbal might have started thinking

1. For a detailed discussion, refer to his *Iqbal Ke Ibtedai Afkar* 1969 Chap. III. His contention is that Iqbal used the symbol of Shahin (Falcon) in his 'Orphan's Plaint' written in 1900 (p. 36) or perfected his philosophy long before the rise of Fascism (p. 53).

2. For those interested in such discussions, S.A. Vahid's "Iqbal: Art and Thought" Chap III. (p. 41).

of the inadequacies of European progress. In 1914, the First World War broke out to confirm the worst fears of European turmoil and decay, as visualised in *The Decline of the West* and the critics of Western parliamentarian and the culture of the Occident. Iqbal, who had already predicted this downfall in couplets like:

تمھاری تہذیب اپنے خنجر سے آپ ہی خودکشی کریگی
جو شاخِ نازک پہ اشیانہ بنے گا ناپائدار ہوگا

(Your civilization is going to commit suicide with her own dagger. The nest built on a frail bough cannot but be insecure.)¹

—must have jumped with delight over the opportunity, offered by the war, to the Asians to prove their cultural superiority over their masters. Hence, the predominance of the oriental spiritual element in his concept of the Superman.

Was there any contradiction between Indian situation and the situation of Muslim States? The liberation of Asia, in fact, was a prerequisite for Indian freedom. Both were groaning under the heels of the same exploiter. And as Iqbal was primarily interested in offering an alternative world-view to the West, his attention was focussed on the regeneration of the Arab and West Asian countries, most of which professed Islam and were deeply influenced by Islamic thought. It was necessary to link up his own philosophy of Ego and Superman with a reinterpretation of Islam (which he termed as 'Reconstruction of Islamic Thought'). He was, in fact, trying to present new ideas in the garb of old notions to gain wider acceptance.

To an idealist philosopher, Asia could be liberated only when preponderant Muslim countries of the continent could be liberated from the ideology of decadence by replacing it with a dynamic philosophy of action and achievement under an acceptable phraseology. Iqbal, in this respect, was not a religious poet. He was simply a poet of religious terminology. He used religious symbols and phraseology to accept wider and deeper acceptance of his ideas which basically concerned not only with the advancement of a

1. Tr: S.A. Vahid: Iqbal: Art and Thought p. 9.

particular community but dealt with the secret of rise and fall of nations. The new aspiration of emergent nationalism (one aspect of which was the awakening at the level of various communities and regional entities) called for a Messiah—a phenomenon which seems to dominate even the international scene till the end of the World War II in 1945. Again, this kind of Superman provided a pleasant compromise between the Darwinian concept of the 'survival of the fittest' and the spiritual assertion of Man as a willing and respected agent of the Divine Spirit.

This, therefore, satisfied the Asian within Iqbal who must be thinking for avenging the defeat at the hands of the imperialist West by asserting the supremacy of East in the realm of spiritualism, without which no real progress seemed possible.

Iqbal has, as an idealist philosopher, landed himself in several contradictions. Firstly, he presumes that individual and social egos do not clash and collide. Perhaps in that situation he would easily declare the individual Ego as Satanic and stand by the side of the Social Ego. He has, however, clearly left out of account the usual dissensions within a given society. No human society (*Millat*) is a monolith. It is always constituted of various groups and classes with conflicting interests and clashing fidelities. Now, to which Social Ego, the individual Ego should conform? In that case, the emergence of more than one Superman is imminent representing the interest of his own class and the deciding factor between the two perhaps will only be: who ensures the good of the greater number?

Again, his theory leaves it undefined whether his *Mard-e-Momin* includes both man and woman or man alone. Elsewhere in his poetry, he has parried the question of equality between the sexes. For an aesthete and romantic of the early 20th century, woman was much too tender to be granted equality with man. She may be eulogised as a creator (as Iqbal and his several other contemporaries have done) but often denied a position of equality under interesting pretexts. In his "Stray Reflection" he jots down—"All beautiful things in Nature are in veil of secrecy" and thus justifies *purdah* for women.

But before proceeding further, a discussion of Iqbal's concepts of Time and Space is necessary so as to place his perfect man in a proper perspective. Iqbal propounds his theory of Time in the following words:

"If we regard past, present and future as essential to time, then we

picture time as a straight line, part of which we have travelled and left behind and part lying yet untravelled before us. This is taking Time not as a living creative movement, but as a static absolute, holding the ordered multiplicity of fully shaped cosmic events revealed serially like the pictures of a film to the outside observer.”¹

As a true idealist philosopher, Iqbal believes in a continuum of time in absolute terms and some of his finest poetry has been written on this theme. He believes that non-serial time should not be measured by the short span of life of individuals. Men come and go, like flowers on a branch of a tree which fade away only to be followed by the equally beautiful next bunch of flowers. In *Saqi Nama*, he poetically describes this ceaseless flowering of life thus:

سُکُل اس شاخ سے ٹوٹتے بھی رہے اسی شاخ سے پھوٹتے بھی رہے
سمجھتے ہیں ناواں اسے بے ثبات اُسبھرتا ہے مٹ مٹ کے نقشِ حیات

(Flowers fall off from this very branch
and yet from the same, they sprout again.
Fools take it as transient
But the image of life emerges again after falling off.)

To him, time is eternal and has a totality of its own. The release of time from its material limits, makes it concurrent with God—in fact, the God Himself. That’s why the famous maxim ascribed to the Prophet which Iqbal quoted to Bergson “Don’t speak ill of Time for I (God) am Time.”²

Time creates and destroys things and in its grip everything appears trivial and helpless excepting the eternal power of *Ishq* (Love) which in Iqbal’s parlance, means devotion to a cause that generates action. His poem *Masjid-e-Qartaba* opens with a stanza describing the ruthless power of Time, whose destructive energy can

1. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 54-55.

2. A detailed discussion on Iqbal’s understanding of this rather unconfirmed saying of Prophet Mohammad will be found in Shabbir Ahmed Ghori’s article published in *Fikr-o-Nazar* (Urdu), Aligarh 1963.

only be countered by *Ishq* (Love), which rises above Death and change:

سلسلہ روز و شب اصلِ حیات و ممات	سلسلہ روز و شب نقشِ گرِ حادثات
جس سے بنانی ہے ذات اپنی قبائے صفت	سلسلہ روز و شب تارِ حریرِ دو رنگ
جس سے دکھاتی ہے ذاتِ زیرِ و ہم ممکنات	سلسلہ روز و شب سازِ ازل کی فغاں
سلسلہ روز و شب عہدِ فنی کائنات	تجھ کو پرکھتا ہے یہ 'مجھ کو پرکھتا ہے یہ
موت ہے تیری برات موت ہے میری برات	تو ہے اگر کم عیار میں ہوں اگر کم عیار
نقشِ کہن ہو کہ نو، منزلِ آخر فنا	اول و آخر فنا، باطن و ظاہر فنا
جس کو کیا ہو کسی مردِ خدا نے تمام	ہے مگر اس نقش میں رنگِ ثباتِ دوام

(The sequence of Day and Night shape its own events and, in sum, remains the essence of Life and Death. It is the silk thread of two different colours with which Ego weaves its role of attributes. . . . It (Time) ruthlessly tests both you and me—it is the touchstone of the universe and if anyone of us proves of false metal, death is our fate. Extinction is the fate first and the last, for the obvious and for the Hidden one, for every image old or new. But the only image which may claim eternity is the work completed by a man of God.)

In the words of S.A. Vahid, Iqbal and Bergson both believe in the reality of 'pure time' as distinguished from 'serial time'. But as Iqbal says, "I venture to think that the error of Bergson consists in regard to time, as prior to self, of which alone pure duration is predictable. . . . In Bergson, the conflict of mind and matter means a dualism in the whole universe, which is never resolved into a unity. In Iqbal, we have the all embracing Ego which is God."¹

1. Iqbal: Art and Thought, p. 101.

Dr Yusuf Husain Khan in his *Ruh-e-Iqbal*¹ says:

”اقبال نے ذہن اور فطرت کے دونوں کے نظریوں سے متعلق اپنی ایک علیحدہ
 راہ اختیار کی ہے۔ باوجود فلسفہ خودی کا علم بڑا رہنے کے وہ خارجی عالم کی حقیقت
 سے انکار نہیں کرتا نفس و آفاق اپنی اپنی جگہ حقیقی ہیں فطرت کے معروضی وجود سے
 انکار نہیں کیا جاسکتا۔ مادیت کے ماننے والوں کا یہ دعویٰ غلط ہے کہ مادہ مکان میں
 واقع ہے۔ حالانکہ حقیقت میں وہ حادثوں کا لاتناہی سلسلہ ہے۔ فطرت کے ان
 حوادث و تغیرات کا علم حاصل کرنے کے بعد ہی انسان کے لیے ممکن ہے کہ وہ
 روحانی زندگی کا احساس کر سکے۔“

“Iqbal has adopted a new attitude in respect to the theories of duality of Nature and Mind. Despite his being a votary of the philosophy of Ego, he does not refuse to accept the reality of the external world. Both the universe and the existence exist in reality and the existence of Nature is real and cannot be denied but materialists' contention that matter exists in space is wrong. It (matter) is in fact an unending series of events. After understanding these events and their changing patterns alone one can appreciate spiritual life.”

Iqbal seems to be in general agreement with Einstein's Theory of Relativity but he regards Time as a fourth dimension of Space. According to Iqbal, “this would mean that future is as indubitably fixed as the past; and Time would cease to be a free creative movement.” This he does not regard to be a correct view of the theory of Relativity, for it does not regard Time as a fourth dimension of Space, but of the Space-Time continuum. To him, space and time are not as two distinct entities considered separately but as inseparable part of a single Space-Time continuum as the universal matrix of existence, out of which come all material forms, living organism and human persons.

1. *Ruh-e-Iqbal*; Delhi, 1952, p. 317.

Iqbal in his enthusiasm to escape the basic concept of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*, seems to have accepted the duality of matter and mind and insists on a finer link-up between the two while rejecting materialism and its concepts of Space and Time. Iqbal also does not subscribe to the Theory of the physical world being only a reflection of the human mind or merely a free activity of consciousness.

