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IQBAL REVIEW

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HAFIZ AND THE PERSIAN LITERATURE OF THE SUBCONTINENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

(The case of Muhammad Iqbal)

Natalia Prigarina

ABSTRACT

Iqbal's attitude towards Persian literature can be understood by his approach towards two great Persian poets Rumi and Hafiz. He appreciated and followed Rumi and criticized Hafiz. In his opinion the poetical approach and the ideology of Hafiz was responsible for the decline of Muslim world. That is why he called Hfiz a poet of allowing sensitivity and idle dreaming. According to him the method of mystical gnosis of Hafiz is an immoral conduct because it propagates the ideas of intoxication. Iqbal appreciated only one type of mystic behavior – *Sahw* or sobriety and negated the *Sukr* or intoxication. However the beauty of Hafiz's poetry was also appreciated by Iqbal on some occasions. So, Iqbal's attitude towards Hafiz's poetry seems rather paradoxical.

The great poet of the East, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was famous as Urdu poet of the Subcontinent, but he never ceased to write in Persian till the end of his life. His Urdu and Persian *Kulliyyat* are approximately of the same volume.

Iqbal's attitude towards classical Persian literature could be clarified by his approach to two great figures: Rumi and Hafiz. Iqbal contrasts one great poet with the other as representatives of opposite philosophies. He refers to Rumi constantly: 24 times in Urdu, and 75 times in Persian *Kulliyyat*, and these are only the instances of explicit use. But many hidden allusions could be found in his poetry, too.

At the same time, Hafiz is mentioned in Persian *Kulliyyat* only 4 times– and not in poems, but in the *prosaic* Preface to *Payam-i-Mashriq;* and in Urdu *Kulliyyat*– three times in a *negative* context, and only once in a positive one.

Iqbal presented his first work in Persian– masnavi *Asrar-i-Khudi*, in Lahore (published in 1915), where he was popular as Urdu poet of the Northern India. It was obvious that for his audience Persian poetry appeared to be just the poetry in a foreign language. But Iqbal pursued his own goals, for him Persian was a device to spread his ideas firstly among the intellectuals and educated milieu.[1] On the other hand he was sure that his appeal would sooner or later be available to the Persian speaking people of Asia.

In the first edition of his Persian poem *Asrar-i-Khudi*, Iqbal came down on Hafiz. In his opinion, Hafiz was responsible for at least the decline of Islam. Later on Iqbal erased the poet's name from the masnavi; there remained only the critique of a poet whose work had blighted active life position of Islamic people. Iqbal treated Hafiz as a "poet of alluring sensitivity and idle dreaming".[2] At the same time he did not share ideas of intoxication and so to say 'immoral conduct' of Hafiz's lyrical person as a way of mystical gnosis. Though Iqbal was initiated in the Qadiriya Sufi order himself, he recognized only one type of mystic behaviour– *sahw,* sobriety, and not *sukr*, intoxication. R. A. Nicholson wrote that "As much as he (Iqbal.– *N.P.*) dislikes the type of Sufism exhibited by Hafiz, he pays homage to the pure and profound genius of Jalaluddin, though he rejects the doctrine of self-abandonment taught by the great Persian mystic and does not accompany him in his pantheistic flights".[3] Later on in *Javid-nama* (1932) Iqbal makes Rumi his guide through the spheres of Heaven; he lets Rumi declare the importance of poetry in people's life, and one of the prerequisites that Rumi provides is the following:

سوز و مستی نقشبند عالمی است
شاعری بی سوزو مستی ماتمی است

Ardour and drunkenness embroider a world; poetry without ardour and drunkenness is a dirge".[4]

What is prohibited to Hafiz is allowed to Rumi!

If we take into consideration that Hafiz's connection with any specific Sufi order is not clear till now, and his Shaikhs are mentioned with an element of uncertainty, the only thing that can be stated with certainty, is: that Hafiz followed the customs and habits of *malamaties*. In his book *Hafiz and Iqbal*, Yusuf Husain-Khan says that he had found only one line in *Divan-i-Hafiz,* which could be regarded as a reflex of the philosophy of *wahdat-al-wujud* (radif *hame u-st*).[5]

The negative estimation of Hafiz continued in the course of Iqbal's poetic life, in different contexts, for instance, Iqbal criticized Hafiz implicitly in *Zarb-i-Kalim* (1936), his last poetic book in Urdu, since he "didn't sharpen the sword of his self".[6] Yusuf Husain Khan justly remarks that "the idea of personality in Hafiz is cardinally different from Iqbal's one. Hafiz didn't have any generalized concept of the Self. Not being the follower of *wahdat-al-wujud*, he nevertheless shared traditional Sufi understanding of the Self dissolved in the Beloved, who was partly realistic (*haqiqi*), and partly metaphoric (*majazi*)".[7] As for Iqbal, his concept of the human Ego was modern, and rather revolutionary for India of the first two decades of the 20th century. Only once, in his last Urdu collection *Zarb-i-Kalim,* did Iqbal mention Hafiz's poetry in positive way as a symbol of a perfect work of art:

From the blood of the architect are constructed
The tavern of Hafiz, and the idle-temple of Bihzad.[8]

As A. Schimmel puts it: "Hafiz and Bihzad, otherwise condemned as models of perilous traditional art and seducers of people are taken in verses like this as symbols of highest power of expression– that shows the ambiguity of symbolism which sometimes can be met with in Iqbal's poetry".[9]

This so to say 'ambiguity' results, in practice, in a deciding and sweeping victory of Iqbal-poet over Iqbal-philosopher in his poetic works, and in just the opposite in his prosaic writings.

While not mentioning Hafiz's name, Iqbal would allude to his ghazals implicitly both in Urdu and Persian works. What is remarkable, is that the first address to Hafiz (anonymous in the all editions except the 1st) in *Asrar-i-Khudi* contains an allusion to the well-known ghazal of the criticized poet made in a very beautiful way[10]:

نیست غیر از باده در بازار او
از دو جام آشفته شد دستار او

Compare Hafiz:

صوفی سرخوش ازین است که کج کرد کلاه
به دو جام دگر آشفته شود دستارش

In the Iranian edition of Iqbal's Persian poetry, *Ash'ār-i-Fārsi*[11], the editor (Dervish) marked at least 55 instances of hidden references to Hafiz in it. They are scattered all over the *Kulliyyat*, though they most frequently appear in *Zabur-i-Ajam* ("Persian Psalms"), the collection of most charming Persian lyrics of Iqbal. The editor gives every episode a definition such as 'following' (*nāzer*), 'meeting' (*istiqbāl*), 'quoting' (*tazmin*), and "use of the same meter and rhyme as Hafiz".

Perhaps something could have been omitted by the editor, but even this account refers to a good deal of allusions, quotations or hidden mentioning of Hafiz. Iqbal borrowed some fundamental notions from Hafiz, like wine of eternity (*may-i-bāqi*), caravan bell (*bāng-e darā*)[12], conventional poetic attacks against mullah's and 'clumsy bookish wisdom and lifeless traditionalism'.[13] In Javid-nama, the poet accepted the pen-name 'Zenderud', alluding to the small river of Isfahan (Zayanderud) mentioned in Hafiz's ghazal. (Iqbal was always stressing his spiritual proximity to the old cities of Iran like Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz).

The title of the first Urdu collection of lyrics *Bang-i-Dara* could be regarded as an allusion to the motif of caravan bell in Hafiz's ghazal.[14]

After Iqbal's 'critique' of Hafiz as a propagator of quietism and oblivion of the 'selfhood', the polemics took place in Urdu newspapers of Punjab in 1915– 1916[15], and Iqbal himself was accused by *moulanas* of being a champion of Western values. His claim that the decline of Muslim world was the result of the influence of the Iranian Sufism was by no means accepted by his audience, and he had to explain his position and his own attitude towards the values of the Sufi tradition. Stressing the fact that he grew up in the environment which was mainly Sufi, he declared his loyalty to the traditions of the Subcontinent, and explained that he was rejecting only the type of intoxicated Sufism proposed by Hafiz. He juxtaposed *sukr* and *sahv* (drunkenness and sobriety as ideology of the different Sufi attitudes), and represented Hafiz as a partisan of the first, and himself as the

upholder of the second direction. To be exact, this assertion could be developed by referring to the Sufi tradition when *sukr* and *sahw* become just the consequence of 'states' leading to the Truth when a Sufi experiences the state of *mahv* after intoxication, and then *sahw ba'd az mahv* (sobriety after immersion into oblivion).

I'd like to dwell upon one statement of Iqbal which seems to be quite unusual, (I even dedicated an investigation to this episode[16]).

May be the anecdote itself contained nothing special compared to the other stories about Sufi saints and their deeds. It happened at the time of Aurangzeb (1659–1707), who became the Mughal Imperor after a series of battles against his relatives, claiming the throne.

The very story was related in Muhammad Iqbal's article in a Punjabi newspaper *Vakil* (Amritsar) of 1916.[17] It was one of the five articles which he wrote as an answer to the criticism against the mentioned poem. As an example of the 'poisonous influence' of Hafiz's poetry, Iqbal presents a legendary event, which happened in Delhi at the time of Emperor Aurangzeb.

'Once the Emperor decided to clean the town off of the *tawaif* or courtesans. These *tawaif* were mostly well educated young ladies, who performed music and dances and knew poetry. The Emperor ordered them married, and those who didn't manage to get married had to be put on a ship and drowned in the sea. There was a young singer among them who every day used to pass the street where a Sufi saint Kalimullah was sitting. She would greet him and pass by. But on that day she said: "Accept the last farewell from your slave", and was going to leave. The Shaikh realized that she was preparing to die. Then he said: "Listen to my advice. When you and the other girls are lead to the shore to be put on the ship, do perform the following Hafiz's lines:

در کوی نیکنامی ما را گذر ندادند
گر تو نمی پسندی تغیر کن قضا را

We were not allowed to go to the street of Pious
If Thou not approveth it do change the destiny.

On the appointed day, the group of young women was conducted to the shore in the direction of the ship. They started to sing these lines with the ardor and passion, being sure that it was their last performance. Their singing came to the ears of Aurangzeb, and he cancelled his order'.

What *is* amazing– is Iqbal's summary of the story. "Such was the poisonous influence of Hafiz's poetry,– says he,– that the most pious Muslim ruler changed his mind, and didn't perform his decision to

clean the city from such a dirty spot like prostitutes (*tawaif*)".

So we'd like to formulate two questions. The first is: How was it possible to summarize the event in the way Iqbal did?

The second question is more complicated than the previous one. It is a well known fact, that Aurangzeb was pitiless in his urge for the throne that he put to death his brother Dara Shikoh, one of the most splendid personalities of the epoch, and his son, and his other relatives; that he imprisoned his father; that by his will, the poet-mystic Sarmad was decapitated under a disputable religious pretext; that he prohibited music and dances in Delhi and was ready to get rid of tawaif by simply drowning them in the sea. So, having in mind the rigidness and fanaticism of Aurangzeb, one may ask a question: how did it become possible that this person would change his mind under the influence of a single *bait*?

There is, however, some evidence that the Emperor had "intrinsic interest in spiritual matters", and "special liking for men of learning, 'ulama, Sufis, and dervishes from all lands...".[18] Certain Sayyid Abd al-Fattah "was brought from Gujarat with great honor to spend some time with the Emperor, when the latter was told about his profound knowledge of the Mathnawi of Mawlana Rum".[19] And the last but not the least is that "even stern Emperor Aurangzeb is said to have shed tears when listening to the recitation of this work (Masnavi-ye Ma'navi.– *N.P.*)".[20]

But did the emperor like Hafiz's poetry? And how can the power of this line be explained?

Hafiz's ghazal to which this line belongs is one of the most famous. Its common appeal is extremely positive (*bā dūstān muruvvat, bā dushmanān mudārā*). The only blamed person happens to be the lyrical subject of the ghazal, whose garments are stained with wine, and who is not allowed to settle in the corner of the pious. The flavour of *malamatiya* inherent to this position of the lyrical subject is stressed by the well known principles of this movement in Iranian mysticism: the behavior of a person in this system is fully oriented to his own moral code, which presupposes deeply concealed delicacy, fairness, dignity, sincerity and self-rigorousness. This is a special sort of spiritual work which doesn't demand the Divine interposition in the mundane affairs. If the Sufi is *mukhlas* that is chosen by God as His sincere friend, malamati is *mukhlis*– a sincere friend himself. And he himself performs his spiritual deeds (*karamat*).[21]

Aurangzeb could have known this ghazal, and having listened to one line he could have recalled it as a whole. The ethical premise of the ghazal could have emerged in the Emperor's mind evocated by the recitation of the singers, and could have changed his choice

from ethical discomfort of the severe decision towards the favourable solution.

In the spring of 2007, I happened to visit Turkey on the occasion of the International Rumi Conference. There were many scholars from everywhere, and among them Dr. Muhammad Suheyl Umar, the great connoisseur of Iqbal and his work, Director of the Iqbal Academy of Pakistan, situated in Lahore. I asked him what he thought about this entire story, and how could one explain Aurangzeb's decision. I just learned that Aurangzeb was sobbing when he was listening to the Rumi's poetry, and herewith I could extrapolate that he might have been also well-disposed to Hafiz. My companion smiled, listening to these explanations, and said: "Aurangzeb kept Hafiz's Divan under his pillow!"

I had no possibility to check the information about the pillow, but I could conclude that Aurangzeb didn't make such a difference between Rumi and Hafiz, as Iqbal did! One can rather appreciate his sensitivity to the force of poetry which saved the lives of the innocent young women.

Contrariwise, Iqbal who appeared to be the member of Qadiri Sufi order, to which Dara Shikoh belonged, could be expected to be less appreciative to Dara's executioner Aurangzeb. Thus Iqbal's resume was still a great riddle for me.

There exists one sole reason for Iqbal's conclusion, which is presented by A. Schimmel: in his Note-book, in 1910 Iqbal regarded Aurangzeb as a religious politician and "the founder of Musalman nationality in India".[22] The time of the polemics we discussed above was between the time when his first Persian long poem was published, and the second one namely *Rumuz-i-bikhudi* (written in 1917 and published in 1918) was in creation. I could surmise that he was deeply absorbed in his thoughts about the concept of Muslim nation as distinct from the concept of Hindu nation which was presented by the theoreticians of Indian National Congress some several years earlier.[23] In contrast to his first long poem, which was focused on the theory of personality, the second Persian poem was dedicated to the problem of collective life of individuals and to the creation of Muslim nation (*millat-e islamiye*).[24] It seemed to be the first essay on the theory of Muslim nation in the Northern India in the 20th century.

Coming back to Iqbal's attitude towards Hafiz's poetry, one can say that the situation is rather paradoxical, it could be considered as an example of the ideological polemics manifested through inter-textual relations in Persian literature. Iqbal found the beauty of Hafiz's style too dangerous for the "common" reader, at the same

time he couldn't help drawing inspiration from Hafiz.

Nevertheless, Iqbal was totally rapt by the beauty of Hafiz's poetry, and he wrote in his Note-book: "In words like cut jewel Hafiz put the sweet unconscious spirituality of the nightingale".[25]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] "I wanted my words to become known first to the restricted circle of selected people, so that my message was learned by this circle, and these people would reflect on it, and understand it. Later on people of this circle would convey it to the whole nation, for as far as I may suppose, even when it comes up to the experts and connoisseurs, some of them will understand it, and some will remain indifferent. Only gradually, the comprehension which the author strived for would be achieved." – The answer to the question why he wrote in Persian, asked by Indian students in London at the meeting in Iqbal's honor during the poet's visit in 1931 to participate in the Round Table Conference. See: *Nuqush. Aphiti numbar (Nuqush, Autobiography number)*, Lahore, June 1964, p.13. Translated from Urdu.

[2] Schimmel, A.2000:*Gabriel's Wing*. 3rd edition, Lahore, p.42.

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[5] Husain Khan, Yusuf 1976: *Hāfiz aur Iqbāl*. Ghalib Academy. New Delhi , p.256. (In Urdu)

[6] Iqbal, M. 1979: "She'r-e 'ajam" In: *Kulliyyāt-e Iqbal*, *Urdu*, p. 590 (128). Schimmel, A. 2000, p. 63.

[7] Husain Khan, Yusuf 1976, p. 255.

[8] Iqbal, M. 1979: "Ijād-e ma'āni" In: *Kulliyyāt-e Iqbal*, *Urdu* , p. 593 (131).

[9] Schimmel. A. 2000, p.71, footnote 125.

[10] Husain Khan, Yusuf 1976, p. 1. These lines were excluded from the following editions.

[11] Darvish M.2001: *Ash'ār-i Fārsi-yi Iqbāl-i Lahuri. Shāmel-e Ghazaliyyat, Asrār-e Khudi* etc. Muqaddima va Havashi az Mahmud 'Ilmi (Darvish). Tehran.

[12] Schimmel. A. 2000, p. 46.

[13] Schimmel. A. 2000, p. 77.

[14] Schimmel. A. 2000, p. 46, footnote 77.

[15] These articles along with the other Iqbal's statements and articles were collected and printed in Delhi in connection with poet's centenary jubilee in: *Iqbāl ke nathri afkār*, 1977; Anjuman-e taraqqi-e Urdu (Hind). Delhi. (in Urdu).

[16] Prigarina, N. 1991: "Put' v obitel 'dobroy slavy" (Way to the abode of good name) In:*Sad odnogo zvetka*.(*Garden of one flower*). Ed. by N. Prigarina. M., "Nauka" pp. 31-53

[17] *Iqbal ke nathri afkar*, 1977: pp. 97-101.

[18] *Mir'at al-'Alam* 1979*: History of Aurangzeb* (1658- 1668) *of Muhammad Bakhtavar Khan*. Persian text with introduction and notes by Sajida S. Alvi. Lahore, vol. 1, p. 46.

[19] *Mir'at al-'Alam* 1979, p.48.

[20] Schimmel. A. 2000, p. 355, see also note 75.

[21] Schimmel. A. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, p. 87.

[22] *Stray Reflections* 1992 : *A Note-book of Allama Iqbal* Edited by Dr. Javid Iqbal. Iqbal Academy, Pakistan Lahore, Revised and enlarged edition, p.56; Schimmel. A. 2000, p.11.

[23] To 1916 relates the "Lakhnau Pact" about the separate electorate for Muslims and Hindu.

[24] See: Iqbal, M. 1948: *Speeches and Statements*. Lahore, p. 223. In my book: Prigarina, N. 1978: *Poetika tvorchestva Muhammada Iqbala* (*The Poetics of Muhammad Iqbal's work*) , M., "Nauka" Glavnaya redakziya vostochnoy literatury, I discuss the following aspects of the poem in part I of the book – 1.Masnavi *The Secrets of Selflessness*;

"Third language" of masnavi (on the Role of Qur'anic quotations); theory of 'Muslim Nation' and the structure of masnavi "Rumuz-i bikhudi"; *Bikhudi* and *millat* the key terms of masnavi; Subject-matter and composition of Masnavi; 'Metaphysical picture' of society and the Prophet as its model; The problem of Caliphate and theocracy; A 'State' having neither frontiers, nor other limitations in Space and Time; Qur'an, Sunna, Shari'a and *taqlid* as regulatory devices for the Nation.

[25] *Stray Reflections*1992, p. 128.

"THE PRESSING OF MY SOUL"

(Some Observations on Iqbal's Concept of the *'Ajam*)

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

ABSTRACT

The multi layered metaphor of '*Ajam* is one of the oft-repeated motifs of Iqbal's poetry alluding to a particular human collectivity, a specific geographical area, genius of a human race and a mind-set that proved to be one of the most important formative influences that moulded the Islamic civilisation in its present form. Iqbal's evaluation of Persia's legacy is nuanced and complex and cannot be appreciated correctly unless one takes into consideration all that he had to say on the question. The article tries to analyze all the relevant materials and seeks to arrive at a balanced and comprehensive view.

شراب میکدۂ من نہ یادگار جم است
فشردۂ جگر من بہ شیشۂ عجم است

No Jamshid's memory, the wine that floweth in this inn of mine
It is the pressing of my soul that sparkleth in the bowl of Persia

*

Thus sang Iqbal in his *Zubūr i 'Ajam* (*Persian Psalms*).[1] The multi layered metaphor of '*Ajam* was one of the oft-repeated motifs of Iqbal's poetry. He used it, in various contexts, to allude to a particular human collectivity, a specific geographical area, genius of a human race and a mind-set that proved to be one of the most important formative influences that moulded the Islamic civilisation in its present form.[2] In his view the Islamic civilisation was created from the twin elements which he defined, in his short poem "Islamic Culture", in a symbolic manner as عجم کا حُسنِ طبیعت، عرب کا سوزِ دروں! *'Ajam kā husn i tabī'at, 'Arab kā sūz i darūn*. (finesse and refinement of the Persian genius and inward burning of the Arab soul).[3]

As Mustansir Mir has noted, Iqbal's view of the role of Persia in Islamic history at first sight appears to be ambiguous, or even self-contradictory, but a closer look will present the matter in a different light. Iqbal speaks approvingly of the refining influence of Persia on rugged Arabian character, yet he is critical of the enervating effect of Persian mysticism on Islamic culture. But this only means that Iqbal's evaluation of Persia's legacy is nuanced. He takes a similar view of the influence of the West on modern Islamic history. He is severely critical of certain aspects of Western culture and repeatedly warns Muslims to beware of imitating the West slavishly. At the same time, he admires certain other aspects of that culture, and, furthermore, regards as highly positive the role of the West in giving a wake-up call to the slumbering Muslim world. In the same vein, he is also critical of the decadence and deviation to which the Arab part of the Islamic civilization became subject to. A representative comment would help elucidate the point. In his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* he lamented, "To my mind these arguments, if rightly appreciated, indicate the birth of an international ideal which, though forming the very essence of Islam, has been hitherto

overshadowed or rather displaced by Arabian Imperialism of the earlier centuries of Islam."[4] Would that warrant us to conclude that the "Arab" as such was responsible for the overshadowing of the "very essence of Islam"? Similarly would the verses given below, which criticize the Arab world, provide us a sufficient reason to conclude that Iqbal saw nothing of value in the Arab world and anchored no hopes for the future of Islam in the genius of the Arab race?

عرب کہ باز دہد محفل شبانہ کجاست
عجم کہ زندہ کند رود عاشقانہ کجاست

Where is the Arab, to revive
The old night-revelry,
And where the Persian, to bring alive
The love-lute's minstrelsy? [5]

خود را کنم سجودی، دیر و حرم نماندہ
این در عرب نماندہ آن در عجم نماندہ

I bow down before myself– there is no temple or Ka'bah left!
This one is missing in Arabia, that one in other lands. [6]

در عجم گردیدم و ہم در عرب
مصطفیٰؐ نایاب و ارزان بولہب

I have wandered through lands, Arab and non-Arab,
Bū Lahab is everywhere, Mustafā nowhere.[7]

خودی کی موت سے رُوحِ عرب ہے بے تب و تاب
بدن عراق و عَجَم کا ہے بے عروق و عظام

The Arabs have lost their former zeal,
Their souls are shrunk, they can not feel;
Iraq and Persia are bereft
Of bones and veins and naught is left![8]

As could be seen easily, these remarks and other statements to the same effect address certain specific situations or problems that the Muslim community had faced during the course of the historical unfolding of its cultural ethos. So is the case with his observations on the '*Ajam* which, if taken out of context or studied in isolation, can lend them to an interpretation that, to say the least, would be misleading and would stop short at giving us an inaccurate view of Iqbal's real assessment of the role of Persia in Islamic history.

Thus we observe that many commentators of Iqbal and even distinguished authorities in Iqbal studies do take a partial, often

truncated, view of the highly nuanced usage of the concept/ theme of '*Ajam* in Iqbal thus arriving at results that cannot be supported by the poetic and prose works of Iqbal. We would like to elucidate through a representative sample. In his otherwise excellent discussion of the concept of '*Ajam,*[9] Mirza Muhammad Munawwar, brilliantly guides his readers through the corpus of Iqbal's works with reference to his nuanced and multilayered usage of '*Ajam,* but leaves us with a half truth by highlighting only the negative side of the story; the enervating effect of Persianate ethos on the Islamic culture. Iqbal's view is much more complex and cannot be appreciated correctly unless one takes into consideration all that he had to say on the question.

In Iqbal's view, Muslim communal life depends not only on the 'unity of religious belief', but also on 'the uniformity of Muslim Culture'.[10] Muslim culture is 'relatively universal' in the sense that it is not the product of a single race.[11] Hence he recognised the importance of the fact that the Persians had a brilliant pre-Islamic civilisation of great spiritual and artistic beauty, and played a major role in the very foundation of Islamic civilisation.

In fact, although Islamic thought and culture succeeded in freeing itself from becoming only 'Arabic' or 'Persian' during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, both of these peoples left their indelible mark upon its historical deployment and development. The Persians on the one hand, played a central role in building Islamic civilisation[12] and, on the other, were able to integrate within the universal perspective of Islam many elements of their pre-Islamic past, which thus became completely Islamicized. They therefore not only became thoroughly Islamic and have remained one of the most productive of Islamic peoples intellectually and artistically, but they were also able to preserve their own identity and remain distinctly Persian, creating a second cultural focus within the unity of Islamic civilisation, which in its classical phase and almost up to modern times could be divided culturally into the Arabic and the Persian zones. Let us analyse the issue now with reference to his prose and poetic works in order to arrive at a conclusion that is squarely rooted in his views and provides us a comprehensive answer while steering clear of the confusions that have come to surround the question over the years.

As early as 1910 we find a note in his personal diary which reads as follows:

> If you ask me what is the most important event in the history of Islam, I shall say without any hesitation: The Conquest of Persia. The battle of Nehāwand gave the Arabs not only a beautiful country, but also an ancient civilisation; or, more properly, a people who could make a new

> civilisation with the Semitic and Aryan material. Our Muslim civilisation is a product of the cross-fertilisation of the Semitic and the Aryan ideas. It is a child who inherits the softness and refinement of his Aryan mother, and the sterling character of his Semitic father. But for the conquest of Persia, the civilisation of Islam would have been one-sided. The conquest of Persia gave us what the conquest of Greece gave to the Romans." [13]

He expanded on the same subject. In the same year, while delivering his seminal address "The Muslim Community–A Sociological Study", Iqbal made a statement that revealed his views on the subject in more detail and in a manner that is no less than categorical. The extract is so important for the issue at hand that it deserves to be quoted in full. [14]

> The Arab Race, the original creation of Islam, was certainly a great factor in its political expansion, but the enormous wealth of literature and thought– manifestation of the higher life of the spirit– has been the work of chiefly non- Arabian races. It seems as if the birth of Islam was only a momentary flash of divine consciousness in the life- history of the Arab race; the working of its spiritual potentialities was due to the genius of people other than the Arabs. …….just as the Muslim Community does not recognize any ethnological differences, and aims at the subsumption of all races under the universal idea of humanity, so our culture is relatively universal, and is not indebted, for its life and growth to the genius of one particular people. Persia is perhaps the principal factor in the making of this culture. If you ask, me what is the most important event in the history of Islam, I shall immediately answer– the conquest of Persia. The battle of Nehāwand gave to the Arabs not only a beautiful country, but also an ancient people who could construct a new civilisation out of the Semitic and the Aryan material. Our Muslim civilisation is a product of the cross-fertilization of the Semitic and the Aryan ideas. It inherits the softness and refinement of its Aryan mother and the sterling character of its Semitic father. The conquest of Persia gave to the Musalmāns what the Conquest of Greece gave to the Romans, but for Persia our culture would have been absolutely one sided. And the people whose contact transformed the Arabs and the Mughals are not intellectually dead. Persia, whose existence as an independent Political unit is threatened by the aggressive ambition of Russia is still a real centre of Muslim culture, and I can only hope that she still continues to occupy the position that she has always occupied in the Muslim world. …..the loss of the Persia's political independence would not be a territorial loss. To the Muslim culture such an event would be a blow much more serious than the Tartar invasion of the 10th century. But perhaps I am drifting into politics which it is not my present object to discuss, all that I mean to establish is that in order to become a living member of the Muslim Community the individual besides an unconditional belief in the

religious principle, must thoroughly assimilate the culture of Islam. The object of this assimilation is to create a uniform mental outlook, a peculiar way of looking at the world, a definite standpoint from which to judge the value of things which sharply defines our community, and transforms it into a corporate individual giving it a definite purpose and ideal of its own."

The elements that Iqbal, in his above quoted remarks, claimed to be the God given mediums of "the working of Islam's spiritual potentialities" were also mentioned time and again in his Urdu and Persian verse through the use of a variety of symbols. For example he declares it to be a manifestation of Divine Mercy, using the symbol of "the waters or rainfall of Mercy" in the following verse:

رگ تاک منتظر ہے تری بارشِ کرم کی
کہ عجم کے مے کدوں میں نہ رہی مئے مغانہ

The vine awaits Your bounteous rain: no more
Is the Magian wine in Persia's taverns sold.[15]

Because the Persians became thoroughly Islamicized and yet created a distinctly Persian Islamic culture related on a certain plane with their pre-Islamic past, to understand their role in the formation of the Islamic civilisation, it is necessary to cast a brief glance at the religious history of the people during the past three thousand years but that is the topic of a full length book and can not be compressed in the space of an article.[16] For the purposes of our immediate discussion it suffices to point out that the major spiritual transformation in Persia came, strangely enough, not from one of the new members of the family of Iranian religions but from a religion of Abrahamic and Semitic background, namely Islam. Although the military defeat of the Sassanids before the Arab armies was a sudden and rapid process, the spiritual struggle between Islam and Zoroastrianism was a gradual one and did not really terminate until the fourth/tenth century. This fact itself indicates that the Persian accepted Islam, not through force, as is claimed by some modern historians, but because of an inner spiritual need.[17] When the Persians regained their political independence from the caliphate there were still very sizeable Zoroastrian communities in Persia. But instead of showing any inclination to return to this tradition, the newly independent Persian rulers became themselves the champions of the spread of Islam, while insisting on the independence of the literary and cultural life of Persia. Most of the Muslim lands of Asia have, in fact, been Islamicized through the intermediary of the Persian form of Islam. And to this day, when a person belonging to the Persianate world thinks of the domain of 'Persian culture' he sees

before him nearly the whole of the Eastern lands of Islam from the Western borders of the Iranian plateau to Western China, with Iraq as an intermediary realm where the Persian, Arabic and, later, Turkish elements met.

It should not, thus, come as a surprise when we notice Iqbal saying, "my religion is from Hijaz but it has reached me through Isphahan, Kabul and Tabriz"[18] or when he sings, "*My heart is from the sanctuary of Hijaz, my song from Shirāz*".[19] In his view, the Arabs and the Persians (*al-'Arab wa 'l-'Ajam* in traditional Islamic sources) together founded the Islamic civilisation and have influenced nearly every phase of its subsequent history.

عرب کے سوز میں سازِ عجم ہے حرم کا راز توحیدِ اُمم ہے
تہی وحدت سے ہے اندیشۂ غرب کہ تہذیبِ فرنگی بے حرم ہے

"Building" of the 'Ajam is contained in the "burning" of the Arab,
The secret that keeps the "sacred precinct" is the unity of nations.
Western thought is bereft of the idea of Oneness,
Because the Western civilization has no sacred precinct.[20]

Islam, like any universal religion, aims at creating a larger circle of human unity and solidarity to which various human collectivities, different racial genius and diverse national temperaments can contribute while retaining their distinctive features and individuality. The first semicircle that builds this Truth-centred circle is, in a sense, inward and pertaining to the self while the other arc is civilizational and outward. The first bow i.e. *sūz i 'Arab* allows the human self to reach perfection by making it a manifestation of the Truth while the latter i.e. *sāz i 'Ajam* brings the world to its complete fruition by making it a medium through which the Truth can manifest itself in the outward realm. The *'Ajam,* because of its racial temperament and brilliant pre-Islamic civilisation of great spiritual and artistic beauty, played a major part in creating new conceptual frameworks and intellectual manifestations of the Truth based on Islam and it also moulded Islam into a civilisation. In other words, the rock like stability and permanence that is essential to a religion is manifested through the Arab temperament while the cultural diversity required of a civilization unfolds through the medium of the mind of the *'Ajam.* That is to say that *sūz i 'Arab* stands as a metaphor for the originality (in the sense of unbroken, living link to the origin) of religion and religious ethos while the sāz *i 'Ajam* stands for the unfolding movement and creativity that brings forth cultural forms and intellectual constructs.

He returned to the same theme in one of latter verses, this time using a different set of terms (that is ذکرِ عرب [the Arabian remembrance] and فکرِ عجم [the Persian Mind]) lamenting the decline of both these constituent elements of the Islamic civilization in the times of decadence.

