

TWO LECTURES ON IQBAL

SYED SIRAJUDDIN

**THE IQBAL ACADEMY
HYDERABAD - INDIA**

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TWO LECTURES ON IQBAL

with a Foreword by Dr. S. Vahiduddin

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by Dr. S. Vahiduddin

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FOREWORD

HERMANN Hesse in his foreword to the German translation of *Javed Namah* observes that the spiritual world of Iqbal belongs to three spheres of the spirit, the World of Islam, the World of the Western thought and the World of India.¹ Iqbal indeed moves from one sphere to another with equal ease. And yet there is a difference in the way he has been influenced by the three sources of his inspiration. He has thought with the conceptual categories of the West, his poetic creativity has found expression through the metaphors and images of Islam and his Indian roots took him back to the spiritual experience of the seers of ancient India. His love for India which found early expression in his charming lyrics did not cease with mature years as is evidenced by the depth of anguish felt by the Spirit of Hindustan in *Javed Namah*. The misunderstanding of his poetry is partly born of the political upheavals of the recent past and is partly due to our unidimensional thinking in customary stereotypes. His admirers and detractors are to be equally blamed on both sides of the sub-continent. Though his poetry assumed increasingly an Islamic profile with the passage of time, he cannot be called an Islamic poet in any narrow credal understanding. As Prof. Sirajuddin has pointed out, though his Islam jealously guards its historical specificity, it transcends history nevertheless. Iqbal's Islam thus is both history and a symbol. Even Prophet Mohammed who is the first and the last in his devotional experience appears first as a mighty figure of history and last as a symbol of man in all perfection.

Iqbal wrote *Pyam-e-Mashriq* in response to Goethe's reception of the ecstatic visions of the East as primarily represented by Hafiz. And yet there is a significant difference. Whilst Goethe submits with almost complete abandon to ecstasies of the East, Iqbal answers with restraint and qualification. Iqbal's enthusiasm for the great figures of the West has always been critical and reserved. Nietzsche with whom Iqbal felt much sympathy is not allowed to sway his mind with his concept of

power unless it is tempered with compassion. Here Iqbal is true to the Quranic vision of God in his dual aspect of *Jamal* (Beauty) and *Jalal* (Majesty). God fascinates man with his beauty and overpowers both man and cosmos with his *Jalal*, his awesome majesty.

Professor Sirajuddin's approach to the reading of Iqbal is highly instructive, as it is based on personal experience. He has grown with Iqbal through a kind of participation mystique. Without a living involvement in the creative process of the poet there is no possibility of genuine appreciation. Though Iqbal's poetry matured tremendously from his early attempts in *Bang-e-Dara*, he has remained himself through all the variations of mood, motive and expression. The existential constituents of his poetry have remained constant. In his early poems, perhaps under the influence of Wordsworth, he develops close proximity with Nature, though identification is not thought of, a distance is always maintained. Self consciousness is considered the dividing line between man and Nature. The candle burns but does not know that it is burning. It is the privilege of man to suffer and to know that he is suffering. In a parallel movement of thought, the great Christian thinker Pascal says that a tree cannot feel miserable. Only man is miserable by the fact that he knows that he is miserable and this is what makes for his greatness. Another basic existential constituent of man's life is the feeling of loneliness which the poet must have felt all through. This finds expression with all its innocence in the charming little poem of *Bang-e-Dara* and more subtly and profoundly in the poem of the same name (*Tanhai*) in *Pyam*. The basic strains of Iqbal's poetry, suffering (*dard*, *soz*), the never-to-be satisfied longing (*arzoo*) for the unattainable, the struggle, though never complete (*natamam*), to aspire higher and higher run through all his poetry from his early years to his mature achievement. It may not be out of place to observe that poetry has an advantage over philosophy. While philosophy knows no 'finality' and is held up by its self-imposed restrictions, poetic fancy moves freely and by its elusive ambiguity brings us closer to reality. What the poet

has said of the destiny of man in his touching lament on the death of his mother or on the parting of his friend Masood cannot be captured through philosophical reflection.

The House of Islam is divided against itself. It is high time that under the guidance of Iqbal it should move forward towards the future instead of looking back to the past of its imagination. Prof. Sirajuddin has explored the world of Iqbal with love and veneration and he has said what was to be said within the compass of two lectures. We hope he will soon give us a more detailed account of his encounter with Iqbal's genius.

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1. *Javed Namah* - translation into German by Annemarie Schimmel 1957.
 2. See Iqbal's Preface to his *Reconstruction*.

NOTE

These are two of the eight Lectures I had the honour to present at the Iqbal Institute, Srinagar, University of Kashmir, in August-October, 1985. I planned these two lectures as an introductory approach to Iqbal's poetry. The Iqbal Academy, Hyderabad, wishes to publish these in booklet form for readers who have an interest in the poetry of one of the most significant poets of our century and one of the greatest of all time. I am grateful to Dr. Vahiduddin for his learned foreword.