But we have perhaps reached the crux of the ideological limitations of Iqbal. Here he stands fully exposed as a truly idealist philosopher, whose poetry fails to mask the clear contradiction he faces as a Thinker. On the one hand, he is compelled to admit the existence of the material world in its own right, and on the other, he negates matter as to prove the all pervasive primacy of consciousness and spirit which lands him into a dilemma where he is forced to the position of accepting dualism, thus accepting both matter and consciousness as real.

In short, it may be pointed out that the contradiction in Iqbal's thought emerges mainly due to his failure of not being materialistic enough in not seeing direct link-up between matter and consciousness as two entities but as a twin manifestations of matter changing itself into thing and thought, in not realising that both Time and Space are not absolutes but points representing mutual penetration of opposites of matter and consciousness. He fails to realise that consciousness is conditioned by matter. In fact, the consciousness itself is a higher form of matter.

This short resume of Iqbal's thought may be rounded off by considering his mode of expression of these thoughts in his poetry. What is creditable is not only the credibility of his concept, what is much more important is that he succeeded in expressing these ideas in beautiful poetry.

As already pointed out, Iqbal accomplished this delicate feat by giving new interpretation to age-old symbols and weaving them in the very texture of his poetry so as to create a new mosaic of aesthetic ecstasy and philosophical awareness. He symbolised inertia as evil and idealised movement and action not only as an embodiment of all Beauty and Knowledge but also something which guarantees continuity of life and hence represents all that is sacred in it.

As discussion of Iqbal's poetic craft is put off for a later chapter. It will be interesting to note in passing that Iqbal has used:

- (a) Symbols
- (b) Parables

(c) Personalities

(d) Metaphors and images

to express his philosophic concepts. The details of his poetic technique shall be discussed later. Here it will suffice to give examples of his use of these devices in his poetry.

In one of his early poems, *Khizr-e-Rah*, Iqbal selects panorama of still life by river-side and then juxtaposes it with the picture of an uninhabited plane enlivened by the moving herd of gazelles covered by a sky radiant with meteors and stars. The entire scene brightens up with gathering of a caravan round a stream—all pointing out to the action and movement as the very essence of life. Khizr, the wandering Prophet who has been granted eternal life and given the responsibility of leading those gone astray, associates these manifestations of action and movement with life itself and emphasizes Man's role as a conqueror:

یہ رنگا پوئے دوامِ زندگی کی ہے دلیل	کیوں تعجب ہے مری صحراوردی پر تجھے
گو نجحتی ہے جب فضائے دشت میں بانگِ حیل	اے رہینِ خانہ تو نے وہ سماں دیکھا نہیں
وہ حضر بے برگ و سماں وہ سفر بے سنگتِ میل	ریت کے ٹیلے پہ وہ آہو کا بے پروا خرام
یا نمایاں بامِ گردوں سے جبینِ جبرئیل	وہ نمودِ اخترِ سیما بپا ہنگامِ صبح
جس سے روشن تر ہوئی چشمِ جہاں بینِ خلیل	وہ سکوتِ شام صحرا میں غروبِ آفتاب
اہلِ ایماں جس طرح جنت میں گردِ سلسبیل	اور وہ پانی کے چشمے پر مقامِ کارواں
اور آبادی میں تو زنجیر مٹی کشت و نخیل	تازہ ویرانے کی سودائے محبت کو تلاش

پختہ تر ہے گردشِ بہم سے جامِ زندگی
ہے یہی اے بے خبر رازِ دوامِ زندگی

(Why are you surprised at my continuous roaming of jungles and dales. This hub of struggle and action is the evidence of life.

O! thou who is confined to the four walls of your house, you

have not seen the beautiful sight when the voice, calling the caravan to move, rings in the wide expanse of wilderness.

On a plateau of sand, the gazelles move carefree, O' the pleasure of unencumbered travel and that incessant going on without any milestones.

O' the emergence of the mercurial stars of the dawn; is it the Jibril's forehead that reveals itself from the balcony of the sky.

Or the sun set in the complete silence of the jungle like (Abraham's) eyes which have seen the world, brighten up with revelation.

And that converging of the caravan on a stream. As if the Believers gather near the rivulet of the Paradise, 'salsabil'.

The passion of love needs a new wilderness. And you are still a prisoner of pastures and groves.

The cup of life gets sustenance by its eternal movement. This is O' ignorant! the secret of the continuity of life.)

The description clearly manifests how Iqbal has reduced his philosophic concepts into simple terms of incessant movement, into the meaningful symbols of mercurial stars, fast moving gazelles and convergence of a caravan on a lonely stream. Even apart from its deeper meanings, the description is highly picturesque and aesthetically satisfying. This combination of sublime thought and emotions with the powerful and picturesque diction is the essence of his art and explains his perennial appeal even to those who do not always agree with his formulations.

Only two more such instances will suffice to show the artistry he employs in weaving his philosophical concepts into the very fabric of his poetic experience. In the example given below, he employs two well known characters and endows them with his own interpretation. The characters are none other than the Holy Ghost (Jibril) and Lucifer (Iblis). As discussed earlier, Iqbal denigrates all angels, including Jibril, as of lower strata of existence as they do not have any desire and the passion to achieve their desired goals while Lucifer remains, in this respect, far superior to them all because of his 'Passion and Desire.' He readily refused to subordinate his individuality by refusing to pay obeisance to Adam, even at God's command and risked eternal damnation. Iqbal presents Lucifer as an embodiment of misguided and indisciplined Ego which was nonetheless far superior to the Egoless Jibril and his fellow angels.

Again, Iqbal sees in the fall of the Lucifer, a subtle divine conspiracy by which God created the drama of the good and evil by ascribing the willing role of a villain to the Lucifer, who was, as the Tradition goes, the teacher of the angels before his fall. Iqbal artistically exploits these characters and through them expresses his entire philosophy of Self dramatically:

جبریل : ہمدمِ دیرینہ کیسا ہے جہانِ رنگ و بو؟

ابلیس : سوز و ساز و درد و داغ و جستجو و آرزو!

جبریل :

ہر گھڑی افلاک پر رہتی ہے تیری گفتگو

کیا نہیں ممکن کہ تیرا چاک دامن ہو رنو

ابلیس :

آہ اے جبریل تو واقف نہیں اس راز سے

کر گیا سرمست مجھ کو ٹوٹ کر میرا سب

اب یہاں میری گزر ممکن نہیں، ممکن نہیں

کیس قدر خاموش ہے یہ عالم بے کاخ و کو

جس کی نو میدی سے ہو سوزِ درونِ کائنات

اس کے حق میں تقنیطو اچھا ہے یا لا تقنیطو

(Jibril: Friend of bygone days, how you like the material world of colour and odour.

Lucifer: It is all Sorrow and Mirth, Pathos and Passion, Quest and Desire.

Jibril: In the Skies, they still remember you; Isn't it possible to mend your torn robe again.

Lucifer: Alas, Jibril, you do not know the secret, My broken cup satiated me. Now, it is impossible to return to that listless place without winding ways and towering mansions. For one, to whose eternal dismay enlivens the universe with life and warmth, which is better for him—to hope or despair?)

And finally, that deceptively simple poem of jingling words liting musicality, *Saqi Nama*. Iqbal does not fall back upon any symbol, any known character, any historical or religious episode and imbibes simple thought. His magic touch gives expression to the

deeper Realities of life through the miraculously simple words. Sample the following couplets describing the all pervasiveness of Self, the passion for life:

اسی نے تراشا ہے یہ سومات	یہ عالم یہ بُت خانہ شش جہات
کہ تو میں نہیں اور میں تو نہیں	پسند اس کو تکرار کی خو نہیں
مگر عین محفل میں خلوت نشیں	من و تو سے ہے انجمن آفریں
یہ چاندی میں سونے میں پارے ہیں	چمک اس کی بجلی میں تارے ہیں

(This universe, this six-dimensional temple of variegated idols, this Somnath, has all been carved out by Self. It never repeats itself for you and I am not identical. It decorates the world with manifold figures and yet conceals itself from every eye in open assembly. Its radiance lits every star and lightning. It embodies silver, gold, quicksilver.)

Einstein once remarked that his Theory of Relativity can only be explained in poetry. Iqbal at the very outset selected poetry as the medium of his philosophical thoughts which gave it the depth and sublimity it deserved. It was for nothing that Sajjad Ansari had observed: "If the Holy Quran could not have already communicated to mankind in Arabic through prophet Mohammad, the only medium for it in present times would have been either Iqbal's poetry or Abul Kalam Azad's prose." Iqbal has the distinction to be one of the pioneers among our poets who gave poetry deep philosophical depth and significance and thus added a new dimension to its sublimity and beauty. Ghalib said: "I never agreed to be a poet. It was poetry that desired to be my Art." It was much truer in case of his able descendant, Iqbal.

CHAPTER VII

Poetic Craft

Before the assessment of the poetic achievements of Iqbal, it is perhaps essential to know what he really wanted to achieve. This will naturally involve a discussion, however cursory, of his definition of the poet and his idea of poetry. Much injustice has already been done to him by scholars who have either painted him as primarily a philosopher or a political scientist or merely a poet—which in their parlance, meant someone too trivial and imaginary to be taken seriously. Such scholars found some clues to support their view of Iqbal in his own lines like:

مری نوائے پریشان کو شاعری نہ سمجھ

(Do not take my voice in wilderness as poetry.)

نہ زباں کوئی غزل کی نہ زباں باخبر میں کوئی دل نشیں صدا ہو عجمی ہو یا کرتنازی

(There is no diction of *ghazal* neither I am aware of it.
Let there be a heart-rending melody, be it from Persia or from
Turkestan.)

