K.N. SUD

FOREWORD BY OMAR ABOU RICHE
POET LAUREATE OF ARABIA

Iqbal & His Poems

(A Reappraisal)

IQBAL
and his
POEMS
(A Reappraisal)

By the same author

ETERNAL FLAME

(Aspects of GHALIB'S Life and Works)

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AND HIS
POEMS
(A Reappraisal)

by

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with a foreword by

OMAR ABOU RICHE
Poet Laureate of Arabia

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PREFACE

Mohammed Iqbal ranks among the world's most controversial poets. Controversy has raged for the most part not over his style or the quality of his compositions (there *are* a few critics who assail him on this score too) but on their thought-content and purpose. His poetry only served, though not always, as a vehicle for putting across his political, more precisely religious—the dogma style—views before his countrymen and the world at large. It is therefore as a thinker that he has been either praised or criticised.

Among Iqbal's uncritical admirers are those who, in the true tradition of the cult of idolatry, have found in him nothing but virtue and have ranked him higher than Dante and Plato whom he has called the "leader of the old herd of sheep." As a poet of Nature, he has been grouped with Wordsworth and Shelley and as a romanticist with Coleridge. On the other hand, Iqbal's detractors have dubbed him a rank communalist and no more than a mere "bard of Islam." But most of the literature that has grown up on and around him was penned down during the poet's lifetime and immediately after his death. While that in the latter category can be dismissed by and large as a set of funeral orations, the books and articles written about him and his works when he was alive do not do justice to the subject inasmuch as the poet's attitudes and postures underwent frequent changes. Moreover, very few critics have the courage to say something that sails against the current of popular feeling.

Over thirty years have passed since Iqbal's death and nearly twentyone since the creation of Pakistan which he visualised earlier than most of his compeers. The generation influenced by his politico-religious philosophy is also now more or less extinct. Hence it is time we had a fresh look at him and took a detached view of his achievements and contribution to mankind. This book tries to do just that.

A modest attempt has also been made to render some of Iqbal's poems into English for the benefit of readers who are not acquainted with the Urdu language. Translating poetry is perhaps the toughest job and the author may be forgiven if the readers who know Urdu as well find any deviations from the original text. Sometimes it has not been possible to reproduce in English the Arabic and Persian allusions in Iqbal's verses and in such cases the aim has been to transcreate the idea rather than translate the lines.

The author is extremely grateful to the Syrian Ambassador in India, His Excellency Omar Abou Riche, the Poet Laureate of Arabia, for going through the manuscript of this book and for writing the Foreword. As a matter of fact, the author was inspired to translate Iqbal's poems after reading the English translation, *Roving Along* (An Indian Interlude), of His Excellency's Arabic poems written during his tenure in India. Is it a coincidence that the first poem both in Iqbal's *Bang-i-Dara* and *Roving Along* describes the grandeur of the Himalayas ?

The author is also highly indebted to his friend Professor Lajpat Rai for revising the manuscript.

C 17, Hauz Khas,
New Delhi-16.

K.N. Sud

FOREWORD

Most poetry when translated comes out the poorer at this end for having lost the delicate atmosphere of it in the process; and that seems rather inevitable—the cadence of the original line ever refusing to go along and well with the printed word. Ultimately it comes to depend on the sense and aptitude of the translator alone to see if he could do something about it and save the situation. K.N. Sud, I believe, has this sense and aptitude and indeed he has played his part very creditably in dealing with Iqhal.

But first let me make my meaning a little clearer. To listen to a melody like the following, say, from Faust—

> Meine Ruhe ist hin, mein Hertz ist schwer ;
> Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmer mehr.

—how it stirs, how feels it to be transported to horizons usually hidden from view ! The mood and the theme of the verse is one of depression, utter depression, yet what the lines suffer one to feel instead is an uplifting of the spirit. Now turn to this 'faithful' rendering of the same and see how Goethe's 'word' has been left a thing of pity—dewinged—in the transit :

> My peace of mind is over, my heart is heavy ;
> I find it no more and nevermore.

Surely a wingless word never soared nor touched. And at this point a comparison will, I think, be in order. The way Fitzgerald would come to grips with Omar Khayyam was something like this: 'first get the spirit of the rubais and only then, after prolonged meditations on each piece separately, would you be able to croon them out in some from. But the form Fitzgerald eventually came to give Khayyam would turn out to be all his, there being no comparison absolutely between Khayyam's originals and these Fitzgeraldian transformations of them, none whatsoever. And yet in the long run they are Khayyam, all Khayyam. But to an ear not lost sense for Persian's native touch and depths Khayyam's famous translator stands exposed as being not very honest in his attempts ; after all he was just playing loose with a theme which, being extraneous to his genius, he could only ill-absorb. K.N. Sud, on the other hand, with Iqbal in the edition before us, is disarmingly sincere : as a student of literature, and then not a foreigner to his subject's medium and inspiration, to boot, as Fitzgerald was—he has the scholar's humility moreover to

see to it all along that he might not be taking any liberties either with Iqbal's poetry, and his philosophy backing it, or with his outlook in general on life—in content as well as in form.

Here it is, then, that it becomes relevant for poetry to step in with an office—to soar, to touch, to stimulate. A poet by temperament, Iqbal was just quickening us to our worlds-within then apparently he was only vouchsafing a glimpse of his universe in a rubai—

Kabhee daryaa se misl-e-mauj ubhar kar
Kabhee daryaa ke seene mein utar kar
Kabhee daryaa ke saahil se guzar kar
—maqaam apnee khudee ka faash tar kar

—meaning:

A tide enow, and then an ebb, a ripple...
...and there you stand—a universe
yet to be explored!

The pithiness of which, however, seems to create an illusion that it was no more than a sly turn for expressing something that was universal; but such a thing never came save from some inner personal suffering, from a yielding too much to some passing thrill outside:

The veil
it only whets
the loiterer's thirst
in love's lost lane.

Just one insignificant poetic touch and all those barriers of time and creed and race have vanished, and coming face to face with the Infinite, 'on an alien threshold', the poet feels helpless and speechless until he is held captive by 'a flower that felt':

Sweet is springtime;
sweeter—one brief hour
to bask in spring's sweet shades:
but sweeter still—
in spring's niche soft somewhere
to slip, to lie unless for a shadier spot, in
some lovely tress or dress, be swooned.

The beauty of a poetic experience always lies in this that the original thing it may quicken, it does, something quite different and oft unmeant by the writer, something still sublimer—in its reader—and urge him even to retouch it!

That is not bypassing K.N. Sud, forgive me. Just as that feeling flower had been a timely medium for Iqbal's freedom from a pent-up subconscious, his rubai is now left free for carrying on this—its reviving trick of a miracle in whosoever should chance and choose to give in to its innocent, captivating, freeing charms. Only Iqbal seems to have been so carried away by the feeling-of-the-flower that he overlooked two butterflies hovering over near there—or had they already flitted to another flower in the meanwhile and from there too ?—one of them stopping to whisper into the other one's ear 'how beautiful life is, the world is, only that the moment of it always should pass away too soon !'...and the onlooker, you or I, it being our moment of poetry now—wishing the wee wingsome twain had better not grow as wise and quick, as man, as Adam and Eve. This is what I call *eeman* or, if I understand the spirit of Indian music rightly, *yaman kalyan.*

You value a piece of creation not for what it is, you value it rather for its being left unfinished there for teasing every passerby to take up one loose thread from it for explorations newer, deeper ...for possibilities no one in himself had ever suspected were...for going the next leg of the journey alone, on one's own...So, that is what I mean by my 'right to retouch', and yours.

Coming from Iqbal to K.N. Sud, I think I can by now visualise the factors that must have gone into making this enviable credit and accomplishment of his vis-a-vis Iqbal possible. Firstly, comes that very-likely-to-be-ignored touch of the native soil : products of which both he and Iqbal started off with a common mother-tongue, Punjabi, and then with Urdu for a common medium of their primary culture and education following up. And then again : K.N. Sud seems to score one better in his favour in this that as a critic and editor of Ipbal he has the distance also of time for a calm, detached view of the whole panorama of a heritage and *in it* of his subject. This his balanced introduction, which he develops very systematically into three smooth, lapse-dissolving chapters, amply proves.

And yet again—most important perhaps : knowing full well that English too has its own peculiar measures, its regular rhythms and rhymes—a whole set of rhetorics in fact,—knowing this all, at places K.N. Sud has not failed in the sense and courage to delibe-rately depart from observing the rules rigidly whenever that could make the emerging thing the better poetry for that. Also, guided by the same feeling for a still better effect, he seems to leave a word

unsaid here, a melody unstruck there, and a turn just looked to but left 'unexploited' off a little farther. The result is there for everybody to see and appreciate: his version of the piece Haqiqat-e-Husn, for one, coming up as something better than either Sarojini's or Kiernan's ...

I hope the work will re-introduce Iqbal to a generation of Indians that is fast losing touch with its history and, with history, missing its moorings. For the non-Uudu section of it, the more, it should serve as an inspiration and suggest inculcation of a comparative, co-relating habit of looking at things if only for a better self-knowing, for a sincerer self-exploring—since Urdu too had had, and still has, a role and a contribution in the subcontinent's coefficiently unifying struggle for cultural emancipation. For developing a better understanding between peoples, between countries, there was never a better gift to be cherished than cultural values and poetry, in an excellent translation. And the present endeavour has all that sincerity of intention and purpose, I feel, while proffering its bit of tribute towards filling this most unfortunate void, and vacuum, in the country's current life.

Embassy of the
Syrian Arabic Republic
New Delhi.

Omar Abou Riche

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THE SHEET-ANCHOR

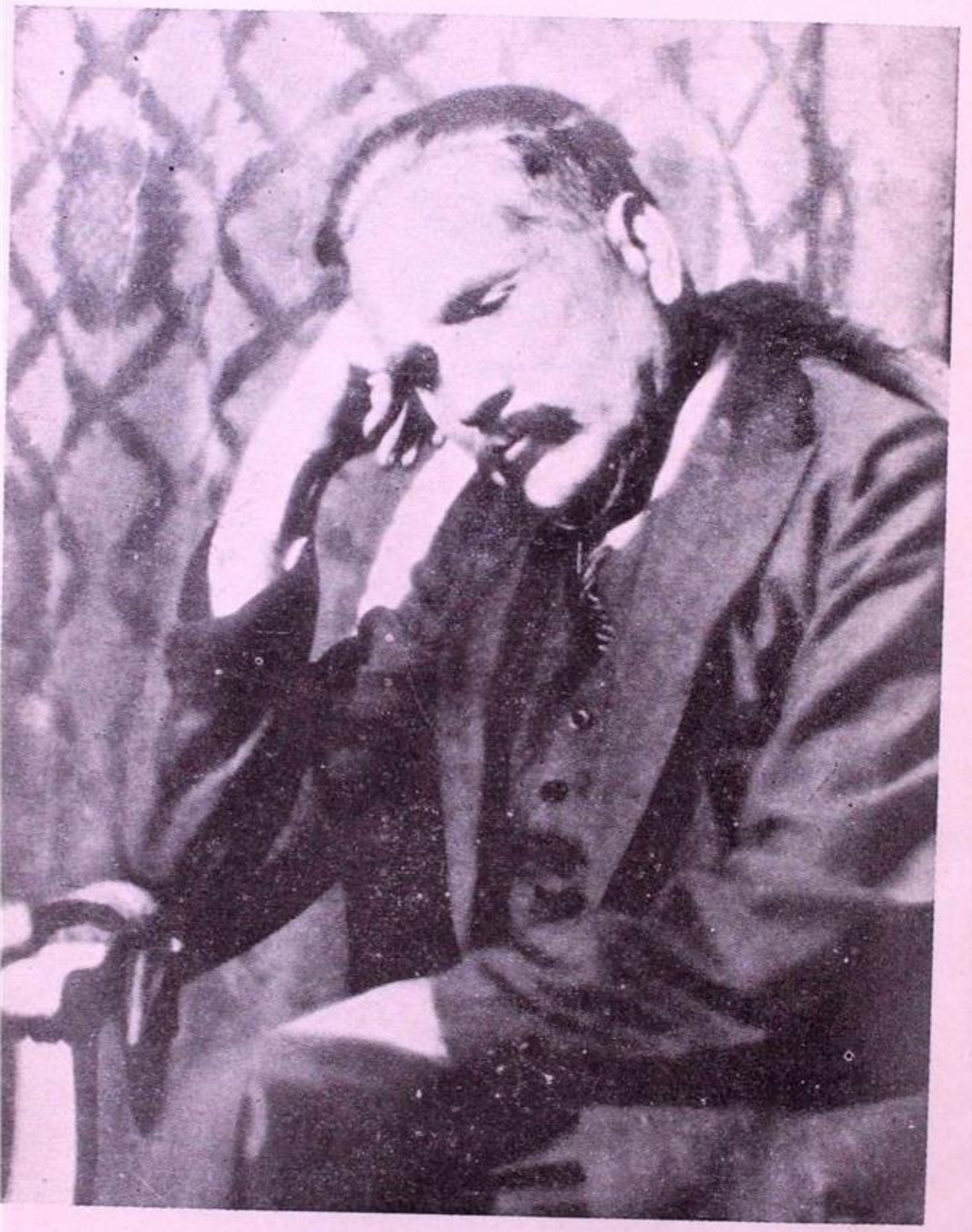
Though the mentality of the Muslim masses and the new growing middle class was shaped essentially by events, Sir Mohammed Iqbal played an important part in influencing the latter and especially the younger generation. The masses were hardly affected by him. Iqbal had begun by writing powerful nationalist poems in Urdu which had become popular. During the Balkan wars he turned to Islamic subjects. He was influenced by the circumstances then prevailing and the mass feeling among the Muslims, and he himself influenced and added to the intensity of these sentiments. Yet he was very far from being a mass leader; he was a poet, an intellectual and a philosopher with affiliations to the old feudal order; he came from Kashmiri Brahmin stock. He supplied in fine poetry, which was written both in Persian and Urdu, a philosophic background to the Muslim intelligentsia and thus diverted its mind in a separatist direction. His popularity was no doubt due to the quality of his poetry, but even more so it was due to his having fulfilled a need when the Muslim mind was searching for some anchor to hold on to.

—Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
in *The Discovery of India*

PAN-ISLAMISM

I am opposed to nationalism, as it is understood in Europe, because I see in it the germs of atheistic materialism which I look upon as the greatest danger to modern humanity. That which really matters is a man's faith, his culture, his historical tradition—things worth living for and dying for—not for the piece of earth with which the spirit of man happens to be temporarily associated. Islam, as a religion, has no country. So long as this so-called democracy, this accursed nationalism, this degraded imperialism are not shattered, so long men will never be able to lead a happy and contented life, and the beautiful ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity will never materialise.

—Extract from *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*



Allama Dr. Mohammed Iqbal

THE PATRIOT AND PAN-ISLAMIST

I

Mohammed Iqbal (1873-1938) is considered the greatest Urdu poet of this century, and if we take the whole gamut of Urdu poetry since its birth, his place is regarded next only to Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869). His genius has been universally acknowledged and his recognition has surpassed the bounds of country and community. An intellectual colossus of the calibre of Poet Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Iqbal addressed himself to entire mankind, particularly the rising generations of the Asian and Middle East countries.

Urdu poets born before Iqbal concerned themselves mostly with bemoaning the faithlessness of the beloved, the fickleness of fate, or with eulogising the imaginary valour and virtues of their patrons. They least worried about the practical aspects of life or the mundane affairs of man. Iqbal employed his whole intellect and poetic art to the uplift of the downtrodden, the dispossessed and the dejected and filled them with the spirit to fight for their rights and dignity. But, unfortunately, he became a prisoner of his thoughts and from that prison he could not free himself until his death. Too many causes claimed his attention: foreign domination of India, exploitation of the poor by the resourceful, West's encroachment upon Eastern values, the ferment in small Muslim countries under the thumb of predatory empires, the Khilafat movement and, above all, his zeal for a Pan-Islamic world.

Pan-Islamism became the dominant force in his thinking as he grew up and the bulk of his poems are concerned with Islam and its pristine glory. He became so obsessed with his new creed that he turned extremely dogmatic and intolerant towards other religions. Failing to reconcile religion and progress, he became sceptical of the parliamentary system of government. Even his most ardent admirers looked askance at his extremist ideology. V.G. Kiernan, an English author who has studied Iqbal, says:

> "Carried away by recollections of the departed heroes of Islam, Iqbal was always scanning the horizon for Great Men who were to descend from the skies and lead their peoples into promised lands. Inevitably he was often disillusioned. Asia's Muslims were not, after all, much different from Europe's."

Starting as a poet-philosopher, Iqbal gradually came to be known as "the bard of Islam". Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha in his book, *Iqbal : the Poet and his Message*, says:

> "Iqbal is invariably reminding his readers that though 'I have been brought up in the temple of idols (referring to his Brahmin ancestry), my lips have uttered what is within the heart of Ka'aba'—that is in the tenets of Islam as Iqbal understood them."

Dr. Sinha, like many others, among whom are some leading Muslim theologians, does not agree with Iqbal's interpretation of the Islamic law. He says:

> "Iqbal is not a sound and faithful interpreter of the Qoranic Islam but an expositor of its illiberal dogmatism, as developed later by dogmatic exegetes. This is conclusively evidenced by his constant insistence on the distinction between *kufr* and *iman*, Muslim and non-Muslim, idol-worshipper and non-idol-worshipper, mosque and temple and other things of that kind. In other words, he had trained his mind to see more of the difference of humanity, in matters relating to religion, rather than their fundamental oneness and essential unity—a very serious defect indeed in a messagist or philosopher aspiring to teach humanity."

Dr. Sinha has also reproduced an extract from a significant speech made by Iqbal. There the poet says:

> "I confess to be a Pan-Islamist. The mission for which Islam came into this world will ultimately be fulfilled, the world will be purged of infidelity and the worship of false gods, and the true soul of Islam will be triumphant. I convey the same message to the Musalmans through my poems."

II

Dr. Sinha's criticism of Iqbal, however, seems to be rather harsh. Religion has played a very important part in most literatures of the world, Iqbal's poetry being no exception. Every poet has the

right to dedicate his talents to the exposition and popularisation of the religion he believes in. Didn't two of the most eminent Hindi poets, Surdas and Tulsidas, champion the cause of Hinduism? Has anyone condemned them for doing so? In this connection, it is interesting to know the views of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who was one of the foremost advocates of the Urdu language and was for several years president of the Anjuman-i-Taraqi-i-Urdu. He says:

> "In my opinion, those who call Iqbal a mere Islamic poet do a great injustice to him, for to say so is to limit the sphere of his influence. No doubt, he has written a great deal on Islamic philosophy, Islamic greatness and Islamic culture, but nobody has till now limited the influence of Milton by calling him a poet of Christianity, or by designating Kalidas a poet of Hinduism. Men professing religions other than Christianity have not, on account of this aspect of Milton's poetry, diminished their admiration for him. If Iqbal deals with the great events of Islamic history, or talks about Islamic glories, there is no reason why non-Muslims should not honour him."

However, what shocked and pained the non-Muslim admirers of Iqbal was his religious bigotry and intense hatred of *kufr* and non-believer. Milton, Kalidas, Surdas and Tulsidas were no fanatics of their respective cults nor did they condemn what did not belong to them.

After having written intensely patriotic songs in his early career, Iqbal's veering towards communalism and Pan-Islamism came as a big disappointment to his Hindu admirers. His obsession with Arabia and things Arabian can best be described by recalling a couplet from the poem *Gang Tarang* written by an eminent Hindu scholar and contemporary of Iqbal, the late Pandit Chamupati Rai. It says :

> *Darya se hararat hui is sokhta-lab ko*
> *Hai pyas ise kheenchti Saharai Arab ko*
> (His parched lips burn at the sight of a stream and to quench his thirst he repairs to the sands of Arabia!)

In the beginning of his poetic career Iqbal wrote a good deal on Indian subjects. His best known and most-loved poem, *Taraana-i-Hindi*, (Sare jehan se achcha Hindostan hamara) belongs to this period. It became a household word throughout the Hindi and Urdu speaking parts of India and established his reputation as a patriotic poet of the first order. But, unfortunately, Iqbal neutralised

the effect of this great poem (which was considered the nearest popular approach to a national anthem for India) by later writing another poem called *Taraana-i-Milli* whose opening lines said:

> "China and Arabia are ours, so is Hindostan; we are Muslims and the whole world is our native land."

Commenting on this "duplicity" in Iqbal's approach to his countrymen as distinct from his Muslim brethren all over the world, Dr. Sinha says :

> "For the Hindu to be called upon to sing "Our India" (*Taraana-i-Hindi*) either side by side with, or before or after, the other song about China, Arabia and the rest of the world (including, of course, India), would be not only to play with facts, but render the poor Hindus' position obviously ridiculous. In view of these facts and considerations, it is not surprising that Iqbal's earlier poem, "Our India", had failed to achieve its object. This, to my mind, is highly regrettable. But if after having summoned all Indians to the call of their native land, the poet chose to put China and Arabia, and the rest of the world, on the same level with India (on the ground that the whole world was the native land of Muslims), this sentiment, however pleasing or palatable to the latter, was, in the nature of things, bound to be distasteful to the Hindus, since it could make no appeal to their nationalist or patriotic sentiments. That was bound to be the natural reaction, in so far as the Hindus were concerned ; and so it has been."

Iqbal's first collection of Urdu poems, called *Bang-i-Dara* (The Call of the Caravan), contains, besides *Taraana-i-Hindi* many poems brimming with patriotic fervour. His lengthy song on the Himalayas, also his first to get into print, is to date one of the best descriptive poems in Urdu literature. He calls this mountain--range as more beautiful than even Mount Sinai which is held in extreme veneration by the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians. Then there are poems on Ram, Swami Ram Tirath and Guru Nanak. Another poem that endeared Iqbal to his countrymen is *The National Song of Indian Children.*

The poem *Naya Shivala* (the New Tempel) was written at a time when relations between the Hindus and Muslims were at a low ebb. It gave a call to the two communities to live in amity and inculcate love for each other. After reading it one is left

in no doubt that Iqbal was an ardent Indian and a patriot to the core.

III

In 1905 Iqbal went to England and visited some other European countries also. This was the turning point in his career. His sojourn in Europe and his extensive studies there of the religious thought and philosophy of Islam made him revise his ideas on nationalism. He found it incompatible with the spirit of Islam and renounced it in favour of Pan-Islamism. He looked forward to Islamic fraternity as a basis of human unity. What appeared to him as internationalism was no better, to others not agreeing with his philosophy, than communalism or, in other words, religious bigotry of the first order.

Iqbal developed intense attachment to early Islamic polity under which the ruler was invested with temporal as well as spiritual powers. He found the Islamic world threatened with extinction by the encroachments of non-Islamic nations on her vital interests. Nationalism with which he started his career became in his eyes "accursed" (that is how he describes it) after his visit to Europe. From now on he became a poet of Islamic renaissance or, in other words, the bard of Islam. He dreamed of a liberated world of Islam in the form of a kind of federation linked with common faith and ideals.

Side by side with his becoming a religious fanatic, Iqbal's mind could not remain uninfluenced by the new trend towards socialism. He hailed the Soviet Revolution and the new proletarian movement. His heart beat in unison with that of the poor peasant and the oppressed labourer. He detested capitalism and prayed for its obliteration from the surface of the earth. He believed that the capitalists were using democracy and nationalism to oppress the poor and the weak.

IV

Iqbal hated injustice. His protest, which began on behalf of his country, continued in the name of Islam. On his return from Europe in 1908, he was deeply moved by the plight of Indian Muslims who happened to be poorer and far less advanced than the Hindus. In a letter to Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League leader, Iqbal wrote that the problem of bread and butter for the Muslims was becoming steadily more acute. But, instead of trying to

find out the real causes of their economic plight, he blamed the Hindus for it.

Indian Muslims, after the abortive Mutiny of 1857, had by and large kept themselves aloof from the main political current in the country and had looked down upon Western education. This had resulted in the doors of government employment being blocked upon them. Trade and commerce they had all along left as a dirty routine to the care of the Hindus. This trend continued till Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, father of the Indian Muslim renaissance, appeared on the scene and started rescuing his co-religionists from the welter of decay and stagnation. He successfully brought about an understanding between the British rulers and their Muslim subjects whom the former had hitherto regarded with suspicion and distrust because of the leading part they had taken in the Mutiny. To safeguard their interests, the Muslim League was formed in 1906 at the Dacca session of the Mohammedan Educational Conference.

Iqbal, all these years, had been watching with deep interest the inter-play of political forces in the country. He came out with the announcement at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930 that mere safeguards were no answer to the peculiar requirements of Indian Muslims. He advocated the concept of an independent, sovereign Muslim State, within or without the British Empire. Thus it was Iqbal who originated the idea of Pakistan and the seed that was sown by him at Allahabad sprouted into a full bloom in 1947, nine years after his death.

However, we must deal with Iqbal as a whole and not as a bard of Islam alone. Fragmentary treatment of this great poet is bound to lead to biased conclusions. No doubt, he was a paradox to most critics but, above all, he was a poet who sang of man, of life, faith and hope. As a poet, he represents not any segment but the whole of mankind. Besides, he was a philosopher, a sage and an inspirer of the youth. He exhorted the young of all faiths to lead a better and a more strenuous and self-efacing life. Together with Rabindranath Tagore, Iqbal climbed to sublime heights in reviving the ancient renown of India for poetry. The two acted as ambassadors of the East's emphasis on the inner life. Our final judgment on Iqbal should, therefore, be based on the totality of his contribution as a poet, as a philosopher and as a humanitarian.

POLITICAL POET

Iqbal might be summed up as, in the broadest sense, a political poet, one concerned with men as social beings. Art, he said, has for duty the strengthening of mankind in the face of its problems; and he would have agreed with Wordsworth in desiring to be regarded as a teacher, or as nothing. In his experimental years he was under the influence of English romanticism and nature-poetry, not always of the best models (he even wrote adaptations of Longfellow). He was also working in the well-beaten track of Persian-Indian literature, with its ogling lovers and other such trifling and artificial themes, and its stock of imagery and symbolism derived in large part from the winecup and the wineshop and garden of the old Sufi mystics or pseudo-mystics. But quite soon Iqbal was pushing his way towards more solid ground; and it was because he grappled with the great questions of his world that he has a place in the history of twentieth century Asia.

—V.G. KIERNAN, author of
Poems from Iqbal

THE IDEAL

A free and independent Muslim fraternity, having the Ka'aba as its centre, and knit together by the love of Allah and devotion to the Prophet, such is Iqbal's ideal. ... It is less clear, however, why Iqbal identifies his ideal society with Mohammed's conception of Islam, or why membership of that society should be a privilege reserved for Muslims. Here the religious enthusiast seems to have knocked out the philosopher.

—Dr. R.A. NICHOLSON,
translator of *Asrar-i-Khudi*
(by Iqbal).

THE POET AND PHILOSOPHER

I

We shall now examine Iqbal's merit as a poet. As stated earlier, Urdu litterateurs before Iqbal were extremely conservative in their outlook and this limitation reflectcd itself in their compositions. They considered any deviation from the conventional style, that was more than a hundred years old, to be an offence against their conception of poetry. The sole theme of their muse was still the rose and the nightingale the candle and the moth, the unrelenting beloved, the suffering lover and the hated rival and finally the recourse to the winecup and endless entreaties to the wine-server (saqi). They excelled in clever play on words and the typical Oriental hyperbole.

To begin with, Iqbal too had his share of the artificial themes, but he soon left behind the wellbeaten track of Indo-Persian literary style and found himself grappling with practical problems of people, especially the have-nots among them. He broke the bonds of convention and swept away the barriers imposed by orthodox methods of versification.

Unfortunately for India, Iqbal, like Ghalib, wrote the bulk of his verses in Persian. He did so because Persian was much better suited than Urdu for the expression of his philosophical ideas. He also wanted through this language to reach a wider audience, Persian being the literary *lingua franca* of a large part of the Muslim world.