ذکرِ عرب کے سوز میں، فکرِ عجم کے ساز میں
نے عربی مشاہدات، نے عجمی تخیلات

The burning of the Arab remembrance, the building of the Persian thought
No more carry either the Arabian contemplative visions or the Persian imagination.[۲۱]

To sum up, Iqbal gives due importance to both the aspects of the Islamic civilisation and is very clear as to how did the "*Husn i Tabi'at,*" of *'Ajam* manifested itself in Islamic history through making its rich contribution to the deployment of the Islamic civilization and his insights are remarkable with regard to the intellectual and spiritual activity that unfolded itself through the medium of "*Sāz i 'Ajam*" leaving its indelible imprint not only on Islamic history but in the annals of cultural heritage of all mankind.[22] We wish to end our remarks by presenting to the readers the beautiful verses [23] that enshrine the tribute through which Iqbal[24] has acknowledged the debt:

چون چراغ لاله سوزم در خیابان شما ای جوانان عجم جان من و جان شما
غوطه ها زد در ضمیر زندگی اندیشه ام تا بدست آورده ام افکار پنهان شما
مهر و مه دیدم نگاهم برتر از پروین گذشت یختم طرح حرم در کافرستان شما
تا سنانش تیز تر گردد فرو پیچید مش شعله ئی آشفته بود اندر بیابان شما
فکر رنگینم کند نذر تهی دستان شرق پارهٔ لعلی که دارم از بدخشان شما
میرسد مردی که زنجیر غلامان بشکند دیده ام از روزن دیوار زندان شما
حلقه گرد من زنید ای پیکران آب و گل آتشی در سینه دارم از نیاگان شما

In the avenues of your garden, I burn like the lamp of a tulip
By your life, O youth of 'Ajam, and by mine!
Time and again, my thought dove into the depths of life,
Until I seized hold of the hidden thoughts of yours.
I saw the sun and the moon, my vision soared higher than the Pleiades:

In your infidel land, I laid the foundations of the Sanctuary.
That its point may become sharper still, I twisted it down–
A listless flame it was in your wilderness.
My colourful thought presents to the empty-handed of the East
A piece of a ruby that I have from your Badakhshan.
There is about to arrive a man who will break the chains of the slaves
I have looked through the window in the wall of your prison.
Make a circle round me, O creatures of water and clay:
In my breast, I have a fire that I carry from your ancestors?[25]

Not only that, he has to register a complaint as well:

نوای من بہ عجم آتش کہن افروخت
عرب ز نغمۂ شوقم ہنوز بی خبر است

My song has relit old fires in Persia,
But Arabia is still a stranger to my ardent lays.[26]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] *Zubūr i ʿAjam* in *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 398. *Zabur-i ʿAjam* (*Persian Psalms*; Persian; 1927). In one of his letters, Iqbal summarises the contents of this four-part work: the first two parts present, respectively, man in conversation with God and man commenting on the world of man; the third part offers responses to a series of philosophical questions raised in a poem by a Muslim mystic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and the fourth part discusses the impact of slavery on a nation's religion and culture. In general usage, however, the title *Zabur-i ʿAjam* refers to the first two parts, each of the last two parts having acquired an almost independent status as a poem. Both for profundity of thought and exquisiteness of diction and style, *Zabur-i ʿAjam* occupies a distinctive place in Iqbal's poetical corpus. Also see Mustansir Mir, *Iqbal,* Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006.

[2] In some instances, the word was used, no doubt, with certain negative connotations. But this did not change his essential position on the question of Persian influence on the Islamic civilization. Iqbal criticises the arts that have a soporific effect on people and kill their *khudi* instead of building it up (*Zarb i Kalīm*, p. 562, 576, 580-1 in *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994). Iqbal was of the opinion that the Arab element in the Islamic literary tradition was basically healthy, invigorating, and life-affirming, whereas the *ʿAjami* or non-Arab element– especially that represented by some of the medieval Persian mystics– was effete and lethargy-inducing, and should, therefore, be avoided by Muslim readers.

[3] The complete line, which occurs in his poem "Islamic Culture" reads, "*ʿAnāsir is ke hain rūḥ al-qudus kā dhawq i jamāl / ʿAjam kā husn i tabīʿat, ʿArab kā sūz i darūn*" (Its constituent elements are the taste of Beauty imparted by the Holy

Ghost / finesse and refinement of the Persian genius and inward burning of the Arab soul). The verse comes from a small poem entitled "*Madaniyyat i Islām*" (Islamic Culture) in *Zarb i Kalim*, in *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 561.

Sūz (literally, burning, blazing, fiery and by extension, fervent, ardent, passionate) and its complementary term *sāz* (literally, building as well as musical instrument and by extension, edifice, structure, creativity) are among the most important of metaphorical devices that Iqbal had employed, not only for describing character types, mind-set or conceptual paradigms point toward modes of approaching reality, formulating a vision of reality and relating to the Infinite.

[4] Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan/Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1989, p. 13.

[5] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 393.

[6] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 423.

[7] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 719.

[8] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, pp. 593. The following verse (*Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu), pp. 561) also speaks in the same vein:

وہ لذّتِ آشوب نہیں بحرِ عرَب میں

پوشیدہ جو ہے مجھ میں، وہ طوفان کِدھر جائے

[9] Mirza Muhammad Munawwar, "Kalām I Iqbāl mein *'Ajam kā mafhūm*", in *Mīzān i Iqbāl*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1992, pp. 41.

[10] Latīf A. Sherwanī, (Ed.), Speeches*, Writings and Statements of Iqbal,* Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1995, p. 125.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] For the contribution of the Persians only to the purely religious sciences of Islam, see S. H. Nasr and M. Mucahharī, "The Religious Sciences", *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 464-480; as for Persian contributions to Islamic philosophy and the sciences see S. H. Nasr, "Philosophy and Cosmology", *ibid.*, pp. 419-441 and "Life Sciences, Alchemy and Medicine", *ibid.*, pp. 396-418; see also H. Corbin, *Terre celeste et corps de resurrection.* The most thorough discussion of the mutual influence and interplay of Islam, its civilization, and the Persians is to be found in the Persian work of M. Mucahharī, *Khadamāt-i mutaqābil-i Islām wa Irān*, Tehran, 1349 AH solar.

[13] "The Conquest of Persia", *Stray Reflections*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, p. 49. This entry was incorporated into the paper 'The Muslim Community' later the same year. Only minor changes were made. Namely, "but also an ancient people; or, more properly, a people who could…" was tightened up as "but also an ancient people who could…" In the same sentence, "civilisation with the…" was changed to "civilisation out of…" Next, "It is like a child who inherits…" was changed to "It inherits…" and "character of his…" to "character of its…" The last two sentences were re-arranged to read: "The conquest of Persia gave to the Musalmans what the conquest of Greece gave to the Romans. But for Persia our culture would have been absolutely one-sided."

[14] "The Muslim Community– A Sociological Study", *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal,* (Ed. Latīf A. Sherwanī), Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1995, p. 125.

[15] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, pp. 353. The following verse could also be construed in the same vein:

نہ اُٹھا پھر کوئی رومیؔ عجم کے لالہ زاروں سے
وہی آب و گلِ ایراں، وہی تبریز ہے ساقی

(*Ibid*, pp. 351);

[16] When we look at Persia today, or to be more accurate, the Persiante zone of the Islamic world, we see that it is one of the most overwhelmingly Muslim areas in the world. The life of the vast majority of Persians today is dominated and moulded completely by Islam, while, at the same time, the religious and cultural life of the country naturally reflects the long history of the Persian people. Persia has been both a centre from which major religious influences have radiated and a cross roads at which the religious traditions of the Mediterranean world and Asia have met, resulting often in new currents of religious life. Having originally belonged to the same ethnic and linguistic stock as the Aryan conquerors of India, the early Iranians who settled on the plateau possessed a religion akin to that of the Vedas. From this early background there arose the reform of Zoroaster and the establishment of the specifically Iranian religion of Zoroastrianism. Although the dates of Zoroaster are still much debated, there is no doubt that in the fifth century BC his teachings became the official religion of the Persian Empire. The sacred book of Zoroastrianism, the Avesta, is the most precious religious document of the early history of Persia as well as a basic source for the study of the Iranian languages. Zoroastrianism, with its firm belief in the angelic world, its accent upon the moral dimension of human existence, its emphasis upon the reality of the after-life and Last Judgment, and its stress upon the purity of the elements and the sacred character of human life, left an imprint both on the later religious life of Western Asia and on the general outlook of the Persians.

The positive qualities that this religion implanted in the souls of the Persians survived and became transmuted into the Islamic mould after Zoroastrianism itself had decayed and lost the spiritual struggle against the new forces of Islam. For example, the care that many devout Persians take in keeping their clothing, food and habitat clean in a ritual sense, sometimes even over-emphasising this elements of religion, is founded upon an old Zoroastrian teaching reinforced by the emphasis of Islam upon cleanliness. Whatever survived of Zoroastrianism in the Persian soul was, however, thoroughly Islamicized and interpreted in the light of the unitary point of view of Islam.

From the matrix of Zoroastrianism, which is the stable and orthodox background of Iranian religions, there grew several religious movements that had worldwide repercussions and also shook the foundations of Zoroastrianism itself. With the fall of the Achaemenian Empire, Hellenistic influences spread throughout the domain of the Persian people. This cultural movement was combined with a religious one known as Mithraism (considered as a distinct religious movement and not general devotion to Mithra, which ante-dated Zoroastrianism itself) which itself contained important Hellenistic elements. The mystery cult of Mithra, which spread as for West as Germany and Scandinavia, was a synthesis of Zoroastrian, Hellenistic, Babylonian and Anatolian elements, as well as pre-Zoroastrian Persian religious practices. If, for the world at large, this religious movement meant the spread of Iranian religious elements, for Persia itself it implied perhaps more than anything else the establishment of a religious sanction for the syncretic cultural life through which the Persians were now passing as a result of the conquests of Alexander and the establishment of Seleucid rule.

During the Parthian period, Zoroastrianism and the proper Persian cultural tradition began to reassert themselves until, with the advent of the Sassanids, the religion of Zoroaster became once again the official state religion, remaining in this position until the fall of the Sassanid empire. Nevertheless, its authority did not go unchallenged even on the religious plane. In the third century AD, a second world sweeping Iranian mystery religion, Manichaeism, came into being. Its founder, Mani, first found favour with the Sassanid ruler but was finally put to death through the opposition of the Zoroastrian priesthood. His cult nevertheless spread from China to France and in Persia itself gained many adherents. At once a socially revolutionary and a religiously mystical movement, it marked a major protest against established religious institutions. Although some of its cosmogonic and cosmological teachings found a place in certain forms of Islamic philosophy, for Persians of the later period Manichaeism has appeared as a rebellion against religious authority. It has never enjoyed the same status as Zoroastrianism, from which it came into being and against which it revolted.

The Sassanid period was also witness to other religious movements such as Mazdakism, a 'religious communism' known today mostly through what its enemies, both Zoroastrian and Christian, wrote against it. This movement, which was soon crushed, was again a protest against the Zoroastrian social order and foretold the collapse of this order that occurred with the coming of Islam. Also at this time there developed within Zoroastrianism the philosophico-religious school known as Zurvanism, which indicates a blend of Iranian religious thought with certain Greek philosophical ideas. Finally, it must be remembered that through rivalry with the Byzantines the Sassanids encouraged Oriental Christian sects, especially the Nestorians. These sects were given a free hand to establish schools and missions throughout the Sassanid empire, with the result that notable Christian communities came into existence in Persia and became an important minority religious community in the Islamic period. The Jews also had several centres in Persia from Achaemenian times, and continued to thrive under the both Zoroastrian and Muslim rule. The tolerance toward minority religions shown by Cyrus the Great has with few exceptions the rule in the religious history of Persia.

[17] In a letter to A 'Abbās Ārām, an eminent Iranian, written in 1932, (recently discovered and published in *Iqbal Review*, October, 1999) Iqbal wrote, "These days when I was busy setting the question paper for the postgraduate level Persian language and literature, my assistant brought me an article published in the Persian Journal *Irānshahr* or *Kisrā*. Writer of the article was a Persian who held the view that Persia was converted to Islam by force. My assistant thought that we could give it to our postgraduate students for English translation. I, however, rejected the idea and selected an other text. These Persian gentlemen are either totally ignorant of the history of their country or else they play in the hands of European politicians and propagandists whose sole objective is that Muslim countries should lose the sense of unity with one another."

[18] Quoted from his letters.

[19] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 331. In his Urdu verse he has many parallels to the same idea expressed variously, for example:

عجمی خُم ہے تو کیا، مے تو حجازی ہے مری
نغمہ ہندی ہے تو کیا، لَے تو حجازی ہے مری!

(*Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, pp. 1999;

مرا ساز اگرچہ ستم رسیدۂ زخمہ ہائے عجم رہا
وہ شہید ذوقِ وفا ہوں مَیں کہ نوا مری عَرَبی رہی

Kulliyāt i Iqbal, (Urdu) pp. 313);

[20] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, pp. 407.

[21] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Urdu) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, pp. 439.

[22] Which he had else where termed as "an ocean with out shore"

عجم بحریست ناپیدا کناری
کہ در وی گوہر الماس رنگ است

Kulliyāt i Iqbal, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 236.

[23] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 415.

[24] A study of Iqbal's Persian poetry (and Iqbal's Urdu poetry itself is highly Persianized) will show that it, too, has rich– perhaps richer– folds of meaning. Ehsan Yarshater's evaluation will come as no surprise to students of Persian literature: 'Iqbal may well be considered the most significant poet in the classical Persian tradition since Hafez [d. 1390]' (Yarshater, in *Yarshater*, p. 31).

[25] Translated by Mustansir Mir, *Iqbal Quarterly*, Volume 8, Numbers 1–2, Winter and Spring 2008, pp. 3.

[26] *Kulliyāt i Iqbal*, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 295. The following verses also refer to the same theme:

عجم از نغمہ ہای من جوان شد ز سودایم متاع او گران شد
ھجومی بود رہ گم کردہ در دشت ز آواز درایم کاروان شد

***

عجم از نغمہ ام آتش بجان است صدای من درای کاروان است
حدی را تیز تر خوانم چو عرفی کہ رہ خوابیدہ و محمل گران است

بہ نیستان عجم باد صبحدم تیز است
شرارہ ئی کہ فرو می چکد ز ساز آور

Kulliyāt i Iqbal, (Persian) Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, pp. 235; 355.

IQBAL IN THE MIND OF EUROPE

AN OVERVIEW OF WESTERN INTERPRETATIONS OF IQBAL

Khurram Ali Shafique

ABSTRACT

The inability of the Western critics of Iqbal to reconcile themselves to a system of philosophy places serious limitations on the conclusions drawn with regard to Iqbal's message by some of the most eminent names in English and Orientalist literature. Because many subtleties come out only when we make an effort to discover the internal coherence of the works of Iqbal, for which we need to study him on his own terms– terms that may not be in complete agreement with the current trends of philosophical thought. Amongst the Western scholars' analytical and critical studies on Iqbal the most valuable contributions have been by those who, like Bausani and Metcalf, were brave enough to step outside the narrow tradition. It is a pity that the discovery of internal coherence of Iqbal's works was missed by many scholars. Western scholar's could be traced back to the concepts of the poet as a sentimental being. Since the *Javid Namah* is a reflection on what Iqbal met, thought about, and internalized in his own lifetime, it can be taken as blueprint to be followed literally, since his particular context will never be repeated. Nevertheless, it is a message about what it was like for one human being to try to make sense of his life.

Mechanical Research

The first collision between the new East and the old West on the issue of Iqbal occurred when R.A. Nicholson, the Orientalist best known for his translations of Rumi, tried to introduce the Poet of the East in Europe in 1920.

Nicholson came across Iqbal's first long poem in Persian soon after its publication in India in 1915, and approached him for permission to translate it. Iqbal, who had known him from his own Cambridge days nearly a decade ago, gave permission as well as some notes in which he compared the ideas with a few Western thinkers. Nicholson didn't understand that this was meant to be an easy entry-point for the Western audience. Instead he took the notes as a product of 'mechanical research', a list of sources.[1]

This assumption left him perplexed. If Iqbal had borrowed all his thought from Western thinkers then why didn't he allude to them in the poem? The only Western thinkers mentioned there were Plato and Machiavelli– as major perpetrators of evil! Thus Nicholson presumed that "*Asrar-i-Khudi* gives no systematic account [of Iqbal's thought] though it puts his ideas in a popular and attractive form."

It was obvious that by "systematic account" he meant a text that could be completely exhausted through mechanical research without challenging the existing 'categories' of knowledge in any major way. Having failed to place Iqbal inside this box, he suggested the following method for interpreting Iqbal's work:

> Let us begin at the end. What is the far-off goal on which his eyes are fixed? The answer to that question will discover his true character, and we shall be less likely to stumble on the way if we see whither we are going. Iqbal has drunk deep of European literature, his philosophy owes much to Nietzsche and Bergson, and his poetry often reminds us of Shelley; yet he thinks and feels as a Muslim, and just for this reason his influence may be great. He is a religious enthusiast, inspired by the vision of a New Mecca, a world-wide, theocratic, Utopian state in which all Muslims, no longer divided by the barriers of race and country, shall be one…

Nicholson had raised a valid question but the answer he was suggesting was rather like saying that Columbus crossed the Atlantic because he liked sailing. It was true that Iqbal had the vision of a modern Muslim polity but "the far-off goal" on which his eyes were fixed was about much else besides.

The novelist E.M. Forster, still four years away from *A Passage to India,* mistook the word of Nicholson as authentic and wrote in an otherwise sympathetic and well-meaning review of Iqbal's book:

> …like other of his contemporaries he has been influenced by Nietzsche;[2] he tries to find, in that rather shaky ideal of the Superman, a guide through the intricacy of conduct… As a guide to conduct, Nietzsche is at a discount in Europe. The drawback of being a Superman is that your neighbors observe your efforts, and try to be Supermen too, as Germany now realizes. The significance of Iqbal is not that he…manages to connect it with the Quran. Two modifications, and only two, have to be made: he condemns the Nietzsche who is an aristocrat, and an atheist; his Superman is permitted to spring from any class of society, and is obliged to believe in God. No further difficulty occurs.

Lowes Dickinson, who was among the architects of the League of Nations, joined the beeline. He detected passages in the poem where "the influence of Bergson is clear," and then added:

> But the strongest influence is Nietzsche. The doctrine of hardness, of individuality, of the need to conflict, and the benefit of an enemy run all through the poem.

E.G. Brown, whose *History of Persian Literature* had received a sharp rejoinder from Shibli Nomani (1857-1914) in India a decade ago, decided that Nicholson (and not Iqbal) was "the greatest living authority on Sufi mysticism" and thus repeated Nicholson's opinion about the philosophy of Iqbal:

> …which, as Dr. Nicholson says (p. x.), "owes much to Nietzsche and Bergson" and very little to the Neo-Platonists and their Eastern successors. Yet it is by no means a Western philosophy, rather a philosophical Pan-Islamism…

On these grounds, Brown arrived at the conclusion that "the surprising philosophical doctrine embodied in the poem" stands in "violent antagonism" to Sufi mysticism. (This reluctance of the European scholarship to the possibility of fresh interpretation of Sufi thought is reflected in our own age, for instance, in William Chittick's effort to interpret Rumi without having to deal with Iqbal. To a Western mind such scholarship may appear attractive, perhaps reminiscent of the twilight days of colonialism, but it appears painfully outdated to someone attuned with the recent developments in the East.)[3]

Iqbal wrote back to Nicholson, explaining that in his notes he had deliberately explained his position in reference to Western thinkers as he thought this would facilitate the understanding of his views in England. "I could have easily explained myself in the light of the Quran and Muslim Sufis and thinkers," he wrote, and went on to assert:

> I claim that the philosophy of *Asrar* is a direct development out of the experience and speculation of old Muslim Sufis and thinkers.

Following Nicholson's lead that Iqbal ought to be placed in the category of Muslim revivalists, Dickinson had raised an alarm:

> …some wistful Westerners, hopeless of their own countrymen are turning once more to look for a star in the East. What do they find? Not the star of Bethlehem, but this blood-red planet. If this book be prophetic, the last hope seems taken away. The East, if it arms, may indeed end by conquering the West. But if so, it will conquer no salvation for mankind. The old bloody duel will swing backwards and forwards across distracted and tortured world. And that is all. Is this really Mr. Iqbal's last word?

Apparently, Bethlehem was an allusion to W.B. Yeats' poem 'The Second Coming' that had only recently come out. Dickinson seems to have recognized that the "beast" in Yeats' vision was in fact a symbol of the rising East.[4]

In his letter to Nicholson, Iqbal addressed this concern too (and what he said about Dickinson's fear may also be applied to Yeats' poem):

> I am afraid the old European idea of a blood-thirsty Islam is still lingering in the mind of Dr. Dickinson. 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…That Muslim peoples have fought and conquered like other peoples, and that some of their leaders have screened their personal ambition behind the veil of religion, I do not deny; but I am absolutely sure that territorial conquest was no part of the original programme of Islam…Islam certainly aims at absorption. This absorption, however, is to be achieved, not by territorial conquest, but by the simplicity of its teaching, its appeal to the common sense of mankind, and its aversion from abstruse metaphysical dogma…The object of my Persian poems is not to make out a case for Islam; my aim is simply to discover a universal social reconstruction, and in this endeavour I find it philosophically impossible to ignore a social system which exists with the express object of doing away with all the distinctions of caste, rank and race, and which, while keeping a watchful eye on the affairs of this world, fosters a spirit of the unworldliness so absolutely essential to man in his relations with his neighbours. This is what Europe lacks, and this is what she can still learn from us.

2

For the sake of a better understanding among nations of the world, Iqbal was asking for a paradigm shift in Europe's approach. Unfortunately that didn't happen.

In the 1940s, the Canadian missionary W.C. Smith set out to discover "Modern Islam in India" with a set of categories deeply rooted in the socialist discourse, such as liberal thought, reactionary thought, and so on. He found that Iqbal did not fit completely into any one of those but that parts of him may be placed in each. In his book *Modern Islam in India* (1944), Smith concluded that Iqbal was a sum of contradictions. It never occurred to Smith that if the most prominent exponent on the subject didn't fit into any category then obviously wrong categories were being used for the study.

The collapse of European colonialism called for a greater effort to understand Iqbal as the man through whose work so many people in the East were seeking guidance for setting up a new world order. Smith obviously realized this change and upon establishing the McGill Institute for Islamic Studies in Canada he tried to associate it with the vision of Iqbal. Another scholar who rose up to face the reality, with a vengeance, was Nicholson's successor at Cambridge, Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969).

In the 1940s, Arberry had offered two volumes of lyrical selections from Iqbal's Persian poetry in English. After the collapse of colonialism he felt that the message of Iqbal and his school of thought were the biggest threat to the Western supremacy and hence the West should be warned about the nature of this "immanent danger." Consequently the passage he chose for translating next was *Rumooz-i-Bekhudi* (Mysteries of Selflessness), the second half of the better-known *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self).

Arberry had a greater exposure to the works of Iqbal than any of his predecessors. Unfortunately, even he seemed reluctant to step outside the beaten track of critical appreciation. Here is a typical passage of his description of Iqbal's craft:

> …his poetry is in Urdu and Persian, and abounds in the conventional imagery of those literatures; so that even when translated into English it is apt to be felt as somewhat remote and unfamiliar. Moreover, not only is his style highly idiomatic, but his thought is not infrequently complex, and almost too subtle for the language in which he chose to express it; while the exuberance of his poetic fancy baffles the reader not alert to its rapid transitions and not aware of the conceptual unity underlying the rhetorical diversity.

These are generalizations that may be repeated, without changing a single word, about practically every master of classical poetry from Iran or India. We can see that Arberry made no effort to show how Iqbal had used these well-known poetic conventions for constructing the grand architecture of his particular philosophy. In other words, he completely neglected the internal coherence in the work of Iqbal.

Like Nicholson, he also failed to observe that *Asrar-i-Khudi* and *Rumooz-i-Bekhudi* were not separate poems but parts of a single 'Mathnavi', or long poem, *Asrar-o-Rumooz* (Secrets and Mysteries).[5] His assumption that in the 'Secrets of the Self', Iqbal "developed the first part of his theory of the individual in society" was questionable because emphasis on society is found even in this part. To Iqbal, an individual is inconceivable without society just as a wave without the ocean, and hence the following deduction of Arberry hardly makes any sense:

> It is obvious that the Iqbalian conception of selfhood, if developed in isolation from society, ends in unmitigated egoism and anarchy…

It seems that Arberry relied on Nicholson's ideas about Iqbal's concept of the self and therefore arrived at a similar conclusion about Iqbal's concept of society, which is equally incorrect:

> …[Iqbal] aims to show that it is only in an ideal Islamic society, as he understands the matter, that the individual can hope to achieve complete self-affirmation.

Arberry's usage of "an ideal Islamic society" is misleading since according to Iqbal, the Islamic society is a single organism and has always remained so. A Muslim can achieve "complete self-affirmation" (as Arberry chooses to call it) through her or his relationship with this society regardless of whether the society is in its ideal state or not– the ideal in any case lies in the distant future. Likewise, Iqbal's emphasis is not on comparing the Islamic society with others but rather on seeking cooperation from those who have "practically the same ethical outlook."[6]

It is quite sad to notice where Arberry was taking his readers through this partially incorrect information:

> Such, in very brief and very simple, are the fundamental ideas worked out in these two poems. The ideas themselves are of course not particularly new; not particularly new either is the proposition that Islam is the ideal society; what is new, and what justifies Iqbal's pretension to be a leader of thought is the application of this philosophical theory of individuality and community to the religio-political dogma that Islam is superior to all other creeds and systems. The propaganda for Islamic unity in modern times has been continuous from the days of Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-97); Iqbal was one of the latest albeit one of the ablest and most influential of its publicists. He supplied a more or less respectable intellectual basis for a movement which is in reality more emotional than rational.

By his own admission, Arberry was working on the agenda of rehabilitating the colonialist discourse in the post-colonial academia– "the date of the millennium has been postponed," he wrote at the end of this passage. "But in the meanwhile there is important work to be done." How unfortunate that someone as well-reputed as

Arberry accused others of having a "more emotional than rational" basis in order to hide the fact that this was only true of himself!

In the repertoire of Iqbal Studies, *Gabriel's Wing* (1962) by Annemarie Schimmel remains a favorite especially with Western readers who are unfamiliar with Iqbal's works in their entirety. On its first appearance it offered an interesting kaleidoscope of comparisons between fragments of Iqbal's writings and scattered gems from Western and Sufi sources. However, the avowed task, to "simply show Iqbal's views on the essentials of Islam" remained underachieved due to lack of homework beyond mechanical research.

For instance, the very important section on 'predestination' in the third chapter depended too heavily on the general impression that Iqbal gave importance to free will. Thus it wasn't even mentioned that Iqbal's perception of history was entirely based on a kind of fatalism. In *The Reconstruction,* Iqbal quotes from Verse 34, Chapter 7 of the Quran, "Every nation hath its fixed period," and comments that it is "rather an instance of a more specific historical generalization which, in its epigrammatic formulation, suggests the possibility of a scientific treatment of the life of human societies regarded as organisms."[7] In so far as the life of an individual intersects with the life of the society, "destiny" also plays a part, according to Iqbal. Hence in his poetry we often find him rejoicing at "the humiliation of strategy at the hands of destiny."

3

Yet, mechanical research is not without its uses, as may be seen from the several useful indices, bibliographical tools and textual notes prepared by Iqbal scholars.

This mode of research is also useful for unpresumptuous brief studies consciously aimed at giving a sectional view of the subject. Two excellent examples are the various writings of Alessandro Bausani and the paper by Barbra Metcalf on Iqbal's poem 'The Mosque of Cordoba'.

Bausani's crowning grace is his acute sense of history due to which he never fails to place his findings in their proper perspective in the evolution of human civilization. He seems to be the only writer within the European milieu who had the potential to correct the mistakes of all his predecessors, only if he had received more attention. His comparative study of the sources of Iqbal's conception of Satan is quite well-known but here I would like to point out to such lesser-known gems as the following insight in his paper 'Dante and Iqbal', first published in the *East and West,* Rome, in 1951-2:

> Naturally the many vital differences between the two are not to be gainsaid. For one thing, Iqbal lived six centuries after Dante's death, and was born to a religious tradition different from the Catholic one. His is not the settled and well-ordered universe of Aristotle. On the contrary Iqbal strongly criticizes Greek thought which, according to him, ruined the pure atheism of early Christianity through its rationalist theology and Pagan ritualism; whereas Islam, though not entirely immune from the same taint, was better able to resist owing to its own anti-classical theology, such as the Ash'arite, which abolishes all the causes secundae in recognition of God's absolute freedom as Creator.[8]

Hence it is clear that Bausani displays a deeper insight into the world of Iqbal's thought than many European writers we have discussed here. While most of them had a tendency to look for dichotomies, Bausani aims to do the opposite by integrating the works of Iqbal, especially *Javednama* and *The Reconstruction.* This gives him a better view of the larger picture, for instance:

> Iqbal then, is not one of those Oriental mystics admired by too many weary Europeans on account of his own weariness; but neither is he a religious agitator or a fanatic worshipper of action as such. He "rose to heaven" before he went into action. His revaluation of the ego must not be too literally accepted, nor should we transpose it to a meaning too well-known to us Europeans.[9]

This is a very good first step towards discovering the internal coherence in the works of Iqbal. Unfortunately the tradition of Bausani was less often followed in the mainstream than that of Arberry.

While Bausani was pointing at the internal coherence in the larger picture of Iqbal's entire work, Barbara D. Metcalf studied a small detail of that picture in order to discover that mechanism through which the coherence of the larger picture could be discerned. In 'Reflections on Iqbal's Mosque', a paper read out at the International Congress on Allama Muhammad Iqbal held at Lahore in December 1977, Metcalf treated Iqbal's poem 'The Mosque of Cordoba' like a masterpiece of architecture in order to discover parallels between the poem and the Mosque which was being praised in it. Of an even greater utility was her general observation which, unfortunately, didn't get much attention in the subsequent decades:

> The appeal of the poem is often attributed to its subject. That alone, however, does not explain the poem's magic, for the mosque alone could be read about in Baedeker or a history of Spain. The subject is important only because of the way it is treated and the way it is embedded in the poem. It is, therefore, important to examine the poem itself, its stanzaic form and patterns of rhyme and rhythm as well as its content. Most studies of Iqbal take for granted that Iqbal is a poet and do not analyze his skill as craftsman and artist. Treatments of his poetry

> typically extract from the verse aspects of Iqbal's political or philosophical or religious thought attention to the context that gives them form and meaning.

In this compact statement, Metcalf summed up the cardinal temptations of Iqbal scholars. Her own success in showing that "Iqbal in this poem not only celebrates a mosque, but literally builds in the verse a 'mosque' of his own" was ensured by her success in avoiding extra-textual resources.

On the other hand, the work of Pakistani-American scholar Mustansir Mir– available so far in the volumes *Tulip in the Desert* (2000) and *Iqbal* (2006), and the quarterly *Iqbalnama*– is a specimen of how first class Western scholarship on Iqbal can occasionally suffer from giving in to these 'cardinal temptations'. The work offers an outstanding translation of passages from the Urdu and Persian poetry of Iqbal with an excellent analysis of the imagery used. Also, it deserves special credit for introducing to the Western scholarship several convictions commonly shared in Pakistan but relatively unknown outside– such as, "Iqbal's poetry and philosophy do not exist in isolation from each other, but are integrally related, his poetry serving as a vehicle for his thought",[10] or "even if we take the period of his stay in Europe (1905-8) as the turning point in the evolution of his thought, Iqbal's writings in the post-Europe period show remarkable consistency."[11]

Mir is at his analytical best on subjects such as the imagery of Iqbal's poems but gives his readers an occasion to be dissatisfied where he attempts to reach a conclusion on the basis of minor details only and overlooks the larger context.

An outstanding example of the first is to be found in Mir's footnotes to his translation of Iqbal's poem 'Philosophers', which is a dialogue between Locke, Kant and Bergson. After explaining the imagery of the poem in relation to the philosophical position of each thinker, Mir concludes:

> A few general remarks on 'Locke, Kant and Bergson'[12] may not be out of place. (1) Iqbal's three couplets are remarkable for their succinct summing up of some of the fundamental ideas of the three philosophers. But Iqbal does not merely state the three philosophers' views; he also shows how these views are interrelated in a continuing movement of thought from Locke to Bergson: how Kant criticized Locke, and how Bergson criticized both Kant and Locke. (2) It is equally remarkable that Iqbal is able to use a single image, that of the tulip, to describe the philosophies of the three thinkers. The tulip, Iqbal's favorite flower, appears ideal for his purposes here: with Locke it becomes a clean slate (empty wine-cup); with Kant it becomes the formal conditioning factors of knowledge and understanding (tulip's starlike cup); and with Bergson the 'scar' in the tulip's heart represents the principle of life which is its own explanation. Iqbal succeeds eminently in explicating certain concepts in

> Western thought by using a typical Eastern image; one could hardly think of a more felicitous way of describing Western thought to an Eastern audience. (3) To which of the three views is Iqbal himself sympathetic? One can say that in the present context at least, Iqbal supports the view of Bergson, or that he uses Bergson as his mouthpiece. Bergson would be quite pleased by Iqbal's description elsewhere (ZK 638 [589][13]) of the natural water fountain: "It is from its inner drive that the water of the fountain gushes forth and rises [*buland josh-i darun se hu'a he fawwara*]."[14]

Mir's analysis of this poem is outstanding. However, while showing us that Iqbal himself may be most sympathetic to Bergson's view on the subject, Mir has chosen to quote from a different book by Iqbal and although one cannot disagree with Mir's comment, the comment itself may have become more substantial if he had informed his readers that in the preface of 'A Message from the East' itself (the book from which this poem is taken), Iqbal has made a comment about Bergson which is very relevant to the substance of the poem and sheds more light on it.

Likewise, while analyzing the theme of nature in the chapter entitled 'Major Themes in Poetry' in *Iqbal,* Mir points out four levels of Iqbal's engagement with nature:

(a) Celebrating the simple beauty of nature;
(b) Nature as a congenial companion;
(c) Nature as a spur to serious reflection;
(d) Nature as a foil for drawing out the human being's potential.

This is inspired scholarship. It is much to be regretted that it doesn't take one more step to demolish some boundaries by showing the very obvious connection between these four levels of Iqbal's engagement with nature and the five elements in his interpretation of the Qur'anic conception of God. Those elements have been listed by Mir himself in the chapter called 'Philosophical Thought' as Individuality, Creativeness, Knowledge, Omnipotence and Eternity.

It should not be difficult to see that the four levels of engagements with nature which Mir has so candidly discovered in the poetry of Iqbal are related to the latter four elements in the conception of God *in the reverse order* (and the reversal is significant, as I will try to show):

(a) Celebrating the simple beauty of nature is recognition of God's Eternity.
(b) Nature as a congenial companion is a sign of God's Omnipotence.
(c) Nature as a spur to serious reflection corresponds to God's Knowledge.
(d) Nature as a foil for drawing out the human being's potential mirrors God's Creativeness.