Syed Sirajuddin

IQBAL-A WORLD POET MISUNDERSTOOD

I came across Iqbal's poetry when I had not yet learnt the alphabet. My mother used to read him out to me in the evenings, poems like "The Glowworm", "A Child's Prayer", "The Plaint of a Bird", "The Cloud". That you were introduced to a poet's work in childhood will not generally be regarded as of significance where a critical understanding of that work is in question, but when such a thing happens a very special relationship with a poet is formed which plays an uncanny role in your later perceptions of his poetry. The early spontaneous response somehow keeps a freshness alive in the midst of subsequent sophistications of understanding. I have never forgotten the verses that imaged vividly some of the experiences that entranced or thrilled me in childhood, as, for instance, the lines where Iqbal speaks of the soundless passage of the moon among tattered clouds (*voh phatay badal mein bay awaz-e pa uska safar*)¹, or of the approach of thick monsoon clouds throwing a dark mantle over the hill :

*Uthi phir aj voh purab se kali kali ghata
Siah posh hua phir pahar surban ka*²

To follow Iqbal from this point to the poetry and thought of his later days is a richly rewarding journey. More, perhaps, than several other poets Iqbal needs to be read entire if he is to be fully and properly understood. Iqbal is a difficult, because a very complex, poet. The study of his poetry, in fact, can be "the last reward of consummate scholarship". The late Aziz Ahmed, who taught English literature at the Osmania University in the forties, in his excellent book *Iqbal Na'ee Tashkeel* (Iqbal: A Reconstruction), 1947, has succinctly stated this fact. "After having read all of Iqbal's work", he writes, "we find that we have to read much around Iqbal. We have to study Rumi,

Nietzsche, Bergson, Fichte, Al-jeeli, Greek, Islamic, Hindu, and modern European thought, German, Italian and English poetry, Persian and Urdu *ghazal*, and after having read all this, when we return to Iqbal's poetry, we feel that much more yet remains to be read". Obviously there are not many readers who can undertake a task like this. As a result Iqbal is one of the most misunderstood of poets, misunderstood not only by those who regard him as exclusively the poet of a creed but also by those who enthusiastically admire him as the poet of Islam.

It is impossible to cover all aspects of Iqbal's poetry and thought at one sitting. His concepts of time and space, emotion and reason, of love and the self, determinism and free will, his concept of history and of the perfected man who can revolutionize and transcend history, his concepts of change and the dynamic principle of life, of all conquering power ethically restrained and regulated, his views on politics, society, education, women all require separate treatment. I have therefore chosen, to deal with one aspect particularly, the misunderstanding of Iqbal, and to indicate the general direction of his ideas while attempting, at the end, through a few pieces of translation, to communicate, if possible, the lyrical charm of his earlier and the vibrant force of his later poetry.

In the thirties when I was a student everybody was singing Iqbal's verses in the University, in schools, and in homes. His books could be seen on every private shelf. My father and uncle eagerly bought the first editions of Iqbal's works as these appeared, *Asrar-e-Khudi*, *Payam-e-Mashriq*, *Bang-e Dara*, *Javed Namah*, *Bal-e Gibreel*, *Zarb-e-Kalim* and *Armughan-e-Hijaz*. On public platforms speakers interspersed their orations with quotations from Iqbal. Larger than life Iqbal's colossal figure loomed on the literary and political horizon. The man himself, it is reported, was always found sitting reclined on a cot in his Lahore home while visitors came and went. Iqbal admiration continued after the poet's death in '38 almost unabated till 1947. Then came the holocaust in the August of that year. The country was partitioned, and Iqbal receded into the

background. For nearly more than a quarter century Iqbal remained in the shadows. In 1973 the Iqbal Academy in Hyderabad celebrated the birth centenary of the poet. In 1977, following a more authentic determination of Iqbal's date of birth, the centenary celebrations were held, among other places, in Hyderabad, New Delhi and Lahore, the poet's home town in Pakistan. International seminars on Iqbal in Lahore and Delhi were attended by distinguished scholars from all over the world, from Russia, Iran, Iraq, America, Egypt, Turkey, Czechoslovakia, and Tajikistan. Earlier, a little before his arrest in 1973, the leading ideologue of the Iranian Revolution, Ali Shari'ati had declared that Iqbal was the most enlightened and integrated individual of his time, and that the poet had an intuitive perception of the yet unborn Islamic revolution that would take place in Iran. Shari'ati recognizes Iqbal's work as having influenced the Revolution, while only thirty years back an Iranian cultural delegation in India had declared Iqbal to be a regional poet and unknown in Iran. The seventies thus rediscovered Iqbal as an international, revolutionary thinker and a world poet.

At home Iqbal has been a victim of pre-partition politics. His poetic career spans the first thirty eight years of this century, the years in which important and far-reaching political and social changes were taking place in India. The struggle for freedom was gradually getting mobilised and moving forward towards its goal. Iqbal as a deeply committed man and as one of the most sensitive and lively minds of his age could not remain withdrawn from politics. He thought deeply on all matters affecting human lives and none of his conclusions was in the least facile.

In his presidential address at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League, 1930, Iqbal spoke of an autonomous Muslim area in the north-west of the country. This address led the way to Mohammad Ali Jinnah's later demand for the Muslim State of Pakistan. Iqbal's name has thus come to be associated with the fact of partition and this has generally worked against an understanding of the man and his works. To regard Iqbal's

advocacy of a Muslim ruled territory in the north west of India as communal in the narrow sense in which the word is and was used in India specially during the years preceding and following partition, as, for instance, Mr. Chagla does in his autobiography, is the result of inadequate knowledge both of the freedom movement and of the intellectual level at which Iqbal operated.

We generally tend to regard the freedom movement as a single-minded and unidimensional drive. The fact is that it was never a mono-movement; it oscillated between Bombay, Calcutta and Allahabad or Delhi, and between such disparate groups and personalities as Dadabhai Nauroji, Firozshah Mehta and Badruddin Tyabji, Tilak, Lajpath Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, and the Nehrus. Even when the movement came later to be dominated by Gandhiji and Jawahar Lal the disparity in its ultimate goal beyond political independence remained. Anyone with some knowledge of Iqbal's thought would easily realise that even between these two men the poet could go along with neither. Iqbal's vital concepts of power and an autonomous 'self' made Gandhi's ideas of passive resistance and rural staticity alien to his mind and Nehru's Godless socialist liberalism was unacceptable to him. Iqbal has hinted at Pakistan being a reply to Jawahar Lal's atheistic socialism. Pakistan for Iqbal was thus not a narrow political but an ethical and spiritual idea. His mind had ranged over all the Islamic countries and nowhere did he find the noble ideals of Islam in practice. He, therefore, thought fondly of a niche on the subcontinent where Islam could unfold itself as the just and humane world order that it really was. Pakistan was Iqbal's utopia not a mere communal division of territory.