Besides Persian, Iqbal was also well versed in Arabic, English and German. In English he wrote two books in prose (1) *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, and (2) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. The first, for which he received in 1908 the doctorate of the Munich University, was intended to be a contribution to the history of Muslim philosophy. The second is a collection of six lectures on Islamic polity he delivered in 1928 at Madras, Hyderabad and Aligarh. In it Iqbal sets

forth his ideals for a better world based on the *shariat* (Islamic law.)

Iqbal's best known work in Persian is *Asrar-i-Khudi* (The Secret of the Self). First published in Lahore in 1915, it put his philosophical ideas in a compendious form. Professor R.A Nicholson of Cambridge University translated it into English in 1920. In recognition of Iqbal's work as a poet, the British Government conferred knighthood on him in 1922.

Other collections of Iqbal's Persian verses are: *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi* (The Mysteries of Selflessness)—a continuation of the themes dealt with in *Asrar-i-Khudi*; *Payam-i-Mashriq* (The Message of the East); *Zahur-i-Ajam* (The Testament of Iran); *Musafir* (The Traveller); *Pas Che Bayad Kard ai Aqwam-i-Sharq* (What to do Then, O Nations of the East); and *Armughan-i-Hejaz* (The Gift of Hejaz)—the last containing both Persian and Urdu poems.

Like Ghalib's Persian ghazals, Iqbal's Persian works received little notice in the land of this language—in Iran. He wrote, not in the modern vernacular of Iran, but in the older classical Persian brought to India by Muslim invaders of the past centuries. The only Indian poet, writing in Persian, who had won some recognition in Iran was Amir Khusrau. Dr. Wahid Mirza in his *Study of Khusrau* writes: "Persian poetry, produced in India, has always been looked upon by modern scholars with mild contempt."

How we wish both Ghalib and Iqbal had written all their poems in Urdu! What has been Urdu's or India's loss has not necessarily been Persian's or Iran's gain. After all, Macaulay was not exaggerating when in his *Essay on Frederic the Great*, he wrote: "No noble work of imagination was ever composed by any man except in a dialect which he had learnt without remembering how or when, and which he had spoken with perfect ease before he had analysed its structure."

II

Iqbal's first collection of Urdu poems, *Bang-i-Dara*, appeared in 1924, though most of them were written before 1908 when he returned from Europe. This was followed by *Bal-i-Jabreel* (The Wing of Gabriel) in 1935 and *Zarb-i-Kalim* (The Stroke of the Rod of Moses) in 1936. It is a collection mostly of short epigrams, more critical than lyrical. *Armughan-i-Hejaz* appeared posthumously in 1938.

Iqbal's Urdu is dominated by Persian idioms and expressions. This was quite natural since the poet's own preference was for the language of Iran. Being by birth a Punjabi, he lacked the finesse of the Urdu writers of Delhi and the United Provinces. However, Urdu poems written by him in his early years are in a simple and flowing style and are easier to understand than those he wrote under the sway of his Pan-Islamic passion. At times his emotion got the better of him and then flowed from his pen highly complex Persian images and metaphors which perhaps suited his genius more than the simple language spoken by the people at large. As a result, he developed a highly euphemistic style enriched by vocabulary borrowed from the languages of Iran and Arabia. Iqbal probably thought that pure and simple Urdu was incapable of expressing his ideas in the domain of theology and philosophy.

There is much similarity between the styles of Iqbal and Ghalib who too overloaded his writings in Urdu with outlandish Persian words and phrases. But we must not forget that Ghalib wrote his verses when Iqbal was not even born and when Urdu had not adequately developed and had suffered from the jargon, pomposity and pedantry of the Moghal court. Iqbal had no such disadvantage. On the contrary, the tendency in Urdu literature in the early decades of the twentieth century was towards a simpler, homely and chaste language. Iqbal, however, outdid Ghalib so far as Persianizing and Arabicizing of Urdu is concerned.

It is not that Iqbal could not write in simple pure Urdu. He did it with a telling effect in some of his early compositions. He even made use of Hindi words and when he did so he sounded all the more sweet, for example, in :

Iqbal bara updeshik hai man baton men moh leta hai
(Iqbal is a great preacher who fascinates you with his talk),

or in:

Shakti bhi shanti bhi bhagton ke geet men hai
Dharti ke basion ki mukti preet men hai
(Power and peace are found in the hymns of the votaries. The salvation of the inhabitants of the earth lies in love.)

This shows that, if he wanted, Iqbal could have written the bulk of his poems in simple Urdu and thus enjoyed a wider readership and audience at home, particularly among the non-Muslims. This also would have cleared much of the misunderstanding about

his religious predilections. Unfortunately this was not to be. As it is, his highly Persian and Arabic-oriented Urdu led the Hindus to believe that he was a Pan-Islamist through and through and wrote for the benefit of the Turk, the Iranian, the Afghan and the Arab rather than for the Indian.

The few poems that Iqbal did write in intelligible Urdu and which had a nationalistic flavour in no time captured the imagination of the Hindus of North India. His songs like "Our India", "The New Temple", "The National song of Indian Children", "The Cry of a Bird" and "The Himalayas" became very popular.

Words and phrases flowed from Iqbal's pen with surprising grace and facility in Persian as well as Urdu. Only if he had allowed more words to flow in the latter language! How disappointing it is to find some of his Urdu verses, especially those in *Bal-i-Jabreel*, full of difficult Persian expressions and constructions, only interspersed with Urdu verbs, pronouns and prepositions. Moreover, they are full of sermons, preachings and propaganda. Iqbal made the fatal mistake, against which Macaulay warns every poet, of philosophising too much.

III

Though Iqbal was essentially a political poet, one concerned with men as social beings, in his experimental years he was under the influence of English romanticism and nature-poetry. He has been compared by his admirers with Shelley and Wordsworth as a poet of Nature and with Coleridge and Browning as a romanticist. Clouds, stars, trees, flowers, mountains and streams fascinated him. He expressed in words what a painter does in colours. He was a minute observer of Nature's doings but his model was the Persian garden with its roses, breezes and nightingales. The best specimens of his poems on Nature are: "The Glow-Worm", "The Himalayas", "The Mountain Cloud", "A Wish", "The Moon", "The Morning Star", "An Evening", "Solitude" and "The Night and The Poet." All these were written in the early years of his life when religion had not taken complete hold of him.

During his stay in Europe, Iqbal was influenced by several thinkers—like Hegel, Bergson and, above all, Nietzsche. He was also influenced by the British thinkers McTaggart and James Ward with whom he came into contact during his stay (1905-8) at Cambridge. From their writings he imbibed the doctrine of dynamic individual personality developed through practical activity as opposed

to the Sufi ideal of passive contemplation and mystic absorption. Surprisingly, his own mentor was the great Persian Sufic poet Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1207-1273).

Opinions differ whether Iqbal was a poet-philosopher or a philosopher-poet. His philosophical works number no more than two, one of which is mainly historical. However, his verses are permeated with philosophic ideas and metaphysical conceptions. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between the two aspects of his life. According to Prof. M.M. Sharif of Aligarh Muslim University, philosophy and poetry are indissolubly blended in Iqbal "as they have never been before in any great thinker not even in Dante !" Therefore, for a critical appreciation of Iqbal's poetical works one must keep in mind the development of his philosophical thought. However, in the final reckoning it is as a poet that Iqbal has secured his place in history.

IV

It has been stated that Iqbal ranks next only to Ghalib in the domain of Urdu poetry. Ghalib was primarily a lyrical poet and remains unexcelled in this field to this day. Iqbal stands no comparison with him so far as sublimity of thought, intensity of feeling and elegance of diction are concerned. However, what distinguishes Iqbal from other Urdu poets, including Ghalib, is the vigour of his verses and the sweetness of his songs. He employs a thoroughly emotional approach to his themes and is easily swayed by sentiment. So are his audiences. The passion for the Islamic legend was his forte.

Another leading Urdu poet, who sang of the glory of Islam, was Maulana Altaf Husain Hali of Panipat (1837-1914). Besides writing *Yadgar-i-Ghalib*, a biography of his preceptor, Hali made himself immortal by composing his well-known poem "Madd-o-Jazr-i-Islam" (The Flow And Ebb of Islam). It is also called "Musaddas-i-Hali". Like Iqbal's "Shikwa" and "Jawab-i-Shikwa" (The Plaint and The Reply), Hali's poem is also written in the hexameter and has for its theme the greatness of the early Arab polity and the brilliant conquests of the Saracens in Asia, Europe and Africa. It had also aimed at rousing the Indian Muslims (of undivided India) from their slumber and galvanising them into action for restoring the past greatness of Islam.

Though both poets addressed themselves to the Muslim community, there is a vital difference between Iqbal's "Shikwa" and

"Jawab-i-Shikwa" and Hali's "Madd-o-Jazr-i-Islam". While the former twin poems are full of overt anti-Hindu references, the latter is written in the nationalist spirit and is free from any unkind or sarcastic remarks about the sister community. Moreover, Hali writes simple, graceful Urdu easily understandable by Muslims as well as Hindus. whereas Iqbal uses highly Persianised expressions to the disadvantage of those who are not well versed in the Iranian language.

However, when all is said and done, the fact remains that Iqbal did achieve international fame whatever the quality and content of his compositions. No other Urdu poet, or for that matter any other Indian poet barring Kalidas and Tagore, is known and read outside India as much as Iqbal. As for his popularity in India and Pakistan, it can be said without fear of contradiction that he is held in high esteem by large sections of the people, including non-Muslims. This may be partly due to his political thinking but is mainly the result of his scintillating poetry.

The most outstanding feature of Iqbal's message to the people of Asia, particularly to Indians, is to give precedence to action over abstract thinking. He tells us through the medium of his poems that life is not to be merely contemplative but to be assertive. It is to be lived actively and passionately. His denunciation of capitalism and western materialism also appealed to most Indians of his day. Writing on this aspect of Iqbal's philosophy, Kiernan says :

> "The situation from which Iqbal contemplated the world was that of the middle classes of Muslim India (before partition), in the process of separating themeselves off from the feudal order of landlords and peasants, and leading a general revival of the Muslim community in India.....Iqbal might convince himself that he had the master-key in his hands, yet the doors seemed to remain obstinately shut on him. At the end of his life the true, inward, essential revival of Islamic virtue, whose prophet he had made himself, seemed to him to lie as far away as at the beginning. Reason and faith had not fused after all, and it may have been an uneasy sensation of this that made him at times somewhat querulously critical of the West, as the worshipper of mind to the exclusion of soul...what made Iqbal a great poet was his hatred of injustice. It also at times made him fall into that indis-

criminating aversion from Europe (as well as from Hinduism, in another way) which has been the worst of all Europe's gifts, good and bad, to other lands."

Yes, Iqbal hated injustice more than anything else. He felt for the poor of whatever caste or community, as he felt for the backward and dependent nations. The social problem occupied his mind more and more and, in the final analysis, he sang of the sorrow of mankind as a whole rather than of this or that sect.

The conclusion is inescapable that Iqbal was more of an idealist and political philosopher than a politician, more of a poet and thinker than a man of affairs. He was uncompromising in his beliefs, views and attitudes. In fact, he could not realise that politics was a game of compromise and, therefore, he could not become a political leader or a careerist, as many of his compeers became, despite his great name and fame, erudition and acumen. Perhaps he never aspired for it. All the same, his name will go down to posterity as one of the great sons of the Indian sub-continent, whatever his achievements.

TRADITION AND SENTIMENT

It is true that Iqbal was saturated with Western culture, and that he was steeped in the tradition of Islam, but I do not think that there was nothing Indian about Iqbal's poetry or philosophy.... He was in the broadest sense of the word Indian in his sentiment and outlook, though his mode of expression was to a very large extent influenced by his Arabic and Persian learning.

— *Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru*

VITAL TRUTHS

People who differ from Iqbal in religion and in their political views allege that his poetry is parochial, and as such is limited in its appeal and significance. They look upon him as a rank Pan-Islamist, and a thorough communalist. But in its real spirit it rises above all communal limitations. He, no doubt, writes as a Muslim and writes for the Muslims, but in its broader implications his poetry is a source of inspiration to all those who are making a heroic effort to shatter the chains of political servitude.... .. Iqbal has charged his poetry with certain vital truths of life, and has emphasized the need of action in the life of every progressive and freedom-loving individual or commuaity and has not reserved the right of benefit from his inspiring words for his co-religionists alone.

— Ghulam Sarwar, author of
Some Aspects of Iqbal's Poetry

LINGERING MEMORIES

I

Iqbal was born in a middle class Muslim family of Sialkot on 22nd February, 1873. It had migrated from Kashmir where his Brahmin ancestors had been converted to Islam nearly 300 years back. His father, Sheikh Nur Mohammed, was a pious and God-fearing man. He was a petty trader but was held in high esteem by the people of the town on account of his acts of piety and saintly nature.

Sheikh Nur Mohammed had two sons, Ata Mohammed and, Mohammed Iqbal. They learnt Urdu, Persian and English. Iqbal also learnt Arabic. Ata Mohammed, who was 14 years older than Iqbal, took up engineering as a career. The younger brother joined college after passing the Entrance Examination from the local Mission High School.

This school had a teacher of Oriental Languages, Maulvi Mir Hasan, who was widely known and respected for being a great scholar and an authority on classical Arabic and Persian. Sheikh Nur Mohammed too had been educated under his tutelage. Iqbal was greatly fascinated by this teacher and owes to him his command of the Arabic and Persian languages and his vast knowledge of Islamic history and polity. Maulvi Mir Hasan took special interest in Iqbal who from the very beginning betrayed a literary bent of mind. This pupil did not have to be taught a thing for a second time: so strong was Iqbal's memory and power of comprehension. Verses had started flowing from his pen while he was a student in the school.