To take such pronouncements literally would be incorrect. For, parallel to them, we find Iqbal taking pride in his role as a

poet. In his 'Stray Reflections' diary compiled in 1910, he writes about poets:

”شاعری میں منطقی سچائی کی تلاش بالکل بے کار ہے۔ تخیل کا نصب العین حسن ہے نہ کہ سچائی۔ اس لیے کسی فنکار کی عظمت کو ظاہر کرنے کے لیے اس کی تخلیقات ہی سے وہ اقتباسات پیش نہ کیجئے جو آپ کی رائے میں سائنسی حقائق پر مشتمل ہوں۔“

(It is idle to seek logical truth in poetry. The ideal of imagination is beauty, not truth. Do not then try to show a poet's greatness by quoting passage from his works, which, in your opinion, embody scientific truth.)

Again in the same diary, he writes:

روحِ عالم اپنی باطنی زندگی کی مختلف صورتوں کو علامتوں میں پوشیدہ رکھتی ہے۔ کائنات ایک بڑی علامت کے سوا کچھ بھی نہیں لیکن وہ ہمارے لیے ان علامتوں کی ترجمانی کی زحمت کبھی بھی گوارا نہیں کرتی۔ یہ شاعر کا فرض ہے کہ وہ ان کی ترجمانی کرے اور اپنی نوع انسان پر ان کے اسرار منکشف کرے اس سے ظاہر ہو گا کہ شاعر اور روحِ عالم ایک دوسرے کے مخالف ہیں۔ کیوں کہ شاعر ان اسرار کی نقاب کشائی کرتا ہے جسے روحِ عالم پوشیدہ رکھتی ہے۔

(The world spirit conceals the various phases of her inner life in symbols. The Universe is nothing but a great symbol. But she never takes trouble to interpret these symbols for us. It is the duty of the

poet to interpret them and to reveal their meaning to humanity. It would, therefore, appear that the poet and the world-spirit are opposed to each other; since the former reveals what the latter conceals." p. 105)

There are two more entries on the subject:

" قومیں شاعروں کے دلوں میں پیدا ہوتی ہیں اور وہ اربابِ سیاست کے ہاتھوں میں پروان چڑھتی ہیں اور فنا ہو جاتی ہیں۔ "

(Nations are born in the hearts of poets; they prosper and die in the hands of politicians. p. 125);

and about a prophet, he observes:

" ایک پیغمبر صرف ایک عملی شاعر ہے۔ "

(A prophet is only a practical poet. p. 126)

About the relationship of poetry and philosophy, he is of the opinion:

" فلسفہ انسانی تعقل کی بر فلی رات میں کانپتا ہوا جوہر ہے۔ شاعر نمودار ہوتا ہے اور ان کو معروضیت یا حرارت بخشتا ہے۔ "

(Philosophy is a set of abstractions shivering in the cold night of human reason. The poet comes and warms them up into objectivity. p. 127)

About the relationship of psychologist and poet:

" ماہرِ نفسیات سطح آب پر تیرتا ہے جب کہ شاعر غواصی کرتا ہے۔ "

(The psychologist swims, the poet dives. p. 137)

In the words of a poet, he addresses his fellowmen.

”میرے پیارے دوست تو نے مجھے صرف خیالی مفکر اور بلند تصورات
کا خواب دیکھنے والا جانا ہے۔ مجھے میرے گھر میں بچوں کے ساتھ کھیلتے دیکھو اور
یہ دیکھو کہ میں باری باری ان کا مرکب بنتا ہوں گویا میں لکڑی کا ایک گھوڑا ہوں۔
ہاں مجھ کو حلقہ خاندان میں اپنی اس سفید بالوں والی بوڑھی ماں کے قدموں میں
پڑا ہوا دیکھو جس کے شباب انگیز ہاتھ کا لمس وقت کے دھارے کو پیچھے بہا دیتا
ہے اور میرے دماغ میں بسے ہوئے کانٹوں اور ہریگلوں کے باوجود مجھے ایک
طفلِ مکتب ہونے کا احساس بخشتا ہے۔ یہاں تو مجھے انسانی حیثیت میں پائے گا۔“

(Come, dear friend; Thou hast known me only as one abstract thinker and dreamer of high ideals. See me in my home playing with the children and giving them rides turn by turn as if I were a wooden horse! Ah! See me in the family circle lying at the feet of my grey-haired mother the touch of whose rejuvenating hand bids the tide of time flow backward, and gives me once more the school-boy feeling in spite of all the Kants and Hegels in my head! Here thou wilt find me as a human being. p. 142)

About the effect of poetry and philosophy on human personality, he writes:

”فلسفہ بوڑھا بنا دیتا ہے۔ شاعری دوبارہ شباب لاتی ہے۔“

(Philosophy ages; poetry rejuvenates. p. 143)

In the last few entries of the diary, only one is on Art:

”سائنس، فلسفہ، مذہب سب کے حدود ہیں۔ صرف فن لامحدود ہے۔“

(Science, philosophy, religion all have limits. Art alone is boundless. p. 156)

All these formulations, along with the oft-repeated couplets given above, clearly show that for Iqbal, a poet is a seer. He cannot live in oblivion, unconcerned with the life around. Poetry is part of total cosmic consciousness. Poetry is not merely a medium of communication of philosophy, religion or scientific truth. It is the consciousness itself—the sensibility born out of man's contact with Nature and the life around.

This image of poet and the nature of his commitment to life around kept on changing during the period of his creative activity. In *Bang-e-Dra*, for instance, he begins with describing the poet as the eye of the nation's organism:

قوم گویا جسم ہے افراد ہیں اعضائے قوم منزلِ صنعت کے رہیما ہیں دست و پا قوم
 محفلِ نظمِ حکومت چہرہ زیبائے قوم شاعر رنگیں نوا ہے دیدہ بینائے قوم
 مبتلائے درد کوئی عضو ہو روتی ہے آنکھ
 کس قدر سجدہ سارے جسم کی ہوتی ہے آنکھ

(Nation is an organism and individuals are parts of its body.

Those engaged in industry are its hands and legs.

Those engaged in administration are its face.

Poet of myriad sweet melodies is the eye of the nation.

The eye weeps for the suffering of any and every part of the body.

How sympathetic it is to the entire organism.)

During the period 1905-08 when he had already visited Europe and taken to the creed of internationalism with a pan-Islamic slant, he describes himself as one of the poets who are born to lament the eclipse of a great civilization. After mentioning Sadi, who wrote an elegy on the fall of Baghdad, poet Dagh, who lamented the plunder of Delhi in 1857 and Ibn-e-Badrin who wrote feelingly of the loss of

Granada to Islam, he concludes by describing himself as a poet mourning the decline of Sicily:

نارکش شیراز کا بلبل ہوا بغداد پر ذآغ رویا خون کے آتسو جہان آباد پر
 آسماں نے دولتِ غرناطہ جب برباد کی ابنِ بدروں کے دلِ ناشاد نے فریاد کی
 غم نصیب اقبال کو بخشا گیا ماتم ترا
 چُن لیا تقدیر نے وہ دل کہ تھا محرم ترا

(The Nightingale of Shiraz (Sa'di) lamented the fall of Baghdad, (Poet) Dagh shed tears of blood on Shahjahanabad (Delhi). When fate demolished the Empire of Granada, (poet) Ibn-e-Badrūn's heart groaned with grief. To the grief-stricken, Iqbal has been consigned the sorrow of your downfall (O, Sicily). The Destiny has chosen the heart which knew your pain.)

Other main references to the poet in *Bang-e-Dra* are in *Raat Aur Shair* (p. 188), *Shama-o-Shair* (p. 201) and *Shair* (p. 235). The first poem retains a deep subjective and personal touch and describes a poet as a lonely soul laden with grief and sorrow without any confidant excepting the night and its twinkling stars.

ضبطِ پیغامِ محبت سے جو گھبراتا ہوں
 ترے تابندہ ستاروں کو سنا جاتا ہوں

(Whenever tired of guarding the secret of message of love, I share it with your radiant stars [O night].)

But in the following poem, the poet involves himself in a deep and

searching questions with the candle, turning himself suddenly from a tender, melancholy and romantic soul into an inquisitive philosopher trying to unravel the mysteries of life. The poet turns into a seer. The voyage of Iqbal's discovery of the self had begun. The last poem on the subject in *Bang-e-Dra* reiterates a poet's role in not only lamenting or bemoaning the sad plight of the nation's organism but giving the universe a touch of eternity by playing his role as one who seeks to change the world for the better:

شاعرِ دل نواز بھی بات اگر کہے کھری
 ہوتی ہے اس کے فیض سے مزرعِ زندگی ہری
 شانِ خلیل ہوتی ہے اس کے کلام سے عیاں
 کرتی ہے اس کی قوم جب اپنا شعار آرمی
 اہلِ زمیں کو نسخہٴ زندگی دوام ہے
 خونِ جگر سے تربیت پاتی ہے جو سخنوری

(So, if the poet who enchants the heart, says something true and correct, the pasture of life is nurtured by him. In his verses, the glory of the iconoclast Prophet, Ibrahim, becomes evident when his nation adopts idol-worship as its creed, like Ibrahim's idol-making father, Azar. Poetry which is nurtured by the toil and sufferings is, in fact, a prescription for eternal life for the inhabitants of this universe.)

Surprisingly in his second Urdu poetic collection, *Bal-e-Jibril*, Iqbal does not take up this theme but for a passing reference in *Masjid-e-Qartaba*, where he describes all forms of fine Arts as the result of heart-rending toil.

رنگ ہو یا خشت و سنگ، چنگ ہو یا حرف و صوت
 معجزہٴ فن کی ہے خونِ جگر سے نمود

(Be it painting, architecture, music or song, it is the blood of your own heart which manifests in the miracle of Art.)

In *Zarb-e-Kalim* he returns to the theme once again setting a clearer ideal before all art, in general, and poetry in particular.

یہ ایک نفس یاد و نفس مثلِ شرر کیا	مقصدِ سوزِ سوزِ حیاتِ ابدی ہے
اے قطرہ نیساں وہ صرف کیا وہ گہر کیا	جس سے دلِ دریا متلاطم نہیں ہوتا
جس سے چمنِ افسردہ ہو وہ بادِ سحر کیا	شاعر کی نوا ہو کہ مفتی کا نفس ہو
جو ضربِ کلیمی نہیں رکھتا وہ ہنر کیا	بے معجزہ دنیا میں اُبھرتی نہیں قومیں

(The real object of Art is the fire of eternal Life;
Of what use is a spark of a moment or two.
Which does not stir up the bosom of the Ocean;
Of what use is the pearl or the shell, O' the drop of spring cloud!
Be it the voice of a poet or the song of a singer;
Of what use is the breeze if it makes the garden sad.
Without a miracle, nations do not forge ahead;
Of what use is Art without the stroke of the Moses.)