Iqbal is a figure from the Indian Renaissance which began around the third decade of the 19th century. The central motive of this Renaissance, from such men as Vivekananda and Swami Dayanand Saraswati to Rabindranath and Jamini Roy, was the rediscovery of roots and the re-interpretation of ancient culture and thought in the light of the new knowledge from the West. Iqbal was doing exactly what these men of the Indian Enlightenment had done. If he discovered his roots and the springs of his

inspiration in Islam he cannot be blamed for it. Iqbal was simply being himself in the same way as Rabindranth was being himself when he wrote the *Gitanjali*. If the rarefied, lyrical mysticism of Tagore is more easily accessible to the outsider than the solider, perhaps a little more culturally specialised concepts and ideas of Muhammad Iqbal, it does not necessarily imply that the latter are less universal in their interest and appeal.

I shall not attempt any thing like a survey of all of Iqbal's verse. It would need too much time. Of his major poetical writings, seven are in Persian and three in Urdu. (The poet's use of Persian as his verse medium is in fact another difficulty in his appreciation at home. But Iqbal was not writing only for India but for the whole of Asia and, at his best, for the whole of mankind). Iqbal's first book, *Asrar-e-Khudi*, appeared in 1915, his last, *Armughan-e-Hijaz*, in 1938, the year of his death. The *Bang-e-Dara* in Urdu, published in 1924, contains several poems written much earlier than 1915. Iqbal's early phase of lyrical romanticism, showing traces of the poets of the English Romantic Revival, lasts, roughly from 1900 to 1908 and includes the poems of the first two parts of *Bang-e-Dara* and some of *Payam-e-Mashirq* (1923). There is a freshness, a cheerful, care-free abandon in this poetry which Iqbal is rarely going to achieve later. This is the time before the poet's mind gets preoccupied with problems of the human soul and of historic human existence on earth. It is to this period that the famous and universally popular song, "Sare Jehan se Achcha" ("In the whole world there is no land like India,") belongs. Since this song, along with some other poems like "The New Shrine" (Naya Shivala), has become a measure of what is often regarded as Iqbal's later unfortunate deviation into other, less nationalistic paths, and since several people seem to think of this as better poetry than what followed, some comment at this point is necessary to set the record right. First, the 'song' (entitled the 'Tarana-e Hindi'), despite its great charm and appeal, is in the category of Iqbal's minor poetry. The *Bang-e Dara* itself, the earliest collection of Iqbal's Urdu poetry, contains poems that

far surpass it in poetic power and beauty. Secondly, Iqbal never ceased to love India and its people to his last days. In fact, far more intense and glowing tributes to the country and its great thinkers are found in Iqbal's later rather than his earlier poetry, and the examples are too numerous to quote in a single sitting. In the *Javed Namah*, 1932, partly modelled on the *Divine Comedy*, at the very beginning of Iqbal's journey across the celestial regions, there sits the Hindu sage, Vishwa Mitr, cross legged, bare-bodied, engirt by a white snake, his long hair knotted on top of his head, his eyes deep with peace and knowledge. Beyond, when the poet has already seen and talked to many of the great dead, he meets the Hindu poet Bhartari Hari, the man who knows the secrets of life (*kargah-e zindagi ra mahram ast*)³ and whose deep glance can turn dewdrops to pearls (*shabnam az faiz-e nigah-e oo gohar*)⁴. It is he who tells Iqbal that what gives the poetic word its power is human yearning (*sher ra soz az muqam-e arzoost*)⁵. Nor does Iqbal forget the Indian landscape. The Kaveri is dearer to him than the Oxus and the Euphrates (*Ai mara khushtar ze Jaihun o Furat*)⁶. In his last Urdu work *Zarbe-e-Kaleem* he speaks of India as the focus of the sun's hopes, the soil which the poet's tears have irrigated:

*Khavar ki umidon ka yehi khak hai markaz
Iqbal ke ashkon se yehi khak hai serab*⁷.

The third part of the *Bang-e-Dara*, dated 1908 onwards, is a definite break with the earlier phase of Iqbal's poetry. Iqbal's themes are now specifically Islamic, and his verses are touched with a fervour which derives largely from a romantically glorified Islamic past. Iqbal's concern here is with historic Islam, its great figures and some of its great moments. One of his earlier positions that Iqbal rejects now is with regard to geographical nationalism and the patriotism based on it. He begins to regard such nationalism as a new form of idolatry and a disaster for mankind, proved to be so by the Great War of 1914. The

supraterritorial and supraracial element in Islam appeals to him strongly. It is now that he writes the "Shikvah", (The Complaint) that made him so famous throughout Muslim India and which Mr. Khushvant Singh has recently translated. The "Shikvah" is exciting poetry, remarkable for its passion and the irresistible surge of its rhetoric but no genuine student of the poet would class it as one of the greatest poems of Iqbal. The years from 1908 to the writing of the "Khizr-e-rah", which is the last poem in the *Bang-e-Dara*, can be called the middle period of Iqbal's poetic career. It is the work of this middle period which has largely impeded a correct assessment of Iqbal among the non-Urdu population of India, among whom only the early Iqbal is usually recognized and appreciated. Not only Iqbal's non-Muslim but his Muslim readers too, it seems to me, generally get stuck in the middle period, the latter thinking that it is here that the essential Iqbal is planted and acting as if his poetry were the special prerogative and property of the Muslims. This is unfortunate, for the curious mind of Iqbal is always on the move and once the middle region is passed his domain expands to take within its fold the universal and basic problems of man touching both his individual and corporate life on earth.