Urdu in those days was taking rapid strides in the Punjab. A number of literary magazines made their appearance and mushairas (poetic symposia) began to be held in major towns. Iqbal attended some of them and also recited his compositions. He had a resonant voice which drew repeated applause from the audience. Nawab Mirza Khan Dagh of Delhi, popularly known as Dagh Dehalvi, (1831-1905) was then the leading-most poet of the Urdu language. Poets of lesser merit, including the then Nizam of Hydera-

bad (Deccan), got their compositions corrected by Dagh. Iqbal too sent his ghazals to him for correction but, after going through a few of them, Dagh declared that Iqbal's verses did not stand in need of correction. He saw in his young pupil the makings of a great poet and encouraged him to write more frequently. Later, when Iqbal achieved wider fame, Dagh took pride in the fact that he had been his pupil.

Though belonging to the latter half of the nineteenth century, Dagh carefully preserved the traditions of such ancient masters as Wali, Mir, Sauda, Momin, Ghalib, and (his own mentor) Zauq. He did not allow the purity of the Urdu language to be affected by the western influences which had begun to make inroads into Indian culture long before his time. This fact appealed to Iqbal and he wrote his early ghazals in his master's style but later adopted the pattern set by Ghalib. Dagh was at his best when handling a love them. *Gulzar-i-Dagh*, one of his three diwans (collection of poems), contains ghazals depicting the various phases of love with subtle (psychological) insight. These ghazals represent the effusions of his youth when love to him was not a mere play of fancy and imagination but a reality, felt and experienced. According to Iqbal, the power of subtle analysis of the workings of the human mind is the distinguishing feature of the poetry of Dagh. Iqbal alludes to the pictures of love drawn by Dagh in a touching elegy he wrote on the latter's death :

Some new wine
from cups haps newer
we still shall sip
by maybe fresher sakis served ;

Some new words
of comment, gloss—
maybe something more original still—
on the time-old themes
of a heart in pain,
of a dream of youth unstained...
some poet unborn
shall proffer us still.

His death surely
is not going to be
the death—an end for all times—
of sculptors, painters,

writers, artists...And yet—
Only
none's no more left :
to with his dart
so pierce the heart
as to leave it whole
—whole and merged in a joy divine ;
And so shoot, capture love
—like a picture, true, preserved
with thoughts sublime : Today
that the Master leaves
the temple all to us.

Iqbal passed the Intermediate Examination from Sialkot and went to Lahore to join the Government College there for the B.A. degree. He had a brilliant academic career and won several awards and scholarships. He took his M.A. degree in Philosophy in 1899 and began life as a lecturer in the Oriental College. Later he served in the Government College as well.

While he was a student in the Government College, Iqbal came under the influence of Professor T. W. Arnold (later Sir Thomas Arnold) who taught him philosophy. Professor Arnold was a person of exceptional ability and took particular interest in Iqbal, recognising in him the seeds of a future great man. Earlier, during his lectureship at the M. A. O. College in Aligarh he had taught philosophy to another great writer of Urdu literature, Maulana Shibli Naumani (1857-1914) who became famous as a biographer of some of the greatest men of the Islamic world. Arnold and Iqbal developed great affection and regard for each other and, when the former left for England after his retirement from service, the latter could not but follow him there to further enrich his treasure of knowledge.

Before the turn of the century Iqbal, though he recited his ghazals at the mushairas, did not make an effort to get them published in a book form or in literary magazines. In 1901, for the first time he came into contact with Sir Abdul Qadir, a leading figure of the times. The two met at a mushaira in Lahore at which Iqbal recited a ghazal with which Sir Abdul Qadir was highly impressed. Iqbal's fame at that time had not travelled beyond the precincts of the literary circles of the city. Meanwhile, the Urdu enthusiasts of Lahore formed an association at whose meetings lectures were given and poems recited. At one of these gatherings, attended by Sir Abdul Qadir, Iqbal read out his famous poem "The Himalayas."

It took the Urdu world by surprise and thereafter Iqbal was in great demand at mushairas and public meetings. Soon after, Sir Abdul Qadir decided to bring out an Urdu monthly named "Makhzan." He requested Iqbal to contribute to this magazine but the young poet who till then had not seen his name in print declined to do so out of shyness. Sir Abdul Qadir, however, insisted on carrying something from Iqbal's pen in the first issue of "Makhzan" He persuaded Iqbal to let him publish the poem "The Himalayas." Each subsequent issue of "Makhzan" carried one or two poems by Iqbal till he left for England in 1905.

II

Iqbal led a very active but simple life during his stay in Lahore. He spent the best part of his days in reading and writing and attending literary get-togethers. His poems were in great demand by newspapers and journals and the mail every day brought an ever-increasing number of requests for his personal appearance at various functions and gatherings. His youthful exuberance was bursting at the seams and there was no restraining him once he had started pouring forth in verse his emotions and effusions. Lying in bed in a contemplative mood, he would start speaking in poetry and verses would flow from his lips like a torrent. For long spells he would remain in a state of ecstacy and those around him would too become enraptured. His melodious voice added charm and grace to his lyrics. It was not his wont to sit down with a pen and paper in hand and then exercise his brain to compose verses. It was foreign to his nature to be commissioned to write a poem suited to an occasion. He said his verses only when he got into a state of poetic frenzy. Even then he would not jot them down. He had a very strong memory and could reproduce in the same order on a subsequent occasion any poem that he had recited before. However, when he sang his verses, his admirers would take them down on paper so that they could be published in magazines and thus benefit wider audiences. As his fame spread the audiences grew bigger and bigger. He was the star attraction at the annual meetings of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-ul-Islam and thousands of people turned up to hear his verses in his own voice.

When Iqbal left for England in 1905 he was 32. He joined the Cambridge University for advanced studies in philosophy under the guidance of Professor McTaggart. He also carried out research at the University of Munich in Germany which awarded him the degree of Ph.D. for writing a dissertation, "The Development of

Metaphysics in Persia." Next he qualified as a Barrister in London and was called to the English Bar in 1908. The same year he returned home and started practice at Lahore as an Advocate. But he did not make much of a mark in this profession as his mind was busy with literary pursuits.

While in Europe, he did not get much time for writing poetry. In fact, one day he declared that he would no longer engage himself in this "useless pastime" and conveyed his decision to Sir Thomas Arnold and Sir Abdul Qadir who happened to be in England at that time. Iqbal thought that he should better devote his time to some constructive work. Naturally his two well-wishers were sorely disappointed over his decision and tried to argue with him to reverse it. They told him that the type of poetry he was writing was no waste of time but a useful contribution to the wellbeing of his country and community. Perhaps it would inspire his dispirited and depressed countrymen to free themselves from foreign domination. He was told that he had a God-given gift which should be used for the good of humanity. Iqbal was finally prevailed upon to change his mind.

However, an incident that occurred during his stay in England changed the tenor of Iqbal's poetic career. He had been invited to a dinner in a friend's house. The host requested him to recite some of his Persian verses. Iqbal told his friend and other guests that so far he had written only Urdu poems except a few stray couplets in Persian. The request, however, gave rise to a chain of thoughts in his mind and when he returned to his residence he lay awake in his bed far into the night musing over the idea. Next day, when he met Sir Abdul Qadir, he recited two Persian ghazals that he had composed during the night. The latter appreciated their beauty and excellence of diction and complimented the poet who for the first time realised that Persian offered him a much better medium than Urdu to translate his thoughts into poetry and to reach a much wider audience than hitherto. From then on, Iqbal composed his poems mostly in Persian.

After his return to India in 1908 Iqbal busied himself with the task of writing a long Persian poem (masnavi) which he called *Asrar-i-Khudi*. He had been toying with the idea of writing this book for a long time and, when it was published at Lahore in 1915, it established his reputation as an international poet of great merit. Seven other collections of his Persian verses were published in quick succession and, in recognition of his contribution to world literature,

the Allahabad University on the occasion of the celebration of its Golden Jubilee in 1937 conferred on Iqbal the degree of Doctor of Literature (*honoris causa*).

During this period when Iqbal was for the most part occupied with the writing of Persian verses, he did occasionally write poems in Urdu as well. But his Urdu poems had mostly appeared in newspapers and magazines or had been recited at public meetings. His admirers were keen to see them collected in a book form. This was finally done in 1924 and his first Urdu collection was published under the name of *Bang-i-Dara*. It consists of three parts, part I containing poems composed before he left for England in 1905, part II poems written during his stay in Europe, and part III poems written after his return from there. This book was followed by three more collections of Urdu verses : *Bal-i-Jabreel* (1935) *Zarb-i-Kalim* (1936) and *Armaghan-i-Hejaz* (1938, posthumously).

Being a leading light of his community, Iqbal was inevitably drawn towards party politics. He was a member of the Punjab Legislative Council from 1925 to 1928. He presided over the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in 1930. In his presidential address, he for the first time originated the proposal for a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims. He said : "I would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to be the final destiny of the Muslims of North-West India." How prophetic ! Yet nobody at that time took these words seriously as Indian nationalism was at its height during those days with the Indian National Congress dominating the political scene of the country. The Muslim League was considered, perhaps rightly so, a party of reactionaries who were only interested in perpetuating their feudal and vested interests and did not want any reduction or interruption of the power and influence they exercised over the illiterate and ignorant masses.

In 1931, Iqbal attended the second Round Table Conference in London convened to find a solution to the political problem of India. The idea of a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims was mooted at this conference too but it did not catch on at that time. Iqbal's voice at the conference was a voice in the wilderness. He was dubbed a reactionary and out of tune with modern tendencies. He fell foul with the leader of the Muslim delegation, Sir Akbar Hydari.

After attending the London conference, Iqbal made a tour of Spain, Italy and other European countries. The following year he was again sent, rather reluctantly, to the third Round Table Conference. While the Conference was in progress, he resigned and returned to India. At a Muslim League session he strongly denounced the British Government policy towards India. The fact is that he could not tolerate hypocrisy by whomsoever it was practised.

III

Financially Iqbal was not placed in a very happy position. As a lawyer, he did not earn adequately because he could not devote much time to practice. He had a knack of annoying persons in positions of influence who could help him. For example, he severely criticised the Punjab Unionist Party leader, Sir Fazl-i- Husain, on the rural-urban issue which was agitating the people of the province those days. Yet the latter, who headed the provincial administration, went out of his way to help Iqbal. It was at his instance that Iqbal was nominated by the Viceroy to the second Round Table Conference. Earlier, in 1924, Sir Fazl-i-Husain had urged the Punjab Governor to have Iqbal elevated to the Bench but, while the case was under consideration, the poet indulged in an unrestrained indictment of the Government and the move to make him a judge fell through. The same fate met Sir Fazl-i-Husain's proposal to get him nominated a member of the Public Service Commission. After Iqbal gave up legal practice altogether in 1931 due to failing health, his financial condition became worse. Sir Fazl-i-Husain approached the Nizam of Hyderabad for an arrangement under which Iqbal was to deliver six lectures on "Modern Islamic Thought" for a fee of Rs. 10,000 but the poet stipulated stiff terms which the Nizam's Government refused to countenance. Ultimately, the Nawab of Bhopal came to his help and sanctioned for him a monthly stipend of Rs. 500 which Iqbal continued to receive until death.

Not much is known about Iqbal's private or family life, except that he was married thrice. He, however, led an austere existence getting up very early, saying his prayers most regularly, eating sparingly and dressing plainly. He generally wore a shirt and salwar (baggy trousers) and sported a Turkish cap. During his visits abroad, he put on English-style suits but not the hat. In its place he wore the Turkish cap. Though the British King had conferred on him the coveted title of "Sir," Iqbal considered himself a *Darvesh* or a fakir (mendicant) and was proud of it. His admirers, however, called

him Allama Iqbal. In spite of the various honours bestowed on him, he remained to the end a very unassuming person. He sat in his house reading, writing and talking with a continual stream of callers to whom he was always accessible.

Among Iqbal's distinguished visitors was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The latter writes his impressions of the visit in *The Discovery of India*. Pandit Nehru says : "A few months before his death, as he lay on his sick bed, Iqbal sent for me and I gladly obeyed the summons. As I talked to him about many things I felt how much we had in common, in spite of differences, and how easy it would be to get on with him. He was in a 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 a patriot."

Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, an eminent author, wrote after a visit to Iqbal at Lahore: "In Iqbal's house there was little obvious modernity; in fact, an odd air of indifference oppressed you as you waited to be ushered into his presence. With rare charm, taking the stem of his hubble-bubble out of his lips, he would greet you, raising himself on his couch where he lay reclining in oriental fashion, clad in garments of a Punjabi gentleman. His smile would put you at ease; in flawless English he would begin discussing on modern themes as to the manner born."

Iqbal possessed an extremely genial nature and had a very large circle of friends. He was witty, brilliant in conversation and informal in approach. He could speak with equal felicity in English, Urdu and his mother-tongue Punjabi. His fondness for Punjabi is testified by his request only a few hours before his death to a friend to sing a Punjabi song. The latter sang a few verses of Punjab's mystic and most popular poet Bulleh Shah. Iqbal was so much touched and overwhelmed by the pathetic song that tears rolled down his cheeks. How unfortunate for Punjabi that this great gifted poet did not turn his attention to this language!

For some time Iqbal resided in the congested Bhati Gate area of Lahore. From there he shifted to a house in Anarkali. Here he stayed for about ten years. Then he moved into a bungalow on Macleod Road and spent fourteen years of his life there. Three years before his death, he built his own house on Mayo Road which was named Javed Manzil.

Iqbal's third wife died in 1935. This left him very unhappy. Thereafter he kept indifferent health and developed kidney trouble. His eyesight too became very weak and breathlessness increased. He now knew that the end was near but did not despair. One day he sat up in his bed alone and wrote his will and sent it to the Registrar. As his condition grew worse, two prominent Unani hakims of Delhi were sent for but they could do little to save his life. He started vomitting blood and the great poet who kept his audiences spellbound and fired the imagination of thousands in and outside India left for his heavenly abode on 21st April, 1938. The news of his death spread in the city like wild fire and people of all communities and from all walks of life poured into the lawns and roads around Javed Manzil. Over seventy thousand mourners are stated to have joined the funeral procession. Hartals were observed in Lahore and many other towns and public meetings were held by the score to pay him tributes. In a condolence message, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore said: "The death of Iqbal has created a void in literature. India, whose place in the world is too narrow, can ill afford to miss a poet whose poetry had such universal value."