If Mir had decided to bring this internal coherence in the work of Iqbal it would have not only substantiated his magnificent conception of Iqbal's poetry 'serving as a vehicle for his thought', but he may also have felt inclined to mention a fifth level of Iqbal's engagement with nature. This is where, after using nature as a foil for drawing her or his own potential, the human being makes sustainable modifications to nature and hence:

(e) Nature serves as raw material for sustainable human artistry in celebration of God's Individuality.

As I have tried to show in my book *The Republic of Rumi: A Novel of Reality* (2007), the five elements of the Qur'anic conception of God lead to the formation of five 'categories' for objective analysis in the thought system of Iqbal. Since in any such analysis the human being is ascending from her or his own position, the sequence of the stations of this objective human wisdom is the opposite of the five elements in the conception of God– the human consciousness 'ascends' towards the conception of God while the conception of God 'descends' upon the human consciousness. These subtleties come out only when we make an effort to discover the internal coherence of the works of Iqbal, for which we need to study him on his own terms– terms that may not be in complete agreement with the current trends of philosophical thought.

In a very Shakespearean sense, the tragic flaw of Mir seems to be his bonding with the academic paradigm of the West. In 'Iqbal's Legacy', the final chapter of *Iqbal,* he writes:

> Until now, Iqbal has been mainly viewed as a poet and the serious philosophical aspect of his thought, whether expressed in his prose or in his poetry, has not been fully recognized. That aspect has now begun to attract greater attention, and this changing trend is due, at least in part, to Western scholars' analytical and critical studies on Iqbal.

Of the overall worth of "Western scholars' analytical and critical studies on Iqbal," we have already made a fairly good assessment. The most valuable contributions have been by those who, like Bausani and Metcalf, were brave enough to step outside narrow definitions of "analytical and critical studies" and were therefore able to have a clearer view of Iqbal's poetry "serving as a vehicle for his thought," as Mir himself has stated the matter so beautifully elsewhere.[15]

PART II

The Sentimental Approach

In his review of *The Secrets of the Self,* mentioned earlier, E. M. Forster also informed his readers that Iqbal used to write with a

Muslim sentiment in the beginning but had been catering to patriotic feelings since 1916 due to a change in political trends in India:

> …and there is much discussion as to how he will evolve. If an outsider may venture an opinion, he will not evolve but revolve.

One wonders from where Forster got his information that "there is much discussion as to how [Iqbal] will evolve." There was no such discussion, nor could have been, for the poems did not come in the order Forster had assumed for them. The so-called 'patriotic' poems, which Forster placed in 1916 and later, had in fact been written much earlier around 1904-5. The 'Islamic' poems came later, but what Forster missed was that patriotism and Muslim identity existed in the works of Iqbal simultaneously in any given period, early or late.

In his letter to Nicholson, Iqbal tried to correct Forster's mistake rather politely and not without his characteristic humility:

> The view of the writer in *The Athenaeum*[16] is largely affected by some mistakes of fact, for which, however, the writer does not seem to be responsible. But I am sure if he had known some of the dates of the publication of my Urdu poems referred to in his review, he would have certainly taken a totally different view of the growth of my literary activity.[17]

The most striking thing about this mistake is that Nicholson himself, to whom the letter was addressed, repeated it a few years later while reviewing Iqbal's next Persian work, *Payam-i-Mashriq* (A Message from the East). He opened his essay with these words:

> Amongst the Indian Muslim poets of today Iqbal stands on a hill by himself. In him there are two voices of power. One speaks in Urdu and appeals to Indian patriotism, though Iqbal is not a nationalist in politics; the other, which uses the beautiful and melodious language of Persia, sings to a Muslim audience…

It seems that Nicholson, who may not have had any first-hand knowledge of Iqbal's Urdu poetry, was relying on Forster's report. He may have remembered that Iqbal mentioned some error of dating, and therefore he substituted the gradual changes in thought with a dichotomy existing at the same time!

Ironically, "the Muslim element" was actually more obvious in Iqbal's Urdu poetry at that particular time while his latest Persian anthology, which Nicholson was reviewing, contained much of such stuff as "a lover does not differentiate between Ka'aba and the temple." One wonders why –despite this latest evidence of 'universalism' in Iqbal's poetry– Nicholson was so adamant at repeating his previous position that Iqbal's Persian poetry was only about making out a case for Islam.

Thus was born that most persistent myth about Iqbal that his career was either a series of dramatic changes in viewpoints– from patriotism to Muslim nationalism, from pantheism to its opposite, from Sufism to Superman– or it suffered from some sort of dichotomy, whether between his Urdu and Persian poetry or between his poetry and his prose.

It is not difficult to see that this misconception was partially due to Forster's general concept of poets which he had described in the same review. "Poets," he had written, "Since they decide by emotion rather than arithmetic, their attitude is often unstable and vexes the politicians. Iqbal is a case in point." This concept comes quite close to the Quranic description of bad poets from which, in all fairness, Iqbal deserves to be exempted:

> And as for the poets– those who are lost in grievous error would follow them. Are you not aware that they roam confusedly through all the valleys. And that they say what they do not do? Except those who have attained to faith, and do righteous deeds, and remember God unceasingly, and defend themselves [only] after having been wronged, and those who are bent on wrongdoing will in time come to know how evil a turn their destinies are bound to take.[18]

The Islamic concept of 'wisdom poetry' arises out of the Qur'anic conception of good poetry. In his *Mathnavi,* Rumi tells the story of a foolish servant whose master sent him to fetch flour and salt in a pot but told him to keep the two separate. The servant went to the shop and got some flour. Then he turned the pot over and asked the shopkeeper to put some salt on the other side. Of course, the flour was lost in the process but he didn't notice. When he returned to the master and showed the salt, the master said, "That's nice. Now where is the flour?" The servant said, "It must be on the other side." Saying this, he turned the pot over again, thus losing the salt as well. Rumi warns us that when we do with ideas what the foolish servant did with the pot, what we lose in the process is not salt or flour but our selves. One can see an analogy between this constant turning over of the pot and "the continual surrender of himself" which T.S. Eliot asked of a poet towards "the mind of Europe." Rumi foresees loss of the self as a result, and Eliot also hoped for the same:

> The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.[19]

This 'new criticism' that was emerging in Europe those days could not leave much room for 'wisdom poetry'– a handicap of the European scholar that was further enhanced by a new approach to biography usually attributed to the Bloomsbury writer Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), who was a close friend of both Forster and

Eliot. It seems appropriate to see how he viewed the duties of a biographer:

> To preserve, for instance, a becoming brevity– a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that is significant– that, surely, is the first duty of the biographer. The second, no less surely, is to maintain his own freedom of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary; it is his business to lay bare the facts of the case, as he understands them…[20]

The intentions are indeed noble but one can detect a sense of defeat in the qualifier "as he understands them" as it implies that the biographer may not be able to lay bare the facts as they were in themselves. Secondly, the suggestion "to maintain his own freedom of spirit" could lead to a kind of intellectual arrogance that was avoidable only if the writer aimed instead to *discover* that freedom of spirit through the process itself. Ninety years later we can see that Strachey's methods have led to a sentimental approach whereby many subsequent biographers have been compelled to approach their subjects in the light of their own dogmas and misunderstood this as freedom of spirit.

Alternates to the Strachey approach have seldom been taken seriously in the West. One such case is the American critic Herbert Reed, who offered an alternate to the sentimental approach in 1921 when he compared Iqbal with the ideal of Walt Whitman and observed:

> Applying it here and now, I can think of only one living poet who in any way sustains the test, and almost necessarily he is not of our race and creed. I mean Muhammad Iqbal…

He concluded that Iqbal's ideal was more relevant than Nietzsche's and more vital than Whitman's.

Reed could not overthrow the influence of Strachey. "Man is led by man and we are led by Mr. Strachey," a younger biographer Lord David Cecil (1902-86) wrote in 1936. "We may extend his building, but we must always construct on his foundations."[21] Most subsequent writers on Iqbal have been directly or indirectly indebted to the biographical legacy of Strachey whether they knew it or not (and in most instances they did not). Therefore, Iqbal knew exactly what he was talking about when he stated in the preface to *A Message from the East* in 1923:

> Regarded from a purely literary standpoint, the debilitation of the forces of life in Europe after the ordeal of the war is unfavorable to the development of a correct and mature literary ideal. Indeed, the fear is that the minds of the nations may be gripped by that slow-pulsed Magianism which runs away from life's difficulties and which fails to

distinguish between the sentiments of the heart and the thoughts of the mind.[22]

4

In the 1940s, the Canadian missionary Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000) attempted to discover the "modern Islam in India" with a set of categories deeply embedded in the socialist discourse, such as liberal thought, reactionary thought, and so on. He found that Iqbal did not fit completely into any of those but parts of him could be attributed to each. In his book *Modern Islam in India* (1944), Smith concluded that Iqbal was a sum of contradictions. Obviously a more objective approach would have been to notice that if the subject wasn't fitting into any category then the categories being used for the study were wrong.

However, we need not discuss that book further because Smith himself realized his mistake very soon. Consequently the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies founded by him in 1952 was attributed to a mature perception of Iqbal. "My teacher Wilfred Cantwell Smith had been strongly influenced by Iqbal," writes Dr. Sheila McDonough, who was in the first batch of students at McGill Institute:

> Smith said he had tried to pay honor to Iqbal, not by writing explicitly about the poet-philosopher's life and thought, but by receiving inspiration from him, and by applying his mind to the same problems that had concerned the Muslim thinker. Subsequently, Smith has become one of the most significant innovative thinkers and institution builders in North America, and in the world, in the area of the comparative history of religion as an academic discipline.

It is the later and more mature understanding of Iqbal by Smith that properly deserves our attention. He thought that 'destiny' in the writings of Iqbal was a figurative reference to human potentials yet to be unfolded. Likewise, Smith thought that Iqbal, like Nietzsche, had regarded all cultures to be entirely human creations.[23] On both issues, Smith was overlooking a major portion of the canon of Iqbal's writings.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Iqbal's perception of history was based on a kind of fatalism. This made it possible for him to believe that a visionary can foresee the destiny of his or her nation. In the Allahabad Address he stated clearly:

> By leaders I mean men who, by Divine gift or experience, possess a keen perception of the spirit and destiny of Islam, along with an equally keen perception of the trend of modern history. Such men are really the

> driving forces of a people, but they are God's gift and cannot be made to order.

The "spirit" and "destiny" both refer here to certain concretes. Iqbal himself claimed knowledge of the major events of Muslim history up to several centuries into the future– he wrote that very clearly in a letter to a friend in 1917, in every single book of his poetry and in the Allahabad Address itself where he stated:

> Self-Government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, *the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state* appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of the North-West India. [24]

Likewise the 'spirit' of Islam– or "the spirit of Muslim culture" as he calls it in the *Reconstruction*– is not just a figure of speech but an entity, a 'self'. As such it cannot be a human creation and only the Divine command could have created it. Since the spirit of Muslim culture is an entity– a 'spirit'– its aims, objects and future intentions may be discovered by someone who dares to look beyond appearances and take into account all the forces that shape history. Iqbal believed it possible to acquire such knowledge and considered himself to be one such person (which wasn't very unusual in the particular tradition to which he belonged: Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah had also made similar assertions in their own times, and their predictions had come true, just like Iqbal's prediction about 'the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state').

It is a pity that Smith didn't grasp this dimension of Iqbal. One can see why. Dr. Sheila McDonough writes:

> The shocks of partition, and his discovery of the brutality of the Stalinist regime, had knocked out of Smith's head any certainty that he, or anyone else, could ever have a clear enough grasp of all the factors at work in any historical situation to be able to say that they knew exactly what forces were shaping history.

One can sympathize with Smith but should not presume too readily that he and Iqbal were on the same plane.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, another significant Orientalist who appeared with the collapse of colonialism around the same time was A.J. Arberry. His treatment of Iqbal's biography in the preface to *The Mysteries of Selflessness* (a part of which was discussed earlier) was as sentimental as any Bloomsbury:

> …his last years of mental and physical anguish were not relieved by the consolation of knowing that the cause for which he strove so long was so soon to triumph. But a spate of publications, issued in Pakistan hard upon the heels of its independence, hailed him as the spiritual founder of the richest and most numerous Muslim country in the world…

In this sample, Arberry has glossed over certain facts. We have seen that Iqbal's foresight is an issue that cannot be handled without some serious analysis of his statements in that regard but Arberry was either not aware of such material or he overlooked it in order to achieve a Stracheyesque style in his writing. At least his next sentence seems to be driven more by stylistic concerns than by what he must have known about "the spate of publications" that hailed Iqbal as the spiritual founder of Pakistan: such publications had been quite abundant even before the independence of Pakistan and included several statements by the Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah himself.

The low ebb of sentimentality in Iqbal Studies, however, may only be assessed through H.T. Sorley who, in his note on Iqbal in *Musa Parvagans* (1953), came up with a fantastic observation:

> Iqbal would have been a better poet if he had had the spirit to climb Mount Everest. But he did not care for such things of the pulsating and active spirit. The result is that his poetry is the work of a sedate intellectual who at times reaches the high levels of achievement but cannot hope to scale the utmost peaks.[25]

Annemarie Schimmel echoed Sorley, although in a more sympathetic manner, when she wrote about 'the aesthetic side' of Iqbal in the first chapter of *Gabriel's Wing*:

> Iqbal himself was not fond of outdoor amusements, and therefore praises Islam which has, essentially, no amusements…[26]

She quoted an entry from Iqbal's private notebook *Stray Reflections* where Iqbal states, "The absence of amusement in Muslim countries indicates neither poverty nor austerity nor bluntness of the sense for enjoyment…" If the thesis of Sorley and Schimmel is accepted then it becomes very difficult to explain such passages from Iqbal's poetry where the protagonists attempt to cross the Atlantic on horsebacks– we cannot presume that the poet developed a temporary passion for horse-riding when he wrote those lines.

The assessments of Sorley and Schimmel seem to be driven by the same concept of poet which Forster had erroneously applied to Iqbal: *"they decide by emotion rather than arithmetic…"* Hence from a letter written by Iqbal in 1918, she inferred that he "wanted literature to be optimistic" and presumed that "this is also the reason for his criticism of Hafiz whose poetical art– if taken only as art– he highly admired but who 'did not sharpen the sword of the self' (ZK 127)."

It seems that Schimmel overlooked the fact that Iqbal had a tendency towards meliorism rather than optimism, but what is even more baffling is that Hafiz is not even mentioned in that poem in *Zarb-i-Kaleem* ('ZK') from which she quoted the line with some interpolation. On the

contrary, two poems later Iqbal praises "the tavern of Hafiz" for being a testimony to "the heat of its architect's blood."

Schimmel was obviously relying on the information that Iqbal made harsh remarks about Hafiz at one point in his life and overlooked the fact that he took back those remarks two years later. Even then it was not a very safe presumption that one could quote any statement of Iqbal on bad poetry as Iqbal's opinion on Hafiz.

5

The Flame of Sinai: Hope and Vision in Iqbal (2002) by Dr. Sheila McDonough was a full-length biography from the perspective of comparative history of religions. The positive, and perhaps lasting, contribution of the book was to revisit the life of Iqbal with a number of perspectives that had emerged in the academic discourse since the collapse of colonialism, such as the potential contribution of Iqbal to the comparative history of religions, his comparison with Gandhi and Nehru, and so on. Some of these aspects had never been studied in book-length detail.

What made this commendable effort ineffective was a high number of factual mistakes and unsubstantiated opinions. It is true that most scholars face some gaps in factual information, since few people can claim to know everything about a subject but writers usually get around it by wording their statements carefully. Unfortunately, Dr. McDonough's work gave the impression of a general disregard for facts. Her assertion that Iqbal was "deified" and "divinized" in Pakistan could have been worded more carefully to show her familiarity with the difference between 'canonization' and 'deification'.

Apparently the statement was rooted in the author's dislike for reverence but she went on to state that Iqbal was never called "Allama" in his lifetime[27]– as if those who now call him by that title lack in a sense of history. Since 'Allama' was the singularly most common epithet used for Iqbal in his lifetime, at least in the Muslim press of India, Dr. McDonough's assertion amounts to a mild intellectual violence: as if she was claiming superiority over the more knowledgeable on the ground that she knew less. One could see the Stracheyesque sentimentalism at work here: objectivity was being interpreted as mere irreverence and the author's "independence of spirit" soared higher than the need to be checked by accuracy of facts.

To this may be added some fifteen other errors that punctuated the 250-page book. Some seemed to be due to a lack of familiarity

with basic texts– such as that Iqbal delivered his *Reconstruction* lectures "in Madras in 1929".[28] (The preface of *Reconstruction* mentions that the lectures were "delivered at Madras, Hyderabad, and Aligarh.") Other mistakes may have arisen out of a general disregard for facts.

This overall inability 'to distinguish between the sentiments of the heart and the thoughts of the mind' prevented Dr. McDonough from seeing a basic problem in her premise. In the introduction to her book she stated:

> The theoretical point is that religions are best understood by those who practice them…

It is difficult to disagree with her position but it is a position which questions the very justification for comparative history of religion, of which Dr. McDonough herself is an exponent and in her book she tried to show Iqbal as one of the earliest exponents too. If "religions are best understood by those who practice them", then a scholar of comparative history of religions should presume to be superior to the followers of religions, since they can best understand only their own religions while the scholar can understand all religions. To say the least, this would lead to an intellectual arrogance even when the scholar doesn't intend it.

The other alternate for the scholar is to admit that she or he is working with something less than average, something less than the best understanding of religions possible only for those 'who practice them'. This would be tantamount to admitting that the discipline itself is an exercise in mediocrity, and hence the practitioners of comparative history of religions would be reluctant to go for this alternative.

Iqbal offers a solution. In *Javidnama,* his journey across the universe begins under the guidance of Rumi and the first stop in the itinerary is moon where the following seven stations may be recognized:

1. The cave of Vishvamitra[29]
2. The music of Sarosh
3. The poetry of Sarosh
4. The tablet of Buddha
5. The tablet of Zarathustra
6. The tablet of Christ
7. The tablet of Muhammad

A careful study would reveal that these seven stations are meant to highlight the spiritual journey of the entire humanity as well as that of an individual soul. The first station is metaphysics, the second and third stations are fine arts, and the remaining are four

religions in historic progression. The unity between religions is to be understood through the unity of life which insists on integrating spirituality with other areas (hence the first three stations) and by assigning a unique role to each religion in history (hence the four latter stations). Practically, the entire existing civilization can be divided into four zones, each of which is illuminated by the message of one of the four prophets mentioned here: Buddha, Zarathustra, Christ and Muhammad.

However, while one particular region may find more emphasis in a particular region, the real boundaries cannot be geographic or eugenic. The point is not to stop at any point, since the seven stations of Moon are paralleled by seven stages of the journey itself. Those stages are Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the Paradise:

1. As the first station on Moon, the cave of Vishvamitra comes to represent the whole of the planet, which is the first stage of the journey: Vishvamitra's "nine sayings" give an overview of the entire journey from an intellectual point of view while the seven stations of Moon give an overview through experience.
2. The deeper meaning of the music of Sarosh (the second station on Moon) is revealed on Mercury (the second stage of the journey) through recitation of the Quran by Jamaluddin Afghani and his exposition of 'the World of the Quran'.
3. The poetry of Sarosh (the third station on Moon) is apparently the inspiration for two poems recited on Venus (the third stage of the journey): Iqbal's *ghazal* recited by Rumi in defiance of false idols and the Mahdi of Sudan's lyrics recited by him in defiance of human tyrants.
4. The message of Buddha 'to be in the world and yet be free of it' (the fourth station on Moon) gets fully illustrated through the world of Barkhia on Mars (the fourth stage in the journey).
5. The prophetic consciousness of Zarathustra, who defies the ascetic preaching of Ahriman (at the fifth station on Moon), is echoed in the souls whom Iqbal meets on Jupiter (the fifth stage) and the purpose of Ahriman is also better understood there.
6. The tablet of Christ with the dream of Tolstoy (the sixth station on Moon) is paralleled in the plight of India as depicted on Saturn (the sixth stage).
7. The tablet of Muhammad, where his arch enemy is urging the idols to stay in Ka'aba or at least in the infidels' hearts (the final station on Moon) may be better understood in the light of the final stage of the journey where Iqbal meets God face to face.

It is a pity that the discovery of this internal coherence of *Javidnama* escaped the one scholar who had the "cause, and will, and strength, and means to do it."[30] Dr. McDonough's limitations didn't seem to be personal but could be traced back to the Bloomsbury concept of the poet as a sentimental being. "Since the *Javid Namah* is a reflection on what Iqbal met, thought about, and internalized in his own lifetime, it cannot be taken as blueprint to be followed literally, since his particular context will never be repeated," she observed at the beginning of her analysis. "Nevertheless, it is a message about what it was like for one human being to try to make sense of his life."[31]

Ironically, this is the assumption against which Iqbal warns the potential reader at the very beginning of the poem:

> What I have said comes from another world; this book descends from another heaven.

*****

Postscript:

In His Own Words

My Dear Dr. Nicholson,[32]

I was very glad to learn from your letter to Shafi[33] that your translation of the *Asrar-i-Khudi* has been favourably received and excited much attention in England. Some of the English reviewers, however, have been misled by the superficial resemblance of some of my ideas to those of Nietzsche.[34] The view of the writer in *The Athenaeum*[35] is largely affected by some mistakes of fact, for which, however, the writer does not seem to be responsible. But I am sure if he had known some of the dates of the publication of my Urdu poems referred to in his review, he would have certainly taken a totally different view of the growth of my literary activity. Nor does he rightly understand my idea of the Perfect Man, which he confounds with the German thinker's Superman. I wrote on the Sufi doctrine of the Perfect Man more than twenty years ago – long before I had read or heard anything of Nietzsche. This was then published in *The Indian Antiquary*[36] and later, in 1908, formed part of my book on Persian Metaphysics.[37] The English reader ought to approach this idea not through the German thinker, but through an English thinker of great merit – I mean Alexander,[38] whose Gifford Lectures delivered in Glasgow were published last year. His chapter on Deity and God (ii.341) is worth reading. On page 347 he says: "Deity is thus the next higher empirical quality to mind, which the universe is engaged in bringing to birth. That the universe is pregnant with such a quality we are speculatively assured. What that quality is we cannot know; for we can neither enjoy nor still less contemplate it. Our human altars still are raised to the unknown God. If

we could know what Deity is, how it feels to be Divine, we should first have to become as God." Alexander's thought is much bolder than mine. I believe there is a Divine tendency in the universe, but this tendency will eventually find its complete expression in a higher man, not in a God subject to Time, as Alexander implies in his discussion of the subject. I do not agree with Alexander's view of God; but it is clear that my idea of the Perfect Man will lose much of its outlandishness in the eye of the English reader if he approaches it through the ideas of a thinker of his own country.

But it was Mr. Lowes Dickinson's review[39] which interested me most, and I want to make a few remarks on it.

1. Mr. Dickinson thinks, as I understand from his private letter to me,[40] that I have deified physical force in the poem. He is, however, mistaken in his view. I believe in the power of the spirit, not brute force. When a people is called to a righteous war, it is, according to my belief, their duty to obey the call; but I condemn all war of conquest (cf. the story of Miyan Mir and the Emperor of India).[41] But Mr. Dickinson is quite right when he says that war is destructive, whether it is waged in the interest of truth and justice or in the interests of conquest and exploitation. It must be put an end to in any case. We have seen, however, that treaties, leagues, arbitrations and conferences cannot put an end to it. Even if we secure these in a more effective manner than before, ambitious nations will substitute more peaceful forms of the exploitation of races supposed to be less favoured or less civilized. The truth is that we stand in need of a living personality to solve our social problems, to settle our disputes and to place international morality on a surer basis. How very true are the last two paragraphs of Prof. Mackenzie's *Introduction to Social Philosophy* (pp.367ff).[42] I take the liberty to transcribe them here:

> There can be no ideal society without ideal men: and for the production of these we require not only insight but a motive power; fire as well as light. Perhaps a philosophical understanding of our social problems is not even the chief want of our time. We need prophets as well as teachers, men like Carlyle or Ruskin or Tolstoy, who are able to add for us a new severity to conscience or a new breadth to duty. Perhaps we want a new Christ… It has been well said that the wilderness of the present is in the incessant war by which we are trying to make our way upwards. It is there that the prophet must be.
>
> Or perhaps our chief want is rather for the poet of the new age than for its prophet – or for one who should be poet and prophet in one. Our poets of recent generations have taught us the love of nature, and enabled us to see in it the revelation of the divine. We still look for one who shall show us with the same clearness the presence of the divine in the human… We shall need one who shall be fully and in all seriousness what Heine

playfully called himself, a 'Ritter von dem Heiligen Geist,' one who shall teach us to see the working out of our highest ideals in everyday life of the world, and to find in devotion to the advancement of that life, not merely a sphere for an ascetic self-sacrifice, but a supreme object in the pursuit of which 'all thoughts, all passions, all delights' may receive their highest development and satisfaction.

It is in the light of such thoughts that I want the British public to read my description of the ideal man. It is not our treaties and arbitrations which will put an end to the internecine wars of the human family. A living personality alone will effectively do such a thing, and it is to him that I say:
Bring once more days of peace to the world,
Give a message of peace to them that seek battle.[43]

2. Mr. Dickinson further refers to my "Be hard." This is based on the view of reality that I have taken in the poem. According to my belief reality is a collection of individualities tending to become a harmonious whole through conflict which must inevitably lead to mutual adjustment. This conflict is a necessity in the interests of the evolution of higher forms of life and of personal immortality. Nietzsche did not believe in personal immortality. To those desiring it he ruthlessly says: "Do you wish to be a perpetual burden on the shoulders of time?"[44] He was led to say this because he had a wrong notion of time, and never tried to grapple with the ethical issue involved in the question of time. On the other hand I look upon immortality as the highest aspiration of man, on which he should focus all his energies, and consequently I recognize the need of all forms of activity, including conflict, which tend to make the human person more and more stable.[45] And for the same consideration I condemn speculative mysticism and inactive quietism. My interest in conflict is mainly ethical and not political, whereas Nietzsche's was probably only political. Modern physical science has taught us that the atom of material energy has achieved its present form through many thousands of years of evolution. Yet it is unstable and can be made to disappear. The same is the case with the atom of mind-energy, i.e. the human person. It has achieved its present form through aeons of incessant effort and conflict; yet, in spite of all this, its instability is clear from the various phenomena of mental pathology. If it is to continue intact it cannot ignore the lessons learnt from its past career, and will require the same (or similar) forces to maintain its stability which it has availed itself or before. It is possible that in its onward march nature may modify or eliminate altogether some of the forces (e.g. conflict in the way of mutual wars) that have so far determined and helped its evolution, and introduce new forces hitherto unknown to mankind, to secure its stability. But I confess I am not an idealist in this matter, and believe this time to be very distant. I am afraid mankind will not, for a very long time to come, learn the lesson that the Great European War[46] has

offered them. Thus it is clear that my purpose in recognizing the need of conflict is merely ethical. Mr. Dickinson has unfortunately altogether ignored this aspect of the "Be hard."

3. Mr. Dickinson further remarks that while my philosophy is universal, my application of it is particular and exclusive. This is in a sense true. The humanitarian ideal is always universal in poetry and philosophy; but if you make it an effective ideal and work it out in actual life, you must start, not with poets and philosophers, but with a society exclusive, in the sense of having a creed and a well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limits by example and persuasion.[47] Such a society, according to my belief, is Islam. This society has so far proved itself a most successful opponent of the race-idea, which is probably the hardest barrier in the way of the humanitarian ideal. Renan[48] was wrong when he said that science is the greatest enemy of Islam. No, it is the race-idea which is the greatest enemy of Islam – in fact of all humanity; and it is the duty of all lovers of mankind to stand in revolt against this dreadful invention of the Devil. Since I find that the idea of nationality – based on race or territory – is making headway in the world of Islam, and since I fear that the Muslims, losing sight of their own ideal of a universal humanity, are being lured by the idea of a territorial nationality, I feel it is my duty, as a Muslim and as a lover of all men, to remind them of their true function in the evolution of mankind. Tribal and national organization on the lines of race or territory are only a temporary phase in the unfolding and upbringing of collective life, and as such I have no quarrel with them; but I condemn them in the strongest possible terms when they are regarded as the ultimate expression of the life of mankind. While I have the greatest love for Islam, it is in view of practical and not patriotic considerations, as Mr. Dickinson thinks, that I am compelled to start with a specific society (e.g. Islam) which, among the societies of the world, happens to be the only one suitable to my purpose. Nor is the spirit of Islam so exclusive as Mr. Dickinson thinks. In the interests of a universal unification of mankind the Quran ignores their minor differences and says: "Come let us unite on what is common to us all."[49]

I am afraid the old European idea of a blood-thirsty Islam is still lingering in the mind of Dr. Dickinson. 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. Leagues, mandates, treaties, like the one described by Mr. Keynes,[50] and imperialisms, however draped in democracy, can never bring salvation to mankind. The salvation of man lies in absolute equality and freedom of all. We stand in need of a thorough overhauling of the uses of science which have brought so much misery to mankind, and of a total abandonment of

what may be called esoteric politics, which is ever planning the ruin of less clever or weaker races.

That Muslim peoples have fought and conquered like other peoples, and that some of their leaders have screened their personal ambition behind the veil of religion, I do not deny; but I am absolutely sure that territorial conquest was no part of the original programme of Islam. As a matter of fact I consider it a great loss that the progress of Islam as a conquering faith stultified the growth of those germs of an economic and democratic organization of society, which I find scattered up and down the pages of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. No doubt the Muslims succeeded in building a great empire, but thereby they largely re-paganised their political ideals and lost sight of some of the most important potentialities of their faith.[51] Islam certainly aims at absorption. This absorption, however, is to be achieved, not by territorial conquest, but by the simplicity of its teaching, its appeal to the common sense of mankind, and its aversion from abstruse metaphysical dogma.[52] That Islam can succeed by its inherent force is sufficiently clear from the Muslim missionary work in China, where it has won millions of adherents without the help of any political power. I hope that more than twenty years' study of the world's thought has given me sufficient training to judge things impartially.

The object of my Persian poems is not to make out a case for Islam; my aim is simply to discover a universal social reconstruction, and in this endeavour I find it philosophically impossible to ignore a social system which exists with the express object of doing away with all the distinctions of caste, rank and race, and which, while keeping a watchful eye on the affairs of this world, fosters a spirit of the unworldliness so absolutely essential to man in his relations with his neighbours. This is what Europe lacks, and this is what she can still learn from us.

One word more, in my notes which now form part of your introduction to *Asrar-i-Khudi* I deliberately explained my position in reference to Western thinkers, as I thought this would facilitate the understanding of my views in England. I could have easily explained myself in the light of the Quran and Muslim Sufis and thinkers, e.g. Ibn Arabi and Iraqi (Pantheism), Wahid Mahmud (Reality as a Plurality), Al-Jili (the idea of the Perfect Man) and Mujaddid Sarhindi (the human person in relation to the Divine Person).[53] As a matter of fact I did so explain myself in my Hindustani[54] introduction to the 1st edition of the *Asrar*.

I claim that the philosophy of the *Asrar* is a direct development out of the experience and speculation of old Muslim Sufis and thinkers. Even Bergson's[55] idea of time is not quite foreign to our Sufis. The Quran is certainly not a book of metaphysics, but it takes a definite view of life and destiny of man, which must eventually rest on propositions of a

metaphysical import. A statement by a modern Muslim student of philosophy of such a proposition, especially invoked by that great book, is not putting new wine in old bottles.[56] It is only a restatement of the old in the light of the new. It is unfortunate that the history of Muslim thought is so little known in the West. I wish I had time to write an extensive book on the subject to show the Western student of philosophy how philosophic thinking makes the whole world kin.

Yours very sincerely,
Muhammad Iqbal
Lahore, 26th January, 1921

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] My deductions about Nicholson's reading of Iqbal's notes is based on a comparison of his 'Introduction' to *The Secrets of the Self* with the letter written to him by Iqbal after reading it (see the 'postscript').

[2] Nietzsche's influence on Iqbal was a myth that seems to have been created by this review. Iqbal protested vehemently.

[3] In the East, Iqbal is seen as a legitimate intellectual heir of Rumi. His ceremonial 'tomb' now exists inside the precinct of Rumi's mausoleum in Konia. Separate sessions were allocated for discussing Iqbal's thought in the International Congress on Rumi in Iran, organized by UNESCO on the 800th birth anniversary in October 2007, where I happened to be present.

[4] I have attempted a detailed comparison of Yeats' poem with a similar idea expressed thirteen years earlier by Iqbal in *The Beast and the Lion* (2007) published by Iqbal Academy Pakistan.

[5] Iqbal printed the two parts separately while they were being composed but once they were completed he published them collectively as a single poem only.

[6] Presidential Address.

[7] In my brief Urdu monograph published this year, *Tarikh-i-Pakistan 1886-2027,* I have attempted to discover the fundamental principles of this new science.

[8] Reproduced in *The Sword and the Sceptre,* Riffat Hasan (ed.), pp.333-4.

[9] Reproduced in *The Sword and the Sceptre,* p.334.

[10] *Tulip in the Desert,* Mustansir Mir (2000), 'Introduction', p.1.

[11] *Iqbal,* Mustansir Mir (2006), 'Preface', p. ii.

[12] This is the title Mir has given to the poem whose original title, given by Iqbal himself, is 'Philosophers'.

[13] "ZK 638 [589]" refers to *Zarb-i-Kalim,* the seventh book of Iqbal's verse and the page number of the quotation in two different editions of the complete Urdu works of Iqbal.