With the "Khizr-e-Rah" Iqbal's concerns begin to widen; he probes the problems of imperialism, tyranny, capitalism and class struggle and seeks to unlock the secrets of life. The centuries old Khizr in the poem becomes the symbol of humanity eternally revitalizing and rejuvenating itself. Khizr speaks of life as constantly moving, constantly renewing itself, ever young, (*Javedan, paiham davan, har dam javan hai zindagi*)⁸.

From the "Khizr-e-rah" the road lies open to the *Zabur-e-Ajam*, the *Javed Namah* and the *Bal-e Jibreel*, the high points of Iqbal's poetic achievement. In these works we emerge into an Islam which is not the sole possession of Muslims, but a system of values that is an important part of the heritage of mankind and as such is available to Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It is a tribute to the great courage and honesty of Iqbal that he does not make use of vague and easy generalising to achieve this. His

Islam does not lose its historicity or specificity as it broadens into a universal principle of human conduct and organization and reveals the spiritual vitality at its core.

The subject of Iqbal's poetry, like that of all great poetry, is man and man's life on earth. As Ali Shara'ati has put it, Islam regards man's salvation in the other world as part and sequel of his life on earth. It is by making the earth a place of bliss that man earns a place in heaven, in paradise. This is a kind of task that cannot be accomplished without the help of reason and knowledge. Hence Iqbal's admiration for the West where reason and knowledge have flourished. "The learned men of the west", he writes, "have lighted up my mind". But for Iqbal, reason untutored by ethics and by what he calls *ishq*, which is a form of intuition, can lose its way and leave human society high and dry.

No poet has testified to the significance and value of the human element in God's universe as Iqbal has done. In a poem in the *Payam-e-Mashriq* he treats the birth of man (i.e. his appearance on earth following the Fall) as a cosmic cataclysm, an awakening of the slumbering earth. It is also the awakening of the active principle in life, the unveiling of the concealed secrets of existence. Iqbal's man occupies a position at the centre of all creation. In the prayer prefacing the *Javed Namah* Iqbal places man (which is the poet himself), stripped to his soul in the midst of an elemental landscape of sky, sun, moon, stars, land, sea and mountains. Man looks around and finds nothing that can understand or communicate with his restless mind (*Hamnafas farzand-e adam ra kujast*)⁹. The inert mass of matter lacks the heart-beat of man, it lacks desire, *arzo*, the motive force in life. The inert otherness of the universe can be assimilated through man's conquest and domination of it.

With his vision of the uniqueness of man Iqbal built up the concept of the human 'self'. Man acquires power over the universe through a strong and developed self. The self is autonomous and insists on its identity. Iqbal's views on the 'self' run counter to the general trend of prevalent Islamic mystic

thought which aimed at the submergence of the self in a divine Super Ego. The self is not only autonomous but creative, realising itself in continuous action. Action and movement are central to Iqbal's system of thought. "It is action", he says, "which can turn life into heaven or hell". It is on this point that he criticises the static idealism and pure rationalism of Plato, calling his thought the "goat philosophy". The subtle and deep Vedantic negation of action considered the source of all evil appears to him dangerous for man and human society. On this point he parallels the pantheism of Ibn-al-Arabi with the negation of action in Sri Shankara. One of the images that Iqbal has created for the kinetic principle in life is that of the wave which exists if it rises and moves and ceases to exist if it ceases to move.

Iqbal's concept of action and a powerful 'self' assimilates elements of the Nietzschean will to power. But Iqbal does not allow reason, knowledge and 'self' to become self-centred. He makes these ethically responsible by making them theocentric, as forces subject to the will of an all powerful and benign Being.

Iqbal is conscious of a dualism at the heart of human society, the dualism between knowledge and reason on the one hand and faith and intuition on the other. In the fifteenth *ghazal* of his *Bal-e-Jibreel* he uses the terms *danish-e-burhani*, (rational wisdom), for the first and *danish-e-noorani*, intuitive wisdom, for the other. It is these two that he seeks to bring together to resolve the dichotomy that haunts mankind. This attempt to remove the schism that has occurred in man's thought, destroying its wholeness, the desire to create a new world, a new human society that can, as he puts it in the sixth Lecture of his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, reconcile the categories of permanence and change, this it appears to me is the unique contribution of Iqbal to our civilization.

It is true that Iqbal's terminology, his inspiration and his models are largely Islamic. This is so because Iqbal's understanding of life is channelled through Islam. Islam is a condition of his thought just as Christianity was a condition of the thought of Dante, Milton or Tasso. But the implications of his thought

are not purely credal. In a letter to R.A. Nicholson Iqbal wrote in 1921 : "... it is in view of practical and not patriotic considerations ... that I am compelled to start with a specific society (i.e., Islam) which, among the societies of the world, happens to be the only one suitable to my purpose... All men, and not Muslims alone, are meant for the kingdom of God on earth, provided they say good-bye to their idols of race and nationality, and treat one another as personalities". This seems clear enough, but it is not in such statements in prose but in Iqbal's amazingly ambivalent and complex poetry that we should seek his universalism. The way Iqbal's verse breaks through his terminology without destroying its cultural quality and touches the shores of general humanity is a remarkable literary and artistic event.