But the poet's soul was now in search of pastures new as he had said in one of his couplets :

Bewildered eye
looks for some other, newer, vision evermore ;
Wrecked ship of life
distraught, by storms purblinded,
pines for shore.

IV

Iqbal died a frustrated man, his mission having remained on the whole unrealised. He pined for the revival of Islam's past glory for which he dedicated the better part of his life. Only if he knew that fanaticism in any religion reaches its zenith but once. This had happened in the case of Islam centuries before Iqbal was born. The futility of his misguided zeal to extricate the Muslims of the world from the morass of moral and political stagnation is borne out by a quatrain he wrote shortly before his death:

On my death each one did cry:
"He was a friend of mine."
But none did care a jot to find
to whom said I, and what, and whence was I.

The diehard among Iqbal's uncritical admirers may, however, take consolation from the fact that his idea of a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims ultimately took practical shape in 1947, nine years after his death, with the formation of the independent sovereign State of Pakistan. But at what price? Tens of thousands, mostly innocent women and children, Hindus as well as Muslims, became the victim of the fanatic's knife. Millions and millions of others, Hindus as well as Muslims, were overnight left homeless and penniless because someone wanted a *separate* home for a section of the Indian population. Had Iqbal been alive at the time of partition and had he witnessed the massacre that accompanied it, he would surely have recanted and admitted his mistake of arousing communal passion among his co-religionists. Being thoroughly human and kindhearted, it is impossible to think that he would have glossed over this ghastly tragedy. Pundit Nehru writes that though "Iqbal was one of the early advocates of Pakistan, yet he appears to have realised its inherent danger and absurdity. His whole outlook on life does not fit in with the subsequent developments of the idea of Pakistan or division of India." It must be remembered that Pundit Nehru met Iqbal only a few months before the poet's death. Naturally his impression must have been based on the final turn Iqbal's mind had taken.

NATURE'S GENTLEMAN

Iqbal was one of the greatest intellectual forces that modern India has produced. He possessed the highest culture—both of the East and the West—and was one of Nature's gentlemen. His chief interests in life were intellectual and cultural rather than political. In fact, politics was to him absolutely uncongenerical....Iqbal overflowed with the milk of human kindness and was cheerful, genial and urbane. If his works happen to convey a contrary impression, it is the fault of his poetry and not of the poet himself.

—Dr. SACHCHIDANANDA SINHA,
author of *Iqbal; The Poet and His Message.*

A POET REBORN

Who could imagine that after the death of Ghalib India would produce a man who would infuse new life into Urdu poetry and revive once again the great poet's subtlety of thought and inimitable style, thus giving a big fillip to the popularity of Urdu literature? But see the good luck of this language that it was blessed with a poet of the stature of Iqbal whose verses captured the hearts of the Urdu lovers all over India and whose fame spread as far away as Iran, Rome and England. Ghalib and Iqbal had so many things in common that had I believed in the transmigration of the soul I would have certainly said: 'Mirza Ghalib was so much in love with Urdu and Persian poetry that it did not let his soul rest in peace in the world of the dead and compelled it to again take an earthly form so as to nourish the garden of poetry. It reappeared in a corner of the Punjab called Sialkot and took the name of Mohammed Iqbal.'

Sir ABDUL QADIR, in his preface
(translated from Urdu) to *Kuliyat-i-Iqbal*.

by Iqbal

MY POEMS

My poems
like a truant spark
or like a secret cherished
choose me to leave, divorce, betray...
—I feel depressed; 'why,
why couldn't these my little dearies
with me ever stay—a glow
within, if not also a guide
in the cruel world without?'

SORROW'S PROFILE

(*Tasveer-i-Dard*)

No ears it begs—this
this my speechless, tongueless tale.
My lips they yearn
—though the rules-of-game are strict:
"Not but a wordless wail!"

My wail, too, then is not mine—'tis
a whole, whole garden's
condensed cry, travail
at winter time when
leaves they fall all 'round, and
no no, wishful check avails.

I must
my hidden, cherished wounds
all bare today;
I must
with tears of blood
infuse all earth
to a sorrowful May;
I must
with my secret pain enkindle
every wicksome pulse;
I must
all dark of the night
with love illume or—
burn myself.

Think not of self,
think of the country, fool:
ill bodes ahead,

the sky it lours.
Get freed of past, live
here in the present, future's dread.

Ne'er tolerance pays;
Cry, ring with resonant plaints
and rend—the skies ;
Come, wake up; or you die—
no mention of your name
shall History prize.

No trace of a petal
hath been left, been all picked clean:
'tis poaching time
and 'tween them gardeners there
are quarrelling mean.

There's lightning up there
hiding dark in clouds;
Can the nightingales afford good time
to sing and sing, to world, self-lost
—in nests, in dales ?

These scattered beads
in a rosary re-knit
(however hard) I must.
Communalism is a tree
of which bigotry is the fruit,
a fruit that—not lust—
had Adam old turned, exiled
from Hea'en to rot
in sweat, in blood, in dust.

In love doth freedom
be, shouldst thou but care to know;
This hate is it divides,
enslaves, imprisons men in vices low.

Be not indifferent to
thine own, O fool—slavation's *this* ;
and nowise else thou
canst ever thine own
self be.
Or—wilt thou miss—
a cure-all that it brings
this wine that nourishes souls—

of men, of nations, climes...?
—'Tis love this miracle works,
wakes nations
to their destinies, tasks of times.

This curse of schism is
hath uprooted men, communities,
families whole.
My people, too. Don't they
have some regard for their country's fate—
for their place of birth,
for...for...Eh ?—No ?

Long is my tale, my tragedy, wail. 'Tis
endless ; so—an end enow
to it all put I must :
for I too—have a tongue
could speak,
impress an audience
with a searing, searching
surge and burst.

(abridged)

MAN'S BUT A BREATH

(*Ghazal*)

A tiny breath of air, a whiff,
a freak—is all what man's life is.
"No," cut in bloom, "it's all a sniff,
a blush, a smile *du modeste*."
"No, no : it's something else still," said
the flame, "a pain, a woe, ever burns (burns red)."
A secret haps (inspired a seeker hails)
that no more is, when found: 'was not, is dead.'
All pilgrims bound for Lord's abode I'd ask:
"Is Holy Waters all you get
(at journey's end), at last ?"

RUBA 'I

Speak not
of love, of lover's partings, friend;
Life's worth's at bloom
—that blossoming of the self.
No gain or loss
on either side it is:
when a pearl from her bed stirred-up
she parts
and—the story seeming ends!

*NO LAND IS LIKE OUR IND

(Taraanai-i-Hindi)

Of all the lands
—in heaven, on earth—
commend me to my Ind.
no land is like our Ind.

A garden vast
whose nightingales we
freesome frisk, flit, fling ....
We sing, we soar—yet ever
anon, earth-bound, to it return—to
where our heart belongs, longs
—yearning clings.

Up there—
in the neighbourhood *there* of the skies
above, earth's highest reach
—la Snowscape -- for ... serene...aloft
us sentinel stands; whilst warbling, cherubic
streams
in their thousands course
them down—in valleys *here* below
to frolicking swing
in an envy sweet of the Heavens (on earth)
in playful, circling rings.

Down here—
of—Heavens—born, O Ganges
O singing still
e'er ceaseless, e'er wistful
of that timeless caravan's resting—
eve, its first—first camping
on thy banks.
That spirit
undying, outpouring
of that Pristine Song emerged
it is doth us unite
—us Indians, us of Ind—
in a living, purposive bond
of a nation's—as one stringed !

Long past, long dead
have been those days of glory
—of Athens,' Egypt's, Rome's;
grips, lives on, livens as
ever but instead
(like some ancient, deathless ode)
the tale of Ind, our Ind.

Something must be—
some thing that us, our Ind,
from all else doth so mark apart:
a heartless, senseless world—
encroaching—left to smart !

Like a pain divine
from 'vading hordes in-sheltered
—*In* we (poets-like) live.
Who's there to us will
listen, will respond—
in a blue moon, once, one touch
of solace bring ?

*Iqbal wrote this poem when he was in England(1905-8)

THE MOUNTAIN CLOUD

See here my nest
yon men, yon birds ;
My earth—flow'r—decked
on hill-sides far,
yon words !

O'er stretch of sands, of grass,
of cities, wilds ... ...
o'er wilderness, o'er seas,
o'er forests see me fly!

O'er them I fly, in them I rest ;
Exhausted fall to sleep—
in meads of valleys green
(my velvet bed) !

My mother taught me—
pearls, e'er pearls, to strew
for life is but a short shrift
here to woo
all world as yours—
with an o'erflowing heart, renewed!

To a hard—prest
peasant, so, I bring
some bit of joy....
to a careless lot of youth
in parks yegathered—
a cheer ehoy !

Then—with dust-laden,
cascades dark
of hair all disarrayed,
bespread I space : some
universal touch
of fear, dismay !

To the upturned eye
a wistful short glimpse giving;
ever silently
o'er human huts somewhere
a slip, a bye :

a spirit free – to lend
lit' ripply rings
to streams, in love's mood,
kissing past I sing ;
—a hope to plants
at bloom somewhere nearby
—of oceans born, by sun himself
brought up, O my !

Who
to the mountain streams
that ocean's tumult gave?
Who
In every bird's
obliviousness of self
songs stirred, in 'graved?

Who
was it, paused, snatched
verdure up from death ?

Who
from helpless buds drew out
a winsome smile,
a faint first breath ?

Who
was it turned
those poor huts made of straw
to sleeping chambers,
rich man's envy—an envy too
of law ?

An outlaw I—
free spirit, so self-confessed,
of all this waywardness
do guilty plead. Nor wince, nor mince. Id Est.

THE STAR

No rest it knows
thy world; as we
poets would it have expressed:
"Change is all
what Nature's scheme here means,
is worth".

Born's never a rose
but for some death
—a bud's, a breath's.
Your fall is, see? my
victor's triumphant, jubilant mirth.

What fear is thine ?—
Moon jealous afield ?
Or morn's around ?
Or—a sense of beauty's fade ?
Or death's in—stepping muffled, hushed parade ?

Why escaped earth
little star to heavens' green room
from our loving, 'joying eye. . . .
and there, afar, shrinks all
in veil of silv'ed limpid skies?

—A thrill of fear
(as e'er) ne'er stilled
all through night's soothing sleep
dost twinkling lone in fright's vigil
strange restlessness thou keep !

MY DUST

(Ghazal)

My dust
a witless, lightless thing
by Nature left,—in this dark world and wide—
Hath instinct for to see
a passing Gabriel
—whose apron, look, it must
bedrag, pluck, tear apiece!

Hath sense to see
('a home is a useless thing—its clinging love');
No straw to nest or rest
it was e'er seen to pick.

A 'tear'
—its only gift from Nature earned—
that touch of a woman's strength
it shames the stars; its glisten
hath the strength
—undying, undrowned strength—to rise
cover haughty graves, becloud men's eyes...
stars' mischievous winks, and...
...pass beyond !

RUBA'I

No storms in thee there left to rage ?
No self-respect inside more wars to wage ?
Fool, fate is not to fret against, bewail ;
Wake, rise up—be a man,
a maker (in thine own) of thy own
destiny be.

THE COMPLAINT...

Well knows all world
our nature 'tis to yield ;
Yet feel constrained, for once,
for one small plaint to Thee
we—like an unstruck lute,
ill repressed, mute—
in all good faith
and love, O Lord,
here at Thy feet are we.

'Twas a different scene
'fore we arrived :
they worshipped stones,
they worshipped trees—men 'live !
Men, wont to prehend
forms alone, (well)
how could they
Thy formlessness 'cognize
(until Thy Muslim's sword
deigned—made them wise) ?

If those that from the Book of History
serfdom, lies erased,
if those that braced the Word and
dust to sublime godhead raised :
if such—such as we are,
we never sinned—a faithless lot
are dubbed godamned,
then—Thine own gratefulness, O God,
we beg Thy leave to doubt, 'repent'.

The kafir gets all good things
(easements) free, full, fine
—uncultured brute he gets
wealth, women, wine :
whilst Muslims' fasts,
privations, life sublime
win him but words, sweet words !
We don't complain,
(my, why should we ?),

if Lord Himself
this change in His response
and nature wills, affords.

Peoples, peoples, peoples :
and 'mongst them men of sin, humility, pride ;
And of quite different stuffs—
of sloth, slick, sod—in this world wide
there be ;
Not few—in thousands—
those allergic to Thy name.
And yet—Thy mercy does that
all, this know (still blessing faithlessness
as ever!) my God?

The Muslim hath deserted
—say in temples icons ;
The Muslim hath betrayed
—e'en tongueless Ka'aba groans ;
The Muslim's fled on camels clean
with Qur-aan up his sleeve :
—all world's infidels scoff
and make of us a laughing stock,
and there unchanged
our Lord in Heavens
Thou still dost reign
as the only God of worlds,
of all that be !—?

...AND THE REPLY

Then a voice from Heavens
was touched sore, moved to say
"True, sad—too sad—it is thy wail,
O Muslim, o'erflowing—nay—
thy tearful cup of life on earth ;
Thy cry it pierces, rends the skies
—thy holy passion losing patience
for to urge
man's kind to rise,
stand face to face

with Me, its God !"
"We thought our gifts were there,
none came forth, up, to take ;
Our guidelines would there be
unfollowed (none's awake) ;
All lessons, arts would rot
for lack of pupils fit. But now—
of man despaired no more
(to hear thee thus), we'd show'r galore
new dust, new fertz, new waters
all for thee."

"Poor, humble folk alone they pray,
to Me they bow
(never plaintive)—for others' sins—
they'd suffer fain e'en now ;
Would undergo still more
if that could bring them round
to the Eternal Flame they kindle, feed
in temples, as of old,
in history's need
—through sacrifice of self !"

"Life's comforts, easements, riches
not one whit a Muslim make
—if intellect, talent, art, and
human touch there aren't in their wake.
There's something timeless there
in history's past

that takes all honour to itself—
(dost not see ?)
e'er leaving here some
freakish orts—to tempt
thee—pure gracelessness to Man,
my Word that are."