Again, in his poem entitled *Shair* (Poet) he admonishes the poets of the East for singing the songs of negation of the self and prays that his incessant voyage of discovery never ends leading him to newer and newer destinations.

In these pieces, Iqbal's expectation of poetry comes out in bold relief. Examples and quotations need not be repeated for all these stress the same points but his remarks in his article: 'Prophet Mohammad as a Connoisseur of Poetry' which appeared in the first issue of the *Daily Sitara-e-Subh*, Lahore, edited by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan are interesting.

" ہر شے کی قدر و قیمت کا معیار یہی ہونا چاہیے کہ اس میں حیات بخشنی
کی قابلیت کس قدر ہے "

(The criterion of the worthwhileness of an object should be its capacity to give life and vigour.)

He ends with the revealing denunciation of theories of 'aesthetic' self-containment.

Thus poetry is neither in itself merely a medium of life's message nor a self-contained aesthetic experience for all aesthetics. To Iqbal, it is subject to the test of evolution of Life. Even God is not Love, but Power. Hence all true aesthetic feelings emerge from rousing a sense of Power.

For many of us may doubt the utility of poetry or Art, in arousing sense of Power in a nation but for an idealist philosopher like Iqbal, ideas move the world and ideas are transmitted through Fine Art and literature and much more powerfully through poetry. The poetry may rouse right type of emotions, transmit powerful, life-giving ideas of power and dignity to the people and thus awaken them from deep slumber of inertia. It is, perhaps, in this sense that he scribbled in his diary as early as 1910, "Nations are born in the hearts of poets. Politicians rear or destroy them."

Such was the vital role which Iqbal aspired to fulfil as a poet. To lend this life-giving poetry a wider appeal, he started writing in Persian so that at least West Asia could find a message of power and dignity in his words. It was this new poetic temper which made his poetry so innovative and new.

Poetry of Purpose

Convinced of the power of poetry and its revolutionising effect on human thought, Iqbal chose to make his poetry a vehicle of a life-giving philosophy which he considered to be the only panacea for human ills. As a true idealist philosopher, he sincerely believed that thought comes first and all action stems out from thought. Hence, the war of liberation of mankind must begin in the minds and hearts of men. Minds may be conquered easily, for the impact on mind soon loses its effect, but hearts conserve the imprints much longer. Hence poetry, that conqueror of hearts, may be much more effective than philosophy, the conqueror of minds.

Iqbal attempted to effect marriage of the two with great success to make philosophy the mainstay of poetry and yet to retain its tenderness. Iqbal mainly owes his greatness to this astounding feat.

What is particularly surprising is that he accomplished the feat without greatly disturbing the conventional mould of poetry. He has

hardly any experiment in form or metre to his credit. He was content with giving new meaning to age-old symbols and images.

How Iqbal succeeded in giving this new temper to poetry without encroaching upon its tenderness and sublimity, remains the basic question but before any such probe, it will be, perhaps, worthwhile to have a look on the landscape of Iqbal's poetry.

Poetic Landscape

What does this poetic landscape manifest? The temporal divisions made by the poet or the critics may appear to be arbitrary. In *Bang-e-Dra*, the first collection, for instance, the change in style does not conform to the neatly-marked periods of pre-1905, 1905-1908 and post-1908.

Bang-e-Dra begins with a poem on the Himalayas, denoting three characteristic features which incidently continue to underline his poetry for quite some time.

- 1) Poetry, in the earlier period till *Shikwa* and *Shama-o-Shair* (i.e. in post-1908 period) was mainly descriptive, lending itself to didacticism or precept-oriented expressed through a brilliant use of imagination. Instances are too many to be enumerated. (For instance, the poems: *Himala*, *Jugnu*, *Aftab* etc.) During this period Iqbal seems to be extending the frontiers of descriptive poetry by adding new dimension to it.
- 2) Iqbal's entire concern seems to be with Nature and its varied manifestations. Periodically, all subjects selected by him come from Nature. This is incidentally in direct contrast to the dominant trend of contemporaneous Urdu poetry which was much too pre-occupied with human relationships than with man's relation with Nature. Iqbal, too, used some similes, metaphors and images of the drawing room and the saloons but unlike his contemporaries, he soon discarded them in favour of the theme of man's place in the Universe.
- 3) Iqbal in his earlier phase seems to be too fond of surprising his listeners with sudden and unexpected twists and turns given to poems written on simple and mundane subjects. His main device seems to be to dilate upon rather naive objects and then raise them to higher and more sublime plane by reading deeper meanings into them.

It may be noted in passing that the famous Urdu monthly,

Nairang-e-Khayal of Lahore used to carry as a regular feature a poem illustrated by an accompanying picture or photographs. The early part of Iqbal's poetry mostly consists of poems which may easily be used as a caption to a picture. The images are much too 'representational' and 'realistic' and the conclusions reached by the poet often too commonplace to arouse any difference of opinion. These unpredictably widen the perspective of these objects. A few instances will suffice:

The titles of the first few poems of *Bang-e-Dra* are as follows. They appear in one succession:

	<i>Himala</i> (Himalayas)
	<i>Gul-e-Rangin</i> (Colourful Rose)
	<i>Ahd-e-Tifli</i> (Infancy)
	<i>Mirza Ghalib</i>
	<i>Abr-e-Kohsar</i> (Cloud Over the Mountain)
For Children	{ <i>Ek-Makri Aur Makkhi</i> (A Spider and a Fly)
	{ <i>Ek Pahar Aur Gilehri</i> (A Mountain and a Squirrel)
	{ <i>Ek Gai Aur Bakri</i> (A Cow and a Goat)
	{ <i>Bachche Ki Dua</i> (A child's prayer)
	{ <i>Hamdardi</i> (Sympathy)
	{ <i>Ma ka Khwab</i> (A Mother's Dream)
	{ <i>Parinde ki Faryad</i> (A Bird's Plaint)
	{ <i>Khuftagan-e-Khak Se Istafsar</i> (Query to the Buried)
	{ <i>Shama-o-Parvana</i> (Candle and the Moth)

These poems are composed of a series of objects which could very well be illustrated in painting (like Candle, a withered Rose, Sun, Waves, Moon). The poet seems to be in the process of internalising the external world. He appears to be an extrovert and, every time he starts from the external world towards a voyage within, all the magic of his poetry seems to be concentrated on the object itself. The real internal self does not eloquently speak up, excepting perhaps in two poems, *Sada-e-Dard* and *Rukhsat Ay Bazm-e-Jahan*. From these poems to *Tarana-e-Milli* he gives expression to highly personalised even private experiences. He is mainly a lover, sick at heart and restless in spirit with a nameless pain. Never in Iqbal's poetry, such unfathomable internal turmoil is repeated. Again and again, he juxtaposes Love with Death. In *Mohabbat* he tries to analyse the components of Beauty and pours out his heart in a galaxy of poetic

similes. This again is followed by another poem, *On seeing A Cat in Her Lap*, which ends on these lines:

شیتہ دہر میں مانند مئے ناب ہے عشق
روح خورشید ہے خونِ رگِ مہتاب ہے عشق

(In the flask of the Universe, Love is like wine. Love is the Soul of the Sun and the life-blood of the veins of the Moon.)

Poetry, for Iqbal, was a personal testament. If he had organised his thoughts into a compact philosophy of self ego, as he claims to have done, it was not reflected in his early poetry. He seems to be passing through an intensely romantic period of his life, writing constantly as a lover in search of the Beauty, enchanted with his dream and feeling lonely and forlorn in pursuit of beautiful dreams. In poem on 'Loneliness' or 'An Evening', even the death-wish asserts itself. In 'Loneliness' he indulges in a soliloquy.

کس شے کی تجھے ہوس ہے اے دل
قدرت تیری ہم نفس ہے اے دل

(Of what you pine, O my heart
The Nature Itself is with you.)

Resolving Conflicts

Resolving internal and external tensions is the hallmark of great Art. Tension and its resolution create Art. The greater the tension and higher the level on which it is resolved, the greater will be the Art.

Remembering Iqbal is to remember contemporary validity of his tensions—both internal and external and pay tribute to the degree of his success in resolving these in a manner which could still inspire the world, more than 100 years after his birth.

The basic internal tension of Iqbal's poetry is between philosophy and poetry. Iqbal faced the dilemma several times. He was often on the crossroads of philosophy which called for precision, and poetry which called for tenderness, and finally decided to resolve the dilemma by expressing his philosophy in poetry. To render intellec-

tual experience into a personal, private experience which goes to make good poetry, was a Herculean task and he accomplished it admirably well. Einstein once remarked that his theory of Relativity can only be expressed in poetry. Iqbal did express his theory of the universe in poetry for to him, the most effective guarantee for the transformation of the human race was to engrave vigorous ideas of Passion, Desire and incessant Action on the clean slate of human heart for ideas alone motivate action and action alone can give birth to a brave new world. Again, he did realise that through poetry, ideas are not only more effectively communicated but also deeply embedded in the collective unconscious of the peoples to whom it is addressed. From the short 1900-1905 phase when Iqbal wrote poems of deep romantic melancholy and turmoil, he soon acquired a maturer personality. He widened the range of his experience and succeeded in connecting even intimate personal experiences—such as the death of his mother—with the higher problems of human existence, for instance the problem of life and death in general and its significance to man.

Even earlier, he was contemplating to write a poem on a larger canvas of classical dimension. In 1903 he wrote to a friend: "For a long time I have been learning to write in the manner of Milton (*Paradise Lost* etc.) and the time for that seems to be fast approaching, because in these days, there is hardly a moment when I am not thinking seriously of this. I have been nurturing this wish for the past five or six years, but the creative pangs have never been so acute as now."