A full discussion on this point is not possible. I shall for the moment take just one example to show how what is specifically Islamic can reach out to the whole of mankind. The term '*momin*' is a theological term in Islam, describing a pious and righteous Muslim. Iqbal's *momin*, however, goes far beyond theology. Assimilating to himself elements from Nietzsche and Jeeli and swerving back to the unique person of Prophet Muhammad, Iqbal's *momin* becomes the emancipated man, who has grown gentle because of all-swaying spiritual power, whose heart has imbibed the sufferings of mankind. Iqbal's concepts of 'self' and devotion and the poised tension that results from a fusion of the two are some of the finest things in all literature, and his 'devotion' or 'love' is not passivity or peace but creativeness and activity, a power that gives new ecstasy, new dignity to man raising even slaves to royalty:

Jab ishq sikhata hai adab-e- khud agahi

Khultay hain ghulamon par asrar-e shahinshahi ¹⁰

II

AN APPROACH TO THE READING OF IQBAL'S POETRY

There exists a delicate, tenuous relationship between reader and poet. In one sense all criticism outside Ph.D. theses is an exploration of this relationship. Whatever might be said in favour of objectivity what is involved in all reading is the interaction of two minds, one in a communicative or at least exteriorising mood and the other in a receptive or apprehensive mood. Criticism at one stage was eager to discover the intention of the writer, to find out what he really meant. For this it would have recourse to the personality and life of the writer. But it was later found that this could be a frustrating quest. Apart from the fact that it is so difficult to analyse motives and moods, there is the further difficulty of the medium of expression. If nothing else language itself which is supposed to hold a mirror to intention stands out as a barrier, as modern linguistics and semantics have shown and as the poet Ghalib put it: "When all veils are torn off there remains the obstacle of the seeing eye".¹

With the development of linguistics the idea has grown of reading literature as a verbal structure. "Every work of literature", says a recent critic, "..... is a specialized language-act (what the latest school of criticism in France calls *écriture*)." "Certain lexical and syntactical material", he continues, "is filled out according to principles other than those of basic communication." George Steiner here is concerned with "interactions between semantic units".²

This attitude with its emphasis on *explication de text* has served a useful purpose in as much as it has brought greater precision to criticism and to the reading of poetry, but it cannot explain or even appreciate fully a creative act, nor can it totally analyse a reader's response to a work of art. When men and women read (or recite aloud to themselves) lines of a poem, it is not merely their linguistic and semantic consciousness which is at work, much besides is involved, for example, their sense of

time and space, their awareness of the contemporary world and of past history, their consciousness of the moment in which the reading is taking place, their entire background, their entire life *vis a vis* the world that the poet confronts them with. I therefore like to maintain that a fair amount of subjectivity is implied in all reading and understanding of poetry, in fact even in all scholarly or philosophical criticism. T.S. Eliot, for example, in his convocation lecture at the University of Leeds, 1961, published under the title "To Criticise the Critic", admits that concepts like the 'dissociation of sensibility' and 'objective correlative' ("Hamlet and his Problems"), concepts which apparently seemed the result of an objective study, were caused by his "reaction against the poetry ... of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" coupled with his "passion for the poetry ... of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" and his "bias towards the more mature plays of Shakespeare". He calls these phrases "conceptual symbols for emotional preferences". "It seems to me in fact", he states, "that these concepts, these generalisations had their origin in my sensibility". (pp. 19,20) This would imply that as a reader he was applying his own sensibility to the work of the poets whom he studied.

Let us say that when we read a poet we try subconsciously to fuse subjective elements with objectivism we have learnt from empirical science, our knowledge of human history, of other arts, other languages, linguistics, semantics, philosophy, the opinions or views of other people and of established scholars.

This preamble is meant to indicate the complexity of the experience which the reading of a poet, specially a complex poet, is. When suggesting an approach to the reading of a poet, by which I mean roughly a reading scheme, the question that has to be dealt with before proceeding further is what kind of reader is presently envisaged. Basically this reader is myself. I am concerned initially at least, and vitally, with my own experience of Iqbal's poetry, and let me state right at the start that it has been an experience that spans my entire life. Over this long period contact with Iqbal's poetry has never been constant, nor has the

approach to it been scholarly or, most of the time, even critical. It has been the approach of an average man of culture with some knowledge of history, some acquaintance with a few languages and with poetry written in them, a rough awareness of trends in the modern world, and a sensibility for poetry somewhat refined and catholicized over the years. However, I have no wish to make this lecture a piece of autobiography, for autobiography in such a context can only be of marginal interest, if not exasperating to the well informed reader. I wish only to use my experience as the core of the approach that I suggest, because that experience is more reliable than any other and it alone can give some touch of authenticity to what I am going to say.

Let me imagine, then, a reader of Iqbal who is roughly equipped like me, may be a little more or a little less. It is an Indian reader with a fair knowledge of Urdu and its literature, a fairish knowledge of English, some acquaintance with Persian language and literature, and an awareness of the history of the Indian sub-continent and of the highlights of Islamic history. To such a reader who has not had the time to think of any particular approach to Iqbal's poetry, I wish to address a few suggestions.

Iqbal's poetry can be viewed within several orbits, within the orbit of the Islamic faith, of Indo-Islamic thought, of the Indian political struggle of pre-independence days, of stylistics, of the Indian Renaissance which began with Ram Mohan Roy, of the Islamic Renaissance which began with Jamaluddin Afghani, of the Urdu and Persian literary development in India, of that Islamic thought and culture of which the boundaries extend from Hijaz and Egypt to Iran, Afghanistan and India and which embrace such men as Ibn-al-Arabi, Imam Al Ghazali, Imam Ibn-e-Taimya, Shah Waliullah, Al Jeeli, Jamaluddin Afghani, Jalaluddin Rumi, Khwaja Hafiz, Mirza Bedil, Mirza Ghalib and Iqbal himself. From one orbit to another the movement and curve of Iqbal's poetry would vary. But we are not concerned here with a channelized study of Iqbal, we are concerned with that aesthetic and cognitive verbal complex *per se* which we call *Kalam-e-Iqbal*, with the object of acquiring some kind of

ordered and balanced response to that complex. This response, even on the part of Iqbal's admirers, has been largely partial or heavily weighted in favour of a premise. Rarely do we come across a reader or a critic who allows Iqbal's poetry to sink in his mind and then grow and expand in those various directions that sometimes appear contradictory to minds unfamiliar with the characteristic waywardness of a truly poetic sensibility. The point to note is that the poetry of Iqbal is not a static structure but a moving spiral, the journeying of a soul across nature and the human landscape. If the journey envisages an ultimate goal it does not follow that the mind of the poet has always been in a state of having arrived. In accompanying the poet on this journey lies the real adventure of reading him, the joy of experiencing a pilgrimage in which, as Iqbal has himself put it in a different context, it is the moving on that exhilarates (*Masti-e ma khiram-e ma*).