(*abridged*)

THE COMPLAINT AND THE REPLY IN REVERSE

GOD : From common clay,
primodial waters—I'd
fashioned worlds, your world
and given some ore. You came,
you saw, you played with it, and sure—
its primal purity was gone—to leave
some sabres, poisoned tips, some axes, guns
to kill—to cut—
trees, saplings in their buds : O Foe
of Life—O Man, my man, why
didst thou cage
my song, my bird, my self—in, in ?

MAN : Thy tale
was just a piece half-done
with all its nights, its deserts, dusts,
its ridges, vales, its flowers...
Which seeing—I
with art just retouched some
—to turn to lamps and cups, and beds and parks
and arbours, views—and glasses
catching, fixing views alive
from rough dead stone, and elixir
—from thy dread arson, herbs—

to renew, 'vigorate life.
Come taste, come see
and make thyself
an artist fresh, true, new, divine.

(*Translated from Persian*

COME, LET'S TO THE OPEN

(*ghazal*)

Time—
came ye out
and faced the world,
unveiled;
Was,
no more is—
a secret : what your sealed lips
had concealed :
In freedom drink;
Not but an addict out here
in the open sits.
Sans
aim, sans life—
barefoot some tread they
thorns at home in towns;
God—
seekers there
in forests fare. Not one
doth crown
his efforts (fair)
with love of men,
men's lovers' quest
(requited) :
Would
rather live
neath wayside trees
and there sit, wait
for the Tyrant's freckled,
frowning, drab dress,
date.

RUBA'I

"Who sleeps there
—there under the arch?"
of the priest I asked.
'Who's lost there
—there in the temple's darks?"
instead the walls
to me thus, echoing all, unmasked.

HOMO POLITICUS

And night and day
the caravan moves—led
by some simple soul of a chief
—his 'wagon', eyes
to a Pole Star, up there, hitched...
...his temper humble yet unbending
stalinese.

And night and day
we thoughtless wend
even as our leaders' whims they selfish bend
over maggots, moths, mean things and vile
—degrading. Their only chance—or ours—
for an upgrade (e'en recovery) lying
up along lines thin
by their poorly webbed sand
by our hopes false-fed!

Our leaders
to us—to their own's well-being—not wed,
ever faithfully, truly
to their mean tricks, dust, vile dreams
—self-aggrandise.

ON A FLOWER OFFERING

She strolls
the garden—
path in beauty's pride.
All flow'rs
they for her
picking fingers (vie, wish) bide.

I moan,
I sigh—all
world's loved though I'm, eh:
No peace
is mine in
my love's breasts for me;
No apron breeze hers
e'er creased past my dream.
I'll wither, die—*all*
life e'en so in wait for thee!

O there
thou'st picked one
leaving us here of bliss bereft.
E'en so
fare ye, my
lady lo'e,
that won't us 'cept for gifts!

STARS NOT THY LIMIT

(*ghazal*)

Yon stars
—yon twinkling, beackoning stars
are not the limit—eye's limits!
Horizons more
there ope galore—thereaft!
And love's travails
and trials—are not yet o'er.

There too
are tempests, winds, and caravans more
e'er struggling o'er the mile—unriled
—to egg ye forth.

Your garden's fence ne'er
Everest, ocean was—a boundary line;
More lovely still the scenes maybe
—the views, the 'spheres, the nests
off this our God's-little earth there be!

You do not leave a home
—'tis an opening new for your quest, your spirit
to come out, outgrow, soar;
O falcon mine, O spirit unseen—
for you was it the skies were made
with 'sphere, with airs
to plenish, brace your wings, your spirits
again, and ever again.

Look—night and day
e'er circling round ye they
ne'er hold ye in
time or space or pace. O, fly
ye off—and your secrets, poems,
feelings, love
with a widening world go share
(all self effaced)

RUBA'I

To the inner eye
'tis light, never failing
light from God;
The world outside
though a passing show of specks—
of shades, of lights—
of sun and moon, of night and noon
encyclic—not Synod!

THE HIMALAYAS

Skyline
serene of snows
where hea'en bends low
to kiss earth's brow!
—A rampart national,
fence, a wall—just that—
(in North) impreg
thou never wert, nor art.

O ageless youth, defying Time
(e'en Nature's morn and
eve are born to die) !
The sky is not thy limit—
a chapter new,
a fresh page, still not writ,
in thy book 'tis : a nook
for pensive souls
to meditate in, inward—
to a galaxy of fiery bushes becks !
O snows
—sponts soft of sparks, and
sprays—O mist—of peace!
Snows—laurels cool on earth's crest
there serene
how palish make sun's crowned
head look
at dew-kissed dawn!

The morning breeze thy swing...
and every bud wee, drunk, a—dance
and petals all fresh (poets)—all, all
a—trance, a—glance—
a glance that dissuades
all ideas mean of pickards, lo:
"My home is here, heart-like,
in a Nature's-nook
my peace of mind bespeaks

my tale, here, look!"
And from thy peaks
comes down a-trill that sacred rill
—a crystal mirroring glass of life :
a division line—
'tween the Kausar-Tasnim pair
and self—sublime,
at play with pebbles now,
now on its course—escapes—
soft-touching strings of heart,
with songs of thrill
—a passing stranger, she, gives
meanings new to life!

And when night comes
dishevelling curls of jet,
the while streams blend
their stirs to a catching bar
of music unheard in daytime
with a re-touch, one, of an evening calm
impelling spells
in trees to self-lost meditate,
suffusing crimson coyly on the Ganges'
glowing girlish cheeks, her face !

Perennial snows,
could ye not tell us
one of those tales old
when Adam's first generation
had ye chosen
for their home, abode ?
Pray, tell us something
of their simple ways
of life knowing naught of formal
courtesy, pose.
O fancy, just unfold those
old, old scenes once more ;
Take me, O wheel of time, with thee—
to bygone days of yore !

A WISH

And sick
of the madding world, O friends,
for a nook peaceful I long, beseach
—that peace—
Cinderella girl sweet, shy,
an envy of speech's self;
A hut
on a lonesome hill with slopes
to the other side to delve
her mysteries deep—
of a hermit's touch, o'er aeons
lying adream'.

No cares of life
like thorns-in-side
to distract one e'ermore;
caressings soft
of chirps, rills, heart's strings (stilled)
ever vying
to soothe galore
—bedspread
of meads to calm recede
and on an arm to 'cline...
where—*friends* fearless
the nightingale free flits,
lulls senses rapt;
Where trees
they shade soul's path,
while streams-beside—souls photograph,...
... by scenes
of hills enraptured, O where breaking
popping—lift necks so!
Where verdure
in earth's arms she sleeps;
through bushes, streamlets sneak;
Where twigs they

bend like brides
them down o'er crystal glass; Bespeaks
Eve's mien
— by Sun, 'fore parting, kissed—all crimson,
flow'rs, retouches, gold.

Worn nights
where travellers
urging to my steady lamp,
onto my hut awake!....
dark skies
with flashes off and on where showing
the path, its lurking snakes;
The cuckoo, late, for a duet
then so teasing me, "See : who's come ?—
our Dawn!"
Dew-time—time for
my tears to bud's oblation be,
my cries their matin clear;
Prayer time—time for
my voice in altos high to rise,
to heavens thus echoing near;
Cry-time—time for
me (every plaintive heart—through me)
to stir earth's sleep
—in conscience' sleep.....

Such be
my home somewhere—abroad—becks me to
come, belong.... to make it *My* lov'd niche.

THE PROMISE OF STRING

(*ghazal*)

O Truth—a promise-ever, come:
come in a pose not thine.
—How here a brow of obeisances full
for thy advent it waits.
'Tis the promise of the string,
its restlessness inside
that a promising, restless ear
it rightly becks;
E'en so it is
with every spell of drink,
of poetry, art.
No use it is to keep the glass
ever safe:
which only broken doth become
ever lovelier,
to be liked ever ever the more.
No more's that old touch in the song,
no more that either
in the listeners new it is:
complains the flame!
No haven the world shall e'er ye give;
A homeless fool some mercy, just,
from a pardoning, witless God can have,
can claim.
That passion's heat,
that beauty's stateliness replete,
that pulse of valour,
that grace of a warrior's fall, defeat—
None no more is:
an age seems past
—and so much so
that a prayerful brow the earth
all earnest she repels :
"O faithless lover, O hypocrite,
O senseless fool !"

RUBA'I

Now like a tide
—its surface stirred up, surged;
Now like an ebb
—in-shrinking for a hide, a rest;
Now like a ripple
—unseen gliding past the shore:
Man, know (thyself) to be,
—a depthlesness ever, ever
to be explored.

THE GLOW-WORM

What light glows there
in the garden
with fleurs-de-lis asleep?
A life? A flame?
A star come down? A ray of moon?
A freak of Nature's (liveliness)
hath got untamed?

Some one from home
exiled—from day—
in night's world found
his talents and—a name?
A captain's star
from moon's coat dropped?
An atom from sun's shirt
fled loose (an excuse lame)?

A glimpse—first glimpse—
of an aspect hid, hid long,
of beauty's, love's
(by Nature brought
this first time out
—out for our view)?

'Tis a shadow—play
for the little moon—in dark,
in light by turns :
now smiles, now burns!
Firefly and moth—both worms
they are : one's light itself,
the other—light doth seek.
And the moon 'tis both
—the moth, the glow-worm
and dark, light—
in one!

'Tis Nature's gifts—distinctions—
lie here scattered all around us:
the glamour of hues,
pain, speech and light and silence,

consenting shades, mind's peace,
and soul's few moments snatched to self :
.. and restlessness to woo. 'Tis that
for glow-worm makes a day
what night for all world is.

Maybe—all these were, are
same : ever the one
is various, varied strewn:
moonlight or poesy, and
bulbul's wails
or bud's first cracks, and
glow-worm's speechless glow or
flowers' smell speechless o'er aflow!

THE STARS AND THE MOON

Ashiver at pre-dawn
stars to the moon complained :
"This twinkling all through night,
this mission ever to move
neath changeless sky,
never knowing of rest or peace or love,
ne'er knowing of the journey's end
or of destination's sight or bend:
a prisoners' caravan all—
all world—
we, trees and rocks,
and beasts and birds and men...
—what life is it?"

"So hath it been
from times unknown:
'its Nature's law
—of movement...life...non-stop.
O gatherers ye of night's harvest,
my fellows
in life's journey ye—
what rest ye crave?
Ambition goads, the steed he speeds,
and life is short;
Where is the time to pause?
Death's there around, and
out of sorts.
And many a treacherous hurdle,
more, besides.
Just lag, and trampling run on
over the rest—your own!
And if ye but in advance
had just known:
Love gave ye that first stir,
and beauty its fulfilment
in the end will be.
So—
move, let's move."

And the elder statesman
of Ind's sky was silent he, and
moved he on
that timeless man—
the moon.

STRANGE BIRDS THESE LOVERS

(*ghazal*)

Strange birds
from which unknown land of Love's,
preferring pain to cure
and—thorns, pricks ever-enjoying:
My saplings
watered, fed on blood—my blood:
Let them not die.
My wakeful nights
yond stars are witness to :
to my forlorn love, and wails.
My, ask me not—why I
to ruin betake, a hundred structures
by self built
left, smashed, to waste.
My glow of pain—to glow-worm
mated is;
No hypocrite I—of Hurs, of Heaven,
shall dream.
A poet am I—whose songs
are love, enough, to sustain him...
to live, to die.

RUBA'I

Plunge into the darkest depths
but never never lose—
thy balance, peace of mind ;
Fall, break, snap loose
but soon come to—to-inward 'clined.
No rest or peace thine
ever will be, O wave :
The shore never was thy mate, thy home
(never meant to be)
—O restlessness accurs'd.

A DIALOGUE

HE NIGHT :

Why, what can ail thee, poet,
in these sheets silv-soft
shimmering mine?
Thy rose-like face struck dumb and
scent-like groping
for some light, some
silvery line !
Like a jeweller here
for pearls to scan these
hemistichs of skies ;
Like a fish restless
from home strayed far
in labyrinths, depths of light!
Or art thou but
a gem mine own
from my crest witless dropped
and with earth
fallen in love and so
to me for ever, ever lost!
But the poet
like a restless heart he
loitered, loitered
in night's calm
no peace anywhere ever he finding;
Untouched
(would seem)--ill-fared, unhomed—
by her magic sweet unwinding.

THE POET :

In thy moon's virgin soil
some seeds to sow of pearls is—
here I toil :
The pearls—these dew-drops small
(mine eyes aweep)
a treasure me had given for to cherish, keep
—ever jealous keep.
My tears in daytime would

never fall, so—
night's nook, peace they seek.
My virgin, secret pain
(e'er ill-repressed)
shall lighten I
on whom ?—Like an earthen lamp
at a stilled, hushed tomb
my candle weeps—foredoomed.

Far, far there whilst
the journey's end evades,
recedes.....I
overwhelmed deep by love do seek
thee and seek thy listening stars
to lend an ear to me,
my pain, O Night,
my Jove !

The night she
over her poet she wept
and wept; in sleep she glowed...
The world all (save the poet) it felt—
was dawn come back, around
a corner there,
from a rendezvous disgaged!

ONE SILLY FLOWER

Why waste thyself
o'er nightingale's broke heart,
sore plight
--*thy* apron torn to shreds—?

To wish for honour
in life's open court, this garden here,
thou hast first
to learn "with thorns to live."

Like pine thou wilt
have passion, pride to soar—soar high,
higher—though slow
earth's fences shall to thee give in.

One unman mean
may come and pluck
thee for his beloved's lock,
his luck !

That dew, fore slipped,
did not she whisp
in bud's ear, "My,
bring forth ye hues blue,
scents serene
thy florist's wit (love ?) for to tease !"?

And if
from autumn's touch
thou wilt choose—choose to far off stay,
then snap thou must
these ties of thine
with smells, with hues,
with anything else that's gay.

Well, look—herein
alone will thy life's success be,
and true:
"A lovely face to tempt and pick
and into her lovelier lock
set it (thee)
...on a budding breast...
in a breezier button's hole !"