[14] *Tulip in the Desert,* Mir (2000), p.80.

[15] The ambiguity here seems to be over the meaning of an 'analytical and critical'

study. Metcalf's study of Iqbal's poem was analytical precisely because it aimed at 'analyzing' the poem instead of furnishing lexicographical details on the persons and texts mentioned in it.

[16] This is an allusion to E.M. Forster's review (included above).

[17] Letter to Nicholson (see Appendix for complete text).

[18] Quran, Chapter 26: 'The Poets', Verses 224-227. Translation is based on Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Quran* (1980).

[19] Quotations from Eliot are from his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. It may be noted that without 'extinction of personality' it would not be possible for a non-European to become a medium for 'the mind of Europe'.

[20] Preface to *Eminent Victorians* (1918).

[21] Introduction to *An Anthology of Modern Biography* (1936), edited by Lord David Cecil, p.xii. Cecil's *The Young Melbourne* (1939) is said to be one of John F. Kennedy's favourite books.

[22] Iqbal's own preference was for the 'popular' yarn, an antithesis of the Bloomsbury. He recommended *Napoleon* (1926) by German biographer Emily Ludwig (1881-1941) as a model to be emulated for Muslim heroes. (Strachey found the book to be "interesting but really second-rate." See Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Biography* [1971], p.920.)

[23] For my comparison of Smith and Iqbal, I have especially relied on Dr. Sheila McDonough's *The Flame of Sinai: Hope and Vision in Iqbal* (2002).

[24] The passage was italicized in the published version of the Address distributed on the occasion. A copy is preserved in the library of Iqbal Academy Pakistan.

[25] Reproduced in *The Sword and the Sceptre* by Dr. Riffat Hassan, p. 178.

[26] Schimmel: *Gabriel's Wing* (1962), p. 64.

[27] *The Flame of Sinai,* p. "iv".

[28] p. 180.

[29] In *Javidnama,* 'the Indian Sage' is named Jahan Dost, or 'the friend of the world', explained by Iqbal in a statement dictated to the Iqbal Literary Association, London, in November 1931, as "…the Spirit of the great Indian ascetic, Vishwamitra, whose name the poet translates as *Jahan Dost*." Dr. McDonough didn't seem to be aware of Iqbal's statement and relied on Jagan Nath Azad's conjecture that "this is a reference to the attribute of Shiva as the friend of the world" (p. 234). In her summary of *Javidnama* she referred to Vishvamitra as "the imaginary Hindu" and also as "Shiva" (p. 234).

[30] Of course, the quotation is from *Hamlet*.

[31] *The Flame of Sinai,* p. 232.

[32] Iqbal wrote this letter to R.A. Nicholson regarding the 'Introduction' and some of the reviews on the *Secrets of the Self*. It was published in *The Quest,* London, October 1920-July 1921, Volume XII, pp. 484-492. Source: Riffat Hassan, ed (1977), *The Sword and the Sceptre.*

[33] This must be Prof. Muhammad Shafi whom Nicholson had also mentioned in his 'Introduction' as "my friend Muhammad Shafi, now Professor of Arabic at Lahore, with whom I read the poem and discussed many points of difficulty."

[34] Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), German philosopher and the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885).

[35] This is a reference to E.M. Forster's review, which has been discussed in the previous chapters.

[36] In September 1900.

[37] *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia,* first published by Luzac, London in 1908.

[38] Samuel Alexander (1859-1938), Australian-born Jewish British philosopher. His Gifford lectures were delivered in the winters of 1917 and 1918 and published in 1920 as *Space, Time and Deity* (reprinted with a new preface in 1927). It consisted of four books divided into two volumes. 'Deity and God', from which Iqbal quotes in the next lines, is Chapter 1 of Book IV (second volume) and the quoted passage occurs under the subheading, 'Deity the next higher empirical quality than mind.'

[39] Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932); the reference is to his review. Later his biography of Iqbal's teacher James McTaggart, published in 1931, was reviewed by Iqbal in a literary journal of London. His own biography was written by E.M. Forster and published as *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson* in 1934. For other details, see previous chapters.

[40] The letter is not extant. Iqbal used to destroy private correspondence out of courtesy for the correspondents.

[41] The chapter on war in 'The Secrets of the Self' includes a story about the emperor of India (apparently Shahjehan) visiting a saint of Lahore to seek blessing for a war of conquest. In the meanwhile, a poor disciple comes offers a coin to the saint. The saint says, "This money ought to be given to our Sultan, who is a beggar wearing the raiment of a king. Though he holds sway over sun, moon and stars, our Emperor is the most penniless of mankind. His eye is fixed on the table of strangers; the fire of his hunger hath consumed a whole world…"

[42] John Stuart Mackenzie, British philosopher (and from 1890-1896, fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, where Iqbal studied from 1905-1907); *An Introduction to Social Philosophy: The Shaw Fellowship Lectures at Glasgow* was published in 1890, and a second edition came out in 1895.

[43] The lines are from the section on "divine vicegerency" in 'The Secrets of the Self'.

[44] Perhaps in defiance to Nietzsche, Iqbal addresses the world of nature in the sixth book of his poetry, *Baal-i-Gabriel (Gabriel's Wing):* "For whose manifestation are the day and the night in perpetual race? Am I a heavy burden on the shoulders of time, or are you?" (Poem 4, Section 2).

[45] While discussing immortality in the fourth lecture in the *Reconstruction* (1930/34), Iqbal says: "Life is one and continuous. Man marches always onward to receive ever fresh illuminations from an Infinite Reality which 'every moment appears in a new glory'. And the recipient of Divine illumination is not merely a passive recipient. Every act of a free ego creates a new situation, and thus offers further opportunities of creative unfolding."

[46] This was Iqbal's way of referring to the First World War, or World War I (1914-1918). Before the Second World War, or World War II (1939-1945), it used to be known by various names including the Great War, the World War, the War to End All Wars and the War in Europe.

[47] In the *Allahabad Address,* while laying out the concept of a Muslim state (later named Pakistan), Iqbal stated: "One of the profoundest verses in the Holy Quran teaches us that the birth and rebirth of the whole of humanity is like the birth and rebirth of a single individual. Why cannot you who, as a people, can well claim to be the first practical exponent of this superb conception of humanity, live and move and have your being as a single individual?"

[48] Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French philosopher and writer best known for his

writings on early Christianity and his political theories. Iqbal also mentioned him in the *Allahabad Address* (1930).

[49] The Quran, Chapter 3: "The House of Imran" Verse 64. Iqbal also quoted this verse in the *Allahabad Address* (see quotation in the previous chapter).

[50] John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) was British economist and a member of the Bloomsbury Group. His polemic *The Economic Consequence of Peace* (published in December 1919) influenced the American and British decisions at Versailles. In addition to statistics (many of which were wrong about the future) he owed his success to sarcastic jibes at President Wilson, Prime Minister George Lloyd and the French statesman Clemenceau. Apparently, he imitated his friend and lover Strachey, who also advised on the draft.

[51] In the sixth lecture of the *Reconstruction* (1930/34), 'The Principle of Movement in Islam', Iqbal stated: "…in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize the true significance of this basic idea. Let the Muslim of to-day appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam."

[52] In Iqbal's last "grand" poem, 'The Devil's Parliament', the Satan commands his counsellors to indulge the Muslims in abstruse metaphysical dogma in order to keep them away from the real world.

[53] "e.g. Ibn Arabi and Iraqi… in relation to the Divine Person": these phrases are not found in Riffat Hassan, ed. (1977) and is only found in B.A. Dar, ed. (1977), *The Letters of Iqbal,* published by Iqbal Academy Pakistan, pp.146-147.

[54] Apparently, "Hindustani" here means Urdu. Introduction to the first edition of *Asrar-i-Khudi* (1915) appeared in Urdu although the poem was in Persian. This introduction, along with controversial verses against Hafiz of Shiraz, was eliminated from the second edition, which is supposed to have appeared around 1917. *Payam-i-Mashriq* (1923) is now the only Persian book in the "canon" to have an introduction, and that is also in Urdu.

[55] Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941), French philosopher and the author of *Creative Evolution* (1910; translated into English in 1911); Iqbal met him in Paris in 1933.

[56] In his review, Dickinson had written of Iqbal: "Muhammad is his Prophet and the Qur'an his Bible. He thinks, or he chooses to affirm, that his gospel is also the gospel of that ancient book, so inveterate is the determination of men to put new wine into old bottles."

دی شیخ با چراغ همی گشت گردِ شهر
کز دام و دد ملولم و انسانم آرزوست
زیں همرهانِ سست عناصر دلم گرفت
شیر خدا و رستم دستانم آرزوست
گفتم که یافت می نشود جسته ایم ما
گفت آنکه یافت می نشود آنم آرزوست

But yester-eve a lamp in hand
The Shaykh did all the city span,
Sick of mere ghosts he sought a man,
But could find none in all the land.

"I Rustam or a Hyder seek
I'm sick of snails, am sick," he said,
"There's none," said I. He shook his head,
"There's none like them, but still I seek."

IQBAL AND MUHAMMAD ASAD

M. Ikram Chaghatai

ABSTRACT

A cursory look at the corpus of Muhammad Asad's works reveals that most of his writings, particularly penned before 1947, are reminiscent of Iqbal's political and philosophical concepts which made drastic changes in his world-outlook (*Weltanschauung*). He often quotes Iqbal's popular verses in order to substantiate his views, but generally it was the spirit of Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* that profoundly permeated his articles and books.

At the end of November 1932, Leopold Weiss *alias* Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) said farewell to the Saudi Arabian King, Abdul Aziz Ibn-i Saud, kissed his nose-tip and forehead, and embarked for India. His going to India was not a sudden decision, but the voice of an old man in Kurdistan had prompted him to proceed and that voice was:

> If water stands motionless in pools, it becomes stale, muddy and foul; only when it moves and flows, does it remain clear.

Asad reached Karachi and after a sojourn there he set out by train for Amritsar where the whole Ghaznawi family of Indian Ahl-i Hadith persuasion (Daud Ghaznawi, Ismail Ghaznawi etc.) was waiting for him impatiently, as stated in the Intelligence Report of the British Government of 1934. The *ulema* of this religious denomination emphasized more on the teachings of the Holy Prophet from the authentic Traditions (*ahadith*) transmitted to posterity by his Companions. This line of thought appealed to Asad greatly and made it easy for him to describe himself as belonging to Ahl-i Hadith. Furthermore, the idea underlying the Ahl-i Hadith concept was very close to– almost identical with– the thinking of the so-called 'Wahhabis', a school of thought adhered to by a large segment the population of Central and Eastern Arabia, including the House of Ibn Saud. As a result, he could identify himself fully with the religious thinking prevalent in his spiritual home (which was 'Arabia'), as well as with his new Indian friends.

After spending a few days in Amritsar, Asad rushed to Lahore and he was very much pleased to see the unceasing bustle of this city. Apart from his daily routine tasks, he spared some time for the writing of some long-delayed articles for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, a Swiss newspaper published from Zürich in Switzerland, as he was its special correspondent in this part of the world.

It was probably in the beginning of 1933 that Asad was approached by the Anjuman-i Himayat-e Islam to deliver a public talk on how he had become a Muslim. He accepted the invitation and gave two lectures with certain modifications. In the first lecture, delivered before a congregation of several hundred people in the auditorium of the Muslim High School, he outlined the essential characteristics of the two civilizations facing one another; the civilization of Islam, based on a definite ideology of its own on the one hand, and the pragmatic civilization of Europe born out of the

materialistic premises of Roman culture in conjunction with the medieval Christianity and its dualistic antithesis of flesh and spirit symbolized by darkness and light on the other. In the second lecture he stressed the fact that imitation is a deadly enemy of all creativeness, and that by imitating the aims or even the outward forms and aspects of another civilization the Muslims were, by implication, denying to Islam the role of a culture-producing power and thus the very right to existence. The world of Islam, he said, was now standing at a crossroads, with one road leading to cultural fulfilment and the other to dissolution, and the Muslims still had the chance, though not for very long, to choose the road they were to take.

These two lectures created something of a stir among the Muslim community, first in Lahore and then in Delhi and Aligarh. Finally, he decided upon another course: to elaborate the two lectures more fully and to publish the result as a book. And so came about his first book on an Islamic subject entitled *Islam at the Crossroads* in the beginning of 1934, first in Delhi and then in Lahore.

This most thoughtful and thought-provoking small book of Asad caused quite a stir, especially among the educated Muslims in India. Its readers expressed their positive and negative views. Many of the Western-educated Muslims were shocked by his condemnation of the tendency towards 'Westernization' of Muslim society and regarded it as a reactionary attack on all that could be summed up in the term 'progress' while many of his conservative readers, including *mullahs,* vehemently criticized his rejection of all *taqlid* and his insistence on the continuous necessity of independent thinking (*ijtihad*) by the Muslims of all times. Iqbal belonged to the first group of its readers who opined:

> This work is extremely interesting. I have no doubt that coming as it does from a highly cultured European convert to Islam it will prove an eye-opener to our younger generation.

Since Asad's arrival in India, he often heard of Iqbal as a philosopher and a poet of great renown, but he had never met Iqbal face to face, because in those days Iqbal was touring various European countries. Their first meeting took place immediately after the publication of *Islam at the Crossroads*, probably in the early months of 1934. During his stay in Lahore, Asad frequently visited the house of Chaudhri Ilahi Bakhsh, an elderly retired Sessions Judge, who one day asked him to come to him in the evening, for, he said, "Dr. Muhammad Iqbal will be here, and I want you to meet him." So, when Asad entered the living room of Ilahi Bakhsh's house that evening, he found Iqbal sitting on the carpet, surrounded by about a

dozen men of all ages who listened to his words silently. At that time, he was talking about some ancient phase of Muslim history, comparing that glorious period with the decadence of the present. Suddenly he interrupted himself and turned to Asad: "I have read your *Islam at the Crossroads* and I like what you have written. Only ... I disagree with your call for a new *ijtihad*. In itself, *ijtihad* is certainly salutary and necessary, but it is dangerous at a time of decadence– a time like ours– because it could lead to a chaotic divergence of views about Islam, and so to a still greater disruption of our social fabric."

Asad could not hold himself back and broke with some vehemence into his discourse: "But, Dr. Iqbal, don't you agree that without a new, living *ijtihad* on the part of those Muslims who are able to think for themselves Muslim society is bound to fall deeper and deeper into cultural sterility, without any hope of ever emerging from it? I am convinced that you are mistaken. I am convinced that it is precisely at a time of decadence like ours that we must find the courage to look at our ideology with new eyes, untrammelled by what the earlier generations of Muslims thought about the problems of Islam! No, if we want to survive– survive as a community and overcome our cultural decadence– we must, whether our *mullahs* like it or not, try to exert our *ijtihad* even at the risk of committing errors! We must not be afraid of errors: we must be afraid of stagnation."

The circle of Iqbal's admirers sat as if thunderstruck, visibly shocked at the temerity of a young European converted Muslim who dared to contradict him so openly, so vehemently! One or two of them seemed to protest, but Iqbal's voice silenced them once more. He sat there, softly smiling and finally said: "We should talk about all this on another occasion, my young friend. Will you come to me at my house– perhaps tomorrow?"

And thus began Asad's friendship with Iqbal– a friendship that lasted for the remaining four years of the latter's life, until he died in 1938.

Next day, Asad went to meet Iqbal at his residence on McLeod Road and exchanged views about the different problems of the contemporary Islamic world. By temperament, Asad loved travelling, but Iqbal advised him to put aside his itinerary and devote his innate capabilities for the Islamic resurgence. In the opening section of his spiritual biography entitled *The Road to Mecca*, Asad pays homage to Iqbal in these words:

> ...after leaving Arabia I went to India and there met the great Muslim poet- philosopher and spiritual father of the Pakistan idea, Muhammad Iqbal. It was he who soon persuaded me to give up my plans of travelling to Eastern Turkestan, China and Indonesia and to remain in

India to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state which was then hardly more than a dream in Iqbal's visionary mind.

One day, sitting on the carpeted floor of Iqbal's study, Asad said: "What the Muslims really need today is a prophet, for only a prophet could arouse them to new life and effort and bring them out of their stagnation...But there cannot be and never will be another prophet after Muhammad– and he is dead and lies in his grave in Medina, and we cannot hear his voice…"

Iqbal interrupted him and said: "But we can hear his voice if we but listen! It is alive, for everyone to hear, even though he himself lies in his grave in Medina...The voice of the Prophet is alive in the *ahadith*, the traditions of his sayings which have been transmitted to us, and which we can read in so many authentic compilations."

In this background, Iqbal suggested to Asad to translate *Sahih al-Bukhari* from Arabic to English, as it had never yet been translated in this language. Iqbal also emphatically pointed out the significance of the study of *ahadith* and their new philosophical valuation in the conceptual structure of Islam. And so it came about that Asad decided, there and then, to give up his journalistic career for good and to devote himself in the years to come to translating and commenting upon the *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Primarily, he intended to translate the whole Arabic text in forty instalments, but only five fascicules came out between 1935 and 1938. After his release from the internment camp in 1945, its publication was about to be resumed when the holocaust which followed upon the Partition (1947) resulted in the destruction of nearly three-quarters of *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Standing on the bank of river Ravi, he saw a few scattered leaves of manuscripts floating down in the midst of torn Arabic books, and thus perished beyond recall more than ten years of his extensive labour and research.

Iqbal was fully aware of Asad's vast experience of extensive travelling throughout the Muslim world, his proclivities and intellectual attainments and desired to utilize them for the uplift of the prevalent standard of religious teaching in our educational institutions. For this purpose, Iqbal offered him headship of the department of Islamic theology in Islamia College, Lahore. As president of the Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam, Iqbal made continuous efforts for his appointment in this college. Both corresponded with each other (from June to August 1934) for settling some basic procedural issues. Meanwhile, Nazir Niazi, Iqbal's young associate and Asad's neighbour in Delhi acted the role of middle-man, but finally Asad declined this offer on account of inadequate salary.

Wherever Asad stayed, he remained in contact with Iqbal. When Iqbal fell ill and his physical condition degenerated rapidly, Asad became worried and rushed to Lahore for doing something for his "spiritual father". He contacted two German physicians, Dr. Selzer and Dr. Kalisch, who had been practicing for a long time in Lahore. With the consent of the patient, he personally brought them to Iqbal's residence, and they examined him carefully.

At about that time, in 1938, Iqbal's health began to fail; and one day, suddenly, a friend of Asad came running to him and told him about his death. He was shocked by this shattering news and he saw nothing but darkness. Hastily, he reached Jawid Manzil and stood wordless near Iqbal's simple bed. Asad saw him lying with closed eyes and an expression of deep peace on his face, as if thinking a lovely thought. His funeral was the most impressive Lahore had ever seen. At least two hundred thousand men– almost the whole adult male population of Lahore– followed the bier, a mile-long cortege that wound its way slowly, for hours, through the narrow streets all the way to the Badshahi Mosque, before which the funeral prayer was held. After Iqbal's burial, Asad stood near his grave and prayed for him with open hands and tearful eyes.

In one of his unpublished papers, Asad has paid tribute to Iqbal in these words:

> The trait which distinguished Iqbal more than anything else was his inner quiet. Here was a man entirely at peace with himself and with God; a man who almost always spoke softly, often with a sweet, slow smile playing around his lips and lighting up his face. Indeed, he liked to smile on the least occasion, betraying a nature without guile and without rancour: and so one could easily understand why so many people regarded him not only with deep respect but also with love. Everyone with whom he conversed was made to feel as if he were the person most important to him in all the world and that was the reason why he was listened to by all who knew him as no other man was listened to in his time.

A cursory look at the corpus of Asad's works reveals that most of his writings, particularly penned before 1947, are reminiscent of Iqbal's political and philosophical concepts which made drastic changes in his world-outlook (*Weltanschauung*). He often quotes Iqbal's popular verses in order to substantiate his views, but generally it was the spirit of Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* that profoundly permeated his articles and books.

As stated earlier, Iqbal changed Asad' Bedouin spirit of travelling and set him out on a path that ultimately led him to the revival of all the dormant hopes of Islam, creation of a political entity of people bound together not by common descent but by their common

adherence to an ideology. During the last four years of Iqbal's life (1934-38), Asad frequently visited Iqbal, and they spent many an hour talking about the prospect of Pakistan. They discussed in detail the forms in which the future Islamic State of Pakistan should be organized and the ways and means to persuade the Muslim political leaders to stand up boldly for their common goal. Following Iqbal's advice, he wrote a series of articles about why Pakistan had to be established and had them published in various European newspapers and periodicals. Besides, he delivered some lectures on the subject in Delhi and Lahore. According to him, it had been Iqbal who was the first to formulate, in clear-cut political terms, the idea of an Islamic State in North India and who thus gave it body and life. In fact, Asad devoted all his efforts to bring into reality Iqbal's dream of an ideological Islamic state.

During the Second World War, Asad's Austrian citizenship had him imprisoned by the British Government and the six years (1939-45) he spent in the internment camp made him more conscious of the significance of freedom for all people. No doubt, this incident intensified his aspirations for a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims.

Soon after his release from Purandhar, in the hills near Poona, Asad settled in Dalhousie. From there, he started a monthly periodical named *Arafat* that was primarily a vehicle for his ideas on a fundamental reconstruction of the approach to problems of Shariah. This journalistic monologue of Asad was to be a clarion-call at the critical time of Pakistan Movement. Three months before Pakistan came into being, he wrote an article entitled 'What do we mean by Pakistan?' in which he emphasized the real purpose underlying the future establishment of Pakistan: that purpose did not consist in merely providing more economic opportunities or posts to Muslims, but rather in enabling them to live effectively as Muslims and to realize the spirit of Islam in their political forms, in their law and social institutions. In another issue, publishing less than one month before Independence, Asad authored a lengthy essay under the heading 'Towards an Islamic Constitution', and it was the first attempt ever made to outline the principles which must be incorporated in the constitution of any state that claims to be 'Islamic'. Asad's much thoughtful studies were destined to become the first step in the development of our modern political thought and for this reason he can be rightly called as one of the intellectual co-founders of Pakistan.

Equilibrium and Realization:
William Chittick on Self and Cosmos

Prof. Mohammed Rustom

ABSTRACT

The cosmos is a vast configuration of words telling a coherent story (for those who understand), and hence it is a book. So also the human being is a book, but human beings, by and large, have forgotten the story line.[1] – William Chittick

William Chittick, currently Professor of Religious Studies at the State University of New York (Stony Brook), is an internationally renowned expert on Islamic thought. His contributions to the fields of Sufism and Islamic philosophy have helped paint a clearer picture of the intellectual and spiritual landscape of Islamic civilization from the 7th Century A.H. onwards. Yet Chittick is not simply concerned with discussions in Islamic thought as artifacts of premodern intellectual history. His vast knowledge of the Islamic intellectual tradition serves as the platform from which he seeks to address a broad range of contemporary issues. In this short essay, Chittick's writings on the self are outlined within the context of his treatment of cosmology. Rather than being outdated ways of looking at the universe and our relationship to it, Chittick argues, the traditional Islamic cosmological teachings are just as pertinent to the question of the self today as they were yesterday.

Introduction

Every student of Islamic thought is familiar with William Chittick's work in one way or another. His numerous studies and translations in the fields of Sufism and Islamic philosophy have paved the way for a better understanding of the ideas of some of the most difficult and profound writers of the pre-modern Islamic civilization.[2] Yet Chittick has of late also been actively involved in bringing his knowledge of the Islamic intellectual tradition to bear on a host of contemporary issues. Muslim (and non-Muslim) thinkers often wonder how figures like al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) or Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240) would go about addressing today's intellectual concerns. In fact, a good deal of literature has begun to appear which seeks to do just this.[3] But Chittick does not proceed along the same lines. He is more likely to view the current issues through the lens of the pre-modern Islamic intellectual tradition itself. Chittick's writings on today's questions, therefore, draw on the general perspectives of the Islamic intellectual tradition to seek to get at roots of the problems themselves. It is with this in mind that his writings on cosmology and its relationship to the self should be understood. And this is why his work is particularly important today: it is a genuinely Islamic intellectual approach to a problem which has, by and large, not registered on the radar screen of the twenty-first century Islamic thought.[4] A proper understanding of the self and its relationship to the cosmos, Chittick maintains, is the most important question at present, since it is the failure to understand both of these realities that have resulted in our current human predicament.

Scientism and Cosmology

Chittick takes it for granted that by and large, most peoples' perspectives are colored by something called 'scientism'. Scientism is the view which gives primacy to the methods of science in any and all epistemological issues. Since scientism lies at the core of contemporary culture– from disciplines in the academy to technology and finance– it permeates the way humans think. From its perspective, things must be isolated, objectified, distanced from the observer, and subjected to rigorous scientific analysis in order to get at their true nature. Scientism, therefore, restricts to a large degree the possibility of there being a harmonious relationship

between the human self and the cosmos. Objects are 'out there' and therefore distinct from us. Because of this rift between subject and object, the scientistic worldview can only conceive of the cosmos along quantitative lines, rendering its content a mere conglomeration of facts and events which are shorn of any symbolic content. As Chittick puts it about those who have thoroughly imbibed the scientistic worldview:

> [They] look at things, and they cannot see them as anything but things– never as signs or markers or pointers or symbols. From grade school they are taught to believe that things are real in themselves, and that this reality can only be expressed scientifically, which means mathematically and quantitatively. If some qualities, such as colors, can be expressed in numbers, they are real, but those qualities that cannot be expressed quantitatively– and most cannot– are unreal.[5]

Taken to its logical conclusion, a reified and "objective" vision of the cosmos and its furniture results in a worldview in which the cosmic order gradually loses its spiritual significance.[6] This then leads to abstraction, which makes the cosmos before us impersonal, thus rendering human interaction with it an utterly detached enterprise.[7] Once there exists a gulf between self and cosmos, it becomes all the more easier to manipulate the cosmos and its contents according to the specifications of its inhabitants.[8]

Readers familiar with the startling findings of modern physics will undoubtedly aver that the universe is not actually bifurcated, being one unit of sorts from which the observer can never be separate.[9] Yet even if the new physics has something profound to say about the cosmos, the bifurcated conception of the universe continues to be most pervasive. For one thing, since it is still what is 'officially' taught in schools,[10] we learn very quickly that it is the most efficient way of controlling our natural surroundings in order to produce 'results'. Thus technology, material progress, and the purely instrumental nature of science dominate our perspective, since it is through scientism that we can manipulate the cosmos in accordance with our needs and specifications.

Another reason the bifurcated worldview remains most pervasive is that despite what we know about the cosmos today, contemporary cosmology remains meaningless to most people. Even though such books as Stephen Hawkings' *A Brief History of Time* (and his even more accessible *A Briefer History of Time*)[11] have been written to make the findings of contemporary physics accessible to the wider public, we may justifiably ask after reading them through as to what practical benefit this information has for our lives. Indeed, the facts

presented by contemporary physics can be totally divorced from everyday human experience. Theoretical physics remains for the educated masses– and that is to say nothing about the vast majority of people who would not bother reading a popular book on physics that is just an amazing set of findings for them with no real relevance to their lives. After all, how many contemporary physicists themselves see any practical relevance between the kind of work that they do and the lives that they lead?

Perhaps the most significant reason as to why a bifurcated conception of the cosmos reigns supreme is because contemporary cosmology qua discipline is itself confined to scientism; for while it conceives of a cosmic picture in which subject and object are not separated, it must eventually fall back on the mathematical and the quantitative in its formulations. In other words, modern physics knows very well that the cosmos is a much more complicated place than previously believed. But when it comes to making sense of the cosmic picture arrived at through scientistic methods, it can only give scientistic answers. This rootedness in scientism ensures that contemporary cosmological theories will always be confined to the mathematical and the quantitative. As Chittick cautions:

> As long as the truncated worldview of scientism remains the arbiter, no opening to the Infinite is possible. At best, people will devise an ersatz cosmology that hardly lets them see beyond the horizons of popular culture. [12]

In other words, contemporary scientific cosmologies do not possess the means to say anything more than what they say with scientism as their 'arbiter'.

Only when scientism is cast aside can cosmology become a symbology and speak to humans on a level beyond the mathematical and the quantitative. With a science of the soul that is mirrored in a science of the cosmos, as escape from what Henry Corbin (d. 1978) calls the 'cosmic crypt',[13] becomes a possibility. In such a formulation, one transcends himself in order to transcend the cosmos. But without a sacred conception of the cosmos, there will be no accompanying science of the soul, and humans will therefore be trapped in the cosmic crypt without a means of escape. Without means of escape, the *need* for an escape recedes to the background.

The Anthropocosmic Vision

Turning our attention to the Islamic intellectual tradition, we find that in theoretical Sufism and in some strands of Islamic philosophy, the cosmos is created in the image of God. Human beings, also created in the image of God, are therefore nothing but the cosmos.

They are, as Chittick poetically remarks, "two sides of the same coin, a coin that was minted in the image of God."[14] Thus, there is an intimate connection between the ways in which a subject experiences the world and the cosmic picture in which the experiencing subject lives:

> The Islamic philosophical tradition can only understand human beings in terms of the unity of the human world and the natural world. There is no place in this tradition to drive a wedge between humans and the cosmos. In the final analysis the natural world is the externalization of the human substance, and the human soul is the internalization of the realm of nature. Human beings and the whole universe are intimately intertwined, facing each other like two mirrors. The quest for wisdom can only succeed if the natural world is recognized as equivalent to one's own self, just as one must see the whole human race as the external manifestation of the potencies and possibilities of the human soul.[15]

Following Mircea Eliade (d. 1986) and Tu Weiming, Chittick calls this intimate relationship shared between self and cosmos the 'anthropocosmic vision'. Since the anthropocosmic vision entails a view of self and cosmos as being 'a single, organismic whole',[16] knowledge of one entails that of the other. In keeping with traditional Islamic doctrines, the human soul is a microcosm (*al-'alam al-saghir*) and the cosmos proper is a macrocosm (*al-'alam al-kabir*). According to Quran, God's signs (*ayaat*) are to be found in both the macrocosm and the microcosm:

> We will show them our signs in the cosmos (*afaq*) and in their souls (*anfus*), until they know that He is the Real. (41:53)

Since there is no absolute contrast between subject and object, the more humans study the signs within themselves, the more they will understand the signs in the cosmos. That is, the more we learn about the microcosm, the more we will come to know about the macrocosm.

The anthropocosmic vision can only be attained by paying attention to the divine qualities found throughout the cosmic order. As the Islamic tradition tells us, the divine qualities are mediated by God's names. Since God's names are to be found everywhere we look, that is in the cosmos, they are also latent within our souls, in their totality. God taught Adam all of His names, which means that it is the goal of the children of Adam to actualize the divine names contained within themselves. Thus, by knowing God's names, humans can understand the primary qualities which underly the cosmos.[17] What is needed in order to actualize the divine names is divine guidance, since it establishes for humans how they are

supposed to understand the names and what they are expected to do in order to act in conformity with them. Chittick argues:

> The governing insight of Islamic thinking, after the assertion of the unity and ultimacy of the Real, is that the true nature of the world is inaccessible to human beings without help. This insight is made explicitly in the second half of the Shahadah, though it is also implicit in the first. Without messengers from the Real, no one can come to know God and the theomorphic roots of human nature.[18]

If people do not follow divine guidance, they will be left to their own devices. If left to their own devices, they will fail to understand the names in the cosmos and within themselves. Since it is a part of human nature to name, they will therefore create their own names. But these names will not be able to take them beyond themselves:

> If people fail to name things under the wing of divine guidance, they will name them as they see fit. There is no possible way, however, for them to know the real names of things without assistance from the divine Namer, because the real names are the realities of things in the divine mind. God gives existence to the things according to their names, and understanding their real names is the key to understanding cosmos and soul.[19]

People name things according to the realities they assign to them only when the cosmos they inhabit is desacralized. When human beings become the measure and their theomorphic nature is forgotten, the sacred content of the cosmos is slowly stripped away. In other words, rather than signifying their divine roots, things in the cosmos simply become facts. They no longer point to the divine names because the sacred has been cancelled out of the equation. As discrete, quantifiable entities, they thus become subject to the human system of naming:

> A worldview that leaves out the divine dimension will necessarily deal with inadequate names, if not misnomers. The net result of misguided naming will be disaster for those who employ the names, if not for humanity as a whole– a "disaster" that is understood in terms of the full extension of the human realm, not just the world this side of death.[20]

Our own system of naming does not take us back to the divine roots of the cosmos since they produce 'inadequate' names. Rather, they take us back to our all-too-human attempts at knowing the universe. Although there is great instrumentality in such naming, knowledge of these man-made names do not allow human beings to actualize their human potential, which is to realize the divine names which were taught to their father Adam.

Human naming tends to lead us to abstract, quantified, and hence impersonal denotations of reality. Once we become solely concerned with naming those things in the cosmos which are quantifiable and 'real', the names of qualities lose their significance and consequently are relegated to the subjective. This is why, for example, today's typical cosmologist can say that specific mathematical principles underlie the cosmos, but he cannot say that love and mercy do, since they are not quantifiable.[21] This is, from Chittick's perspective, not only because love and mercy are not quantifiable but also because the inquiring subject is so detached from the cosmos that he cannot see the qualities which he shares with his object of inquiry:

> When the universe is named by names that apply primarily to dead things or to machines or to impersonal processes, we will understand it in terms of death and mechanism and impersonal process. We will necessarily miss the significance of the life, mercy, and awareness that suffuse its every atom.[22]
>
> Those who live in an abstract universe will deal with things and others as abstractions. Those who live in a mechanistic universe will treat everything as a machine. Those who find the universe cold and uncaring will reciprocate.[23]

As seen above, the names in the cosmos are not impersonal and abstract. Rather, they are anthropomorphic and therefore intelligible to humans. And the reason they are anthropomorphic is because man is theomorphic.[24] Since our understanding of the cosmos is nothing but a projection of our understanding of ourselves, an impersonal view of the universe is ultimately symptomatic of a greater, spiritual problem.[25] This problem is the loss of self-knowledge.