The starting point for this journey I consider to be the *Bang-e-Dara* (1924). This book was published long after the *Asrar* (1915) and the *Rumuz* (1918) and even after the *Payame-Mashriq* (1923), but most of its poems belong to a much earlier period. The poems of its first two sections, for example, were written between 1900 and 1908. Anyone who has read the *Bang-e-Dara* in early days or heard its poems in childhood is never likely to agree with that picture of the poet in which he is represented as an austere thinker concerned with deeply philosophic ideas, or a writer with a flair for sermonizing, or, as some people still think, a mere orthodox Muslim preaching his creed to the world. For my part, I had the luck to listen to some of Iqbal's early poems, when a small child, from my mother who read them out in her soft and musical voice with great feeling. Because of this perhaps when I find people using titles like *Allama Iqbal*, or *Shair-e-Mashriq* or *Tarjuman-e Haqeeqat* for the poet, the child in me protests and cannot understand why such heavy phrases are being used for a man who had written "The Complaint of a Bird", and "The Glow-worm", and "A Child's Prayer". This, with your leave, is a bit of autobiography but

what I am trying to drive at is the fact that, among other things. Iqbal is a friend of the child, that he is gentle in the sense in which poets like Wordsworth and Blake were gentle. His poems for children apart, there are several pieces in which he has caught the endearments of childhood and the tremors of a child's heart. I would like here to refer to the following poems: "The Lamp and the Child" (*Bachcha aur Shama*), pp. 94, 95, verses 1,9,11; "The Infant" (*Tifl-e-Shirkhwar*), p.60, vv 1,2; "Childhood" (*Ahd-e Tifli*), p.8, vv. 1,3,4,5.³ In these verses Iqbal speaks with deep tenderness about the child's absorption in watching a candle flame, in watching the moon pacing through tattered clouds, the wrapt childish interest in the fictitious stories about the moon, even in the clanging of the door chain meant to divert his/her attention. There is a remarkable freshness in the poems of the first part of the *Bang-e-Dara*. The diction is an advance on Hali - outside the *Musaddas* - and Mohammad Husain Azad, the two major writers who gave a new tone to Urdu poetry. Iqbal's mind is still free from the serious preoccupations of his later period. With an unburdened eye the poet views the beauty that manifests itself in Nature and its varied forms. "Himala", "Gul-e-Rangin", "Abr-e-Kohsar", "Shama", "Aftab", "Tifl-e-Shirkhwar", "Jugnu" are poems in which a lively sense of wonder has surfaced, mixed with a carefree response to beauty, e.g. in the "Gul-e-Rangin" where he addresses the rose to say that he watches it with the bulbul's (lover's) eye, unconcerned with intrusive philosophic considerations (*Bang-e-Dara*.p.6).

*Kam mujh ko deeda-e hikmat ke uljheron se kya
Deeda-e bulbul se main karta hun nazzara tera.*⁴

Those poems in the first section of the *Bang-e-Dara* call for particular attention where a tension develops between a sense of wonder and a persistent questioning of the mind, eg. in the "Moth and the Candle" (p.27) : Why does the moth love the candle so much ? Does it find solace in burning itself to death?

Does it find eternal life in the candle's flame ? In another poem, "Khuftagan-e-Khak se Istefsar" he wants to know from the dead if man is a victim of restless questioning in the other world too (p.26):

*Van bhi insan hai qateel-e zauq-e istefham kya.*⁵

Even while fascinated, the poet's eye is searching for a secret at the core of things, what in Urdu-Persian literary tradition has been termed *raz-e-daroon-e-khana*. In several poems of the *Bang-e-Dara*, as in English Romantic poetry, man develops a close relationship with Nature, and yet there is something in man that keeps him apart, the aching heart in his breast is what Nature lacks (p.77):

*Dard jis pehlu mein uthta hai woh pehlu aur hai.*⁶

And this separateness is not, as in Keats's "Nightingale", the result of a waking up to reality but an awareness of an evolutionary difference. In the poem on the candle (Shama) the poet and the candle have the same identity - I too burn and suffer like you (i.e. the candle) - but as the poem proceeds the significant difference between the two emerges which consists in the awareness of the 'burning' which is peculiar to man (pp. 32,33).⁷

Iqbal does not rue this human sensibility, the capacity to suffer and have awareness of one's suffering; he does not cry out in despair "adieu, adieu" when the moment of communion with nature is past and the consciousness of the self returns. On the contrary he regards this consciousness as a seminal, germinal force, seen at its best in man but operative even in the inanimate world, giving every object its special identity (p.33).⁸

In poems like "Himala", "Abr-e-Kohsar", "Ek Arzoo" etc Iqbal is an entranced spectator. Nature unveils its beauties before his fascinated eye, and, as he watches, he is not troubled by any intrusive thoughts. But unlike Wordsworth, who seems

to be an active influence at this time, he does not move towards pantheism. Nature can unlock sources of wonder and joy in man, it can stimulate his questioning soul but it does not admit of apotheosis for him. Revelation, which is the highest event for man, comes through other sources. In the "Aftab-e-Subh", addressing the sun- and let us remember that as an image and symbol the sun continues to shine in Iqbal's poetry to the end - Iqbal writes that while the sun opens out the world to the eye it needs a different vision for the inner eye to open. (p.37)⁹

Iqbal finds the beauty of natural objects fascinating but static, and contrasts it with the restless, dynamic sensibility of man. As an example one can refer to lines 1,3,9,10 and 11 in the "Gul-e-Rangin" (pp.6,8).