WINCING TO SPURN

(*ghazal*)

Your own word breached is not
what I do mind.
What was it held you back?
Your own emissary, see, hath
yon betrayed. Well—
and Lord be praised—
I'm not to blame.
O the sense, alertness
of the drunk *that*—for his love
in a concourse thus to spot!
Tell me, our friend—though hesitant, how
the manner of his spurning
(of my request) was?
For passion ever,
as even in Moses' case, it draws
—and you along—
to your distant Bush unseen,
as then, so now.

RUBA'I

Is this my home
or homelessness—this vast ?.....
A speck in it
or all of it—whole world (am I) ?
Or—unhomed souls
in their sweetest bliss of shorelessness
self-lost
could they but tell me, O, O, where am I
—a something : misfit, lost
(could-yet-be-saved)..... ?

NATURE AND MAN

As the sun he was coming up, I asked
all faces radiant, in heavens there
—on earth,
or worlds so many rippling riv-like,
silv-like—so !
Heavenly things and beings—well, then,
I asked:

"How comes it, gods—
in sunlight's gold and garments
glistening, splashing
...with here and there a touch
of rose and green
...your nymphs in scarlet, emerald
all serene
.. e'en distant clouds bespeckled
bits of frill
...vermilion, as of a bride's, from eve's
brow radiates thrills
with sparkling wine from goblets two
of her eyes, O, flashing !
O things of light, by humans sung
—prayed to—in songs.
—How comes it, tell : of all yer worlds
I live in hell
to darkness chained ..my hands,
my limbs, my senses maimed?
Where's hid my star, my light...
my destiny's star (ne'er bright) ?"

"O *Krishti*—gardener
of God's garden, Man : is it—
you do not know
how I your God, for life,
on you depend ? How much!
You are the Beauty which but
reflect here I;
You are love's scroll whose meaning but
read I.

'Tis you set right whatever I spoil,
destroy;
'Tis you my shoulders' weight off lift
—and with what joy !
I thought this simple manifest
truth was known to you ;
Never realised how your own unrest
to you a curse had proved.
Man, know thyself."—A voice
from a balcony up there
(from earth's deep heart was it?)
responsive came.

A WITHERED ROSE

Shall I call thee a flower still, Rose
—withered now, a dream of nightingale's
that wert ?
Breeze soft caressed thee, and
brought up like a nurse expert
—e'er innocent clean of tears,
called thee—
e'er mon la laughing Rose !
For whose sweet breath would Zephyr
wait all treacherous night
to see the garden filled
with scents diffused !
And now my tearful eyes they shed on thee
sadness—sad dew's ;
Disconsolate my heart it longs in
thy pain just to merge its night.
A little shade of tragedy mine
in thy lot now I find,...
And a meaning too of this my world
of dreams from that derive.
My tale—a reed from its
native wild earth plucked off, rived—
spells all uprooted, exiled souls' woes
—woes of unheard, untold kind.

WITLESS FOLLY

(*ghazal*)

Love's fulsome stretch
is all I modest crave
of thee.
Unfulfilled word
or tyranny: for me all one is—
from thee—
My patience' test!
May heavens be for God's men, not
for me.
Would rather be content with a gleam,
with a fadeless dream
of thee.
A pulse—spark small
yet all ablaze: O, drop one strain for it
(for me)—
For my night's end,
for my wee struggling flame's last breaths,
O friends,
What's have I done
—love's secret, ah, to world witless exposed !
Ah—how it (punitive?) rends!

RUBA'I

Now restive all
for love my love;
Now restless all
my muse to self-uncove:
Now pining for
a constant at-one-ment;
Now piquing for
a parting, for (somewhere) a rend.

THE MOON

My lonesomeness here unrelieved
—and far thy home—
but for these tides at thy sight
in me stirred;
O whither bound and whence emerged
—exhausted pale by thy journey's strain
thou, still reelst on!

All light art thou.
all dark am I
in creation's scheme; yet despair
(as our common lot) doth us unite.
I burn, burnst thou too—see:
consumes me longing love (to see),
and thee the thought—
'tis sun that makes me bright!

Oribiting things we both, then, are
to our destinations bound, each his,
though—round and round !—
Thy soundless course,
my speechless heart—
we're seekers both who in light,
in love
have our different cicerones found!

Thou art peerless there in the skies
—on earth no second's there to fill
my lonesome sessions here one bit.
Sun's blaze, too hot, for thee
spells death, eclipse ;
And here in creation's spurt
of beauty see me lost sans wit!

And still, my Moon—my luminous,
radiant Moon:
we're different stuff,
we aren't one—the same
we never were, shall be:

'tis a different stuff—
of pain doth know;
Thou'lt ne'er that know.
Not inner dark and outer light 'tis
us divides; 'tis something else—*a lack*
that leagues and destinations,
stations ever will keep
'tween thee and that thy goal.
My aim—well,
that to me is known;
Lack-lustre
is thy torch—
thy consciousness, thy brow.

BY THE RAVI

Rapt in some unstirred music in
the evening's hush swoons she—the Ravi,
with her I.....
To one soft cadence
turns it all—a prayerful world.
God's fold, His own precinct!

Here at her gliding waters' edge
stand I—to the world, to mine own self
within extinct.

The skirt of Eve is glamorous red
—in Heaven's wine all divine, in a palsied
hand beheld :
The day's caravan it hastens swift
—e'er swifter, as that pyre
of the sun's —to ashes burns down, mild...
The whilst those rising towers they look
at the scene, as at some death—serene—
of a Nature's cherished child's!
Thus telling that cruel tale of Time
in pages ope of life's own logue
(as history's gleanings wild).
But soon all this to a melody's shape
it tends: holds speech a prisoner
in trees' parliament—for to chide?

Swift sails a *PT-hundrednine*
on waters' breast—
her oarsmen wrestling hard,
nerves edged;
Light-footed, like a glance,
and sooner slides she past,
past limiting-line of eyescape
there: a sledge!

Even so doth slide life's ship:
to be but lost to view
in the stretching vast of space, of time;

a fledge!
Naught knows of death—no ship:
it just eludes, escapes the eye
but does not die, just shies:
(a pledge ?).....

WHOSE SIGH ?

(*ghazal*)

O morning breeze,
take these my words, my message
to the Sage :
"The world, thy trust,
close no more holds
to its values, to its prize."

The shore
to the restless ripple it said:
"Far, far—quite still—
midsea is ; and *thee*
these *shallows* pulverize !"

Love's honour's safe
so long as there some veil,
some sense of decency, remains;
Be morbid—just play with it—
and see : all ethics part, all modesty;

Thy love not inside reigns!
One short excuse of a rest
it was—and the drop
(though a pearl at last)
—no more its own old self it was!

We do not know
whose sigh it was ;
Through Iqbal's lips it
took shape, came anew—
a solace fresh, a touching
piece of art.

RUBA'I

A breath you have, a pulse you miss;
A breath, too, stirs that naught—a hiss!
Go past this glittering, tempting
reason's milestone there
that's but a roadside lamp by winds unswept
—not Journey's End : there, on your left!

YOU AND I

Life's limited span
is not for counting breaths ;
That spark in yer ashes hid—and wan—
it spells hell, death.
The peasant's black bread
gives him strength
enough in life to live ;
That steady flame at shrine's head
lends it free (its way of life),
its praying style morn, eve
—like a salamander on flame fed
—like an Alexander's tale still undead !

Something
us two divides, unites :
no Moses stately mien is mine,
no Brahmin's ways
of world, or, were ever they thine ;
Me magic mighty
of Sinai it holds,
You Azar's artifact or tact it is—behold !
A song I—burnt dead (foreborn)
in the throat,
a shrivelled hue, a scent afright—remote ;
In me here bides
a memory of a longing pain,
in you unfading echo
of love's lament—its strain :
my joy, my home, my soul
—a sorrow, homelessness, and
lack of spirit *in one* ;
Your heart—a temple—
that's ever full
of ungods, faithlessness, and
sects (of religion) missing fun.
Give us, O God, not riches ;
Give us some peace of mind, instead,
some commonsense...

TWO PLANETS

Two planets
happed to close in, face, and—facing—
one to the other he from an infelt
urge said, prayed :
"How wonderful
life, God, would be
should we for ever together be
—to journey stay !
Should only the Hea'ens one whit relent
and let us shine, and die,
as one—to play or pray !"

But hardly had he done, the call
it came for the twain to part—
depart : "To 'volve
is the planets' fixed lot,
a destined chart—
for each one his, her course
(just one) fore-lined.
May you of unison, marriage,
dream and dream—
your course a diverge ever is,
won't won't it gleam
in to converge.
That's Nature's law supreme."

COME HITHER TO MY TOMB

(*ghazal*)

No riches better fare
than burning sweet of pain
(of longing).
Would rather trade
my love of God for this
(this trash of a gain) ?

No place to rest
for Thy free souls
in Thy worlds—there or here;
Both shackles hold—
yes, there of life and here of death,
plus fear.

The veil it whets
the loiterer's thirst
in love's lost lane.
Thou turns not still—
that heartlessness!
'tis this that fires
my heart amain!

Jove's Bird, born-free,
can pass his days
over homeless hills, in dales:
No caging nest
he ever would woo
on worst of days yefallen,
on travails.

Was it flowings-o'er of a Look?
Or a miracle sheer of Books ?:
To Ismail that obeissance taught
(to humblest ways he took) !—?

To my tomb fare but pilgrims
strong of will, with mighty minds;
The dust of roads from me hath learnt
my secret "to upstir"—*thus fine*!

Never loveliness of meaning
lacked my urging vision of life;
Dame Nature sees to that—
to tulip's bursting forth in red, revived.

RUBA'I

Love's blissful madness gone;
No passion, warmth of life there left
in his blood ;
Ranks rent, bewildered hearts...
lips, feelings cold
—zestless at prayer : and there
My lifeless Muslim brother
(an oaf) on his senseless path
he wends, he aimless—windlike
drifts, a floatsam floats.....

THE CAGED BIRD'S PLAINT

Where gone the days—with birds
lived I, birds of my kin,
in the garden there
for just to sing ?

And where that freedom
of an home
to leave, enjoy outside,
and then return—from flings?

Time was
when we birds, like wee children,
laughed at a weeping dame
named Dew.

Time was
when a small love-bird
would sing for me
(*who was* first thought to him subdue?)
We pine
—my birdie in and I, in-held alike,
and helpless
all that past to rue !

Free birds, free men there be
—for them the spring,
for them her buds
and flowers, for them their smiles;
For us two—bars of steel,
and walls of slabs,
and sorrow for to
teach,
and two hearts—sorrow's meal!

O listener-jailer.
do not smile: 'tis not a song—
it wrings
a heart bereaved.....a heart
that longs to free—
its songs too, like its self.
Come, jailer—help.

SOLITUDE

Sweet solitude—
that calm of pain, of night,
of stars for listening, glistening
partners; bright, majestic all around
unfolds the scene.

The sleeping earth,
the heavens on watch...
smooth-carousing moon,
and wilderness and hills...
a rosy spread or bed of white ..
and tears—those pearly hues
retouched, condensed:
—how Nature with one's heart
in harmony blends
—to its feelings how a form,
a melody, and a meaning lends.

O BRING ME BACK

(*ghazal*)

O, bring me back once more that cup,
that wine;
Bring me that natural, true, lost
state of mine.
For centuries have kept slammed Ind's clubs,
Ind's bars;
Was time they open'd like fays to all,
like a universal heart bestirred,
Th' excuse of drops—dregs—in my
cup of songs;
Even that !—God's holy men as sin
they deprecate, as—as down hellish wrongs.
No lions of spirit are seen about o'er
fearless fields (of Truth);
The priest, the saint have turned
this world to slavery's dread, dead booth.
Love's valiant sword—wherefor hath left
(where gone its flash)?
Holds Wisdom's hand its empty sheath
(lacks all old dash);
Soul's light it is...
as font-of-light that...
bursts, bursts forth
from a cry of pain's; as death unquieting
(of li'l worth).
Deprive not, O, my nights of soothing
beams of moon
(thy goblet, Saki, holds them full),
—I pray for, beg a boon.

RUBA'I

While
in the Muazzin's call
all Nature's notes how softest blend;
The Arab's God, one God, that charm
to temples everywhere lends;
One vision of Truth (one experience godly)
his soul upsoaring sends :

The West
ever godless
ever a thing restless
—its own doubts, see, how
how its heart they rend!

THIS WAS THE PIECE OF EARTH

(*The National Song of Indian Children*)

This was the piece of earth—
which Chishti chose
for his fearlessness of sprite;
Which Nanak made a mouthpiece true
of his vision of Him one cloudless night:
—"one God, for man !"

This was the piece of earth—
which the Tartars homeless
found was their own sweet home;
Which the Arabs, weaned from deserts,
won't won't leave e'ermore to roam:
—"one Home, for man,"

This was the piece of earth—
which wonderstruck
world's wisest minds, e'en Greece;
Which made a gift priceless
of its wisdom for man's needs:
—"one Word, for man!"

This was the piece of earth—
which, with its touch of dust,
would turn all dross to gold;
Which filled (and over) with diamonds
e'er—e'en raiders' ventures bold:
—"one Treasure-Trove, for man!"

This was the piece of earth—
which stars 'crest-fallen'
from Iranian sky, soft-catching,
refurbished sent them back--
more lustrous, higher...for a matching right !:
—"one Lucid Eye, for man!"

This was the piece of earth—
which sings, still sings—
its old, old theme in strains e'er new—
like fresh breeze, waking touch of rain:

—"one Urge, for man!"
This was the piece of earth—
which (legends say)
full many a Moses, Sinai bore
on which Nuh's Ark
could tide it o'er to grieve no more :
—"one Haven, for man!"

This was the piece of earth—
which in its early childhood grew
up, up to scrape skies blue,
to leave a climate here
worth envy-e'er, well-known,
of gods, own paradise:
—"one Nest, one Sky,
one Playfield too, for man!"

A LIFE DIVINE

(*Ram*)

As from a cup
(of wine o'erbrimmed)
doth Truth
as by India's sages gathered
over it flow :
O'er flows, o'er soars—
in sublime flights
right 'cross
I 'Azure's empyrean wolds.