Not knowing the true self leads to disequilibrium on both the human and cosmic planes.[26] In order to regain our equilibrium, Chittick argues, we must actualize the names and realize our theomorphic nature. This can be done by living a life in harmony with the names, which means living in accordance with virtue by giving each thing its right (*haqq*) and putting everything in its proper place, just as God does. The anthropocosmic vision is, therefore, fundamentally concerned with self-knowledge. This is why Chittick devotes a good deal of time in his writings to the question of realization (*tahqiq*) and imitation (*taqlid*).[27] He contends that it is only the process of realization which can allow one to know the true nature of things, since knowledge gained through imitation– the kind of knowledge most people have– is ultimately based on other peoples' opinions.[28] In short, it is only by realizing

our true selfhood that we will be able to see ourselves and the cosmos as a unified totality. As Chittick puts it, anything short of self-knowedge is actually the antipode of knowledge, and can only worsen the human condition:

> [To] be human is to seek after knowledge that will increase one's humanity. Humanity's defining characteristic is the self-aware intelligence and knowing that intelligence intelligently demands focusing one's energies on self-knowledge. Any knowledge that does not aid in the quest for self-knowledge is in fact ignorance, and its fruit can only be the dissolution and destruction of human nature.[29]

NOTES AND REFERENCE

[1] William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, xxxiv).

[2] Chittick is also an important figure in the wider fields of religious studies and philosophy, and his writings are not infrequently the basis of comparative projects. See, in particular, Reza Shah Kazemi's *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn 'Arabi, and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006), and the problematic study by Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn 'Arabi* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[3] The most recent of which are Ebrahim Moosa's *Ghazali and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), and Mohamed Haj Yousef's *Ibn 'Arabi: Time and Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 2008), the seventh chapter in particular.

[4] Take for example, *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, edited by Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' (Malden: Blackwell, 2006). Among its several lacunae is the absence of an article devoted to the topic. Some interesting contributions to the question of science, cosmology, and ethics in contemporary Islamic thought can be found in *God, Life, and the Cosmos: Christian and Islamic Perspectives*, edited by Ted Peters, Muzaffar Iqbal, and Syed Nomanul Haq (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

[5] Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy: The Quest for Self-Knowledge in the Writings of Afdal al-Din Kashani* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.36.

[6] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul: The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), p.83.

[7] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, pp.86-87, 93-97.

[8] Indeed, it is precisely such an objectification of nature that has wrought so many of today's major crises, such as the ecological problem. For the roots of the ecological crisis, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). See also Chittick, 'God Surrounds All Things: An Islamic Perspective on the Environment', *The World and I*, 1/6 (June 1986), pp.671-678.

[9] See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, rev. ed. (Boston: Shambala, 1991), p.81.

[10] See Caner Dagli, 'The Time of Science and the Sufi Science of Time', *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, 41 (2007), p.78. See also Chittick's remarks cited above concerning the role of scientism in education.

[11] Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, rev. ed. (New York: Bantam, 1998); Hawking with Leonard Mlodinow, *A Briefer History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 2005).

[12] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.83.

[13] For Corbin's treatment of the cosmic crypt, see his *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, translated by Willard Trask (Irving: Spring Publications, 1980), pp.16-28.

[14] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.132.

[15] Chittick, *The Heart of Islamic Philosophy*, p.66.

[16] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.109.

[17] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, pp.84-85. For an important discussion of the function of "words" in Islamic cosmology, see Chittick, 'The Words of the All-Merciful' in Chittick (ed.), *The Inner Journey: Views from the Islamic Tradition* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2007), pp.121-129.

[18] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.97.

[19] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, pp.85-86.

[20] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.86.

[21] Chittick asks: "What happens when the important names are quasars, quarks, muons, black holes, and big bangs? What is the psychological and spiritual fruit of naming ultimate things with mathematical formulae?" (*Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.86).

[22] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.92.

[23] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.87.

[24] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.87.

[25] Chittick remarks, "An impoverished and flattened universe is the mirror image of an impoverished and flattened soul." (*Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, pp.131-132). At the same time, there are those who do not see God's qualities throughout the cosmos, but this is the result of viewing the cosmos through the lenses of God's transcendence and otherness (*tanzih*). Such a perspective, although very much a part of the Islamic tradition, is, in its extreme form, also liable to viewing nature as a pure object devoid of any sacred content. Nowhere is this more evident than in some of today's industrialized Muslim countries, where the unnatural exploitation of natural resources seems to be a corollary of a radical (and uncorrigible) theology of God's transcendence. Of course, such a theology also has the tendency to manifest itself violently. See Tim Winter, 'Bombing without Moonlight: The Origins of Suicidal Terrorism', *Encounters*, 10/1-2 (2004), pp.93-126.

[26] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.131.

[27] See, for example, Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, pp.45-47, 118-121.

[28] Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, p.119.

[29.] Chittick, 'The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology' in Todd Lawson (ed.), *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy, and Mysticism in Muslim Thought* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p.283.

Muhammad Iqbal And Modernism

Vito Salierno

ABSTRACT

This article traces the evolution of Iqbal's thought from nationalism to pan-Islamism, and onward to globalism through an attempted 'osmosis' with the west. In a world characterized by divisions and discriminations, by separations and contrasts in the name of something which nobody knows what actually is, the message of Muhammad Iqbal is relevant today– after a century. It is not out of place to mention here that the Italian academic world was the first to realize the importance of the *Javed Namah*, immediately after its publication: some months after, the Islamist Maria Nallino reviewed Iqbal's *magnum opus*, calling it the "divine comedy of the east" and a "celestial poem", the title Alessandro Bausani used when he translated it into Italian, in 1952, which was its first translation in any language. On 1st January 1938, the Lahore station of all-India radio broadcasted Iqbal's last prophetic message to the mankind of the east and the west which echoes the future scenario of this globe.

In a world characterized by divisions and discriminations, by separations and contrasts in the name of something which nobody knows what actually is, the message of Muhammad Iqbal is relevant today– after a century. Hundred years are few, but they are many in a historical period which has witnessed two world wars, a nuclear proliferation not always for peaceful purposes, numerous local conflicts and the many ideologies disguised under the umbrella of religion despite having nothing in common with it.

In a famous verse Iqbal had said: "Religion does not teach enmity with each other."[1] It was October 1904: the *entente cordiale* between Hindus and Muslims inside the Indian National Congress was unsteady. The Congress had marked its Hindu composition: out of 756 delegates the Muslim delegates numbered 17 only. Many were the associations which asked for a larger political participation: these created the Muslim League in 1906.

Born on 9th November 1877 at Sialkot, a city of the Punjab today in Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal moved in 1895 to Lahore, then as today the most important centre of Muslim culture in the north-west Indian sub-continent. There Iqbal completed his education, and taught Arabic and other subjects until 1905. At Lahore, under the guidance of a learned teacher, Sir Thomas Arnold (1864-1930), Iqbal came into contact with the European culture and his horizon opened to the knowledge of two worlds, which according to Kipling would never meet.

His poetical career started, almost by chance, in 1899, with a conventional poem devoted to Himalaya (*Homala*), which opens his first Urdu collection, the *Bang-i Dara* (The Call of the Marching Bell), published in 1924. The opening lines speak of the eternity of the Himalayas, compared with the mountain range of the Sinai, where– according to *Qur'an*, VII, 142– God manifested Himself to Moses:

O Himalayas, bulwark of the kingdom of India,
Bending down, the skies kiss your forehead.
You do not show any signs of old age,
You are young in the revolving days and nights.
For the Moses of Sinai you were a theophany,
To the discerning eye you are an epiphany.

According to legend, Adam, after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, first landed on the Himalayas: the poet is eager to hear from the mountain range the story of the age when human beings

lived a simple, unaffected life.[2] In the final lines there is an implied criticism of 'civilization':

O Himalayas, tell us the story of the times
When the first men dwelt in your hem.
Do tell us of that simple, unaffected life
That was untainted by any affectation.
O imagination, take us back to that age,
O revolving time, take us back to the past.

In this poem there is, *in nuce*, the concept of the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*), which he dealt with in his first essay on the Persian mystic 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili (1365-1418).

In 1905, on the advice of his teacher Thomas Arnold, Iqbal decided to leave for England for higher studies since education in Lahore did not go beyond M.A. in those days. The three years he spent in Europe, from 1905 to 1908, were significant not only from the point of view of his education but also and above all for the development of his political and social thought.

He studied at Cambridge, at the Trinity College, where he obtained an M.A. in philosophy; from there he moved in July 1907 to Heidelberg, Germany, in order to attend a course of German, and then to the Munich university where he was awarded a Ph.D. for his thesis on *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*.[3]

Before leaving India, Iqbal, like all the Indians– Muslims and non-Muslims– had been a supporter of nationalism, an attitude amply justified by the political situation in those days. An example is 'An Ode to India' (*Tarana-i Hindi*), which in its original version of October 1904 had the title of 'Our Country' (*Hamara Desh*), where he did not speak of Muslims, Hindus and the like, but of Indians and the mother India. All this was emphasized in the philosophical and political poem 'The New Temple' (*Naya Shivala*):

I tell you the truth, o Brahman, if you are not displeased,
The idols of your temple became aged and obsolete.
You have learnt from the idols to hate your friends,
God also has taught quarrelling to Muslim preachers.
You thought that in the stone idols there was God,
To me every particle of the country's dust is God.

Nationalism in Europe goes back to the period of Enlightenment and the formation of modern nation-states; in the Islamic world this problem arose in the colonial period under the pressure of a more modern idea of life. When Iqbal began to face the problems of the Muslims, in particular of the Indian Muslims, the idea of nationalism in the Muslim world was understood only by an élitarian emerging class. It was Iqbal who anticipated "the trends which were bound to follow in the wake of the popularisation of nationalism in the

Muslim world,"[4] in a period when co-operation between Hindus and Muslims was envisaged. The idea of fatherland occupies the central place in Iqbal's mind, and religion becomes a decisive factor in the life of the nation: rather than religion, fatherland forms the centre of affection and loyalty of citizens– instead of old temples a "new temple" is created.

In another poem of this period, 'The Painful Wail' (*Sada-i Dard*), Iqbal laments the lack of amity between Muslims and Hindus, which was delaying the independence of India from Britain:

Our land foments excessive mutual enmity,
What unity! Our closeness harbours separation.
Enmity and violence instead of sincerity,
Separation and violence in the barn's grains.

On the whole, Iqbal's poems up to 1905 denote the poet's disappointment for the sad conditions of the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent and of the Muslims in general. All this was beautifully expressed in the poem 'Sicily' (*Siqilliya*): during his voyage to England Iqbal saw from his ship in the Mediterranean the island of Sicily and his thoughts went back to the period when Sicily was the seat of a flourishing Arab civilization from 827 to the end of 11th century. Sicily appears to him like the grave of the Arab civilization: once the men of the desert ploughed the waves with their fast ships, and the island echoed the *Allah o Akbar* (God is great); today– he says– there are only tears in the world of Islam– the Persian poet Sa'di, 'the nightingale of Shiraz' weeps on a Baghdad destroyed by the Mongols of Hulagu Khan in 1258, the Urdu poet Dagh sheds tears for a Delhi conquered by the British, the Arab-Andalusian poet Ibn Badrun laments Granada's fall into Christian hands in 1492, and Iqbal himself does the same as he takes back to India the sights of the decadence of Islam:

Ah! O Sicily! You are giving dignity to the ocean,
You are like a guide post in the water's expanse.
May the ocean's cheek ever remain elegant with your mole,
May your lights ever remain a comfort for the ocean sailor.
May your sight ever remain beautiful to traveller's eyes,
May the wave on your shore's rocks ever remain dancing.
You were the cradle of that nation's civilization once,
Whose universal beauty was the object for spectacle.[5]

These feelings for the past can be found, under various forms and aspects, in the whole poetical works of Iqbal; however, his laments are not fruitless. His remembrance of the past will bring about the creation of Pakistan in 1947. When the poet spoke of nation (*millat*), he did not use word in the western meaning but as a term embracing the whole world of Islam. Through the veil of poetry Iqbal wanted

to stir his co-religionists to action. In reminding the Muslims of their long forgotten past, Iqbal wanted to say that Islam was not only a set of rituals but in essence an attitude towards life. He brought to his co-religionists, who were steeped in inaction and overwhelmed with a sense of frustration, a message of hope reminding them of the glorious deeds of their forefathers.[6]

During his stay in England, Iqbal's vision widened; he observed the progress of science and the benefits it had on the living conditions of people, but he realized that nationalism meant competition among the nations of Europe. Before coming to Europe Iqbal's attitude had been typical of a sufi and a romantic; a few months after, he abandoned sufism and romanticism, put his nationalistic views aside and became an active supporter of pan-Islamism. According to him the people of Europe had lost confidence in the life of the spirit and in the evolution of a society based on equality, justice and truth: he seems to hear words of our present times. He was able to see the practical results of that nationalism which would take Europe to the catastrophe of a world war. Nationalism had created artificial barriers between man and man, nation and nation; it lacked moral and spiritual base, and had become a source of conflict among people by dividing them. If this idea was spread in the Muslim world, it would cause divisions and misunderstandings, thus delaying the independence of India.

In a poem, 'March 1907', he warned both the West and the East of the dangers of a nationalism based on considerations of race, colour, and geographical boundaries; in particular, he warned the East not to make the mistake which would take Europe to the catastrophe of a war. In another poem, 'The World of Islam' (*Dunya-i Islam*) he was clearer:

> Whoever would discriminate for colour and race would perish,
> Whether he be the tent-dwelling Turk or the high-ranking Arab.[7]

Later on he explained his attitude:

> I have been repudiating the concept of nationalism since the time when it was not known in India and the Muslim world. At the very start it had become clear to me from the writings of European authors that the imperialistic designs of Europe were in great need of this effective weapon– the propagation of the European conception of nationalism in Muslim countries– to shatter the religious unity of Islam to pieces.[8]

He clarified his idea further, probably because he was aware of the existence of national states in the Islamic world, even if they were under colonial rule. In his sixth lecture of *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* he said:

> It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us the truth that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations

> which recognize artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members.[9]

And in the fifth, devoted to the 'Spirit of Muslim Culture', he broadened this idea:

> [...] the growth of territorial nationalism, with its emphasis on what is called national characteristics, has tended rather to kill the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. It was quite otherwise with Islam. Here the idea was neither a concept of philosophy nor a dream of poetry. As a social movement the aim of Islam was to make the idea a living factor in the Muslim's daily life, and thus silently and imperceptibly to carry it towards fuller fruition.[10]

To summarize, nationalism, which was too narrow for Iqbal, turned into a patriotism that was a spiritual attitude towards one's own country though the ideal solution of loyalty to the *'ummah*, a much larger concept of homeland. In Iqbal's view the community became a supranational entity instead of a geographical one.

Iqbal's stay in Europe and his close study of its history had made him aware of the dangers of nationalism, as if he foresaw the tragedy of the first world war, followed by a more devastating second world war, causes of which were nationalism and all the 'isms' deriving from it. The 'isms'– thought Iqbal– were formulae and prescriptions for providing a solution of the problem, but none had been able to solve it. While in England he was invited to speak at the University of Cambridge, where he had spent some years: he advised the students to guard against atheism and materialism. Capitalism, Imperialism, Militarism, Socialism, Communism and many other 'isms' have since appeared in the arena, but all of them have failed to give any relief to the suffering humanity.[11]

This problem was dealt with by Iqbal again in 1931 when he was in England for the Second Round Table Conference; incidentally, since an agreement between Muslims and Hindus was impossible to forge, in March 1932 Iqbal proposed at a Lahore meeting the creation of two separate States, Pakistan and India. Being aware of the changes that would affect the Muslim society, in his writings Iqbal analyzed the tensions created by the conflict between modernism and medievalism. He himself was a modernist, but with some limits: his dynamism and humanism were modern, but were never carried to extremes. As he knew the impact of his own words, he did not ignore the influence they had on his co-religionists: he was thus compelled to follow a *modus vivendi* in order not to engage himself in open controversy with the religious class mostly represented by narrow-minded *mullahs*, who were tied more to the letter than to the spirit of the *Qur'an*.

A practical example of his attitude is a real fact which became the subject of a very little known poem, not among his best verses, but typical of his age, 'Piety and Ecstasy' (*Zuhd aur rindi*), written before 1905, that is before going to England. In a humorous style, almost with *nonchalance*, Iqbal answers to a mullah who had accused him of not being a good Muslim:

The holy man asked a friend of mine one day:
"Iqbal, who is a milestone in the literary field,
How does he follow the rules of the shar'iah?
[...]
I hear he does not consider the Hindu a kafir.
His beliefs are actually the result of philosophy.
[...]
He considers music as part of adoration,
Does he aim at making a mockery of religion?
[...]
Music at night, prayers in the morning,
I have not understood this secret up-to-now.
But my disciples have informed me that
His life is spotless like the dawn's whiteness.
He is not Iqbal but a mixture of opposites.
His heart is a treasure of wisdom but strange,
I am unable to understand his personality.
He appears to be the founder of another Islam."
[...]
One day the holy man met me in the street, and
The old story came again during our talk.
He said: "My accusation was due to affection,
It was my duty to show you the path of the shar'iah."
I said: "I do not have any cause for complaint,
It was your right since you are my neighbour.
[...]
If you do not know the reality about me,
Your omniscience is not at all diminished.
I myself do not know my own reality,
The sea of my thoughts is very deep.
Since long I too am longing to see Iqbal,
For long I have shed tears for this separation.
Iqbal himself does not know Iqbal.
There is no joke in my words, I swear."[12]

The other section of society Iqbal feared was the westernized Muslims, the least qualified to understand the true spirit of modernism and the essence of western culture. In their superficial thinking and ignorance of their own traditions they posed as liberals and free-thinkers, but their liberalism showed a subjective and personal approach to social problems, based on fragmentary views

rather than on an understanding of the total situation. Iqbal criticized them in the first pages of his lecture of *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

> Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture. [...] With the re-awakening of Islam, therefore, it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam. [...] The main purpose of the Qur'an is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe.[13]

An objection can be made to Iqbal's modernism that it undervalued the importance and social impact of the economical structure in the life of common people. In his lectures he has never condemned– with the exception of a few verses– the exploitation by feudal landlords, perhaps because he did not want to lose the support of a powerful class which he needed for the improvement of poorer people or perhaps because the problem was out of his philosophical approach.[14]

The problem was considered in a couple of humorous poems (*Zarifanah*) in the *Bang-i Dara*, and in an eight-line poem 'The earth belongs to God' (*al-Arẓ li'llah*) in the *Bal-i Jibril*:

Last night the mosquito related to me
The whole story of its failures.
They give me only one drop of blood
In return for the whole night's labour,
And this land owner without any effort
Has sucked all the blood of the cultivator.

(147.20)[15]

The owner of the factory is a useless man,
He loves pleasure, hard work is not for him.
God's command is: Laisa lil insani illa ma sa'a.
The capitalist has no right to the fruit of work.

(147.27)

And the two final lines of 'The earth belongs to God', the title of which is taken from a *hadith*:

Landlord! this earth is not thine, is not thine
Nor yet thy fathers'; no, not thine, nor mine.[16]

Actually it is too little to be a denunciation of a social plague, still present today even if in a limited form; however these lines are sufficient to give us an idea of Iqbal's view of the subject. Times were not mature: other problems needed priority, such as independence, the partition, the role of Islam in the future; without

the solution of these problems it was impossible to face the material problems of a community politically and socially afflicted by centuries of frustration and disillusion.

Between the two world wars other "isms"– a term Iqbal disliked intensely, as we have seen– were born: Fascism, Nazism, Francoism.

On his way back home from the Second Round Table Conference, Iqbal, who wanted to understand personally the fascist regime, accepted an invitation of the 'Accademia d' Italia' to speak in Rome on 28th November 1931, the day before he was to be received by Mussolini at Palazzo Venezia. The news of the visit and of the lecture was published in the most important daily newspapers: the *Giornale d' Italia* published a long unsigned, article about Iqbal's poetry. The lecture of the poet was in English on an "ethical and religious subject" according to what was reported by all the newspapers, which was actually a communication from the 'Minculpop' (Ministry of Popular Culture). In spite of research, I have not been able to find the text of the lecture in archives. Only a few years ago did I find a "summary" of it in a biography of the poet published at Lahore in 2005. Iqbal's handwritten notes were five in number: 1– Movement of Islam towards the West and movement of Russia towards the East. 2– Let us try to understand them. There are three forces that are shaping the world today: Western civilization, Communism, Islam. 3– There can be no denying that Islam has lost its hold on matter. It is moving towards the West. It is no decay but reawakening. 4– England and Islam. Political and economic aspects. 5– The friendship of Islam is worth having.[17]

For our perusal the first and fifth points are important. The first is a clear evidence of Iqbal's wish to open a bridge between East and West, and is based on what he had written in his first philosophical lecture dealing with 'Knowledge and Religious Experience':

> During the last five hundred year religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture.[18]

The fifth point, that is the friendship of Islam, was related to the problem of the other "isms", that is Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany, Francoism in Spain, which were in favour of Islam but only because of their own political interests. Iqbal's apparent favour

towards Fascism– he wrote two poems on Mussolini, one for solidarity, the other one in a negative vein– was by many people misunderstood as support for the totalitarian regimes. On the contrary, Iqbal wanted to understand the role played by Italy in Europe, as the Italian regime made no secret of its anglophobia. In an almost unknown interview granted by Iqbal at his Lahore house in 1938 to the Italian diplomat Pietro Quaroni– who had stopped at Lahore *en route* to Kabul where he was posted as head of the Italian Legation– and published only twenty years later, Iqbal explained his ideas without mincing words: he was not in front of a public of listeners but at his house in the Anarkali quarter, and five years had passed since his visit to Italy, during which the many changes had taken place in the politics of Europe and the Indian sub-continent. It was the period of the proclamation of the Empire, when the first rumours about the sword of Islam and the Protector of Islam were being circulated. It is worthwhile to quote some passages from the intended which ambassador Quaroni learnt by heart:

> If you want to be friends or protectors of Islam, if you want us to trust you, then you must begin by respecting us, and demonstrating that you think our religion is as good as yours.
>
> Well, can you explain to me why Italy wants to become *Rum* again? If Italy is Italy, though a catholic country, there are no reasons not to get on well. But if Italy wants to become *Rum* again, then it is better not to cherish false hopes: the whole world of Islam will be against her, just as at the time of the old *Rum*.
>
> We want to get rid of the British but not to put someone else in their place. As a matter of fact, to tell the truth, we prefer to get our freedom by ourselves.[19]

In November 1932 Iqbal returned to London to attend the Third Round Table Conference: the Indian National Congress was not represented and Iqbal dissociated soon. After delivering his seventh lecture 'Is religion possible?', in December, at the Aristotelian Society of London, he left for Spain on an invitation from Miguel Asin Palacios, the author of an inflammatory book, *Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia*, published in 1919.

In his work the Spanish scholar described the analogies existing between the construction of the celestial world in Dante's *Comedia* and the Muslim eschatology: to support his theory he quoted comparisons between episodes in the *Comedia* and passages taken from Arabic literature. At the time his claim was countered, in particular in the Italian academic circles, by the observation that Dante did not know Arabic and that the works of Arabic literature, to which Asin Palacios referred had not been translated into any European languages in Dante's times. Actually these counter-theories

were more the result of factiousness than of a critical approach: it was an alliance of scholars against Islam as if Dante's fame would be diminished by his knowledge or use of Islamic texts and not, on the contrary, increased. Thirty years after, in 1949, the Italian orientalist Enrico Cerulli published *Il "Libro della Scala" e la questione delle fonti arabo-spagnole della Divina Commedia*:[20] in the first part, he reported the French and Latin texts concerning a celestial voyage of the Prophet and His vision of the skies and of hell and in the second, unknown texts of medieval authors containing information on the Muslim traditions about eschatology. The purpose of this second part was to consider how much the western world knew about the Muslim idea of Paradise and Hell, independently from the *Libro della Scala* (its original Arabic title was *al-Mir'aj*), which was a Latin and a French translation from the Castilian, the latter derived from an Arabic text.

Of these aspects of the osmosis between Islam and the West was Iqbal thinking when he wrote his philosophical lectures, by saying that with the re-awakening of Islam it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and if necessary, reconstruction, of theological thought in Islam.[21]

Even though Asin Palacios' book has not been traced in Iqbal's personal library, the poet knew its content. In 1919, Thomas Arnold, Iqbal's teacher at Lahore, had published a review of Asin Palacios' book[22], which had not escaped Iqbal's attention. The poet had published in 1932 the *Javed Namah*, in Persian, which finds a parallel to the scheme of Dante's Comedy: it is an allegorical voyage to the Superior world made by Iqbal's soul in the company of his Virgil, that is the soul of the great 12th century mystic poet Jalal al-din Rumi. In his voyage Iqbal does not reach hell and does not make any hint to sin. His meeting Nietzsche, the German philosopher of the *Übermensch*, is interesting: the true source of Iqbal's message to the world was the spirit of Islam– Nietzsche did not believe in religion, for Iqbal religion was the only source of life and strength.

It is not out of place to mention here that the Italian academic world was the first to realize the importance of the *Javed Namah*, immediately after its publication: some months after, the Islamist Maria Nallino reviewed Iqbal's *magnum opus*, calling it the "Divine Comedy of the East" and a "celestial poem", the title Alessandro Bausani used when he translated it into Italian,[23] in 1952, which was its first translation in any Language.

On 1st January 1938, the Lahore station of All-India Radio broadcasted Iqbal's last prophetic message to the mankind of the East and the West:

> The modern age prides itself on its progress in knowledge and its matchless scientific developments. No doubt, the pride is justified. Today space and time are being annihilated and man is achieving amazing successes in unveiling the secrets of nature and harnessing its forces to his own service. But in spite of all these developments, the tyranny of imperialism struts abroad, covering its face in the masks of Democracy, Nationalism, Communism, Fascism and heaven knows what else besides. Under these masks, in every corner of the earth, the spirit of freedom and the dignity of man are being trampled underfoot in a way of which not even the darkest period of human history presents a parallel. [...] Engines of destruction created by science are wiping out the great landmarks of man's cultural achievements. The governments which are not themselves engaged in this drama of fire and blood are sucking the blood of the weaker peoples economically. It is as if the day of the doom had come upon the earth, in which each looks after the safety of his own skin, and in which no voice of human sympathy or fellowship is audible.[24]

On 18th February, in one of his last letters, Iqbal wrote:

> I have spent half of my life in explaining the idea of Muslim nationhood (*millat*), because I felt that the European (*farangi*) political idea [of territorial nationalism] is most dangerous for Asia, particularly for the Islam.[25]

Allama Iqbal, as he was called by his followers, died on 21st April 1938. One of his last quatrains, published posthumously, says:

> *The bliss of the past may come or not.*
> *The breeze of Hijaz may come or not.*
> *The last hour of this faqir has come,*
> *Another secrets' seer may come or not.*[26]

NOTES AND REFERENCE

[1] "*Mazhab nahin sikhata apas main bair rakhna"*, from the poem 'An Ode to India' (*Tarana-i Hindi*), in the Urdu *Bang-i Dara*, published in 1924. For the Urdu text I have used the *Kulliyat-i Iqbal, Urdu,* Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1991.

[2] Mustansir Mir, *Iqbal*, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2008, pp. 24-25.

[3] It was published in London by Luzac & Co. in 1908, and reprinted in Lahore, in 1955, by the Bazm-i Iqbal, and in 2004 by Sang-e-Meel. For Iqbal's life in Europe, see the Urdu books by Sa'id Akhtar Durrani, *Iqbal* Europe *main* and *Navadir-i Iqbal* Europe *main*, published by the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, in 1985 and 1995.

[4] Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 'Iqbal and Nationalism', in *Iqbal Review*, Karachi, April 1961, p. 66.

[5] Translation by M. A. K. Khalil, *Call of the Marching Bell*, Lahore, Tayyab Iqbal Printers, 1997, p. 212.

[6] Kabir Chawhury, 'Iqbal*:* an Appreciation', in '*Iqbal Review'*, Karachi, October 1961, pp.70-82.
[7] See note 5, p. 353.
[8] Muhammad Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, compiled by "Shamloo", Lahore, 1948, 2nd edition, p. 224.
[9] Lecture devoted to the 'Principle of movement in the structure of Islam', in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, Lahore, Institute of Islamic Culture, 2006, p. 126.
[10] *Ibid,*. p. 112.
[11] Kavi Ghulam Mustafa, *Iqbal on the concept of Ideal State*, in *Iqbal Review*, Karachi, April 1962, pp. 17-24.
[12] From the *Bang-i Dara*.
[13] Lecture devoted to 'Knowledge and Religious Experience'. See note 9, p. 6.
[14] His prose writings and Speeches in the Punjab Legislative Assembly, however, frequently address the issue and make a lot of criticism. (Ed.)
[15] See note 5, p. 387.
[16] Translation by V. G. Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal*, London, J. Murray, 1955, pp. 44-45.
[17] Notes of lecture delivered in Roma and Egypt, from the original in Iqbal's own hand, in *Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography*, by K. A. Shafique, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2005, p.157.
[18] See note 9, p.6.
[19] Vito Salierno, *Iqbal and Italy*, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2004, p.18.
[20] Published by the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, and followed in 1972 by *Nuove ricerche sul Libro della Scala e la conoscenza dell'Islam in occidente.*
[21] See note 13.
[22] Published in *Modern Language Review*, London, October 1919.
[23] Alessandro Bausani, *Muhammad Iqbal. Il Poema Celeste*, Roma, IsMEO, 1952; 2nd revised edition, Bari, Leonardo da Vinci editrice, 1965.
[24] Ghulam Hussain Zulfiqar, *Development of Iqbal's Mind and Thought*, Lahore, Bazm-i Iqbal, 1998, pp. 275-276.
[25] *Ibid,*. p. 277.
[26] From *Armughan-i Hijaz. Farsi*, Lahore, 1938.

Muslim Modernism, Iqbal, and Demythologization: A Perennialist Perspective

Muhammad Maroof Shah

ABSTRACT

Traditional Islam and modern Western thought are two separate epistemic and cognitive universes that run parallel to each other and any attempt to appropriate former in terms of later necessitates some sort of demythologization and that amounts to relinquishing religious thesis in its authentic traditional format. Iqbal's approach to Islam is dictated by his perception that modern science and some of its fundamental methodological and philosophical assumptions need to be appropriated in traditional Islam and if need be to reconstruct traditional religious thought. His rereading of traditional theological thought from the perspective of his own philosophy of ego conceived in the background of traditional Islamic metaphysical and Sufi perspective could be read as an exercise in demythologization His theological modernism and plea for reconstruction necessitating his attempt at demythologizing and allegorizing the Quran is unique and unprecedented approach in Islamic history. His modernist reading of Islam, inspired primarily by his appropriation of modern science and its philosophy, explicated in his *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, is here critiqued especially as it informs this endeavour of demythologization.

Rudolf Bultman (1884-1976) to whom demythologization owes its origin and vogue, declared that modern man can't think in mythological terms employed in the New Testament[1] or we could say the Quran. Indeed his claim was in a way right if one grants the veracity of modern scientific outlook. Metanarrative of modern science can't allow knowledge and existence claims of traditional religions as Freud declared in his famous *New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*. Dawkins in more recent times has popularized the same claim. Indeed modern man's commitment to naturalistic reductionist scientism is incompatible with traditional premodern super-naturalist transcendent mythological (myth being more real than the facts of with which science deals for the traditional man) framework. Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God is dramatic statement of the same point. All reference to vertical causes and transcendence must go if one is loyal to modernistic-reductionistic-naturalistic-evolutionistic-demythologizing enterprise. Bultman regards myth as the explanatory pseudo-science of a primitive, pre-scientific view of the world. The cosmology of the New Testament (and this will apply to the Quran as well) is essentially mythical in character. For him mythological elements in the of Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) worldview include among others the three layered universe, with earth in the centre, the heavens above, and the underworld, miracles, ascension to heaven, demonology, the other world, appeal to intervention of God etc. What he proposes is not the elimination of myth (although that would amount to the same from strict the traditionalist perspective) but its reinterpretation in existential terms. The inner meaning of the myths must be explicated in existentialist terms and purged of the objectifications that they contain. According to him we can't believe in objective cognitive propositional character of traditional myths. Since modern worldview denies hierarchy of existence and limits Reality to the world experienced by senses and removes the concept of 'reality' as a category pertaining to God, it can't but be compelled to take recourse to some sort of demythologization that appropriates traditional supernatural hierarchic transcendent claims in evolutionist naturalistic existentialistic framework. One could not object to existentialistic appropriation if one grants traditional hierarchical vision of existence but demythologizers don't grant that. Logical sequel of Bultman's view is complete emptying of religious content

of the myths as his follower Fritz Buri has argued. As Buri says, Bultman's stance is insufficiently radical and one can't maintain his distinction between the *kerygma* (the essential proclamations of early church) and myths and desire to retain the former but not the latter.[2] Authentic existentialism according to him isn't Christian (or religious) distinctively. Bultman's underlying assumption is that existential or self involving language can operate effectively if it is disengaged from other language that conveys cognitive truth. Modern evolutionism and reductionism can't allow vertical causality and thus it severs all ties with transcendence.