There is a small group of minor poems in the second part of the *Bang-e-Dara* which should not be skipped. These are poems in which Iqbal speaks of his love in the romantic sense, the love for a woman (ishq-e-majazi). To modern taste these poems might appear too mild, but there are glimpses in them of a passion sophisticated by a deep culture and good manners. Only a lover could write lines like those in the poem entitled "Visal" (Union) where the poet speaks of how it is the imprisonment of love that has liberated him (pp. 126,27).¹⁰

These poems are particularly educative for those readers of Iqbal who never allow him to get off a pedestal if not the pulpit. Further the love song in Iqbal's later poetry is going to change so much in tone and tenor that it is time we paused here and relished it.

When we move on to the third and last section of the *Bang-e-Dara* which opens with the "Balad-e-Islamyah" and reaches a climax in the "Shikvah", we find ourselves in a changed ambience. The change is not really sudden, we had indications of it in earlier poems like "Bilal", "Abdul Qader Ke Nam" and "Saqliyah" but it certainly seems quite pronounced. If we read, for example, the poem on "The Poet and the Candle" - the candle has appeared thrice earlier in the first section - we can sense the difference. Iqbal's rhetoric is at its most powerful in

those poems in this section which made him famous throughout Muslim India. Poetically the third section has appeared to me as a kind of hyphen between Iqbal's early romantic poetry and his later philosophical verse. It is in this section that historic time assumes such importance for Iqbal. Great as the "Shikvah" is, I tend to regard it as a pause in Iqbal's onward journey. But the third part of the *Bang-e-Dara* is not all of a piece, there are poems in it in which the poet of the first part comes alive, e.g. in "Chand" and "Shaer" (p. 187 and p. 235), and others in which the poet to come is being born, e.g. the "Khizr-e-Rah" and the "Irteqa" (pp. 288, 249). Before we take a look at the 'Khizr-e-Rah', there is one more very significant poem of Iqbal in this section which we should note, his poem on the death of his mother, one of the finest and one of the best constructed of his poems. E.M. Forster once called Iqbal 'anti-humanitarian'. In a letter (quoted in Dr. Rafiq Zakaria's foreword to Mr. Khushwant Singh's English version of the "Shikvah" and the "Javab") he once wrote "Humanitarian has two senses : (i) development of human powers and (ii) compassion and responsibility felt by the strong for the weak's failures. Iqbal (as far as I can gather from Vahid's book and it is almost my only authority) was humanitarian in sense (i) but not in sense (ii)". Forster's only source of knowing Iqbal, according to his own assertion is Mr. S.A. Vahid's book on the poet. This would obviously mean that Mr. Vahid's presentation is inadequate. I have already referred to Iqbal's gentleness and his closeness to the child. Let me now refer to his poem on the death of his mother (see *Bang-e-Dara* p. 255).¹¹

Any one who reads the poem and its moving lines will have little doubt about Iqbal's humanitarian quality. What Forster is looking for is compassion. The equivalent of compassion in Urdu-Persian tradition is *dard*, a term which is even deeper and more comprehensive than compassion. And if Iqbal is not a poet of *dard*, he is not a poet at all. For lack of it paradise itself is a dead world to him.¹¹ Forster naturally could have no notion as to how Iqbal's power leads to gentleness and compassion. It is

the coming together of power and compassion that Iqbal saw in perfection in the person of the Prophet of Islam, a fusion which made the Prophet, as the Persian poet, Jami, put it, both "Shah-e-shahan" and "Shah-e-gadayan", ie. alike the King of kings and King of the poor.

With the "Khizr-e-Rah" Iqbal's poetry reaches a take off point. His thought deepens and takes over the direction of his poetry. Iqbal uses the myth of Khizr to probe the life of man on earth. Like Tiresias in Eliot's "Waste Land", the deathless Khizr provides flashes of universal and prophetic insights into life and society. There is no room here for a detailed analysis of this poem, but it gives clear indications of the philosophic poet feeling his way forward with steady steps. Iqbal's crucial idea of life as a constant and progressive movement, his strong dislike of exploitation, imperialism and the capitalist order all receive their early definition in this poem.

If I had time and space I would sketch a detailed critical reading of the *Payam* as I have done to an extent, in the case of the *Bang-e-Dara*, but in view of the limitations of a lecture I would content myself with a few general remarks. Of all Iqbal's works the *Payam* is closest to the *Bang-e-Dara*, thematically and stylistically. It is one of the finest of Iqbal's Persian works and at places touches pure poetry as no other work does. The landscape here is varied and rich, Nature, as poems like "Bu-e-gul", "Surood-e-Anjum", "Lalah", "Kirmak-e-Shabtab" and "Shabnam" testify, is still a joy in itself, and the philosophic strain of some of the poems of the *Bang-e-Dara* gets more strongly defined, for example, in the "Lala-e Tur", and in the poems about the fall of Adam and his arrival on earth, the mystic defiance of Iblis, the song of time and the dialogue between man and God. The tone and the language in the *Payam* are more assured than in the *Bang-e-Dara*. In the section called the "Mai-e-Baqi" Hafiz seems to come alive with a twentieth century consciousness, and Iqbal in the phrasing of the great Persian pleads for ecstasy infused with awareness.¹²