Unbroken string
of thinkers, angels 'live
there following still—e'er vying
at edifying Ind's good name.....
All this
the world—
in the west, abroad—
doth recognise, doth know.

E'en in among these
one man by the name of Ram there was
—Ind's pride (no less
all thinking world's—owned,
own Imam !) : Whose godly light
to her evening lends
a mightier-than-morn's
freshness, glow. A perfect man—
in valour, passion of love, in strength
of character unmatched : for
Love is Jove.

THE EAST, THE WEST, WHOLE WORLD...

We do not free
our slaves, our shudras here ;
They let Demos (an indistinctive man)
them over-rule there !
East's "love and hate"—an ambivalent thing—
stems it from a heart-disease ;
West's reasoning overmuch
doth not even them that please
(a tumour in brain nobody does). So—

An oppressed world
—'twin them divided—sinks,
it stinks, and now and then
arousd—it foolish blinks.

ALL'S TOPSY-TURVY

(*ghazal*)

Back-pedalling
planets, stars
off whirl—like mad;
Hell-spitting
every atom
in the universe is;
And reason, faith
are casualties;
And faithlessness
in stead
is the freshest fad.

Or chronic ill,
Or wavering heart?—One wonder drop
shall cure. Such art!
No more
shall passion fire a trail;
No need in thy temple
is there now, now for a veil;
Grace, loveliness and
soil, Tabriz—(as ever) here they are
but Rumis shall they dream,
less bear, no more.

Yet—of the scene
(this wretchedness galore)
The poet
despairs no whit.
There's wine
to moisten still
the soil, to fertilise it.

The beggar's
gifts are kingly, stately
in his songs; world's riches all
to him, so, still
(e'en as to Parvez did)
belong.

RUBA'I

Dead in soul
or placid will—'tis
all the same :
All's lifeless—an idea or man.

Yet—
the rumble (you half-hear)
—*that*
forebodes it well : The sign—
of an old world's death
there making room for a new one
for to come, replace
around the corner.

THAT RAREST PEARL OF ALL

(Swami Ram Tirath)*

A restless drop
with oceans' depth at one—enow!
—a pearl; nay, a rarer something more
(no more to be 'ad, nowhere to be found)
thou wert, thou art :
That
—dying—with what a graceful ease
the Mystery call we life
for all, for good, revealed
—yes : How—
Not colours', hues' still-life; the scent
(e'er silent) soft-released is all
is there to seek (and poets oft miss!).
Life's struggles end, yet fiercer
as "over Judgement's Day," lo, continue :
Like a spark—stilled, quenched—
God's Bush-o'-Fire for Moses turned to view!
This other Mystery
call we Death, this too,
(like life) to a seeking heart
a miracle is—a purest ray
serene—asleep—God's Self it is
on life's unfathomed godless—earthy beds.
The quiv'less merc
is mercury all the same—it's silver
sans *quick*, is mercury still :
an unseeing eye, albeit, deny that will.
God's love
(whene'er it comes)
false human values
flicks—it desecrates, and—
in their stead
on opening view—all new—
to our consciousness
in due time consecrates.

*Swami Ram Tirath drowned himself in a river to seek reuni
with the Infinite.

A TEMPLE FOR MANKIND

(*Naya Shivala*)

One little bit of truth
—my mind—may I (and no
offence I mean. may I)
here proffer ye, High Priest?—

Sad,
sadly out of rhyme
with time—outmoded all, all are :
yer temples, these,
with all their gods in them entombed.
They're dead. Yer gods—or—God—
whatever it *was* : taught men (Christ's
humblest, wisest lambs) to hate, disown
their own.

Bored stiff
of all this choking stuff
—yer words of wisdom,
scriptures, shrines—
quit I, quit everything.
To me—not stones—not stones alone—
the meanst dust
of my country's earth
is sacred, holy, God's own
little beautiful bit—His Self!
How blind

of man to look for gods in stones
when earth's least bit of dust
is pure divine
—doth Him enshrine?

Come, let's afresh
lift all these thicksome, hugesome veils
that God's little earth obscure, divide.
Let's bring together again
our parted brethren at one place.
Let there no walls remain.

Come, let's reclaim
this desert in men's heart
yet waiting for a creative touch
to bloom, to grow into a temple man sore needs
with its spirals 'spiring
like stamens up
heavenward—inspired :
To it may all world votive wend
as pilgrims for some new strength
to derive, new peace
of mind—from its holy chants
from lips inebriate O arising, as it were
the earth itself, men's spirits
in a single sweep
of love—released—were rising !

ANOTHER AWAKENING

(*Nanak*)

When our people
(a proverbially listless, thickhead stock)
they listen won't
to Gotam's words
of wisdom sweet, sublime
(like unsensed dolts we are) :
would a jewel spurn,
that voice of conscience small
ignore ; would—not for light—
for dreams,
illusions, in its stead,
fall in ; for rains, for rays
to-heavens-ward turn—dead, dust,
sterile...unmoved
by pariah's plight,
right grovelling cringe
for that cursed dust unholy
of a Brahmin's vile unkempt
two wretched feet...

Was time—
that light of Ind—the Buddh'—
for light of Asia and beyond to be ; *Was time*
another with a Burning Bush was born
for shattering things
of dark, for luming minds,
to with a human touch evermore again
unite a fivesome
like its Rives Five
in a bliss of one—one kind—
for once again.

Then was it
Nanak came and—a nation whole,
from her slumber dead
of ages, stirred awake.

CHILDHOOD

For me were new then
both—these ageing earth and sky,
though my world was
to mother's breasts, then
all confined.

All things for me they had
some charm, some joy—
e'en what none else would grasp !—
My lisping lips, whatever they ill-defined.

Even my own cries
I fell in love with, so ! ... ...
A jingling latch
would calm me quite, soon,
all those cries of mine ! !

Delightful, O,
how joyous e'er was
to watch soft, stealing moon
through clouds *mysts* thin shimmerings,
slipping smooth (like wine) !

How pleasant too
to ask of moon's hills, deserts
o'er fields, homes...
my searching soul awondering e'er
at lies in line
(by the world hurled at my face) !

And eyes, lips lost
aseeing scenes, alisping quests of far,...
and mind absorbed in the curious ;
Things, things, things—in their every bit—
were all sublime.

'TWEEN US TWO—WHO ?

(*ghazal*)

Bright stars
they wander off their course ;
Void space
'volves void—ever void
of storms, of love.
For the world who cares
—who'll own the fault :
(well) thou or I ?

That Satan
had at that first-of-dawns rebelled ;
To whom had be belonged :
to thee or me ?

Mohammed, Gabriel,
and (the holy Word) Quran,
all, all be thine.
But whose soul it
doth interpret, reflect—
this thy *ilham* :
(well) thine or mine ?

"That star
it burns, and burns
thy world to light up bright."
Yes true
but if it—man—of that
(of that thy light)
were he here to die,
then—then for whom
that loss would be ;
for me or thee ?

RUBA'I

Tomorrow's not for him
who passion lacks
—tomorrow's sorrows, joys.
A nation too—
that its living moment masters not
(or faces not)
—hath little claim
to struggle, strife, to life.

BEAUTY ASKED OF GOD

(*Haqiqat-i-Husn*)

Beauty
asked of God one day:
"Why didst thou not
make me a thing, a joy, for ever, Lord ?"

Her creator He replied :
"A picture gallery this—unending tale
through lightless lifelessness of night's
being e'er retold—this world of yours
as 'tis : of passing shadows formed, such stuff !
—What but a passing moment or dying shape
could here for the nonce
some shred of beauty...a semblance,
bit of eternity
bear, reflect ?"

The moon, there happening by,
overheard it; heard
and slipped. The whisper
went across, spread
through the space,
disturbing there that
little morning star on 'ts fringe.
The star, poor lover, that secret
that was Heaven's to earth betrayed
—to his love on earth, to dew. And she—
being late in coming,
flower's dreaming—opening eye
first tear of life
was thus to 'xperience, know
.....first breaking, inside
there, of the heart—
in virginal buds
(e'er humanely).

The garden
—a vale of sorrows turned so—left

a desolate, weeping spring; and youth
—out thither for a stroll—a picture wan
of sighs, depression faltered
worse—
nowhere a home to turn, go to !

CHILD'S PRAYER

A prayer it turns
(ere come to lips)
my inchoate, unformed wish—my lisp.

My life
a steady, unwinced course
of a flame—dispelling dark,
and shedding light on distressed Arks
may ever be.

My breath
a natural breeze
from an orchard's light,
a tree's—flowerlike
—a glory all its own may
for my country's welfare be.

A moth
on wisdom's torch
ever falling, in, in love
—my free will, I, may ever be;
A charge, a vow
to the poor, decrepit, suffering
serve in spirit's *sui*—
spontaneous spree.
May the Lord
in His mercy me
from the ways of evil
at a distance keep;
and on to treks
of goodness (edgy) urge
(e'er e'er fresh
purged, so) these my steps
—weak, faltering steps—revived
for avenues, those never seen afore—
and deep!

ONE EVENING

(On the Neckar's banks, in Germany)

In silence
slip moonbeams adown ;
in silence
up shoot-off the trees.
"All Quiet" is there
in the vales below—grass, birds,
beasts, humans sleep.
And stilled is creation ;
Pulse and breasts (of Night)
are stilled.

Pervading hush
hath cut that turbulent Neckar
short to a halt ;
and the caravan
in the sky, of stars,
like footpads onwards wends,
e'er on, sans bells.

Hills, deserts, streams—
all Nature (see)
in contemplation's bliss or death
is lost !
May likewise Heart
—yours, mine, all world's—
to peace with self slide, come
and—hugging grief, grief's folds—
let's pray : swoon, go to sleep !

THE NEW MOON

Sun's ship
she'd foundered in the Nile, a fragment
left afloat ?
Red drop
(one) whirls in heaven's big bowl ?
Or Sun's vein cut ?

A ring
off Evenin's ear l'Azure (in love)
or stole ?
Big fish
in waters deep aglide ? Or Sea's
man old ?

Begs not
no bells thy caravan's march—
it's on, e'er soundless on!

Ebbs, tides
how showest thou, O seer—
of life-and-death's
serene!...

E'er mum
o're whence-and-whither (thine) wistful
sublime !
And here
on earth—in fright grope I
for a flick of light—
from thee !

IN LOVE'S LOST LANE

(*ghazal*)

Thou may respond, may not
—that's thy sweet will.
I'm a free bird ever shall cry,
shall sing—to crave
thy mercy, grace and what-not
never, never, never.

Dead dust, dread storm,
and spacious sky :
—the mercy is it (sweet) or
curse (replete) ?

A tent had pitched La Rose;
She could not stand Le Breeze:
was that Spring's kiss
or Storm's swift snakish, rakish hiss?

I'm a poor soul—once was thine,
thy man ; had sinned ; but
'mongst thy angels *who*, by God,
ever filled *my* place in Paradise?

My nature wild
with tyranny e'er in love
thy accurs'd world doth
bless—me bless—here : see?

A soul
—that's out
to seek storms, dangers, death—
by cynosures won't be lured
but for some dragon, snake
to grapple with
there lurking there in bush!

Love's lane
'tis "out of bounds"
to God's Seraphs;
here right of entry
is reserved
for those that can,
can dare, can do.

RUBA'I

Our prayer
are words—senseless, inane ;
Our trek—
a leaderless, aimless plunge and slow !
When—pilgrims *we*
in faith, in passion, elan wanting
on a spiritless, endless quest or spree
gee *we*.

"I IMPEACH THEE"

I impeach thee, Ind, not
—yes, not Brit one bit.

Unhappy thing,
a crest-jew'l e'er
in some alien crown ; Well—
feel ye blest ?—when
worse than dead yer peasant groans
—dead, *ill* earthed, coffined, e'en ill-dead...
his body and soul to changing masters
ever, shifts, mortgaged !

All world
—e'en I, thy conscience too
reproach but thee
(thee tyrannised)
not the tyrant west
or Brit one bit ; 'tis true.

RUBA'I

The present
--living present—
is the Reality reigns:
'fore which all (see)
—all else—is pale,
all else doth pale :

Night following day,
day night...past
dead, and future
not yet born—though bright
with promise
(aye, for unfulfilment as ever want)
—all, all is pale, is livid
—doth not hail.

SLEEP COMES TO EAST

Servility
(to reality) so one's vision it blurs ;
Imitation
kills all sense—all urge to stir.

So dead
(or all but dead, yes)
how can we—of Arabia, Persia, Ind
for life depend
on sucks, on orts
by pitying west deigned. thrown ?
—How long
can a parasite live
(of shame desensed) ?

RUBA'I

Sweet is springtime;
Sweeter one brief hour to bask
in spring's sweet shades,
sweet shines; And
sweeter still—
in a peaceful niche
at spring to die—unless
for a shadier spot
in some lovely tress or dress
he picked.

(*Translated from Persion*)

THE DIVIDING LINE

Fools (beggars)
take they pride
in their origins, accidents of birth.

The wise
seek they their talent, potent worth
and—off to a lightning start, lo, go
—fate fashioners in their own.

RUBA'I

Bless'd poverty's mine
that envy of the rich, my pride ;
And ever unlike a wandering monk's
that in Muslim cowardice 'stils to there abide !

CIVILISED ?

When west reins in
one other victim
to her treacherous noose
from east
—now India, and now Greece, ..
Is she—her conscience
satisfied it is
a step excelsior in her cultural growth,
her life civilised ?

KUNDALINI

Snake-charmers'
subtle game is west's
—a passing show outside.

Not flesh nor sweating labour
hath any charm for east :
in her the serpent power abides
—in its native calm, in
its majestic asides.

FAITH AND ACTION

What is it that Iqbal does not give to him who seeks? He gives strength to the weak and a meaning to strength. He awakens the urge for a full, all-round, harmonious development of personality, for the devoted and selfless service of social ideals which alone make life worth living. He gives to the pale anaemic calculations of the intellect the possibility to draw upon the unlimited resources of emotion and instincts, disciplined, chastend, ennobled by faith and creative activity.

—Dr. ZAKIR HUSAIN, in his address at the Iqbal Day function at Bombay in 1945.

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K. N. Sud

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