Modern science or modern thought in general, has created contemporary modern age which is appropriately referred to as the Age of Science. Modern age defines itself with respect to theory and practice of modern science. Modern consciousness or sensibility is primarily moulded or conditioned by modern knowledge which is the province of modern science. Modern man is incapable of reliving the alien traditional universe, as a vital process. He has moved form the past traditional medieval *weltanschauung* to a modern one. He thinks that he has really evolved judging from his evolutionary worldview that means rejection of "leading strings of tradition" and moves confidently into future unhampered by the past. Modern man, who thinks that he can't unlearn the developments of knowledge in the last few centuries, has committed himself to the Enlightenment project. The post-Renaissance scientific worldview that created the modern western civilization prides itself on its achievements and can't relinquish them that have led to desacralized, a-religious or irreligious secularist age that is ours -- that sharply distinguishes itself from all traditional religious worldviews. They reject the whole project of modernity and the whole edifice of modern thought or modern science, its philosophy, methodology and its grand claim to stand as judge over religion or to clarify its message or expunge its so-called mythological superstructure. Iqbal, speaking for the modern man shares to a significant extent his basic predicament, his compulsions, his psychology and positivist empiricist rationalist spirit, his anthropocentricism and his humanism. His addressee is modern educated man -- Muslim or otherwise. He is himself a half-convert to modern project although he doesn't forget his traditional roots. Without being forgetful of modern sensibility he wants a space for Islam and tries to fit it in its mould. He approaches from the vantage point of modernity and modern science. He self confessedly sees through modern Western eyes. He takes modernity for granted, as given, as something that is here to stay and He takes it as the reference frame, almost

dogmatically. He is an apologist for modern age and its science. In his preface to *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought In Islam* he gives reasons for embarking on the project of reconstruction (that is not always neatly differentiable from the project of demythologization and in fact concedes some of its claims) of religious thought. He doesn't object to modern mind's inability to organically "assimilate on alien universe by reliving, as a vital process, that special type of inner experience on which religious faith ultimately rests."[3] He accepts and even praises it and brings a Qur'anic warrant for it. Modern man's habit of concrete thought has rendered him less capable of that experience [mystical religious experience] which he further suspects because of its liability to "illusion."[4] He criticizes the later day representatives of Sufism for ignoring the modern mind and for having become absolutely incapable of receiving any fresh inspiration from modern thought and experience.[5] He deplores the absence of "a scientific form of religious knowledge" provided by methods that are physiologically less violent and psychologically more suitable to a concrete type of mind.[6] Naturally he finds traditional Sufi techniques (and literature) as outdated or outmoded, suitable for medieval rather than modern psychological framework. He accordingly reconstructs "practically a dead metaphysics" of traditional Islam and attempts to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy in the light of "more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge."[7] He is critical of the traditional Islamic metaphysics which he sees as a "worn out" and practically "a dead metaphysics" and its peculiar thought forms and set phraseology producing manifestly 'a deadening effect on the modern mind.'[8] According to him it is our duty to watch the progress of human thought, as if it affects metaphysics and religion in some vital manner. As charted out in the preface, he proceeds in his first two lectures to evaluate religion from scientific empiricist viewpoint. He attempts to reconstruct religion accordingly, in the light of modern scientific thought rather than vice versa (i.e., critiquing or reconstruct modern science in the light of traditional Islam or Islamizing it).[9]

In the traditional worldview (expounded in the modern times in most comprehensive manner by the traditionalist perennialist school) God is Reality, the totality of Existence, both transcendent and immanent. God is *Muhit*, the Environment that surrounds us, in which we live move and have our being. This is what modernity would hardly understand. "Cut off from the twin sources of metaphysical knowledge, namely revelation and intellect, and also deprived of that inner spiritual experience which makes possible the concrete realization of higher levels of being, modern man has been

confined to such a truncated and limited aspect of reality that of necessity he has lost sight of God as Reality"[10] as Nasr, the great spokesperson of traditionalist school, says. Nasr elaborates:

> The fruit of several centuries of rationalistic thought in the West has been to reduce both the objective and the subjective poles of knowledge to a single level. In the same way that the *cogito* of Descartes is based on reducing the knowing subject to a single mode of awareness, the external world which this knowing self perceives is reduced to a spatiotemporal complex limited to a single level of reality -- no matter how far this complex is extended beyond the galaxies or into aeons of time, past and future.[11]

The traditional view as expressed in the metaphysical teachings of both the Eastern and the Western traditions is based, on the contrary, upon a hierarchic vision of reality, not only of reality's objective aspect but also of its subjective one.

Not only are there many levels of reality or existence stretching from the material plane to the Absolute and Infinite Reality which is God, but there are also many levels of subjective reality or consciousness, many envelops of the self, leading to the Ultimate Self, which is Infinite and Eternal and which is none other than the Transcendent and Immanent Realty …. both beyond and within… There is not just one form of perception or awareness. There are modes and degrees of awareness leading from the so called "normal" perception by man of both his own ego and the external world to awareness of Ultimate Selfhood, in which the subject and the object of knowledge become unified in a single Reality beyond all separation and distinction.[12]

One need not comment on the profound difference between traditional and modern outlook which inspires demythologization project. We will first briefly explicate modern science's attitude towards this traditional picture, towards the knowledge and existence claims of traditional religion and metaphysics, to contextualize our critique of demythologization.

The orthodox scientific establishment is strongly resisting religious appropriation of science. It is usually agnostic if not atheistic in orientation. In the name of truth, facts and objectivity it has launched a crusade against "superstition" called religion. A leading authority (Julian Huxley) has vetoed against religious explanation of the world by saying that if events have natural causes, they don't have supernatural causes. The naturalist framework of modern science to which it is committed by its very methodology can't be but antagonistic towards religion's existence claims. Richard Dawkins, famous evolutionary biologist who wrote *The Blind Watchmaker* rejecting fashionable "way of two compartments" thesis

i.e., positing separate domains for faith and science to avoid head on conflict between the two says, "It is completely unrealistic to claim, as Gould and many others do, that religion keeps itself away form science's turf, restricting itself to morals and values …. Religions make existence claims and this means scientific claims"[13] and thus as a scientist he must oppose religion tooth and nail but science only can make existence claims and religion's existence claims conflict with it. He is echoing Freud in this connection. Freud in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* concludes with a statement of what he calls "scientific *Weltanschauung"* which represents more or less the official attitude of the Church of science. In essence, he thinks, "it asserts that there is no other source of knowledge of the universe but the intellectual manipulation of carefully verified observations, in fact, what is called research and that no knowledge can be obtained from revelation, intuition or inspiration."[14] Freud makes the drastic implications of this statement quite explicit. "It is inadmissible to declare," he writes, "that science is one field of human intellectual activity and that religion and philosophy are other at least as valuable and that science has no business to interfere with the other two, that they all have an equal claim to truth and that everyone is free to chose whence he shall draw his convictions and in which he shall place his belief." He goes on to declare in a tone reminiscent of some ecclestical authority that:

> such an attitude is considered particularly respectable, tolerant, broad minded and free from narrow prejudice. Unfortunately, it is not tenable, it shares all the pernicious qualities of an entirely unscientific w*eltanschauung* and in practice come to much the same thing. The basic fact is that truth can't be tolerant and can't admit compromise or limitations; that scientific research looks on the whole field of human actively as its own and must adopt an uncompromisingly critical attitude towards another power that seeks to usurp any part of its province.

Religion is incompatible with science according to Freud because it too makes truth claims and can't surrender them. He asserts that science alone can correspond to reality and "it is this correspondences with the real external world we call truth." He then goes on to assert that when religion claims that it can take the place of science and this because it is beneficent and ennobling, it must therefore be true, that claim is, in fact an encroachment, which, in the interests of everyone, should be resisted. Not only religion but also philosophy and what the perennialists call metaphysics, doesn't seem to Freud to offer man a genuine alternative to scientific truth. Insofar as it parts company with science by clinging to the illusion that it can produce a complete and coherent picture of the universe, philosophy must be regarded as an impostor in the halls of

knowledge. The positivist philosophy of science has been so influential in the twentieth century in usurping the place of all philosophy. Thus even philosophical test of religious truth which Iqbal undertakes may be of no value to scientific *weltanschuung*. Only purely scientific tests aren't suspected by modern scientific age. Freud gives his verdict that philosophy any more than religion can't be a substitute of science. Both together fall under Freud's interdict. "Both together should be outcasts from human culture if what he calls "our best hope for the future" that is, the intellect -- the scientific spirit, reason should in time establish a dictatorship over the human mind." In the face of all this if one tries to appropriate modern scientific outlook in religious framework it would be at the cost of emptying it of almost all objective cognitive truth claims, of all "idea" in Iqbalian phrase and reduce it to some sort of feeling, some psychological state and denial of religion's attempt to build a metaphysics that Iqbal defends so passionately.[15]

All theological modernism is committed to demythologizing religion which is a typical modern heretic movement that takes modern project so seriously as to create religion in the latter's own image. This is another manifestation of idolatrous instinct that makes God in its own image or humanizes that which transcends merely human. There are religious as well as secularist demythologizations of religion although the orthodox character of the former is obviously suspect. Man lives by virtue of myths and not by the bread of facts alone. The sacrosanct character of myths was never challenged at such a mass scale until the culmination of modern project, until God was murdered by the collective action of modern man through the sword of modern science. In the post-Christian secular West, myths and legends that formed the life blood of traditional or medieval Christian civilization were no longer credible. The religious myths were replaced by secularist world view and religion too was forced to carve a niche for itself in secularist framework. The religion in an age where God was practically almost dead couldn't be traditional religion; rather the latter had to be demythologized or secularized. This is the background and the logic of modern movement for demythologization that threatened to destroy the traditional character of the Christian Western Civilization and did affect modern man's approach to religion. Many theologians succumbed to it and many of those who critiqued it were influenced to some extent by it. Modern rationalism, scientism and evolutionism were instrumental in creating this great heresy of demythologization.

Christian theology was ideally vulnerable to this rationalist, naturalistic, reductionist appropriation at the hands of secular

theologian and demythologizer. The twentieth century has been the century of Nietzsche who infamously declared that God is dead -- modern man has killed Him. Post-Christian post-Nietzschean theology is deeply coloured by this epoch-making event (Nietzsche captured the essence of (post)modern historical project in this claim). The post-Nietzschean theologies such as secular theology and postmodern a/theology are informed by this disappearance of the traditional God from Western consciousness. Rejection of hierarchy of existence and traditional sciences characterize modern world view. However the traditional myths and archetypes or the symbols through which man has traditionally appropriated the universe, can't be so easily thrown away. Man can't reinvent myths for himself. He can't disown his collective unconscious or archetypes. Religions descend from Heaven and aren't created in the minds of visionaries, poets and psychologists. Modern man can't write his own scripture as certain demythologizers would have us believe. Having emptied traditional religious mythology of all transcendental reference, he tried to build a secular mythology which, needless to say, miserably fails to substitute the former. It is fortunate that Islam has, by and large, escaped the fate of Christianity which took modern rationalistic, scientific Enlightenment project too seriously and accordingly appropriated tradition.

Demythologization, if carried out consistently and to its logical end, results in crude caricature of religion. Modern age is surrounded by an environment of "piety without content," as Susan Sontag has aptly characterized it. The religion-less religion, the logical result of demythologization, is anything but religion and this is precisely the charge of traditionalist orthodoxy against it. Modern man in his attempt to reformulate religion in the framework of perverted modernist thought has missed the most important thing about religion in the process and it is because of this danger that orthodoxy must take strong note of it. It is from this perspective (i.e., perennialist traditionalist perspective) that we will be approaching Muslim attempts at demythologization of the Quran, especially the Iqbalian attempt.

Modernism in religion or modernist approach to religion involves demythologization in one or the other form, to a little or greater degree. Iqbal's approach to Islam is more or less modernist and thus his attempt at demythologizing and allegorizing the Quran is quite in line with it. We will focus on him first and then make a few remarks on Sir Syed and Muhammad Abduh.

Iqbalian philosophy of ego appears to be demythologization of the traditional Islamic conceptions of Soul and Spirit. His

psychological approach to traditional idea of soul and his reduction of the latter to ego is subsumable under the general head of demythologization. Iqbalian appropriation of the spiritual in the psychical as demonstrated in his psychological approach to religion and mysticism may be seen as demythologization at work. Iqbal's naturalistic appropriation of the supernatural elements in traditional Islam in his *Reconstruction* (though not in his poetry), much in the manner of Sir Syed, is yet another mode of demythologization. His interpretation of the finality of prophethood seems to be informed by typical modernist demythologizing assumptions. The Prophet of Islam announced the birth of modern age that is characterized by rationalism, inductionism and empiricism. Thus mythological mode or myth creating intuitive consciousness has to be transcended. The advent of modernity means the retreat of primitive, ancient non-rational modes of thinking and this isn't to be lamented or regretted but welcomed. The institution of prophethood was abolished to pave way for the smooth takeover of the modern scientific and rationalist age. Man must be thrown back on his own resources which are reason and science which have, however, led to disenchanted world view that hardly admits of any transcendental reference. We must keep recent advances in all the departments of human thought in the background (or respectfully approach them) while interpreting scripture. Modern demythologization project is the logical implication of this approach that is too respectful towards modern scientific thought. Bultman's great project of demythologizing the Bible, Bonhaufer's, Tillich's and Robinson's attempts to reconstruct traditional Christian thought in the light of post – Renaissance and Enlightenment project (that culminates in secular theological approach, which amounts to demythologization of the former) are dictated by the assumptions that man and his science have progressed, that positivism with its anti metaphysical bias-needs to be reckoned with, that every age should be allowed to develop its own theology (and write its own scripture to be up to date?) , that there is no such thing as orthodoxy and that man has come of age. Iqbal does share to some extent all these assumptions and his reconstructionist project is informed or conditioned by all of them.

We need to distinguish two different attitudes vis-à-vis demythologization. On the one hand we may say that the so-called myths and legends of religion refer to secular and worldly realties, but on the other hand we may affirm that these myths don't refer to worldly realities at all but to the transcendental realities which are given expression in terms with which we are familiar and which

represent the scientific and intellectual level of the period in which the revelation took place, as Syed Vahiduduin notes.[16] He rightly remarks about Sir Syed and Iqbal in this connection that their approach to "legends" and "myths" is conditioned by the former attitude. He says " Syed Ahmad Khan and Iqbal no less, completely ignore their transcendental character and demythologize them in a way which if carried out consistently would strip revelation of all its contents."[17] The primarily metaphysical import of these so-called legends and myths is more or less absent in Iqbal's reading (dictated by psycho-anthropological and evolutionist framework) of them. Syed Vahidudin rightly says, "Iqbal's biologically oriented approach needs to be supplemented by the deeper metaphysical analysis of the key concepts of Islamic theology."[18] However, Iqbal's demythologization, despite its heterodoxy, doesn't' go as far as those of the Christian demythologizers like Bultman, and such Muslim secular theologians as Niaz Fatehpuri. He isn't even Sir Syed for that matter. His poetry reveals a very different Iqbal from the demythologizer Iqbal of *the Reconstruction*.

Our demythologizers are anxious to reduce religion to something which is comprehensible, logical, an object that can be appreciated by reason and psychology. They try to divest religion of all its mystery, the irrationality and "illogicality" so as to appeal to modern mind. But religion is precisely of the opposite character. To make religion a logical affair or the affair of the mind and compromise or omit Mystery, to translate its realm of the invisible (*Al Ghayb*) in terms of the phenomenal or the visible, to humanize or logicize the Transcendental Ground of our being, to give a scientific or rationalistic cloak to religion – all this is equivalent to its denial. A. N. Whitehead catches the paradoxical or suprarational or a-rational spirit of religion in his famous characterization of religion in these words:

> as the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within , the passing flux of immediate things, something which is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility and yet the greatest of present facts; something which gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good and yet is beyond all reach, something which is the ultimate ideal and the hopeless quest.[19]

It is the hunger of the soul for the infinite, the unreachable, the ungraspable, the unknowable. It celebrates the mystery and the unknown. Indeed it grounds itself in the unknown. It is belief in the Unseen, as the Quran says (2:2). The anti-idolatrous deconstructionist spirit of all religion problematizes any representation or definition or objectivization of the object of

religion. The concept of negative Divine, so characteristic of eastern religions and mysticism shows this clearly. There is no way to know Him (or catch the infinite through reason as Iqbal would like us to believe) or to experience Him as his empiricist appropriation of religious or mystic "experience" would have us believe). He is the unknown, the unknowable, the *mysterium tremendium*. I quote Stace's comments on Whitehead's characterization of religion (quoted above) to show how problematic is the basic assumption of advocates of demythologization regarding comprehensible, logical or rational and this-worldly meaning of religion and their compromise on God's essential transcendence. Stace says:

> Did we not see that the words of Whitehead, must mean at least that contradiction and paradox lie at the heart of things? And is there any more contradiction here than we find – to give the most obvious example from traditional theology – in the doctrine of the Trinity? That, too, proclaims in unmistakable terms that there is contradiction in the Ultimate. The rationalizing intellect , of course, will not have it so. It will attempt to explain away the final Mystery, to logicize it, to reduce it to the categories of "this" and "that". At least it will attempt to water it down till it looks something like "common sense" and can be swallowed without too much discomfort. But the great theologians knew better. In the self-contradictory doctrine of the Trinity they threw the Mystery of God uncompromisingly in men's faces. All attempts to make religion a purely rational, logical thing are not only shallow but would , if they could succeed, destroy religion. Either God is a Mystery or He is nothing at all.[20]

Tertullian's famous remark *Credo ad absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd) puts this position so succinctly. Religion is of the irrational, by the irrational and for the irrational, as Osho says.[21] Mystic experience, on the basis of which Iqbal tries to justify religious claims, reveals an "object" that no demythologizing approach could appropriate. The essential nature or the essence of religion is not just beyond psychology but beyond philosophy, beyond the ken of reason. The most fundamental "proposition" of religion, as revealed in religious experience, is the mystery of God. Nothing can provide any insight into the veiled mystery of the ultimate object of religion. Mystics like Eckhart, Bohme, and the mystical philosophers like Bradley, Hegel and Spinoza amply demonstrate utter incapability of rational logical intellect to penetrate the mystery of the Absolute or Godhead, as Stace argues in his *Time and Eternity*. No science, no level of experience (Iqbal notes three main levels of experience unfolding in time – the level of matter, the level of life and the level of mind and consciousness – the subject matter of physics, biology and psychology respectively[22] and thinks

that these reveal the character or behaviour of God) and nothing from the natural order could provide any real clue in this regard. The religious experience is ineffable and autonomous and this domain of Eternity or Heaven is unconnected with or transcends the realm of time, of this world. Iqbal focuses on what Stace calls the positive Divine (that could, in principle, be appropriated through demythologizing enterprise) and ignored the equally important aspect of the negative Divine that is revealed in prophetic-mystical experience. As the necessary counterpart of the positive characterization of the divine that well catches God's dimension of immanence in the universe, is the negative characterization of the divine that problematizes all our anthropocentric, anthropomorphic, rationalistic representations and constructions of God. The very *raison de'etre* or basis of demythologizing approach gets deconstructed. God is the utterly other. He can in no way be dragged to the human plane and thereby appropriated in the plane of immanence, of time, of logic or thought, of science or of knowledge as ordinarily understood. All mystics including the Sufis (whose experience of God is the fundamental thesis in Iqbalian empiricist approach to religion) have emphasized the negative divine, the nothingness of God. The Ultimate Reality is Non-being, Nothing, Emptiness, the Void, the Abyss, the great silence, the great darkness, "the wordless Godhead," "the nameless, formless nothing" (Tauler), "the wild waste" "the everlasting Nay" (Bohme), "the still wilderness" (Eckhart), the Beyond-Being, *Hahūt* (Ipseity). God is wholly outside the natural order, wholly transcending the realm of temporality. Eternity can't be experienced in the usually accepted sense of the word experience. Only out of time do we experience Him. God can be known only through God, seen only through His eyes, as Ba Yazid says. Intuition or revelation is to be sharply distinguished from reason, despite Iqbal's attempt to prove that intuition is organically linked to the intellect. (The term intellect is here used not in the sense the perennialists use it but as ordinarily used as a substitute term for reason i.e., conceptual intellect. However there is non discursive element in Iqbal's conception of reason. He doesn't restrict reason to conceptual intellect with which Stace contrasts intuition. But Iqbal doesn't seem to be employing the term intellect in the metaphysical or perennialist sense of the term which takes it to be supra individual universal faculty clearly distinguishable from reason as mainstream Western philosophy understands it. There is thus certain warrant in applying Stace's insights on Iqbalian approach). This point is admirably made by Stace and this only can avoid the overlap or confusion of the

respective domains of science and religion – a position which Iqbal also maintains despite contradicting it by his psychological-empiricist approach to religion at the same time. Intuition is needed to "know" God. Reason's wings are clipped to fly in the heavenly realm. It is only after the triumph of rationalism and scientism that the issue of demythologization and the secular meaning of the scripture have arisen. The so-called higher criticism that is closely allied with demythologizer's approach is the invention of modern scientific man. It is modern science that has demanded a rational "scientific" justification of religion – a demand that Iqbal fully concedes or legitimates. And for modern man this rational justification entails some sort of demythologization and Iqbal is thus naturally committed to the latter also.

Demythologizing project necessarily follows from the rationalist, empiricist, inductionist and naturalistic assumptions that Iqbal shares though not fully in the usual sense of these terms. It is modern man's vain assumption that he could solve the "problem" of religion, that he could appropriate the utterly other i.e., God into his scheme of things, that he could test religion through scientific-philosophical methods, that he could make sense of "non-sensical" religion. (Iqbal implicitly and explicitly subscribes to this assumption of modern science and philosophy and provocatively titles his second lecture as "The Philosophical Test of the Revelations of Religious Experience"). It is on this assumption of modern science and philosophy that the validity of claims of demythologization project hinges. Religion's realm begins where all other realms – of mind, of knowledge or science, end. The Realm of the Spirit although reflecting on the Realm of the Psyche is in ultimate analysis incommensurable with the latter. God is known only through God. The Spirit alone knows itself. The Self is known by the Self alone. Iqbal himself concedes the essential separation (and incommensurability) of the scientific and the religious realms and tries to resolve the alleged conflict between the two by pointing out to their separate spheres of action or domains that don't overlap because they don't interpret the same data of experience. But he violates this principle many times when he admits of science's and philosophy's right to have a say in religious problems and pleads accordingly for the reconstruction of religious thought and need to appropriate modern science and its claims by religion and purify and clarify and even evaluate some of its claims. He thinks that psychology could in principle enlighten us regarding the essential nature of religion although he feels that modern psychology has so far been unable to live up to these expectations.[23] He wouldn't have

complained of modern psychology's failure in providing insight into the nature of religion had he not supposed that psychology could possibly provide it.

If we accept Osho's characterization of religion as 'refusal to demystify existence,' then demythologization that by definition implies an attempt to demystify existence is inadmissible. One must celebrate the mystery and the unknowability of God. Islam is surrender to the unknown. Accepting existence as it is along with its hierarchy and not explaining the higher in terms of the lower levels of being or existence is religion's *sine qua non.* But demythologization involves either denial of higher realms of being or existence or their appropriation in terms of the lower realms (natural or formal realms). One can at best have symbols for the higher without thereby negating it or explaining it away. The transcendental signified is unknowable in itself. This world of manifestation is His sign but only sign; it can in no way be identified with Him. It can at best serve as a dim reflection of Him but no more than this. It hasn't the principle of existence in itself. Language and thought can have no jurisdiction to stand as judge over what transcends them. This world is merely a shadow, a poor reflection of Supra-formal paradisical archetypal other world. So this worldly reality should be represented in terms of the other world. But demythologization does exactly the opposite. It is the pretence of certitude and knowledge, of dogmatic faith in our knowledge of truth that characterizes modern Faustian mentality. Now postmodern man is rediscovering the profound symbolism in the legend of the Fall. Postmodernism has problematized the sanctity of so-called knowledge (and science) and will to knowledge. Its links with power are unearthed. Its innocent character is suspected. The biblical myth that associated original fall with tasting the fruit of tree of knowledge modernism and modern science could not comprehend. Postmodernism allows us to see deeper into this biblical myth. Our knowledge and our judgments consist of exclusions and marginalizations as Foucault says and are always guilty of meaning closure as Lyotard emphasizes. All ideologies pretend to be based on knowledge. All metanarratives claim privileged access to knowledge. Belief in the fallacy of knowledge and distrust of its claims to have access to truth, to God characterizes mysticism. Osho remarks: "A mind stuffed with knowledge is a mind which is bound to remain ignorant. Revelation comes the moment knowledge ceases. The known must cease for the unknown to be. And the true, the real, is unknown."[24] He also says, "A person who claims knowledge may be a theologian a philosopher, but never a religious person. A religious man accepts the ultimate

mystery, the ultimate unknowableness, the ultimate ecstasy of ignorance, the ultimate bliss of ignorance."[25] Many modernist rationalist idolatries (e.g., scientism) that have resulted in great disasters are rooted in denying or suppressing the other of knowledge and reason, usurping God's attribute of omniscience and denying the sin in the heart of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment projects. Promethean or Faustian spirit is essentially irreverent towards the sacred mystery of existence that religion always had preserved. Osho, representing the essence of mysticism (although he too could be accused of heterodoxy and demythologization at a different level) thus describes his mission in the world:

> I am here to make you ignorant again if you cooperate with me this will happen, you will become ignorant, innocent. Your knowledgeability will disappear – and in that very disappearance you will find for the first time the mystery of life dancing around you and the benediction of that mystery – that mystery is God…. The original sin is the sin of knowledge. Remember the biblical story again and again. It is one of the most precious parables of human history. Adam has been turned out of the Garden of Eden because he had eaten of the tree of knowledge. His sin is his knowledge….Vomit the apple! Become innocent and ignorant again. And you will be attaining to a second childhood – and fortunate are those who can attain to second childhood, because through it and only through it, is one bridged to God.[26]

It is ultimately credulity towards the metanarrative of science that has primarily contributed to modern man's incredulity towards traditional "myths" and "legends" and hierarchy of existence. It is modern man's naïve acceptance of evolutionism and reductionist methodology of modern science that compels him to reconstruct or demythologize the traditional religious "myths" and "legends." Iqbal did believe to a certain extent in the claims of modern science and its claim to know the truth and this contributed towards his demythologizing project. Demythologization involves stripping religion of its mystery and of its transcendental reference because it believes in the imperialist claims of modern science.

The claims of demythologization couldn't be entertained in traditional world view. The allegorical and analogical approaches to traditional doctrines that have been traditionally practiced mustn't to be confused with modern demythologization. Although Iqbal's demythologization is not Bultman's demythologization but could be defended in certain instances on orthodox Sufi grounds, still he can't be exonerated from the charge of heterodoxy because he seems to reject the traditional Islamic metaphysics, traditional cosmology and traditional psychology (as the perennialist authors like Schuon and

Nasr would understand them taking Sufism as the esoteric dimension or core of Islam; a claim that Iqbal has rejected. Neo Platonic metaphysical framework is quite alien to Islamic sensibility according to Iqbal. However as far as Iqbal's reinterpretation of traditional myths, legends and metahistorical allusions in the Quran (those of the *ahadith* or Prophetic traditions he doesn't reckon with in his *Reconstruction*; he seems to bypass them) is informed by typically modern ideas of anthropology, biology and psychology and positivist bias (most importantly evolution) he is vulnerable to serious criticism from traditionalist viewpoint. It is especially from this perspective that he has been critiqued in the following pages.

Iqbal's interpretation of the metahistorical covenant with God made in pre-Eterntiy, the states and stations of *salik* (a traveler in Sufism), the Prophet's encounter with *Jibril*, the Qur'anic angelology and eschatology, the Qur'anic concept of Iblis, the traditional Qur'anic cosmology and psychology, its concepts of soul and spirit, intuition and revelation and most importantly the legend of the Fall and Creation myth are coloured by demythologizing exegesis. It is his approach to the legend of the Fall that is here discussed. The positivism inspired demythologizing attempts (e.g., that of Zia Gokalp) too have fared no better. Islam resists such rationalist secularist appropriations to maintain its identity, its transcendental reference that is its *raison d'etre*. There can be no compromise with demythologizers because these two are parallel epistemic or cognitive universes. Iqbal's grand attempt at synthesizing the two alien world views – that of traditional Islam and the Western Modernity, couldn't convince either the traditionalist orthodoxy or the secularist modernity. Iqbal is perhaps the greatest demythologizer of Islam in the Indian subcontinent after Sir Syed. We may illustrate his demythologizing approach by seeing how he practices it in his explication or appropriation of the legend of the Fall. Appropriating certain modern biological, anthropological and psychological theories he ingeniously reinterprets the Quran in their light. He is at pains to explain away all miraculous or supernatural elements in the genesis narrative. To make the scriptural account plausible to modern mind he reconstructs the traditional account. He somehow manages to put Qur'anic stamp on it. His interpretation of the creation myth and especially the Fall is unique and unprecedented in Islamic history. Hardly has any scholar interpreted the Fall as man's ascension, his discovery of self consciousness, and his defining feature. He has gone far away from the literal and traditional interpretation of the genesis story. Iqbalian version is at variance with orthodox traditional account and with some modern accounts (like those

inspired by existentialism), but is brilliantly original and ingenious appropriation of scriptural and modern scientific approaches. Kenneth Cragg described the whole of *Reconstruction* as wild speculation and this is best illustrated in his interpretation of the Fall and the Sin. Iqbal is caught in other intractable problems like the problem of evil because of this heterodox interpretation. Iqbalian interpretation could not have been conceived in pre-modern times. It is obviously affected by and addressed to primarily Western sensibility which itself is conditioned by modern science. How daringly heterodox any reconstructionist attempt could be, of which Iqbal is the great protagonist in Islam, is exemplified here. If the project of reconstruction has any validity, such appropriations and constructions are to be expected. If one takes modernism and modern knowledge seriously and from this vantage point approaches tradition, this is not a surprising appropriation. Rejecting the traditional formulation of the concept of Islamisation of knowledge, as Iqbal does, entails such consequences. Respectful attitude towards the post-Renaissance western tradition necessitate such drastic reconstruction of traditional religious thought in Islam. Most interesting point is the fact that Iqbal represents a blend or synthesis of widely divergent approaches – Freudian and the theosophist, Darwinian and the traditionalist or modern and the ancient. His eclectic and synthetic genius is put to sharp test here. He derives momentous results and corollaries from his unique approach to this key religious story. He carries one away by his apparently convincing Qur'anic exegesis. The Quran's multivocity and layered depths of meaning and its susceptibility to multiple interpretations is here fully exploited by him. He ignores relevant prophetic traditions, classical commentaries and much of the traditional wisdom in interpreting the story of genesis. He rejects Biblical account and doesn't extend his interpretative manoeuvring to it to make it look scientific. His overall tone and style is that of a modern evolutionist anthropologist rather than that of a traditional exegete of the Quran. He also displays his selective reading of the Quran here.

Iqbal uses the word 'legend' to refer to these key events in religious narrative of genesis. This sounds quite modern but unorthodox. Iqbal makes a very sharp distinction between Qur'anic and the other scriptural accounts. This is an assumption that could be contested by the perennialist traditionalist approach to Islam.[27] Iqbal is enthusiastic to prove the Quran's modern relevance and sees it more allied to modern spirit than to other traditional scriptures. This is against the basic tenets of traditionalist orthodoxy and indeed seems to run against clear Qur'anic warrant to the contrary. For him

the Quran is essentially modern instead of being ancient or traditional as the traditionalists would argue. Iqbal makes the following questionable statement (from the traditionalist perspective) in this regard.

The Qur'anic method of complete or partial transformation of legends in order to besoul them with new ideas, and this to adapt them to the advancing spirit of time, is an important point which has nearly always been overlooked both by Muslim and non-Muslim students of Islam.[28]

For such traditionalists as Schuon the Quran has no new ideas to put forward and it like other traditional scriptures is a 'space' rather than a 'time' and it would thus reject the very idea of the advancing spirit of time. Advancing times only obscure the otherwise transparent meanings of the Quran for ancients. The farther we go from the Prophet's age, the more difficult it becomes for the moderns to appreciate and cognize traditional wisdom. The Renaissance (and modernity) represents another fall of Adam rather than his rise. Traditional symbolism becomes more and more irrelevant and meaningless in the light of modern knowledge and modern man demands entirely new symbols to make any sense of religion. The clock can't be turned back. Time counts. Islam has to adjust to the changing spirit of the time. The Quran even if using ancient symbolism does appropriate what Schuon would call perversions of post-Renaissance modernity according to modernists. Or we must reconstruct and reinterpret traditional symbolism of the Quran if we are to remain relevant to modern age according to Iqbal. For Iqbal there is nothing in the Quran which runs against the modern scientific rationalist spirit and on the contrary the Quran endorses it. For him the birth of Islam is the birth of (modern scientific) inductive intellect. The Prophet of Islam stood between the ancient and the modern world and thus paved way and legitimized the project of modernity. Islam could be better appreciated by modern man as hitherto the purpose of the Qur'anic revelation was only partly revealed. The traditionalists approaching the legend from a metaphysical perspective would not approve of these assertions. If we read Schuon or Pallis on this issue and compare it to Iqbal's interpretation we will feel unbridgeable gap.

Iqbal remarks that the object of the Quran in dealing with these legends is seldom historical; it nearly always aims at giving them a universal moral or philosophical import.[29] However he thinks that the biblical account is historical, giving the account of the origin of first human pair by way of a prelude to the history of Israel.[30] Iqbal thus tries to circumscribe the import of biblical treatment of the

myth. There have been brilliant appropriations of the Book of Genesis which show its universal philosophical and moral import. What Iqbal does for the Quran many modern writers have done for the Book of Genesis. There have been brilliant attempts at reconciling modern evolutionary anthropological and historical knowledge with the Biblical account. Iqbal seems to follow fashionable modern and orthodox Muslim scholarship which in any comparison between the Bible and the Quran usually denigrates the former. The Quran time and again emphasizes its certification of other religious scriptures and thus Muslims are duty bound to defend rather than criticize them on one or the other ground. However, they usually emphasize the point that Jews and Christians have falsified their scriptures. Granting the veracity of this point, it needs to be appreciated in the light of those Qur'anic verses which put seal and certify the truth of other scriptures. The Quran time and again authenticates rather than abrogates the other scriptures, although there are a few verses which accuse Jews and Christians of the falsification of Scripture. But the emphasis is on authentication rather than abrogation. Also this abrogation has been differently interpreted or understood by certain classical authorities.