I would like here to call the attention of Iqbal's reader to

a particular point about his poetry before I wind up, a point which is often inadvertently missed or ignored, but which is of central importance for a full understanding of Iqbal's *opera poetica*. I refer to the poet's sense of isolation and loneliness which is co-ordinate with the loneliness of man as man — "l'uomo che e solo con se" (man who is alone with himself). In the *Bang-e Dara* there is a small poem on this theme entitled "Tanhai" (Loneliness)- *Kis shai ki tujhe havas hai ai dil* ("what is it you miss my heart"). In the *Payam-e-Mashriq* this feeling has acquired cosmic dimensions. In a poem, which has the same title as the one in the *Bang-e-Dara*, the protagonist, which is the poet himself, which is man in his cosmic status, sets out on a journey across oceans and mountains, and, beyond the earth, to the moon asking them if they have any affinity with him. They all keep to themselves and say nothing. He finally reaches the presence of God to tell him that the universe has nothing in common with him — *Jehan tehi ze dil o musht-e khak-e mun hama dil* (The universe lacks what I have, a heart). In reply he merely gets a knowing smile.¹³

From the *Bang-e-Dara* and the *Payam-e-Mashriq* two streams flow out. One passes (publication chronology overlooked) through the *Asrar* and the *Rumuz* to reach the *Javed Namah*, the other runs on to the *Zabur-e-Ajam*. The *Javed Namah* deals with problems of power, of leadership, probing society and civilization and the human personality. The *Zabur*, as Iqbal himself has said, is poetry to be read in solitude — *Agar ho zauq to khilvat mein parh Zabur-e Ajam*.¹⁴ The *Javed Namah* leans towards reason, the *Zabur* towards intuition. In my opinion the two streams merge in the best poems and ghazals of the *Bal-e-Jibril*, producing some of the finest philosophical poetry found in the Indo-Persian literature. But that is another story the telling of which would need another session.

اردو اشعار کے حوالہ جات

پہلا لکچر

- ۱- وہ پھٹے بادل میں بے آواز پاس کا سفر
- ۲- اٹھی پھر آج وہ پورب سے کالی گھٹا
سیاہ پوش ہوا پھر پہاڑ سر بن کا
- ۳- کار گاہ زندگی را محرم است
- ۴- شبنم از فیض نگاہ اد گہر
- ۵- شعر را سوز از مقام آرزوست
- ۶- ۱ سے مرا خوشتر ز جیہوں و فرات
- ۷- خادر کی امیدوں کا یہی خاک ہے مرکز
اقبال کے اشکوں سے یہی خاک ہے سیراب
- ۸- ہاوداں تبہم دواں ہر دم جواں ہے زندگی
- ۹- ہم نفس فرزند آدم را کجاست
- ۱۰- جب عشق سکھاتا ہے آداب خود آگاہی
کھلتے ہیں غلاموں پر اسرار شہنشاہی

دوسرا لکچر

۱
وا کردئے ہیں شوق نے بند نقاب حسن
غیر از نگاہ اب کوئی حائل نہیں رہا

۲
کیسی حیرانی ہے یہ اے طفلک پروانہ خو
شمع کے شعلوں کو گھڑیوں دیکھتا رہتا ہے تو

All references to the *Bang-e-Dara* are to its Lahore edition of 1924. By a verse (v.) is meant the two lines of a couplet. As lines are not numbered in Urdu poems, for the purpose of this paper verses are counted separately for each poem to give their number in that particular poem. All the verses quoted in this talk are given in the original Urdu.

۳ حسن کوستاں کی بیت ناک خاموشی میں ہے
بہر کی ضوگستری شب کی سیہ پوشی میں ہے

.....

میں نے چاہا تو مجھے چھیننا ہے تو ، چلاتا ہے تو
بہرماں ہوں میں ، مجھے ناہرماں سمجھا ہے تو
پھر پڑا روٹنے کا اے نودارد اللہم غم
چہ نہ جائے دیکھنا باریک ہے نوک کلم

.....

تھے دیار نو زمین و آسمان مرے لینے
وسعت آغوش مادر اس جہاں میرے لینے
درد طفلی میں اگر کوئی رلاتا تھا مجھے
شورش زنبیر درمیں لطف آتا تھا مجھے
تکتے رہنا ہائے وہ پہروں تلک سونے قمر
وہ پھٹے بادل میں بے آواز پا اس کا سفر
پوچھنا رہ رہ کے اس کے کوہ و صحرا کی خبر
اور وہ حیرت دروغ مصطحت آمیز پر

.....

۴ کلام مجھ کو دیدہ حکمت کے پھیڑوں سے کیا
دیدہ۔ بلبلی سے میں کرتا ہوں نظارہ ترا

۵ واں بھی انہاں ہے قسبل ذوق استقبام کیا ؟

۶ درد جس پہلو میں اٹھتا ہے وہ پہلو اور ہے

۷ تو جل رہی ہے اور تجھے کچھ خبر نہیں
بنا ہے اور سوز دروں پر نظر نہیں
میں جوش اضطراب سے سیماب وار بھی
آگاہ اضطراب دل بے قرار بھی

۸ یہ آگہی مری مجھے رکھتی ہے بے قرار
خوابیدہ اس شرر میں ہیں آتش کدے ہزار
یہ امتیاز رفعت و پستی اسی سے ہے
گل میں مہک شراب میں مستی اسی سے ہے

۹ "آفتاب صبح"

نور سے معمور ہو جاتا ہے دامن نظر
کھولتی ہے چشم ظاہر کو ضیا تیری مگر
ڈھونڈتی ہے جس کو آنکھیں وہ تماشا چاہئے
چشم باطن جس سے کھل جائے وہ جلوا چاہئے

۱۰ قید میں آیا تو حاصل مجھ کو آزادی ہوئی
دل کے لٹ جانے سے میرے گھر کی آبادی ہوئی

۱۱ زندگی کی اوج گاہوں سے اتر آتے ہیں ہم
صحبت مادر میں طفل سادہ رہ جاتے ہیں ہم