That Iqbal was planning to extend the range of his poetic sensibility is undeniable. The poets who inspired him belong to the same category. They were not merely craftsmen or masters of poetic technique but had the distinction of devoting themselves to themes vital to human existence and treated them as part of their personal and intimate experience. Iqbal writes: "I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the inside of things, the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals of poetry and the last saved me from atheism in my student days."

He has given new meaning to the age-old symbols and terms used by the classical matters, thus affecting the marriage of old words with new sensibility.

Take, for instance, the poetic presentation of the malady of annihilation of self and indisciplined and unbridled assertion of self which, according to Iqbal, afflicted the East and the West respectively. These rather difficult concepts were poetically conveyed in two conventional symbols of the Angel and the Satan. Angels were born without desire, in fact without any desires of their own, simply to sing the praise of God Almighty and even the most sacred of them, Jibril is without any 'self' of his own. On the other hand, Lucifer, (Iblis), who was at one time the teacher and the leader of all angels, was thrown out of Heaven on his refusing to obey God's order to pay obeisance to Adam who was made from mud, but possessed a well defined Ego. Iblis remains to Iqbal a symbol of misdirected, unbridled, yet valuable 'self' or ego (*khudi*) and hence is much superior to angels, even to Jibril. In his poem "*Jibril-o-Iblis*", Iqbal openly ridicules Jibril through Iblis:

دیکھتا ہے تو فقط ساحل سے رزمِ خیر و شر
 کون طوفاں کے طمانچے کھا رہا ہے میں کہ تو
 خضر بھی بے دست و پا ایسا سبھی بے دست و پا
 میرے طوفاں یم بریم دریا بہ دریا جو بہ جو
 گر کبھی خلوت میسر ہو تو پوچھ اللہ سے
 قصہ آدم کو رنگیں کر گیب کس کا لہو
 میں کھٹکتا ہوں، دلِ یزداں میں کٹنے کی طرح
 تو فقط اللہ ہو، اللہ ہو، اللہ ہو

(You see from the far-off sea-coast the clash between the good and the evil; who faces the tumult of the storm, you or I? The prophets, *Khizr* and *Ilyas*, both are helpless, but my storms rule the waves, the rivers and the streams. If ever you could get chance to be alone with God Almighty, ask him, "Whose blood made Adam's tale so

colourful?" It is I who pierces the divine heart like a thorn; while you are there only to sing his praises, praises and praises.)

But the pride of the place in Iqbal's scale of priorities has been reserved for the Superman, (*Mard-e-Momin* or *Mard-e-Kamil*). He alone masters Ego (*Khudi*) or self without being mastered by it. He makes his 'self' subservient to the Community (*Millat*). And since social well-being, according to Iqbal, is nothing but the execution of the sweet will of God Almighty, the Superman represents a self which is, in fact, a selfless agent of God's will on earth. This subservience to the Community or God's order to shape the Universe in His own Image, in Iqbal's parlance, is termed *Bekhudi* (selflessness). Hence, Iqbal's concept of self completes itself in its dialectics, i.e. by negating itself, at least partially, through subservience to social or divine discipline.

Blending Device

Another device of blending poetic tenderness with philosophic significance is his use of terminology. Even words of simple old *ghazal* tradition—like *Ishq*, *Aql*, *Khiraad*, *Nazar* (i.e. Love, Reason, Thought and Insight) have been used to great effect. Love (*Ishq*) to Iqbal is not just simple love but denotes devotion to ideal or he often uses it as an index to the attainment of selfhood (*Khudi*), for without Desire or Devotion to Ideal, no Self is possible. He also uses it in juxtaposition with *Aql* (Reason) for *Ishq* with its fiery passion and all-conquering devotion often rejects all counsels of Reason and plunges forth into action thus manifesting many a miracle of human will. Iqbal describes this conflict in traditional terms:

بے خطر کور پڑا آتشِ نمرود میں عشق
عقل ہے محو تماشائے لبِ بامِ ابھی

(*Ishq* (passion) jumped fearlessly into Nimrod's fire. *Aql* (Reason) is still wavering on the fringe indecisively.)

It is mainly the magic of this philosophical projection of traditional terminology and symbols which is responsible for Iqbal's success in

expressing himself in simple yet extremely significant poetry. For instance, in *Saqi Nama*, he discusses the nature of human existence and shows that though individuals may perish, the continuity of life goes on. No difficult words have been used in expressing such a complicated concept of life:

سٹھہرتا نہیں کاروانِ وجود
 کہ ہر لحظہ ہے تازہ شانِ وجود
 سمجھتا ہے تو راز ہے زندگی
 فقط ذوقِ پرواز ہے زندگی
 بہت اس نے دیکھے ہیں پرتِ بلند
 سفر اس کو منزل سے بڑھ کر پسند
 سفر زندگی کے لیے برگ و ساز
 سفر ہے حقیقتِ حاضر ہے محباز
 اُلجھ کر سنبھلنے میں لذت اسے
 تڑپنے پھر کئے میں راحت اسے
 ہوا جب اسے سامنا موت کا
 کھٹن تھا بڑا تھا مناموت کا
 اتر کر جہانِ مکافات میں
 رہی زندگی موت کے گھات میں
 مذاقِ دونوں سے بنی زوج زوج
 اُسٹھی و شنت و کھسار سے فوج فوج

سُکُل اس شاخ سے ٹوٹتے بھی ہے
 اسی شاخ سے پھوٹتے بھی رہے
 سمجھتے ہیں ناداں اسے بے ثبات
 اُبھرتا ہے مٹ مٹ کے نقشِ حیات

(The caravan of life knows no stop, as every moment, existence reveals itself anew. You deem life a mystery, Oh! Life is nothing but an appetite for flight. It had seen many ups and downs. It likes incessant movement much better than the destination. Movement (or travel) is for it the only baggage. For it, travel is real, all else unreal. It exalts in facing and resolving new complications. It revels in incessant writhing and turmoil. When faced with death, it was much too difficult to contain it. Landing itself in the world of causation, it lay in ambush to conquer death. Infatuated with multiplying itself, it took shape into pairs, and stormed the hills and the planes like armies. Flowers kept on falling from the bough, and yet blossom from the same bough. The uninitiated deem it ephemeral, but the mark of life re-emerges after it is effaced.)

The inference is clear and unmistakable. He had taken to his heart the task of enlarging the range of his personal experience from subjective individualism to wider social and human problems of universal significance. This saved him from the merely descriptive poetry (as written by his contemporaries from Khushi Mohammad Nazir to Brij Narain Chakbast) and also from the thin, though colourful, romanticism. He was already heading towards a synthesis of the romantic imagination with classical concern for balance and high seriousness. The first tension of the individual and universal sensibility was solved by Iqbal by giving a new and more variegated dimensions to his self.

The second tension was between the experience or the sensibility, on the one hand, and its morphological expression on the other. Iqbal resorted to various techniques to resolve the tension. Firstly by giving new meaning to age-old poetic symbols such as *Ishq*, *Khudi*, etc., and secondly by using poetic terms, motifs, images and phraseo-

logy in a different meaning with a different connotation. Instances are too many and too obvious to be mentioned. But what is much more important is the poetic technique Iqbal used in his long poems of presenting the whole drama of human life against the rugged backdrop of nature. For to him, nature was not an exterior phenomenon to be painted only for ornamentation or aesthetic pleasure as a part of his own personality.

Even in his earlier poems this view of Nature persists. Nature is never painted as a thing, or static matter but as a process growing up on consciousness of the poet and the reader as part of the poetic experience. Ideas are not suggested by it. It is the idea itself. For example, in images, Nature has been portrayed as one of the living characters in the drama of Life. But the most innovative use of Iqbal's treatment of Nature happens to be in *Saqi Nama*, *Masjid-e-Qartaba* and *Zauq-o-Shauq*. In all three poems, nature provides a mirror through which the whole sensibility of the poem manifests itself. In *Saqi Nama*, the wild stream symbolises the entire philosophy of *Khudi*, propounded by the poet. In the background the entire human drama of conquering the obstacles of ages by the will for survival of mankind is enacted and the depiction of nature beautifully illustrates it through eloquent symbols.

In '*Zauq-o-Shauq*', it reaches new heights. Iqbal opens the poem with depiction of Nature—Dawn in desert with rivers of Light and Radiance flowing from the Sun and the mountains clad in the glimmering shadows of multi-coloured particles of floating clouds. The entire scenery narrates a moment of man's direct communion with God with the Nature providing the medium of such communion. In *Masjid-e-Qartaba*, the last stanza opens with three lines, filled with romantic agony reflected in Nature: "In the valley the Sun sets down in the dusk and echoes with the mellow song of a peasant girl." Everywhere the depiction of Nature is full of life, never without a mention of moving objects enlivening the landscape. Everywhere he integrates self with the non-self, Man with Nature, and uses the entire scene as a part of human drama. The most illustrative description, perhaps, is in the opening lines of *Khizr's* reply in the poem, *Khizr-e-Rah* where the depiction of the landscape is accompanied with the depiction of gazelles moving freely and the morning stars fleeting through the sky. Nature thus, appears to Iqbal in yet another dimension of his own extended personality. It is, perhaps, the part of his own self, a manifestation of his own intimate experiences through

objects and landscape, a device to resolve the tension of the Internal with the External.

As already pointed out, Iqbal is so much preoccupied with the classical dimension of the human drama that as pointed out by Qazi Ghulam Mohammad in his article on Iqbal,¹ the poet mostly chooses his metaphors and similes from Nature and not from the delicacies of the drawing room or other manifestations of human skill. His canvases are full of mountains, dales and sky as if he lives not within the four walls of a mansion but in the open space of Nature. He is perpetually dealing not with human ingenuity but elemental forces of Nature.