Iqbal denies any cognitive or empirical or historical element in the legend. Writing in a style reminiscent of some modern anthropologists like Fraser, he observes:

> confining ourselves to the Semitic form of the myth. it is highly probable that it arose out of the primitive man's desire to explain to himself the infinite misery of his plight in an uncongenial environment, which abounded in disease and death and obstructed him on all sides in his endeavour to maintain himself.[31]

The Qur'anic view of creation starts from the first man who is a prophet and thus endowed with the highest intellectual and moral capabilities. He was not primitive in the sense evolutionists think. The myth of the fall relates more to the spirit than to the body and psyche. Iqbal primarily emphasizes the biological and psychological dimensions and relegates to the background profound spiritual or religious and existential dimensions. From the traditionalist perspective it is modern man rather than the so-called primitive man who deserves the derogatory title of primitive man.

Iqbal distinguishes between the Qur'anic use of words *Insan* and Adam. He argues that the word Adam is retained and used more as a concept than as the name of a concrete human individual. He cites the Qur'anic verse (7:11) as a warrant for it. However he has evolutionary theory in mind while making this unique exegesis. There is also not sufficient Qur'anic warrant. The verse he quotes "We

created you; then fashioned you; then we told angels; prostate yourself unto Adam" is interpretable and has been interpreted differently. The whole mass of prophetic tradition is against him. Muslims, throughout their history, have believed, not quite unwarrantedly, in Adam as the name of a concrete human individual, the first man and the prophet. The fact is that the evolutionist account is difficult to square with the plain Qur'anic narrative, especially the philosophical and religious connotations of the former. There are significant reasons why traditional Islam opposes the theory of evolution. The first man is seen by the Quran as a vicegerent of God. Adam is the first *Bashr* or *Insan*,– to problematize Iqbalian binary. Man didn't evolve (especially his spiritual faculty) according to the Qur'anic world view. His bodily evolution could be conceded as Maurice Bucaille argues in his *What is the Origin of Man: The Answers of Science and Holy Scriptures* from the Qur'anic view point but his psychological and spiritual evolution can't be unproblematically derived from the Quran. Darwinism, especially its philosophical naturalism, isn't reconcilable with the traditional Qur'anic picture of man, his origin and destiny.

Iqbal due to his evolutionist approach is forced to demythologize in rationalist terms the profoundly pertinent traditional myths or symbols of the Quran. Syed Vahidudin has justifiably taken Iqbal to task for his demythologizing attitude. He aptly remarks: "Iqbal doesn't accept the Qur'anic legends at their face value but offers some very stimulating observations. But in his fervor for demythologization, he completely secularizes the Qur'anic motives and their transcendental dimension is lost sight of."[32]

Iqbal says that the word Adam is reserved by the Quran for man in his capacity of God's vicegerent. But strictly speaking, the word Adam in this sense has been used in the Quran only in 2:30-31, as Saeed Sheikh also notes in his annotation of Iqbal's lecturers.[33] Iqbal adopts this selective exclusionist way of reading the Quran throughout his discussion on the Qur'anic legend of the Fall.

Iqbal interprets the word *jannat* as used in connection with Adam's primordial abode as the "conception of a primitive state in which man is practically unrelated to his environment and consequently doesn't feel the sting of human wants the birth of which alone marks the beginning of human culture."[34] However, as Vahidudin remarks: "While it is perfectly legitimate to raise the question whether the *janna* which man has lost is identical with the Janna to which the righteous are destined, it isn't legitimate to convert it into an earthly abode."[35] Vahidudin's remarks on Iqbal's concept of hell and heaven apply here also. He says:

> In any case the transempirical reference can only be dispended with at the risk of alienating oneself from the Qur'anic frame of reference. The alienation from the source of the religious experience is, indeed, the risk which all efforts at demythologization with reference to different religious traditions are exposed to.[36]

Iqbal, if we read between the lines seems to deny the reality of the Fall altogether. Man has not fallen from any heavenly Edenic abode to this earth. He was in and has grown from the earth. Earth greets man.[37] It is man's very home. Iqbal is quite contented with this earthly home and asks God to wait for him.[38] The Quran says that man has been created in trouble and that he was thrown out, disgraced, from paradise to this earth. The earth by no means appears to be his original home.[39] There was definitely some kind of fall and definitely man has been punished in some significant sense for his original act of disobedience. Man did lose something worthwhile by eating the forbidden fruit. It wasn't an unmixed blessing for him to lose his original home. Adam wept bitterly and mourned this loss, as the Prophet's traditions testify. Iqbal's heterodoxy lies in his overlooking or ignoring of the relevant prophetic traditions here and elsewhere in his lectures. This fall may have been a rise or gain in some sense as Iqbal says but from purely religious viewpoint it was definitely a fall, a loss and Adam committed a great sin indeed by eating this forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve did usurp the Divine privilege. They did place themselves outside the Divine centre and cut themselves off in practice, though in an illusory sense, from God. Iqbal appears to welcome the Fall and sees it as the birth of self-consciousness – man's defining attribute and precious treasure. To quote him:

> the Qur'anic legend of the Fall has nothing to do with the first appearance of man on this planet. Its purpose is rather to indicate man's rise from a primitive state of instinctive appetite to the conscious possession of a free self, capable of doubt and disobedience. The Fall does not mean any moral depravity, it is man's transition from simple consciousness to first flash of self-consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream of nature with a throb of personal causality in one's own being. Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice and that is why according to the Qur'anic narration Adam's first transgression was foreign[40].

This is in fact an apology for man's primordial act of disobedience. This is humanism plain and simple. This is compromising with the fallen man's view of things.

Countless volumes have been written on the Fall and its relation to the problem of evil. Iqbal has taken a very problematic and vulnerable position vis-à-vis the problem of evil because he denies

any significant connection between the evil and the Fall. Profound Christian insights into the nature of evil and sin are denied at one stroke by Iqbal. Indeed the word 'sin' with its traditional connotations hardly ever occurs in Iqbalian philosophy. He denies man's primordial sin and he denies any sin in subsequent history of mankind. The Quran has to be drastically reinterpreted and indeed new canons of its interpretation evolved for deriving such notions out of it. Religious and psychological perspective on moral evil starts from man's this primordial propensity to evil. The doctrine of original sin has profound psychological and existential truth. Even thoroughly secularized modern man is unable to deny it. Man's moral fallibility and instinctual propensity towards evil is a fact of which Iqbal has no satisfactory explanation. Religion accounts for it by positing evil in the very constitution of things; in his Fall. The fallen state is indeed evil. Religion takes some kind of fall for granted. It is only then that it speaks of Deliverance, Nirvana, Salvation, Grace, Mercy and Heaven. Although Islam doesn't seem to share Hellenistic-Christian-Neitzschean sense of the tragic and evil, still it emphasizes man's ingratitude and his unheedful attitude towards divine summons. Fruits of man's rejection of God and his moral depravity are gathered in the Qur'anic account of numerous ruined cities or habitations of man. Iqbal has too sanguine an estimate of man's goodness. True to the humanistic tradition, he does not fully recognize dark reality of sin or *zulm* to which the Quran testifies. In rejecting the Christian doctrine of original sin he seems to forget Qur'anic reservations on man's perfection and goodness and its testifying to inexplicable wickedness of man as displayed in his moral record in history. He makes a caricature of Christian approach, whose profound moral and psychological insights he misses. He writes: "Nor does the Quran regard the earth as a torture hall where an elementally wicked humanity is imprisoned for an original act of sin."[41] Humanity has something profoundly wrong in it. Even if not elementally wicked, still there is lingering stubborn element of wickedness in man. The earth may not be a torture hall but man is here not on a vacation or holiday. Even heaven isn't a holiday as Iqbal himself concedes.[42] Man is indeed created in trouble. This world if not the vale of tears is definitely the vale of soul making as Iqbal also concedes. But difficult and painful indeed is this soul making. Man wins immortality or heaven at a great cost. Most men seem too weak to pay the necessary cost. Their egos, as Iqbal is forced to admit, may suffer dissolution. Our soul making odyssey is littered with too many failures and is accompanied by too much pain. So this world is, to assert the obvious fact, a kind of

torture hall where men are involved in painful soul making saga. It may well be interpreted as punishment if one wishes. The trial man is facing in this life or this world for the winning of personality, to use Iqbalian phrase, is hard indeed. Most men succumb to the lowliest of the low state by giving their souls to Satan, being deluded and tempted by Satanic viles and temptations of *Mara*. 'Most men will go to hell,' the Quran affirms.

Man has foolishly accepted the trust of personality according to the Quran. The Quran doesn't share Iqbal's sanguine estimate of man's moral worth. What religion conveys through the legends of the Fall and emphasis on moral evil and thus need of God's Grace or *Fazl* and Mercy and His role in man's deliverance or salvation is missed by Iqbal. The Quran, in line with all traditional religions, emphasizes the great significance of evil. Shabir Akhtar in his *A Faith for All Seasons* illustrates the meaning the Quran's profound symbolism of the legend of the Fall (that Iqbal relegates to background) and its emphasis on the darker face of human nature, which is in remarkable congruence with not only Christian but even Buddhist emphasis on moral and physical evil in the world. The Quran, no less than the Torah and the New Testament condemns any excessively sanguine estimate of the purely human potential for self-perfectibility through obedience to the revealed law.

Man who is vicegerent of God and inheritor of divine kingdom, worthy of the immortal life, nobler than angels, made in the image of God, is built of not only the noblest stuff (Iqbal mostly sees only this part of the picture) but also the vilest of clay. He is more often than not inclined to evil and reduced to the "lowest of the low and gravitates towards the ground" (Quran 7:176). Although he is the epitome of God's fair handiwork, semi divine and angels have prostrated before him according to the Quran, he is also created weak (4:28) and his nature conceals a permanent emotional restlessness (6:19) is 'made of haste' (17:11), impetuous, weak willed, foolish and short sighted. Man has a natural tendency to wrong doing. Human rejection of God and perverse heedlessness that litter the human Saga, of which the Quran complains, question optimistic progressivistic evolutionary thesis (that demythologizers share) and its Qur'anic warrant. To quote Shabir Akhter:

> We have here the irrefutable testimony of the sacred volume itself. The picture is a lugubrious one, of an incorrigible humanity addicted to sin and ingratiated, never turning in repentance until their cup is full (34:15-19). An admittedly forbearing Sovereignty willn't tolerate disobedience and obduracy. God warns; men disregard; and again. And then, Allah's judgment comes suddenly while the sinners sleep the sleep and

heedlessness: morning finds a generation fallen prostrate in its habitation (7:78).[43]

The significance of sin, or *zulm* in the Qur'anic vocabulary, is not duly appreciated by modernist humanist writers like Iqbal. Satan, concedes the Quran (34: 20), found true his judgment about a rebellious humanity.

Iqbal hardly reckons with the disturbing role of Satan in the legend of the Fall. He has no more role than to lead man away from his pursuit of inductive knowledge and diplomatically keeping him ignorant of the joy of perpetual growth and expansion.[44] The only way to correct man's Faustian tendency of seeking short cuts to knowledge was to place him in an environment which however painful, was better suited to the unfolding of his intellectual faculties, in Iqbal's account.[45] This environment is our present painful physical environment. Thus Iqbal relegates to the background the whole problem of moral evil and Satan's role in it. Man's universal rejection of prophets and his consequent condemnation to hell – "painful realization of one's failure as a man"– is time and again lamented in the Quran. This dimension for evil and consequence of Man's Fall are ignored by Iqbal. Iqbal is unduly swayed by what may be called man's epistemological dimension. For him knowledge – not the knowledge of God or gnosis but the empirical knowledge gained primarily through inductive intellect – is the *raison d'etre* of man's existence as if knowledge will deliver men out of ignorance, out of the hell he is in. Satan, the principle of evil and one of the central characters in religious drama, has a role related to this project only. This is tantamount to subversion of religious narrative in this regard. This is demythologizing spirit let loose. Even Dr. Faustus of Marlowe didn't take such comfortable view of Satan. Amongst the numerous adjectives the Quran uses against man he mentions only his being hasty (*ajul*) by nature in this connection. Iqbal reduces the key religious issue of the Fall to only an issue of getting this or that kind of knowledge. Against the orthodox Christian and Islamic conception of this tree that takes it as a symbol for knowledge of good and evil Iqbal believes with Madame Blavatsky that this tree is a cryptic symbol for occult knowledge. Some Christians have even argued that this forbidden fruit is a kind of modern scientific knowledge. Iqbal is arguing for the exactly opposite view. It is not the man's intellectual faculty but his spiritual faculty that is the subject of the legend of the Fall. Man's knowledge (not to be understood as mystical and metaphysical realization) and not his spirit is the concern of Iqbal in his treatment of the legend of the Fall. Metaphysical issue is reduced to an epistemological one by

Iqbal. Traditional theology and metaphysics is hardly of any relevance to Iqbal here. Iqbal's demythologizing tendency is also evident in his interpretation of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Eternity. Here is displayed Freudian influence in Iqbal. He says:

> The eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of eternity is life's resort to sex-differentiation by which it multiplies itself with a view to circumvent total extinction. It is as if life says to death. If you sweep away one generation of living things, I will produce another.[46]

Although the legitimacy of this interpretation can't be ruled out yet the profound transcendental or metaphysical significance of this symbolism remains primary of which one must take due cognizance. Otherwise one risks overlooking the Quran's motive in alluding to such things. There have been many beautiful interpretations of this symbol of the Tree of Eternity. Sexual connotations have been almost universally emphasized by sacred scriptures as well as by secular interpretations. However sex has to be understood not in the usually accepted narrow sense of the term but in a wider context that involves man's whole being and thus has metaphysical dimensions as well. Iqbal says that "the Quran rejects the phallic symbolism of ancient art, but suggests the original sexual act by the birth of the sense of shame disclosed in Adam's anxiety to cover the nakedness of his body."[47] There seems to be a contradiction in this statement. How could the Quran reject phallic symbolism when it also points to an original sexual act?

Iqbal, unlike Schuon, doesn't possess the complex and subtle metaphysical insights that alone clear the meanings of the legend of the Fall. Iqbal does possess some profound insights into the matter but as it is only metaphysics and esoterism that clears the meaning of the legend he ends up with problematic account of this key Qur'anic story.

We will now briefly take up Sir Syed's and Muhammed Abduh's demythologizing approach. Sir Syed whose thought influenced Iqbal, doesn't recognize the existence of angelic realm and interprets angels and *Iblis* from a naturalistic standpoint as natural or psychological forces. He deems the whole story of Adam as metaphorical and interprets the various characters in the story in varied ways. To quote him

The story of Adam, *Iblis* and the angels in the reality is not a story of some happening. It is rather a metaphorical explanation of interplay of good and evil forces within man. There are several other such metaphors in the Quran.

The term Satan or *Iblis* in the Quran does not denote any essentially physical existence, but denotes evil or devilish forces concealed within man.[48]

Thus metaphysical or transcendental reference is rejected by Sir Syed. Modern science and evolutionary biology and the advocates of demythologization would hardly find anything objectionable in Sir Syed's account.

Abduh has dealt with the narrative of genesis in greater detail than Sir Syed has done. He attempted to categorize the verses pertaining to the creation of Prophet Adam as ambiguous and deemed the story of Adam as allegorical through certain far fetched interpretations. Though he, like Afghani, critiqued Sir Syed as naturalist he cannot himself be exonerated from this charge. In fact as Shihabuddin Nadvi has pointed out he appears to be a bigger naturalist than Sir Syed.[49] His following remarks speak loudly about his demythologizing exegesis:

> *Jannat* or Heaven could be more appropriately interpreted as pleasure, ease and happiness. It is also correct to say that Adam denotes the whole mankind as a clan is known by the name of his father.
>
> ….Prohibited tree means evils and intransigence….The living in *Jannat* and expulsion may be divinely ordained acts are destined to happen. The living and expulsion from *Jannat* (heaven) denotes various stages such as childhood, an age when happiness is the sole preoccupation of man; so the childhood represents heavenly happiness. Thus the child lives in an eternally genial atmosphere as if in a garden where canals flow, birds chirp, dense trees spread their shades, and remain laden with fruits. The description of mate encompasses all human beings irrespective of being male or female…. Satanic temptations mean the evil spirit behind man. It is to show that man is by virtue of his sublime nature inclined towards virtues and only temptations lead him to vices. Expulsion from heaven means that man gets into difficulties by transgressing the laws of nature.[50]

In comparison to these attempts Iqbal's demythologization is quite sophisticated and convincing and appropriates both modern knowledge and the Quran from the perspective of his philosophy of ego. It is not too wild a guess work.

It needs to be made clear that Iqbal cannot be bracketed with those demythologizers who deny hierarchy of existence and are committed to thorough going naturalism. Though his exegesis of certain traditional myths reveals influence of demythologizing methodology he remains fundamentally a metaphysician and quite an orthodox believer in Islam. He believes in the ontological reality of traditional religious symbols. He believes in the literal reality of afterlife or posthumous life of ego. For him the soul rather than the

body, consciousness rather than matter, invisible rather than the visible are the primary realities. The world of space and time are thought's interpretations on the creative activity of God. The universe is a fleeting moment in the life of God. Body is spirit in space time reference. He had firm belief in miracles. He never questioned traditional belief in angels. Hell and heaven were as real as this world, rather more real. However when it comes to rational philosophical treatment of traditional symbols he becomes too apologetic and doesn't know how to translate these things in such terms that modern man, who is committed to positivist evolutionist rationalist scientific world view, can understand. He didn't realize that there can hardly be made any compromise with modern scientific methodological and philosophical commitments. He was not in possession of metaphysically strong traditional intellectual perspective. He had to address secular disbelieving age and hoped to appeal to it by making serious concessions to its spirit.

Orthodox Islam can't allow development of any demythologization within it. Such attempts as those of Iqbal and Sir Syed have not been generally accepted. The traditional spirit or orthodoxy of Muslims has been very strong and hasn't allowed a counterpart of secular theological and demythologizing movement in Islam. *Batini* movement despite its Sufi cloak was never accepted by the *jumhoor*. The same is true about *Mu'tazillite*s movement. Science inspired demythologization cannot expect a different fate.

The traditionalists reject the whole enterprise of modern science and thought that has logically culminated in demythologization and secular theology. Why there is no need of demythologization in their view will be clear by following account of their position vis-à-vis the supernatural or unseen order of things, which, needless to say is irreconcilable with assumptions of demytholgization.

Religion, as William James correctly noted, is vision of hierarchical universe. For him: "In its broadest terms, religion says that there is an unseen order and that our supreme good lies in rightful relation to it."[51] Modern science rejects invisibles out of hand and we are still so under its sway that it is almost impossible to take seriously the prospect that there are things that don't need physical underpinnings. Iqbal is concerned with the levels of Reality that physics, biology and psychology explore. This means such traditional sciences as astrology, parapsychology etc. are not sciences or are pseudosciences (In fact Iqbal does reject all occultist sciences as superstition.) The metaphysics that grounds traditional sciences has hardly any place in modern scientific framework. Demythologization becomes imperative in such a context for a religious modernist. The

supraformal world is not a subject matter or concern of these sciences; in fact it is denied existence by the official ideologue of scientism. The suprasensible world is hardly the concern of these sciences; they ignore or deny it on *a priori* grounds. So modern sciences are not symbolist; there is no higher world of which the things of the natural world are symbols. The traditional notion of archetypes doesn't figure in the evolutionary worldview. We need not invoke the supraformal ontological realities to explain anything on earth. But many problems that currently baffle scientists and are of fundamental importance can't be answered because their answers lie on levels of reality that science can't access. Modern existentialism is much influenced by science's reductionist account of traditional idea of degrees of reality (though it critiques it for certain other reasons); indeed science and existentialists (especially the atheistic brand of it) acknowledges no existence of supraindividual suprarational supernatural levels of reality and can't see beyond phenomenal, the visible world on a priori grounds. The angelic realm, the supraformal world isn't an object of science. But is religion's very soul. Arguing for the spiritual interpretation of universe in the framework of such physicist philosophers as Eddington and Jeans willn't approximate the traditional religious interpretation of universe. Iqbal's advocacy of religious worldview, using primarily the framework of modern science, is bound to be problematic. There is hardly any scope for miracles and the magic in the framework of modern rationalist naturalistic science (and that is why they hardly figure in *Reconstruction*). Miracles will somehow be appropriated using reductionist logic. Psychoanalysis and evolutionism -- the two great modern myths -- claim to supply those missing dimensions or causes that really higher levels of existence or vertical reference alone can supply. What consequences would follow on accepting such prejudices of modern science are hardly anticipated. I quote Schuon at length to show how fallacious are modern science's methodological and philosophical assumptions and the harmful results that have followed from its wide acceptance, amongst which demythologization is not the least important. Most of this critique applies to Iqbalian approach in principle who speaks on behalf of modern science. Iqbal can't escape this critique of his position as it follows logically or by simple extrapolation from his writing.

> In view of the fact that modern science is unaware of the degrees of reality, it is consequently null and inoperative as regards everything that can be explained only by them, whether it be a case of magic or of spirituality or indeed of any belief or practice of any people; it is in

> particular incapable of accounting for human or other phenomena of the historic or prehistoric past, the nature of which and the key to which are totally unknown to it as a matter of principle. There is scarcely a more desperately vain or naïve illusion - far more naïve than is Aristotelian astronomy!-than to believe that modern science, in its vertiginous course towards the 'infinitely small' and the 'infinitely great' will end up by re-joining religious and metaphysical truths and doctrines.[52]

Scientistic philosophy is unaware, not only of the 'Divine Presences', but also of their rhythms or 'life' ; it is ignorant not only of the degrees of reality and the fact of our imprisonment in the sensory world, but also of the cycles, the universal solve et coagula; that is to say it knows nothing either of the 'gushing forth' of our world from an invisible and effulgent Reality, or of its re-absorption into the 'dark' light of this same Reality. All the Real is in the Invisible; it is this above all that must be felt or understood before one can speak of knowledge and effectiveness. But this will not be understood, and the human world will continue inexorably on its course."[53]

The profound mystical symbolism of the tree of knowledge is beautifully presented by Thomas Teherene in *Centuries of Meditation*. This also explains why it is indeed a great loss and why we need, every moment, to recover the lost paradise. Far from being any evolutionary advance or irrecoverable it is the very mandate of religions and mystical traditions to undo the fall and vomit the forbidden fruit.

> Will you see the infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? Those pure and virgin apprehensions I had from the womb, and that divine light wherewith I was born are the best unto this day, wherein I can see the Universe. . . .
>
> Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world, than I when I was a child.
>
> My very ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one brought into the Estate of Innocence. All things were spotless and pure and glorious: yea, and infinitely mine, and joyful and precious. I knew not that there were any sins, or complaints or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. Everything was at rest, free and immortal, I knew nothing of sickness or death or rents or exaction, either tribute or bread. . . .
>
> All Time was Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. . . .
>
> All things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared: which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. . . .[54]

And "Your enjoyment of the world is never right, till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's Palace; and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air as Celestial joys; having such a reverend esteem of all, as if you were among the Angels."

Thus from the perennialist point of view traditional myths describe something which is far more real and objective entity than our demythologizers would concede. Theological Modernism with all its aberrations including the demythologization is unwarranted in its perspective. What we need is not demythologization but resurrection and reinscription of the myths and this will be done only after the grand claims of modern science regarding demystification of life are rejected. We need to be deconditioned from our scientistic prejudices so that the Invisible world appears more real, more objective than the supposedly real world of phenomena, of *maya.* Only after we reject the superstition of facts and the myth of modern science and then see through the illusory realm of *maya* could we really resuscitate traditional hierarchic vision of the universe. And then it will appear to us that myths count far more than the so-called facts. In the post-secular postmodern era when grand narratives of modern science and secular humanism stand deconstructed, the space is open for so far marginalized and suppressed "narrative" of traditional perspective as Huston Smith has argued in *Beyond the Postmodern Mind.*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] For Bultman's explications of his demythologizing project see "New Testament and Mythology" (1941), in H. W. Bartsh,ed., *Kerygma and Myth* ,vol1, London, SP C K, 1964.

[2] As refereed to in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,(*Macropaedia*) entry "Religion, the history of"

[3] Iqbal, M., *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Ed. and Annot. M. Saeed Sheikh Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1997, New Delhi, Preface P xxi

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., pxii.

[8] Ibid., pp77, 78.

[9] The traditionalist perennialist perspective began to be enunciated in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century by the French metaphysician Rene Guenon, although its precepts are considered to be timeless and to be found in all authentic

traditions.. It is also known as Perennialism, the perennial philosophy, or *Sophia Perennis*. The other founding figures of the traditionalist school were French metaphysician Frithjof Schuon and the Ceylonese scholar A.K. Coomaraswamy. Other important figures in the traditionalist school include Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, Marco Pallis,W.N. Perry, Syed Hussain Nasr, Lord Northbourne, Leo Schaya, Philip Sherrard, Rama Coomaraswamy, J.E., Brown, Charles le Gai Eaton. There are, apart from the traditionalists themselves, several scholars and thinkers whose work exhibits, in varying degree, a strong tradituionalist influence. Mention may be made of Huston Smith,T. Izutsu, Elemire Zolla,Katheleine Raine, Brian Kebble, William Chittick, James Cutsinger, E.F. Schumacher.

Philosophia perennis pertains to a knowledge which is of universal character "both in the sense of existing among peoples of different climes and epochs and of dealing with universal principles." This knowledge which is available to the intellect (which in the traditionalist perspective is a supra-individual faculty distinct from reason though the latter is its reflection on the mental plane) is, moreover, contained in the heart of all religions or traditions

[10] Nasr. S. H., *The Need for a Sacred Science,* SUNNY, New York, 1993, p.7.

[11] Ibid., 15.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Quoted by Larry Witham in *By Design: Science of God,* Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd. Chandigrah.2oo4, p. 157.

[14] All the quotes from Freud are from his work *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.*

[15] In fact Iqbal is primarily a religious metaphysician and declares that religion has never, in its history, taken itself as a matter of feeling alone and has constantly striven after metaphysics(p17 of *Reconstruction).*

[16] Vahidudin, Syed, *Islam in India* : *Studies and Commentaries,* Vol. III, ed. Christian W Troll, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1986, p.76.

[17] Ibid., p. 58.

[18] Ibid., p. 58.

[19] Quoted by Stace, W. T. in *Time and Eternity:An Essay Concerning Philosophy of Religion,* Princeton University Press, London,1952, p. 1.

[20] Stace, W. T. op. cit., p. 9.

[21] Osho, *Take it Easy : Poems of Ikkayu*, Rajnesh Foundation International, Vol. 1, 1979.

[22] Iqbal, M., *Reconstruction ,* p. 31.

[23] Ibid., p.151.

[24] Osho*, Psychology of the Esoteric : New Evolution of Man,* Orient Paper Backs, New Delhi, 1978, p.147.

[25] Ibid., p.151.

[26] Osho, *Come Follow Me: The Sayings of Jesus,* Vol.2, Rajneesh Foundation International, 1977, p.401.

[27] The traditionalist approach is best represented in the writings of great French Muslim Sufi and metaphysician Frithjof Schuon. The traditionalist approach to the problem of modern science is to be found in various writings of Syed Hussain Nasr.

[28] Iqbal, M., *Reconstruction,* p. 65.

[29] Ibid., pp. 101-102.

[30] Ibid., p. 66.

[31] Ibid., p. 66.

[32] Vahidudin, Syed, op. cit., p. 59.

[33] Iqbal, M., op. cit., p.170, ff. 48. This very selective reading of the Quran is paralleled elsewhere in his lectures, e.g., he rejects eternity of hell, which occurs as refrain in the Quran on the basis of Qur'anic verse (78:23) which for him gives a sufficient warrant for such a bold thesis.
[34] Ibid., p. 67.
[35] Vahidudin, Syed, op. cit., p. 160.
[36] Ibid., p. 160.
[37] Iqbal, M, op. cit., p. 67.
[38] Seed Iqbal's poem *Roohi- Arzi Adam Ko Salam Karti hay* in his *Kulliyat.*
[39] See Iqbal's *Bali Jibril* where following famous lines occur: Why had you driven me out in preeternity/World is too much with us, wait.
[40] Iqbal M. *Reconstruction,* pp. 67-68.
[41] Ibid., p. 68.
[42] Ibid., p. 98.
[43] Akhtar, Shabir, *A Faith for All Seasons: Islam and Western Modernity,* Bellew Publishing London, 1990, p. 163.
[44] Iqbal M. *Reconstruction* ,p. 69.
[45] Ibid., p. 69.
[46] Ibid., p. 69.
[47] Ibid., p. 10.
[48] Quoted in *Hayaate Javeed* of Altaf Hussain Hali, Taraqqi Urdu Board, New Delhi, 1979, p. 526.
[49] Nadvi, M. Shihabuddin, *Evolution and Creation*, Furqania Academy Trust, 1998, p. 80.
[50] Quoted in M. Shihabuddin Nadvi, p. 80.
[51] Quoted by Huston Smith in "Postmodernism's Impact on the Study of Religion" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LVIII/4 (1990)
[52] Schuon, Frithjof, *Dimensions of Islam*, George Allen &Unwin Ltd, London,1970, p. 156
[53] Ibid., p. 158.
[54] Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*, 1636-1674 (London: P. J. & A. E. Dobell), p. 19

IQBAL STUDIES:

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MĪR DĀMĀD'S CONCEPT OF *HUDŪTH DAHRĪ*:
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RELATIONSHIP THEORIES IN SAFAVID IRAN
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MĪR DĀMĀD'S CONCEPT OF HUDŪTH DAHRĪ: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP THEORIES IN SAFAVID IRAN

Fazlur Rahman

Since the time of Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsi (d. 1274), philosophical theology has prospered in Shi'ism, but its high water mark was reached in the Isfahan School of the Safavid period. Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631-32) was a highly innovative philosopher-theologian of great prominence in Safavid Iran. His most celebrated, but equally controversial theory, concerns the "originatedness" of the world of intelligences and heavenly spheres, which had been regarded as eternal after Ibn Sīnā, and is called *hudūth dahrī*, or categorical or pure origination. Recently, several scholars have written about this theory, but since their treatments of it are either too brief[1] or, in certain cases, not very satisfactory,[2] I have chosen to elaborate on *hudūth dahrī* further; this paper is devoted to a study and analysis of the central issues in this notoriously difficult but fascinating doctrine and will attempt to explain its real meaning through a consideration of its historical setting as well.[3]

The theory of categorical origination was developed by Mīr Dāmād on the basis of certain statements made by Ibn Sīnā. In part Dāmād supported Ibn Sīnā, but because of the theory's obscurity and material inconsistency, he was forced to disagree and develop his own idea. Ibn Sīnā's statements concern two different but closely related issues, one related to the idea of origination (*hudūth*) and the other related to questions of time and eternity. Ibn Sīnā had, in general, distinguished three levels related to time and eternity: (1) the relationship of the unchanging to the unchanging (*thābit*) is in the realm of eternity; (2) the relationship of the changing to the changing is in time; (3) and the relationship of the unchanging to the changing, which is in *dahr* or perpetuity.[4] On this last category, Ibn Sīnā's statements oscillate: he often speaks as though it is a third distinct category and says, "it is with time [but not time],"[5] (al-Suhrawardī was to say later that "it is on the horizon of time"),[6] and, very often, "it comprehends or surrounds (*muhīt*) time even as it itself is comprehended by eternity"; it causes time as it is itself caused by eternity.[7] But then we are also told, "the relationship of that which is 'with' time but not in time [to that which is in time] is perpetuity

(*dahr*), while the relationship of that which is not in time to that which is not in time, in so far as it is not in time, is better called eternity (*sarmad*), since perpetuity (*dahr*) in itself is part of eternity and is called perpetuity [only] when compared to time."[8]

This last statement appears consistent with Ibn Sīnā's view that although perpetuity is between time and eternity, its postulation is really necessitated by the (causal) relationship of the eternal to the temporal and is hence also said to be "on the border" of time; for if eternals were only mutually related and not related to the temporals, there would be only eternity and no perpetuity. Its close connection with time is again emphasized in the following statement, which probably represents the closest determination of its nature by Ibn Sīnā: "that which falls outside this [temporal] category is not in time [but outside it]. Rather, when it is imagined to be "with" time and is considered in relation to it and its unchanging nature is found to coincide with and parallel with (*mutābiq*) the unchanging nature of time itself and its contents [as a whole], this relation- ship and this aspect is termed "perpetuity (*dahr*); hence perpetuity surrounds time."[9] It thus appears that perpetuity is a kind of fixed or "frozen" time in which there is no temporal flow but otherwise is coterminous or parallel with time. It should be pointed out that Aristotle had himself posited, in addition to the universal eternity of the highest heaven, individual eternities (aiones) for the individual eternal beings.[10] More important, Proclus, who, as usual, posited a middle term mediating between eternity and time and called it "perpetuity in time" says: "…perpetuity… is of two kinds, the one eternal, the other in time; the one a perpetual steadfastness, the other a perpetual becoming; the one having its existence concentrated in a simultaneous whole (i.e., that which is complete every moment), the other diffused and unfolded in temporal extension; the one entire in itself……"[11]

Although Proclus expressly uses the term "perpetuity in time" and has described it as "temporal extension" which Ibn Sīnā denies,[12] there is not much doubt that he means what Ibn Sīnā calls C" perpetuity with time," i.e., *dahr*. Proclus thinks of such entities as heavenly bodies and matter and probably time itself (i.e., as a whole) as contents of the realm of perpetuity; Ibn Sīnā also thinks of these as contents of *dahr*, although Ibn Sīnā usually talks of relationships between entities of different orders of existence as pertaining to eternity, i.e., perpetuity and time. Here, once more: "the relationship of the First, the Exalted (i.e., God) to the Active Intelligence or to the (Highest) Heaven is an unquantified relationship in terms of time: it is a relationship of the eternals, and the relationship of the

eternals to the eternals is called "eternity (*sarmad*)" and "perpetuity (*dahr*)."[13] We note once again that the terms "eternity" and "perpetuity" are most probably used here synonymously. Even more interesting and certainly much more important in Ibn Sīnā than the issue of time and eternity is the counterpart of this problem, viz. that of the emanational order of reality in terms of "contingency (*imkān*)" and "origination (*ḥudūth*)"; his statements on this crucial issue are equally puzzling. He distinguishes sharply between the Necessary Being-God-on the one hand, and all contingents, including the transcendental Intelligences on the other; and although he does not accept that the term "existence" has a different meaning in the two cases, he recurrently emphasizes that the existence of Intelligences was certainly of a different order and altogether of a different quality from that of God, since in the case of God, His existence is original, unique, and uncaused, while in contingents it is borrowed from and caused by God, and hence the two can never be the same.[14] In themselves, even Intelligences deserved non-existence and acquired existence only through God's bestowal; He is the "Grantor of existence (*wāhib al-wujūd*)." But, in view of the difficulties involved in the concept of temporal creation, Ibn Sīnā declares the Intelligences, the heavenly spheres, and the world as a whole to be only "essentially (*bi 'l-dhāt*)," "posterior" to God, not temporally: thus, both God and the world are co-eternal, although the world is contingent and God Self-Necessary.