It will be pertinent at this stage to examine the poetic technique of Iqbal by which he attained the desired results. Practically in everyone of his important poems, he seems to have treated the poem as an integrated totality forged out of words, music and imagery. A poem is to him as much a part of literature as of music and painting. A few examples will suffice. Who will forget the lilting music of poems like *Sarod-e-Anjum*, *Fasl-e-Bahar*, *Hudi*, the poems on Kashmir in Persian and *Saqi Nama*, *Ruh-e-Arzi* and *Mihrab-Gul Afghan* series of poems in Urdu. The same integration of poetry with music and painting both in use of colour, image, light and perspective is evident. This can be very well illustrated by the examples of three important poems of Iqbal belonging to three different periods of his poetic evolution. The use of perspective in *Khizr-e-Rah* is much too obvious while *Masjid-e-Qartaba* has been truly described by critics² as a perspective poem, for only three couplets in this long poem have been devoted to the actual description of the mosque to which it owes its title, and the rest of the poem only providing the perspective. The entire history of mankind, the images of the conquering hordes of Arab militia, the ebb and flow of the human civilization as manifested in the Renaissance, Reformation and the French Revolution, the mellow songs of a peasant girl in a valley lit by twilight radiance—all paint a colourful canvas and then, *Shua-e-Ummeed* though devoted strictly to a dialogue between the Sun and one of its rays, is not without a perspective stanza thrown in between the first and the third. Iqbal's sense of colour and light is so strong that at least

1. Published in Urdu quarterly *Asri Adab*, Delhi 1976 vol. 25-26.

2. Qazi Ghulam Mohammad of Persian literature.

some critics¹ have described him as a poet of 'light' and articles have been written exclusively on this aspect of his art.

Another favourite device of Iqbal is to proceed from imagination to passion. In his early days, he was devoted to Descriptive Poetry but as he progressed he rejected Description and started his poems with powerful use of Imagination. As the poems open up, Iqbal tries to give a tangible focus to his imagination and skillfully builds up a climax to introduce full force of passion. It may be, therefore, not far from truth if Iqbal's poems are analysed as sojourn from the realm of imagination to that of Passion. As he grew old, this intricate poetic design began to get out of his hand and he satisfied himself with short poems registering his views on contemporary problem in his old style of 'Stray Reflection' but the real art of Iqbal had already come into existence, which goes to show that real art gets sustenance from real conviction and commitment, not from mere artifice and design.

It is important to note that Iqbal chose his metaphors and similes, images and symbols mostly from the open atmosphere of the natural landscape and rejected the paraphernalia of the drawing room and feudal ornamentation. This pointed out to certain trait of his character as well as his ideological alignments. The rejection of the feudal imagery as well as his determined opposition to medieval Mullahs and their creed and his unequivocal stand against landlords clearly shows that he was to a great extent representing the new Muslim middle class and the infant Muslim bourgeoisie which was, on the one hand, eager to defend itself against the more powerful Hindu bourgeoisie in the Indian market and wanted to secure an exclusive market for its own use and, on the other, eager to monopolise the Western Asian market on the basis of religious affinity.

In the modern context, therefore, Iqbal can only be partially acceptable. That part of Iqbal which sang of the glories of mankind, inspired millions to struggle for the emancipation from political slavery and all sorts of human exploitation, kindled a new courage and self-confidence in the weak and the humble, gave aesthetic pleasure, sensibility and awareness to generations will continue to live long in the hearts of the people while that part of him which allied himself with obscurantist dogmatism, denied freedom and

1. Dr Abdul Haq, Prof Shahin Rahman.

equality to women, defended sectarianism, encouraged a prejudiced and anti-rational attitude towards life and associated himself with the decadent bourgeoisie is certain to wither away in course of time only to make the glow of the real Iqbal shine much more brightly.

CHAPTER VIII

Iqbal and Struggle for Indian Independence

Iqbal is proud of India and deems it a torch-bearer to world civilisation. He sings praises of the Indian seers, eulogises Guru Nanak, Sri Krishna, Sri Rama, Swami Ram Tirtha, Bhartri Hari, Mahatma Buddha and several others and yet he finds in Islam a potent force for the liberation of Asia and of mankind and goes on to stress a supra-national role of Islam as a uniting force of several 'nations' inhabiting various countries. The contradiction is nowhere so clearly manifested as in Iqbal's poetry, which resounds with a passionate desire of the liberation of India and also yearns for finding some device to protect the Muslim identity in India. Thus he tries to combat the fears of the loss of cultural identity of the Indian Muslims at the hands of the majority in a free India by offering a promise of Muslims emerging as a dominant force at the international *scale* for Islam, to his mind, offers an alternative to the modern Western civilization.

Iqbal is, however, not unaware of the latent divisions between people professing the same religion. They may be divided between various castes (which he summarily dismisses as superfluous and un-Islamic). Regional divisions, of course, he discounts at the very outset. But, then, there is the division caused by economic disparity between the rich and the poor, which cannot be overlooked simply by saying that Islam ordains both rich and poor to offer their prayers standing in the same row in the same congregation. But this apparent equality was merely superficial. Behind this facade, the conflict between the economically backward classes and their exploiting co-religionists continues. Iqbal does not fail to notice it. He tries to gloss over it but whenever he is forced to face this disparity, his sympathies clearly go to the exploited and the poor. Not content with stressing the role of the poor in sticking to religious norms, he comes out unequivocally against monarchy in his *Khizr-e-*

Rah and denounces 'capitalism' as the basis of the ultimate doom of Western civilization. Iqbal, as one interested not only in Philosophy but also in Economic and Politics, is not oblivious of the nature of capitalist exploitation and its political forms, which he discusses in some detail in the same poem.

But to revert to our original theme, Iqbal's sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden is manifested in his attitude towards the peasantry and the industrial worker. He firmly believes that these are the classes to which the future of mankind belongs:

مکر کی چالوں سے بازی لے گیا سرمایہ دار
انتہائے سادگی سے کھا گیا مزدور مات
اٹھو کہ اب بزمِ جہاں کا اور ہی انداز ہے
مشرق و مغرب میں تیرے دور کا آغاز ہے

(The capitalist has scored on you by clever moves and the worker has been defeated due to his innocence. Arise! now there is a new style in the world. Now, your era begins in the East and the West.)

First, let us consider Iqbal's idea of land relations and his attitude towards Indian peasantry, a problem which played a vital role in the struggle of Indian Independence and still retains its primacy in our socio-economic set-up. The first reference to the peasantry in Iqbal's poems occurs in *Shama-o-Shair*, written after 1908. But here, the peasant has symbolic overtones.

In the humorous section of his first Urdu collection, *Bang-e-Dra*, he clarifies his attitude towards the peasantry:

تکرار کتنی مزارع و مالک میں ایک روز
دونوں یہ کہہ رہے تھے مرا مال ہے زمیں
کہتا تھا وہ کہے جو زراعت اسی کا کھیت
کہتا تھا یہ کہ عقل ٹھکانے تری نہیں

(The landlord and the peasant were quarrelling one day. Both were claiming the land as their property. He was saying that land belongs to one who tills it. The other said, 'You are out of your mind'.)

پوچھا زمیں سے میں نے کہ ہے کس کا مال تو
 بولی مجھے تو ہے فقط اس بات کا یقین
 مالک ہے یا مزارع شوریدہ حال ہے
 جو زیر آسماں ہے وہ رطرتی کا مال ہے

(I asked the Land to whom it belonged
 It told me that "I only know
 That it may be either the owner or the poor peasant
 Whoever is beneath the Sky is my possession.)

An obvious echo of Tolstoy's famous story "*How Much Land Does a Man Need.*" In *Bal-e-Jibril*, he refers to the peasantry, at several places. In *Farishton Ka Geet* (Song of Angels), he reports to God, the miserable plight of the poor through the lips of the angels—and in his *firman*, God Almighty orders the angels to burn every corn of the land which does not yield sustenance and livelihood to its tiller. Again, in another poem, he declares land as the property of God and God alone, not of any landlord or his feudal ancestors:

وہ خدایا، یہ زمین تیری نہیں تیری نہیں
 تیرے آبا کی نہیں تیری نہیں میری نہیں

(O! Landlord, the earth is not thine, not thine,
 Nor of your ancestors, neither yours, nor mine.)

In another poem on Punjab Peasantry, he laments it being a prisoner of superstitions and casteism and urges it to rise. Though he does not elaborate further, Iqbal seems to take the position that private property in land is untenable. Land is the property solely of God and all rights of ownership vest in Him and Him alone. The only other claimant of these rights, if any, seems to be the tiller of the land. He calls upon the peasantry to realise its latent potentialities and to understand that in him lie hidden all the powers, lack of which has deprived him of the benefits he deserves.

Again, Iqbal expresses identical views about the industrial workers and the proletariat. In *Khizr-e-Rah*, in which he seems to have moved closest to the Marxian ideology and the ideals of the Socialist Revolution of the Soviet Union, he devotes one complete section to

the theme, "Capital and Labour" and addresses himself to the "proletariat". In *Bal-e-Jibril*, again, the same trend continues in various ways. In his poem on Lenin, he launches a bitter attack on capitalism through Lenin's lips. In the same vein, he declares the doom of the age of capitalism in *Saqi Nama*. In his Persian collection, *Pyam-e-Mashriq*, he devotes at least six poems and poetic pieces to the working class and various thinkers associated with their cause, viz. Marx and Lenin. In one of his poems, he versifies an imaginary dialogue between the philosopher Comte and an industrial worker. This is in response to Comte's formulation that though all men are equal yet certain tasks befit certain people. This division of labour is both just and convenient. In his rejoinder, the worker demolishes the argument as a mere fallacy for, under this pretext, the exploiter mints gold while the exploited are taught lessons of subservience and submissiveness.

In another poem entitled *Qismat Name-in-Sarmayadar-o-Mazdoor*, he describes in some detail, this unjust division of rights and privileges between the two classes, all the best going to the privileged few and all the worst to the working class. In *Armughan-e-Hejaz*, the last collection of his poems published posthumously, he describes Socialism and Marxian Thought as the greatest danger, after Islam, to Satanism and Evil. The Devil's disciples express their consternation over the spread of Socialist ideology but the Devil reassures them by saying that Islam is a greater challenge to their trade and should be given priority over all other challenges. The fifth disciple of Devil complains of Marx as demolishing the very basis of the Satanic order. But the Devil confidently sets at rest all the apprehensions of his disciple.

Incidentally, this was the approach which the Indian National Movement and its various political components were trying to formulate vis-a-vis Marxian Socialism. Gandhiji was evolving his concept of trusteeship thus striking a balance between capitalism and socialism. In various other countries also, attempts were being made to strike a compromise between socialist ideals, on the one hand, and the requirements of the native feudal (or bourgeois) elements on the other. It was not without some justification that Aziz Ahmed in his treatise *Iqbal: Tashkil-e-Jadid* describes Iqbal's philosophy as 'Islamic Socialism'. In fact, Marxian socialism gave no quarter to the lingering vestiges of feudalism and to the nascent native pettybourgeoisie, which were interested in mobilising

the peasantry and the working class to fight their battle under their leadership. This was only possible if these suppressed classes could be given new ideals to fight for, but the realisation of these ideals could be diluted so as to accommodate interests of these retrogressive elements.

Another objection to Socialism forwarded by Iqbal was on its system of proletarian dictatorship which, according to Iqbal, was just another name for yet another repressive State machinery. Iqbal does not differentiate between the class character of the various forms of government and equates the Soviet system with other systems, like monarchy and Parliamentary democracy. He observes in one of his poems: "Even if the reins of power are in the hands of the worker, the styles of the stone-cutter too retains all the clever devices of the monarchy."

Another aspect of our struggle for national independence reflected in Iqbal is the close and inevitable link between the Indian independence and the Asian (particularly West-Asian) resurgence. Iqbal clearly realised that the destiny of Indian liberation movement was inextricably connected with the liberation of Asia. The control of Suez and the West Asian plunder was a decisive factor in this struggle and could not be ignored. This was realised by various sections of the National Movement in India also, particularly after the Khilafat Movement which connected these movements into a unified front against imperialism. Thus his reference to the rising people of China and Tunisia as well as to the exploited and enslaved millions of Asia, was a part of the national independence and faithfully reflected the spirit of the Indian Revolution.

The age of Iqbal was an age of crucial importance to our struggle for Independence both at the political and socio-cultural levels. It was during this period that major upheavals shook the continent of Asia. Iqbal was great as the exponent of the ideas and sentiments that took shape among the millions of his countrymen who were at the threshold of independence.

CHAPTER IX

Contribution

About one hundred years ago in undivided India, was born a child in a family of modest means in far off Sialkot. The child was given the name of Mohammed Iqbal and grew up into a highly educated youngman well versed in Philosophy, Law and Arabic. In addition, he became an epochmaking poet who overshadowed practically all his predecessors and contemporaries in Urdu literature.

He taught Arabic philosophy and practised law but what made him immortal was his Urdu and Persian poetry through which he tried to give his best to his fellow-men. His restless soul was all the time experimenting with words. He wanted to explore the power and energy that a single word can contain. He wanted to give his words electrifying energy undreamt of in the world of art for he was convinced that revolutions are born in the minds of men and conveyed through the magic of words. Poetry was to him this magic of transmitting revolutionising energy to his fellowmen.

Iqbal — the Nationalist

To Iqbal, a poet was like eyes to the organism of a nation. If any part of the body is hurt, eyes weep in pain and sorrow. What is more, eyes show the way and guide us in uncertain mist. Like a true poet, he was extremely sensitive to the misery and tribulation around him. The abject slavery, poverty, disunity and backwardness of his countrymen made him restless:

رُلاتا ہے تیرا نظارہ اے ہندوستان مجھ کو کہ عبرت خیز ہے تیرا فسانہ سب انسانوں میں

(O, India, thy plight makes me weep. For thy tale is the most distressing and exemplary of tales.)

and again:

جل رہا ہوں کل نہیں پڑتی کسی پہلو بجھے ہاں ڈبو دے اے محیطِ آبِ گنگا تو مجھے

(I burn in sorrow and find no rest in any manner. Drown, O, drown me, O wide Ganges so that I may get peace.)

Not only his earlier writings are full of this overwhelming affection, even in his later writings like *Shua-e-Ummeed*, he fondly dedicated himself to India, the land which is 'nurtured by the tears of Iqbal'. The solitary rebellious ray of the Sun refuses to leave the darkening land of India when asked to do so by the Sun. It says:

چھوڑوں گی نہ میں ہند کی تاریک فضا کو
جب تک نہ اٹھیں خواب سے مردانِ گراں خواب
خادر کی اُمیدوں کا یہی خاک ہے مرکز
اقبال کے اُنسکوں سے یہی خاک ہے سیراب

(I shall not leave the dark land of India till those lost in long slumber do not wake up. It is this land, which is the centre of all hopes of the Sun. It is this land which has been nurtured by tears of Iqbal.)

Even prior to *Shua-e-Ummeed* which is included in his third Urdu collection, *Zarb-e-Kalim* published in 1936, his earlier pre-1905 poetry also contains patriotic songs like:

سارے جہاں سے اچھا ہندوستان ہمارا
ہم بلبلئیں ہیں اس کی یہ گستاخ ہمارا

(Our India is best of all lands in the world.
We are its nightingales and it is our orchard.)

and:

چشتی نے جس زمیں میں پیغامِ حق سنایا
 نانک نے جس چمن میں وحدت کا گیت گایا
 میرا وطن وہی ہے میرا وطن وہی ہے

(The land, in which Moinuddin Chishti proclaimed the message of God; the garden in which Nanak sang the song of monotheism; that country is my motherland, that country is my motherland.)

and of course, the famous poem: *Naya Shivala* (New Temple) which concludes:

پتھر کی مورتوں میں سمجھا ہے تو خدا ہے
 خاکِ وطن کا مجھ کو ہر ذرہ دیتا ہے

(You think God resides in idols of stone. To me, every particle of the dust of my motherland is God.)

Iqbal — the Internationalist

But this ardent love of his country did not blind Iqbal to the hard realities of his times. India was enslaved because the nation had no high ideals to live for, no passion or desire to achieve the ideals it could still offer to mankind. It had lost zest for living and, without a burning passion, nations perish. And in this catastrophe, India was not alone. The entire Asia, the glorious birth-place of Prophets, was suffering from the same malaise. The fire within had gone out. The will to live, the passion for an independent and honourable existence had weakened and made the entire Orient an easy prey to the conquering imperialist powers of the West. And Islam which had made a distinct contribution to world culture

had been reduced to a mere dogma losing all touch with living reality:

حقیقت خرافات میں کھو گئی
یہ اُمت روایات میں کھو گئی

(The reality has been lost in trivialities,
This nation lost itself in the haze of conventions.)

His visit to Europe in 1905 and his three-year stay there brought to his attention the other side of the picture. The culture of the enslaving imperialist West, too, was far from perfect. The conscience of the West was in turmoil and its intellectuals were despondent. Treatises like the "Decline of the West", "Thus spake Zarathustra" and "Das Kapital" strongly censured the shortcomings of the western civilisation and predicted its doom because of its inherent contradictions and its sordid materialism. Incidentally, 1905 marked the first defeat of a European power, Czarist Russia, at the hands of an Asian power, Japan, which was followed by the unsuccessful uprising of the Russian peasants and workers—a precursor of the successful Soviet Revolution of 1917.

This was enough to convince Iqbal of the serious deficiencies of the West which was flourishing on the loot and exploitation of its colonies. It was the voice of the Western prophets of the doom which finds an echo in Iqbal:

تمھاری تہذیب اپنے خنجر سے آپ ہی خودکشی کرے گی
جو شاخِ نازک پہ اشیاء بنے گا ناپائدار ہوگا

(Your civilization is going to commit suicide with her own dagger. The nest built on a frail bough cannot but be insecure.)¹

What ailed the West? Certainly not malady of the East, for there was no dearth of passion for life or zeal for living in the West nor any lack of ambition and desire which motivates action and leads to the conquest of Nature. If passion and action could be the only

1. S.A. Vahid's "Iqbal: Art and Thought" p. 9.

value for mankind, the West would certainly have been a paradise for science and technology were daily registering new triumphs.

This brought Iqbal to the conclusion, that what ailed the West and the East both was the lack of proper balance between desire and its subservience to social welfare. The East had no Desire, no Passion. It had been suffering from the disease of annihilation of the self brought about by the mystics and the sufis. All mystics and seers (barring Sri Krishna in the *Gita*, and Maulana Rumi who, according to Iqbal, upheld the real essence of correct teachings of Islam and other true religions) emphasize annihilation of desire as prerequisite to all deliverance which finally resulted in paralysing all sources of action and self-confidence and made the Asian nations docile and submissive.

On the other hand, the West travelled to the other extreme. Desire filled its life and ambition turned into an endless pursuit for material comforts and riches. This mad race made their lives sordid and empty. Wordsworth once complained that the "world is too much with us" and he was correct. The West was yet to learn that the unbridled and undisciplined egoism could only lead to ruin.

Iqbal: The Eclectic

A number of personalities and philosophies left deep impact on Iqbal, though he could not be totally led by them. Among them is Karl Marx and his socialist ideas which were translated into action in 1917 by Lenin. Iqbal was greatly impressed by Marxian thought and in his latter poems, published posthumously in his last collection *Armughan-e-Hejaz*, he describes Socialism as the next greatest threat to all Evil in the world (in the words of one of the advisers of the Satan in the "Devil's Concord" (*Iblis ki Majlis-e-Shura*). Even though he partially subscribed to the Marxian ideology, he had objections to its atheism, on the one hand, and its continuation of statehood on the other. Nevertheless his sympathies with the peasants and workers and inclination towards Lenin and Marx were unmistakable.

Remembering Iqbal about 50 years after his death still remains worth-while because the imbalances pointed out by him still persist. Asia, though now largely free from imperialist rule, still faces the challenge of the dominating self of the West. The slumber of the centuries still remains to be broken and the passion for progress,

devotion to ideal and dedication to action are yet to be acquired. The turmoil of the West, too, is getting more and more intense, and the crisis the world is passing through calls for an equilibrium pleaded by Iqbal.

Iqbal sang of change. Change has also made a part of Iqbal obsolete and unacceptable but there still survives the essential part of Iqbal's poetry which could give a new vision to a desperate world. Iqbal himself had asked only this much:

میری فطرت آئینہ روزگار
 غزالانِ افکار کا مرغزار
 مرادل میری رزم گاہِ حیات
 گمانوں کے لشکر یقیں کا ثبات
 یہی کچھ ہے ساقی متاعِ فقیر
 اسی سے فقیری میں ہوں میں امیر
 مرے قافلے میں کٹادے اسے
 کٹادے ٹھکانے لگا دے اسے

(I am the mirror of the universe. In me flourish the green inhabited by the gazelles of new thought. My heart, the battlefield of my life, the armies of doubts and the stability of faith. Only this much is the asset of this *fakir*. It is only because of it that I feel rich in my poverty. Oh! scatter it all.)

To share this wealth of knowledge, awareness and sensibility, it is essential to correctly identify and understand Iqbal in his entirety.

Relevance to Indian Society

Is Iqbal relevant to Indian society today?

The basic problem before the contemporary Indian society remains that of skipping over two centuries of industrial and technological development so as to overtake the caravan of human progress. To accomplish this stupendous task, not only industrial and technological advancement but a total revolution in the emotional responses and intellectual attitudes of the Indian society is required.

The task becomes doubly difficult in view of the firmly rooted moribund conventionalism of the Indian society, which still takes pride in spiritual surrender rather than in the confident conquest of Nature.

In a moribund society still haunted with feudal elements of self-annihilation and surrender, Iqbal brings a new wave of vitality and vigour. The Indian society urgently needs this shot in the arm. Iqbal discards all idealised talk of negation of self, idle contemplation of total amalgamation of the human self into Divinity and calls for action: for inaction is Death and the only function viable for human beings remains to be that of reshaping the universe into a new pattern.

That our society, satiated with spiritualism, idealistic nihilism and morbid self-annihilation stands in great need of such a corrective appears undeniable. For Iqbal, opposition to the age-old ideals of oriental mysticism and its varied theories of annihilation of self was not a mere academic proposition. To him this remains the basic reason for the subjugation of the Orient at the hands of the Europeans who politically controlled the material sources of the world, which the oriental wisdom was so eager to relinquish. The Orient went under as it had only learnt how to surrender and not how to resist and conquer.

Spiritualism, even in recent times, has often been described as hallmark of Indian culture. Professor Romilla Thaper writes:

“The theory that Indians were always concerned with metaphysics and philosophical speculation and not with mundane things of everyday living has now become an accepted idea... It was first propounded by those seeking a utopia in the ancient Indian system and by those who believed that this may be an *effective way of keeping the minds of Indians away from such mundane, but essential things as industrialisation, technological development and freedom.*”¹

The theory of ascribing spiritualism as the pivotal value of Indian culture, however, created a misplaced pride not only in spiritual achievement but also in adopting an indifferent attitude towards effective action and mundane affairs. Iqbal was the first poet-philosopher who traced and attacked this misplaced pride as the cause of enslavement of the East. He was the first to diagnose the malaise of the Orient as the non-recognition of the material world, which resulted from receding into the inner recesses of the self instead of enriching the self with the conquest of the nature. For the Orient, the denial of the material world was so played up by the Western scholars and the substance of Mysticism so interpreted as to paralyse all zest for life and to disenchant the Orient from the conquest of the material world. Professor R.A. Nicholson in his introduction “The Secrets of the Self” quotes Iqbal’s letter: “Life is a forward assimilative movement. It removes all obstructions in its march by assimilating them. Its essence is the continual creation of desires and ideals, and for the purpose of its preservation and expansion it has invented or developed out of itself certain instruments, e.g. sense, intellect, etc., which help to assimilate obstructions.” (p. XV)

Iqbal’s criticism of decadent spiritualism of the orient was born not only out of his love for his country and his continent which were groaning under the yoke of capitalism. It was also linked with a major problem which haunted him as a philosopher. Is the rise and fall of nations purely accidental? Or, is there any logic behind this baffling play of light and shadow? The query which led Marx to the discovery of the laws of dialectical materialism and Bergson to that of creative evolution in the realm of philosophical thought, and Darwin to the theory of the ‘survival of the fittest’ in the realm

1. “Communalism and the Writing of Indian History”, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi.

of scientific thought, suggested another approach to Iqbal.

He tried to decipher the riddle of nations' rise and fall in history in terms of philosophical thought for, as an idealist-philosopher, he was convinced of the all-pervading power of thought which, to his mind, could liberate or enslave mankind. The power within alone could make or mar the fortunes of nations just as the zest for life alone could lead to the acquiring of new limbs and powers in various species according to the Darwinian theory.

Iqbal, then, ascribed political slavery of the East not so much to the political or military supremacy of the West, consequent upon Industrial Revolution, but to the paralysis of the Orient as a result of the decadent theories of mysticism which idealised surrender and self-annihilation and discouraged ambition as the source of all evil. All mystics will, of course, strongly refute his interpretation of the Hindu and Islamic mystic thought as these developed in India but Iqbal is unequivocal in his denunciation of both.

What then is the way out of the impasse? Iqbal advises shunning this rejection of ambition as the source of human salvation. He strongly advocates strong ambition alone as the guiding star of human destiny. Rejecting ambition means rejection of life, for ambition alone leads to zest for living which in turn releases energy for the conquest of Nature.

But, if this be so, the West could be taken as an ideal pattern where ambition led to great conquests and greater victories. The fact, however, was that the West was experiencing a crisis of conscience. In philosophy and politics both, dissatisfaction with the rat-race for material happiness was under bitter attack in the West. In recent times, the emergence of the Hippies and the increasing swing towards eastern spiritualism evident in Hare Krishna Movement only emphasize Iqbal's views about the nature of the crisis of the West.

But, unfortunately, Iqbal saw only the crisis of faith in the West and ascribed it to the lack of ethical values. He could not correlate it to the socio-economic roots of the capitalist system. Being an eastern philosopher, he stopped at a philosophic interpretation of this crisis in a manner which could give the Orient a much awaited opportunity of teaching wisdom to the political masters of the West. His criticism of the West, therefore, necessarily led him to the conclusion that pursuit of ambition could lead to realisation of human goal only when ambition is subjected to social needs.

The entire question, then, revolves round the relationship between the individual and society. The individual to find his self and to realise his true potential should cultivate ambition and to achieve it, ceaselessly work for it not for petty material gain but for social good. This was, in short, his theory of *Khudi* which, if unbridled leads to Satanic activity, while pursuit of ambition with a social commitment could lead to the true flowering of human personality.

But in this individual-society complex, Iqbal always emphasizes the role of individual as a driving force. Hence his concept of the *Insan-e-Kamil* i.e. the Superman or the perfect man. It may not be out of place here to mention that even greatest Marxist thinkers of the Orient, Mao Tse Tung, speaks in identical terms and unlike his European counterparts, emphasizes the role of the Individual thus: "Single spark can start a prairie fire."

It is mainly Iqbal's emphasis on the role of individual in society that made him vulnerable to attacks from various quarters. Notwithstanding his appreciation of Marxism and the ideals of proletarian Revolution, he was even dubbed a fascist for his poems in praise of Mussolini and Nietzsche. Iqbal's 'Individual' was never an unbridled tyrant as all his ambitions were necessarily subjected to the good of the greatest number. But then it may not be fair to judge a poet in the context of principles of political economy in such great detail.

The idea which Iqbal put across was to lit a burning desire in the drowsy millions of his beloved East and to inspire them to strive hard for a better destiny—an idea which not only still remains valid but, in fact, becomes much more so in the changing context of the East-West relationship. New India cannot shut her eyes to Iqbal's message of hope and confidence and unless this spirit of resurgence prevails every nook and corner of the country and is linked up with the awakening in other parts of Asia this task of Asian Renaissance cannot be accomplished.

To the 19th century India, religion was somehow a strong vehicle of expression. Most of the political thoughts and philosophic formulations found expression through religious terminology. Iqbal too, expressed these important concepts through religious terms. To him Islam was a vigorous religion which had crusaded against the Christian West. Hence Islam presented an equilibrium between Eastern spiritualism and Western materialism by giving

Man a balanced view of disciplined action and controlled ambition. Obviously Iqbal's interpretation of Islam was different from the conventional needs and to express it he designated his lectures as "The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought". He dubbed traditional sufism as decadent and attacked the *Mulla* as an enemy of positive thinking but conceived on the lines of Jamaluddin Afghani and others—a reorganisation of the Muslim fraternity irrespective of national boundaries. This brings him to the realm of practical politics and, consequently, makes him a controversial figure to whom is ascribed the theory of the partition of India along religious lines.

But this part of Iqbal is perhaps outdated and obsolete. Iqbal never accepted any thinker wholly. He as an eclectic par excellence, followed his own interpretation of Islam. He only partly accepted the teachings of Rumi, Nietzsche, Bergson, Marx and others. Practically no great writer and thinker has been wholly relevant all through. Iqbal too needs to be accepted and rejected in parts, but the acceptable part of Iqbal, his concept of *Khudi* and his vision of liberated Orient shall undoubtedly release new energy and unbounded confidence in India which being an under developed country with a great past badly needs these qualities.

Epilogue

The present treatise is basically meant for the general reader interested in studying Iqbal as an epoch-making poet-philosopher who can rightly be described as one of the great thinkers of Modern India. His contribution to the thought and sensibility of his period was monumental and remains relevant even today.

Though not without contradictions, he remains one of the most outstanding sons of India, who gave a new vision to the Orient and thus opened up new vistas before Humanity.

Neither those who try to interpret him as a narrow sectarian obscurantist or only a poet of his own community, nor those who see in him an ardent revolutionary do him justice. In his poetry are reflected both the aspects side by side and in the process lend new significance to the contemporary sensibility.

Iqbal remains one of the most powerful poets of the modern age. In him, poetry found a new messiah. Every word used in his poetry transforms itself into a power station of atomic energy full of verve and vitality.

He leaves to the generations to come a rich and truly significant legacy of art and thought so much so that along with Tagore, he can truly be deemed as one of the greatest poets India has produced.

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