Further, in some of his statements, Ibn Sīnā even reduces this "essential" priority of non-being of contingents to their being (i.e., the "essential" priority of God's existence over that of contingents) to the status of being "mental (*'ind al-dhihn*)" rather than real: "that which is called *ibdā'* (eternal emanation)' by the philosophers is to turn something into a being after it was nothing, since the effect in itself (i.e., non-being) is prior 'mentally ('*ind al-dhihn*, logically)' in essence rather than in time to that which comes to it from something else (i.e., its cause)."[15] The concept of a "logical" priority as opposed to a real one turns it into a more or less "nominal" priority, and we move away, under the impact of Aristotelian-neo-platonic philosophical considerations, from Ibn Sīnā's real distinction between the Necessary and the Contingent (which, by the way, he had originally formulated through a religious motivation). As we have seen above, Ibn Sīnā puts all "eternals," whether God or non-God, in the realm of eternity (*sarmad*); the difference between the two threatens to evaporate.

An important development took place after Ibn Sīnā under the influence of "essentialism," i.e., the doctrine of the priority of

essence over existence, which began with al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), and this strongly influenced Mīr Dāmād's thought. In Ibn Sīnā's use of the terms "in itself" and "essentially or logically (*bi 'l-dhāt*)," there is no obvious reference to any status of the "pure essence"; and there is little doubt that by these terms, Ibn Sīnā simply means that something "taken by itself," i.e., "without reference to a cause," does not exist– not in the sense of its "essential or logical status (*bi 'l-martaba al-'aqliyya*)" as Mīr Dāmād and other thinkers like him came to formulate this doctrine, which they subsequently opposed to "the field of real or external existence (*fi matn al-a'yān, fi hāqq al-khārij*, etc.)."

I have dwelt a great deal on Ibn Sīnā because, in my view, it is simply not possible to understand, let alone appreciate and evaluate, Mīr Dāmād's doctrine of perpetual origination (*hudūth dahri*) without some background. Dāmād's whole effort is concentrated on proving that the "essential origination (*hudūth dahri*)" of Ibn Sīnā which, as we have seen above, threatened to evaporate into a purely nominal distinction between God and the Intelligences, did involve a "real origination (*hudūth fi matn al-a'yān*)" at the level of *dahr* or perpetuity, a concept which Professor Corbin has so excellently rendered as "événement eternel" (to which Proclus's formulation is a close approximation). The question at issue is whether or not the origination of the Intelligences and heavenly spheres, etc. from God, although perhaps not involving a temporal gap, does not involve, nevertheless, a real origination, an ontological hiatus or rupture of being as opposed to a mere "mental" one as the essentialist commentators of Ibn Sīnā had come to believe. In doing so, Mīr Dāmād radically distinguishes *dahr* from *sarmad* or pure eternity, i.e., the level at which God exists. The level of *sarmad*, because it is totally different from *dahr*, let alone time, is beyond any relationship with it, so that it is not even proper to describe God as "being beyond (*mutaqaddis 'an*)" *dahr* or time, since the term "beyond" does imply some relationship to that from which He is beyond. As I shall illustrate, God is, in fact, so utterly unique that it is inconceivable that the world–including both the Intelligences and things material– can exist at His level of existence. We must therefore posit the entirety of the world at a different level of being, which is the level of *dahr*. As for the world of time, it is only made possible by the phenomenon of movement which gives rise to time; but the fact of movement is, as we shall presently see, extraneous not only to our argument but also to the nature of being itself, since all temporal beings really exist in *dahr*.

To establish *dahr*, then, our philosopher follows two routes: one

descending from the pure eternity of God (*sarmad*) and the other ascending from the world of temporal extension. I shall take up the latter first if only because it is the more straightforward of the two. I have just stated that for origination (*hudūth*), the extension of time is not necessary. Dāmād quotes from Abu 'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī the philosophers' argument[16] against the theologians which asks how much time was needed before the creation of the world-if, indeed, the world was created in time. Under examination, the interlocutor is forced to admit finally that no quantity of time is necessary for creation and that *hudūth* or origination is essentially a non-temporal event. It follows from this that time or temporal extension is irrelevant to origination as such. But if you remove the extension of time from the world, what remains is *dahr*, where the order of events remains without past, present, and future. We should note that with this argument, Dāmād has made a real departure from Ibn Sīnā for whom normally *hudūth* means origination in time. Furthermore, he feels it is not *hudūth* but simply *imkān* or contingency which does not require time and thus essentially equates the two.

Dahr, then, means the world of "pure time" where origination or "eventuality" remains without the extension of time. Dāmād further refers to an argument used by Ibn Sīnā and others according to which the *hudūth* of a thing requires that it be temporally preceded by non-existence, and hence this non-existence becomes, in an indirect way, a cause of a thing's coming into being.[17] Further, *hudūth* and temporal non-being are regarded as "contradictories," since existence and non-existence seem contradictory; hence it is held that the non-existence of a thing has to be "removed" if its existence is to be realized. Dāmād rejects part of this argument and accepts part of it in such a way that this finally becomes a proof for his doctrine of *dahr*. He accepts that existence and non-existence are contradictories and that, therefore, non-existence has to be "removed" when existence is realized. He rejects, however, the application of this argument to temporal origination: in time, the non-existence of a thing is temporally antecedent to its existence; hence its non-existence and existence cannot be contradictories since in order to be contradictories, both the existence and non-existence have to be simultaneous– just as A's existence in his home is not contradictory to his non-existence in the market, since in order for A's existence and non-existence to be contradictory, these states must occur *in the same place*.[18] There is no doubt, however, that both the existence and non-existence of a thing are contradictory; if their "contradictoriness" cannot be established at the level of temporal existence, then it must be established at the level of pure time, which,

as I have shown, contains the order of real being (as opposed to the purely logical one) without temporal extension. This is *dahr*. In *dahr*, it is correct to say that the non-existence of a thing is antecedent, or prior to, or precedes its existence, but this antecedence, or priority, or precedence is not temporal but exists in pure time. If one speaks in terms of time, then they are "together" in *dahr*. Nor is precedence or priority purely logical so that the origination in *dahr* might be construed as "essential origination" (*hudūth dhātī*) which has been spoken of earlier and *against* whose implications of a purely logical priority of non-being over being Dāmād formulated his doctrine of real origination in *dahr*, a theory implying a rupture or dislocation of being between God and the world. Indeed, the theory of *hudūth dhātī* or the logical priority of the non-being of a thing over its being– which has been held to be purely "mental"– involves no contradiction (just as the temporal antecedence of non-being to being has also been shown to involve no contradiction), since the non-being in this case is in respect of the thing taken in itself, as divorced from its cause, while the positive being is in respect of the cause of the thing. Since these two respects of being and non-being are different, there is no contradiction, for, as stated above, in order to be contradictory, all aspects of a thing have to be the same. This also shows that the name "logical" often used in this context is a misnomer, since logical contradiction is absolute and does not have reference to different aspects.

Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī rejects Dāmād's theory of *hudūth dhātī* as spurious and asserts that whatever Dāmād wanted to achieve through his concept of *hudūth dhātī* can be explained through *hudūth dhātī*.[19] Yet, Āshtiyānī firmly holds to the traditional description of *hudūth dhātī* as being purely logical (*bi 'l-martaba al-'aqliyya*) or mental (*'ind al-dhihn*). Dāmād, while *prima facie* accepting this definition of *hudūth dhātī* found it justifiably insufficient to prove this *hudūth* and, in his search for real *hudūth*, came to formulate his doctrine of *hudūth dhātī*, since temporal origination has been shown to be a meaningless concept, time itself being irrelevant to origination. Whether one accepts Dāmād's theory of *dahr* or not, one must accept that the traditional view of *hudūth dhātī*, which is nothing but *imkān* or pure contingency, cannot prove real *hudūth*, which means a real, though non-temporal, precedence of non-being of a thing over its being and not just a mental or logical precedence. Alternatively, one may, of course, deny all real *hudūth* and any existential hiatus between God and the world and regard the world and all its contents (including temporal contents) as essentially of the same status as God or His attributes, which Āshtiyānī is obviously not willing to do, recognizing

origination to be restricted to two kinds-mental or temporal.[20] Āshtiyānī also says that because Dāmād's theory of *hudūth dahrī* was untenable, his pupil, Mulla Sadrā did not adopt it[21] and formulated a correct theory of the real origination of the world. (In my work The Philosophy of Mulla Sadrā, I have demonstrated the great sophistication and originality of Mulla Sadrā's philosophical system and have also pointed out and discussed the inadequacy of his doctrine of the origination of the world.)[22]

Dāmād, in fact, holds that it is not in the temporal nature of events but rather in their nature as contingents that the true source of real *hudūth* is to be sought, thus departing from the traditional view of contingency:

> It is a clearly ascertained fact that the contingency of potentiality (which exists in material things only as distinguished from pure contingency which characterizes non-material beings), as such, is a necessary accompaniment of movements, while the simple requirement of time is that for which a potentiality exists is not actualized while that potentiality lasts. The precedence of potentiality over that of which it is the potentiality, accordingly, is a temporally quantified precedence. Therefore, this alone does not render it impossible that the potentiality, the matter that bears this potentiality, and that for which this potentiality exists, all may exist together in *dahr* (without any priority or posteriority, since there is no quantified time in *dahr*) in a *dahrī* co-existence and that the antecedence of matter and its potentiality over that of which it is potentiality be a purely natural antecedence (*bi 'l-tab'*, like the antecedence of the number two over three, for example)[23] and not a real *dahrī* antecedence (like that of cause over its effect, for example).
>
> Hence, the contingency of potentiality, as such, in relation to that for whose actual existence it is a potentiality, is neither antagonistic to its *dahrī* origination (since they can co-exist there), nor required by it. Therefore, we say that but for the fact that the nature of essential contingency itself (*al imkān al-dhātī*, as distinguished from contingency of potentiality, *al imkān al-isti'dādī*) forbids the eternity of the existence (of a contingent) in *dahr*, [the being of] that for which the potentiality exists would be characterized only by a mental or logical origination, in view of its pure contingency, while (at the level of time) it would be characterized by temporal origination in view of its contingency of potentiality. In that case, something which comes into being through the contingency of potentiality (i.e., has material existence in time) would combine in itself temporal origination with a *dahrī* eternity. Nobody, however, will plunge into permitting this kind of view, except one who takes leave of his rational constitution and gives up his natural balance.[24]

This kind of crucial passage makes it abundantly clear that each of

the three levels of existence imposes its own characteristic logic on the contents that exist there, although there is a causational connection among these levels. First of all, there is the level of *sarmad*, or eternity, where only God exists; and there also "are" at this level essences of all things. Dāmād, who is in the tradition of essentialism (as opposed to his pupil Mulla Sadrā who is an existentialist with a vengeance) believes that prior to their positive, real existence, essences exist with God and are caused by Him. These do not possess real existence but simply "are there" with God just as our thoughts are with us, having no real separate existence of their own. But these essences represent a kind of logical posteriority to God's being, if not a real, separate posteriority, because they presuppose God's being while God's being does not presuppose theirs: they depend upon God, not God upon them. This is exactly what Dāmād means by *taqaddum dhātī* (essential or logical priority) and *hudūth dhātī* (essential or logical origination). Since, however, these essences co-exist with God as necessary concomitants of His being, they cannot be called "really originated" but only technically originated, since there is no real, existential rupture between them and between God's being-indeed, they do not "exist" separate from God. Therefore, when one says, for example, that "man is originated," one can mean two things: either that the essence of man is originated, which simply means that this essence, like others, depends upon God. Since essences are known through reason, they are said to be only "at the level of reason (*bi 'l-martaba al-'aqliyya*)" as opposed to the level of real, positive being. Essences, therefore, are doubly non- existent in a positive sense, since, first, they are only "with God" as necessary and posterior consequences of His being and having no existence of their own; secondly, their being is known only through reason, i.e., they exist for reason only and have no real and positive being.

Secondly, by my proposition "man is originated," I mean the real, positive existence of man which is separate from God's own existence and is caused by it in a real sense and do not mean the essence of man which is only a concomitant of God's existence and not separate from Him. This second sense of origination is the real meaning of origination; for where essences are merely contingent (*mumkin*), positive "existents" are truly originated (*hādith*). They imply a genuine rupture from and discontinuity with (*infikāk*) the peculiar being of God, since they are not just necessary concomitants of God's being, having no positive and separate existence of their own like heat in relation to fire, but possessing positive being of their own like Intelligences, heavenly spheres, men, etc. These positive

existents are truly caused by God and are His effects, not just His concomitants such as pure essences. Since these positive existents exist in themselves, are truly caused by God, and are really originated, they cannot exist at the level of God's eternity (*sarmad*); but the discontinuity of their being with God's requires that they exist at a lower level of being which Dāmād calls *dahr*.[25]

The realm of *dahr*, then, is real but pure origination: real because it is not just nominal origination like the origination of essences from God and pure because this occurs in pure time or perpetuity without the extension or quantification of time. The reason for the existence of *dahr* is that positive existence ("in the heart of reality [*fī kabid al-a'yān*]"" and "the verity of external existence [*fī haqq al-wāqi'*]") as opposed to a mere relationship of dependence upon or concomitance to God, requires a real movement in the nature of existence, a fundamental ontological event which brings the being of the world from the unadulterated innocence of the essences into temporally eternal existence. This "twist" in the nature of existence involves a rupture with God's eternal being and is characterized by 4udi2th or real origination, where existence is really preceded by non-existence. This can occur only in *dahr* and not in *sarmad*. It is, however, true that on occasion Dāmād d expresses this argument the other way around and says that it is of the nature of essential contingency (*al imkān al-dhāti*) that it expresses itself as *dahrī* origination, when it comes down to the level of *dahr*. This, prima facie, means that when essential contingency comes down into *dahr*, it translates itself into *hudūth*; but the fact is that when an essence is translated into external existence, it can no longer remain in the state of pure contingency or *imkān* but must develop a rupture (*infikāk*) with God's being– such that its existence must be preceded by not just mental and nominal, but real and categorical non-existence (*al-'adam al-Sūrah al-bātt*). The status of being of this kind of *hudūth*, or origination, is *dahr* where all real entities except God have their existence.

Ibn Sīnā, as I stated at the beginning of this paper, had spoken of *dahr* besides eternity or *sarmad* and *zamān* or time, but as I have indicated, his statements oscillated greatly between making *dahr* a part of *sarmad*, on the one hand, and making it something between *sarmad* and *zamān* on the other. There is no doubt that on the whole, Ibn Sīnā makes only two categories of all being, viz., eternals and temporals and puts in the first category, in addition to God, not only the Universal Intelligences, but at least sometimes the highest sphere also, because the sphere is, in one aspect, eternal and in another aspect (i.e., in so far as it moves) non-eternal; he states categorically

that the relationship of the eternal to the eternal is *sarmad* while the relationship of the eternal to time is *dahr*, and *dahr* itself is a type of or a part of *sarmad*.[26] Although he emphasizes the gulf between the self-necessary God and the contingent world, particularly the Intelligences, nevertheless, he also describes the dependence relationship of the latter to the former as being "mental" and "logical" only. This, coupled with the fact that he could talk only in terms of either eternals or temporals, leaves the firm impression that for Ibn Sīnā the difference between God and the Intelligences, in particular, was only logical or nominal.

It is against this background that the meaning of Dāmād's doctrine of *dahr* is thrown into full relief. It was undoubtedly also facilitated by the fact that in the post-Ibn Sīnā philosophical development of essentialism, Ibn Sīnā's term *bi 'l-dhāt* (which means "by itself" or "in itself") came to be taken to mean "by its essence"; and when one asserted the priority of essence over existence, one came to regard essences after Ibn 'Arabi as God's concomitances constituted by a relationship of dependence upon Him and having no separate being from Him. This being the case, it was not difficult for Mīr Dāmād to show that while essences which have no positive existence are only "essentially contingent (*hādith* or *mumkin bi 'l-dhāt*)," when these are translated into positive and real existents, these existents develop real hudūth or categorical origination in *dahr* where they are preceded by categorical non-existence; otherwise there will be no difference between their positive existence and the non-existent status of essences. Later, when Mulla Sadrā rejects the priority of essences over existents and asserts the opposite, he lifts the Intelligences from the realm of *hudūth* or origination and makes them part of Godhead, as His Attributes, a fact which is by no means accidental but is dictated by Ṣadrā's position, just as Dāmād's positing them in *dahr*, the realm of pure origination, is also not an accident but is dictated by Ibn Sīnā's doctrine and its subsequent development by the essentialist philosophers.

We have now proven *dahr* both by descending from God's eternity and the world of essences, on the one hand, and ascending from the realm of time on the other. The central point of these considerations is that it is neither the purely conceptual origination of the essence, nor the quantified flow of time that gives us the true nature of real origination which is a pure event occurring in pure time and is preceded by a pure, i.e., non-temporal, non-existence. There are two more proofs among several advanced by Dāmād worthy of mention, because, in my view, they are particularly effective support of his thesis-one constructed on the basis of Ibn

Sīnā's own statements and the other through an analysis of conceptual priority (*taqaddum bi 'l-dhāt*) and its application to the being of God.

Although, as stated above, the over-all impression left by Ibn Sīnā is that beings are either eternal or temporal (among the eternals, God is self-necessary while others are contingent in themselves but necessary through God), he nevertheless states that some eternals are not preceded by actual non-being at all while others are so preceded even though they are non-temporal. The first category consists of the transcendental Intelligences, while the second apparently includes the heavenly spheres along with their souls. Here are Ibn Sīnā's words:

> The originated beings which are non-temporal are either those whose existence comes after an absolute non-existence or those whose existence comes after a non-absolute non-existence -indeed, in the latter it comes after a particular non-existence in relation to an existent matter (i.e., wherein it is first non-existent and then becomes existent, but without involving time).... Now, if its existence supervenes upon absolute non-existence, its emanation from its cause is called "simple origination (*ibdā'*)," "this being the most excellent manner of bestowing existence since, in this case, non-existence has been simply prevented (and not just removed) and existence has been imposed. If non-existence could have actually found its way there, preceding existence, then the origination of such a thing would have been impossible except through matter.[27]

Dāmād explains that "absolute non-existence" here means that which can co-exist with existence-the one being from the side of a thing's essence and the other being from God -while "particular or restricted non-existence" means when it cannot co-exist with existence but must be replaced by it.[28]

Let us remember that both these types of origination belong to the category of "conceptual priority (*taqaddum bi 'l-martaba al-'aqliyya*)" and "essential origination (*taqaddum bi 'l-dhāt*)" both are eternal, and yet the one is not preceded by any actual non-existence while the other is. It is this second which has an existential rupture with God's being, which leads Dāmād to his postulate of *dahr* and which Ibn Sīnā also, to all appearances, puts at the level of *dahr* since it cannot belong to the realm of time, being supra-temporal, on the one hand, and yet cannot belong to the realm of simple eternity because its existence is preceded by actual non-existence. The doctrine of *dahr* is thus available to Dāmād ready-made, indeed-but for one important difficulty: apparently Ibn Sīnā puts in *dahr* only the heavenly spheres and time itself as a whole, while he puts the transcendental Intelligences in the realm of simple or pure eternity. Dāmād must interpret and reconstruct Ibn Sīnā's doctrine in such a way that all

"essential contingency (*al-imkān al-dhāti*)" entails a real dislocation of being with God and is preceded by actual non-existence, whether heavenly spheres or Intelligences.

We start with the premise that the highest sphere with its soul is originated in *dahr* and is preceded by non-existence, as Ibn Sīnā himself admits. But coeval with the highest sphere is also the second Intelligence, since both are caused by the first Intelligence which causes them in accordance with its different aspects (*i'tibārāt*), viz., its contingency by itself and necessity by the other, viz., God. Further, these different aspects of the first Intelligence itself must be caused by different aspects of God Himself, since one simple cause can produce only one effect, according to the philosophers' principle. In fact, every cause, in so far as it produces an effect, is, as such, simple; and a cause can be said to produce different effects only thanks to its different aspects, each of which is a simple cause. God, therefore, although He is one single being in Himself, must be regarded as having different aspects in order to cause the different aspects of the first Intelligence. When the first Intelligence causes the highest sphere on the one hand and the second Intelligence on the other, this is also because although it is one single being, it has different aspects, and each of the aspects is a cause. This means that the direct multiple effects of a single being are mutually interdependent (*mutālzim*) thanks to the different aspects of that single being. If, however, the highest sphere and the second Intelligence mutually entail each other and the highest sphere is admitted to be preceded by actual but non-temporal non-existence, then surely, the second Intelligence must also be admitted to be preceded by actual non-existence– otherwise, they cannot entail each other. Further, if the second Intelligence is preceded by actual non-existence and not just by conceptual non-existence, then so must be the case with the first Intelligence itself. There is no intrinsic difference not only among Intelligences but between eternal Intelligences on the one hand, and eternal spheres on the other: all eternals must be originated at the level of *dahr* together. It would be illogical to say that certain eternals actually originate before others in *dahr* even though, of course, at the level of conceptual or essential origination, some have priority over the others. In their actual origination, eternals encounter no impedance which is the fate of only those beings which suffer from not only essential contingency (*al-imkān al-dhāti*), but also the contingency of potentiality (*al imkān al-isti'dādi*), since potentiality needs actualization and hence requires time.[29]

This proves, for Dāmād, that the basis (*milāk*) of existence in *dahr*, i.e., to be originated after a temporally non-quantified non-existence,

is essential or conceptual origination itself; and since everything other than God is characterized by this kind of origination, thanks to its dual nature which is to be a composite of essence and existence, everything other than God must exist in *dahr* and nothing can exist in *sarmad*, where God alone exists. This is certainly a radical modification of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine, but it is a modification made more possible by Ibn Sīnā's own doctrine of emanation where God is absolutely simple, where from one simple being only one simple being can flow, where the first emanent, the first Intelligence, is not quite simple and where, finally, both the Intelligences and the spheres are eternal and the latter are preceded by an actual non-existence, not just a conceptual one which characterizes only the Intelligences.

There is no doubt, therefore, that, although Dāmād has drastically changed this particular theory of Ibn Sīnā's, the overall effect of Dāmād's concept of *dahrī* origination is, to my mind, quite in line with Ibn Sīnā's general intent. The whole idea behind the latter's concept of contingency is to radically demarcate God, the self-necessary Existent, from all the rest of existents, including the Intelligences. He has insisted that original being and borrowed being can never be the same in nature, even though the term "being" is not applied to both with fundamental equivocality.[30] This distinction also lies at the root of his theory of essence and existence. But since Ibn Sīnā, generally speaking, like all the preceding philosophers, could divide reality only into two categories, the eternal and the temporal and he could not put the Intelligences into the temporal realm, he put them in the realm of eternity or *sarmad*, the level where God is. His talk of *dahr* and his statement that heavenly spheres are in *dahr* since they are preceded by an actual but non-temporal non-existence, appears both as isolated and oscillating, since no substantive consequences are drawn from this for a third level of existence in pure time or perpetuity. Add to this what we have said above, viz., that he also described contingency in purely nominal or logical terms (*'ind al-dhihn*), without any existential counterpart, and the Intelligences at least threaten to become identical with God, the source of both their essence and existence! It is this which Dāmād's dahr purports to remedy by proving a real, existential hiatus between God and the world including the transcendental Intelligences. We shall now turn to Dāmād's argument constructed on the basis of his threefold analysis of conceptual or logical priority and the existential contingency of the world resulting from it.

I have thus far implied that the term "conceptual priority (*al-taqaddum bi 'l-martaba al 'aqliyya*)" was the equivalent of the expression

"priority by essence." Strictly speaking, this is not correct since conceptual priority is only one of the three forms of essential priority (*al-taqaddum bi 'l-dhāt*), viz., priority by nature, by existence, and by concept, which are all distinguishable within essential priority. It is true that al-Suhrawardi,[31] in view of the fact that existence is a mental abstraction to which nothing corresponds in reality, wanted to restrict conceptual or logical priority to priority by essence; but even though existence is a mental abstraction, it is a fact of our experience and as such cannot be ignored. Priority by nature (*bi 'l-tab'*) and by existence or, rather, causation (*bi 'l-'illiya*), therefore, must be acknowledged.[32] Priority by essence means that a certain essence is constituted logically before another; for example, the essence of animal is constituted before that of man or the essence of a line is constituted before that of a triangle. The same examples also illustrate [33] priority by nature or natural position, with a difference. The difference is that an essence, as such, exists only in the conceptual realm and has no reference to real, existential reality unless it is caused to exist. When it does exist in the external world, it is accompanied and surrounded by certain extrinsic attachments, but its pure being can be studied and disentangled from them and referred to its purely logical being.[34] Priority by nature, on the other hand, although it is still in the conceptual realm, carries within it reference to existence; for example, the existence of a triangle presupposes the existence of a line– even though, of course, lines may exist in actual reality simultaneously with, and not before, a triangle.

Finally, priority of a cause is universally assumed over its effect. The fact is that whereas an effect does not exist at the level of its cause, a cause does exist at the level of its effect. This phenomenon of simultaneity-cum-priority may also be found in the case of priority by essence and priority by nature; for example a line and a triangle may exist simultaneously, but a line can also exist separately from a triangle, whereas in the case of cause-effect, this separation is impossible. Causal priority also shares with natural priority the characteristic that it also has reference to existence– indeed, it has reference to necessary existence since the complete efficient cause necessarily produces its effect– although, of course, the priority that we are discussing here is only a logical priority.[35]

I have been able to speak of these three priorities at the conceptual level because in the contingent realm there is a duality between concept and reality, between logical being and existential being. When we come to God, however, we find that His actual existence is His essence and that in this case there is no duality of

nature whatsoever but pure existential unity.[36] This being the case, the proposition that the world is conceptually or essentially posterior to God necessarily entails or is, indeed, identical with the further proposition that the world is existentially posterior to God. It is this existential, not just conceptual or logical posteriority (*ta'akhkhur-dhāti*) of the world *vis a vis* God that means that in its actual existence, not just in its concept, the world suffers from a rupture with God's being and that the being of the world must necessarily be preceded by a real, though non-temporal non-existence. It, then, must exist with its contents in *dahr* and not in pure eternity:

> The priority of the being of the cause, particularly of the efficient cause, over the being of its effect, in a logical sense, i.e., at the conceptual level, is among those truths that come naturally to rationally healthy minds and all the philosophers and thinkers are agreed upon it. The effect does not exist at the level of the being of the efficient cause, since existence reaches the effect from the cause, but both exist simultaneously at the level of the effect-in existential reality, not just at the level of concept.
>
> The macrocosm, then, with all the parts of its total system, is absolutely posterior to the level of God's being, the Creator, the Maker, exalted be His name. And when it has become clear that the existence categorically rooted in eternal reality is identically the essence of the Creator, then, in His case, the conceptual level and the level of existential reality coalesce fully, and, in all respects, His real, eternal existence is identically the same as His conceptual being. For the Divine Realm, being categorically rooted in existential reality is the exact analogue of the (conceptual) essence of man or of Intelligence in the contingent world, for example. Hence the posteriority of the world *vis a vis* the conceptual level of God's being, which is the posteriority of an effect (*vis a vis* its cause) is exactly the kind of posteriority that involves a rupture or a hiatus (*infikāk*) in relation to His truly existential being, while God's precedence as cause over the world at the conceptual level is identically the precedence of His unique existence in external reality. [What has just been said about causal priority and posteriority] also applies to priority and posteriority by essence-indeed to the entirety of essential priorities and posteriorities (including priority and posteriority by nature).
>
> The conceptual posteriority [of the world]-whether or not it is caused by essence or by natural order-in all its forms is reducible to existential hiatus in *dahr*, while God's conceptual priority in all its forms-causal, by essence or by natural order-is reducible to His unique existence in eternity (*sarmad*). No analogy can be correctly drawn between the Divine relationship with the world and the relationship of the sun to its rays.., .as so many wag their tongues and gibber; for you already know that, in the case of the sun, its conceptual being is not identical with its real, existential being, as is the case with the Divine Realm. So is the

case with the analogy of the movement of the hand wearing a ring.[37]

Although Dāmād has shown a special preoccupation with this realm of pure time and has brought some palpably cogent considerations to prove the categorical, i.e., extra- essential and non-temporal origination of the world in *dahr*, he seems to have spent little time on going deeper into the nature of *dahr* itself and working out its implications, for example, for the problems of causation, movement, will, immortality, etc. It appears that, although his philosophical impulse and acuteness are certainly genuine and are clearly brought out in his refinement of many philosophical concepts, his overriding conscious aim is theological; and, once he has proved the *dahrī* origination of the world and set it categorically at a different level of being from God, he does not pursue the question of the nature of *dahr* as such much further. In his various proofs for the establishment of *dahr*, he seeks to prove, for example, that Intelligences and heavenly spheres must really exist in *dahr*, that the real existence of temporal things is also in *dahr*, that the true being of general ideas (*al-tabā'i' al-mursala*) is also in *dahr*, and, finally, that time itself exists in *dahr*.

However, all these constitute many arguments to prove the existence of *dahr*, rather than a systematic enquiry into the nature of *dahr* and its contents. For this reason, even though several of his proofs seem to me completely valid, I think that because of his lack of attempt to systematically discuss the nature and implications of *dahr*, this rare and, indeed, original philosophical insight has appeared to many as something unintelligible and perhaps even artificial. My purpose in this paper has been to show that Dāmād's theory of *dahr* is in itself highly intelligible and philosophically meaningful and original, quite apart from the fact that it was not systematically worked out in terms of its implications for the great problems of philosophy. There Dāmād differs from Mulla Sadrā, who worked out in full the implications of his theory of the primordiality and systematic ambiguity of existence. This does not, however, mean that Dāmād's own philosophy is exhausted by his elliptically formulated doctrine of *dahr*; for, after examining his *al-Qabasāt*, I am convinced that there are many additional profound ideas in his philosophical system, all of which merit further investigation.

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[2] Āshtiyānī, *ibid*., Persian text, p. 4 ff., compiler's footnotes to Dāmād's texts. As shown in the body of this paper, Āshtiyānī, to my mind, shows little understanding of Dāmād's thesis.

[3] Crucial for an adequate understanding of Dāmād are, in the first place, Ibn Sīnā and, secondarily, al-Suhrawardī, the latter particularly for his influence on Dāmād's theory of essence.

[4] Quoted in Mir Dāmād's *al-Qabasāt*, p. 8, lines 18-19; p. 9, lines 7-8 and 18-19.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 7, line 12; p. 8, line 3.

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 11, line 1.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 9, line 1.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 8, line 17; p. 9, line 1 (cf. lines 7-8).

[9] *Ibid*., p. 9, lines 22 ff.

[10] Reference to *De Caelo* in E. R. Dodds (edition with commentary) *Proclus' Elements of Theology* (Oxford, 1933), p. 229, lines 1-4.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 52, lines 30 ff.

[12] Al-*Qabasāt*, p. 8, lines 3; p. 9, lines 7-8.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 8, lines 16-17.

[14] See my *The Philosophy of Mulal Sadrā* (Albany, New York, 1975), p. 112, last paragraph.

[15] Al-Qabd8dt, p. 86, lines 6 ff.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 6, lines 2 ff.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 224, lines 16 ff.

[18] *Ibid*., p. 225, lines 9-15; also p. 17, line l1-p. 18, line 2.

[19] Āshtiyānī, *Muntakhabāt*, p. 8, n. 2; p. 9, n. 1; p. 11, line 17- p. 12, line 13; p. 13, line 8- p. 15,line 15, particularly last par. in this reference, where Āshtiyānī admits "a certain origination" (line 8) of the world from God but takes Dāmād's *hudūth dhātī* to imply temporal origination (*pas az hudūth-i zamāni dast bāyad kashīd*); p. 16, line 14, where *hudūth dhātī* is construed only as that of the "conceptual level (*bī 'l-martaba al-'aqliyya*)."

[20] See the last two references in n. 19 above.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 15, lines 13-15.

[22] See my *Philosophy of Mulla Sadrā*, p. 12, lines 4 ff.; p.77 last par.; p.89, lines 8 ff.

[23] For "natural priority or priority in natural order (*taqaddum bi 'l-tabʿ*)" see nn. 32 and 33 below.

[24] *Al-Qabasāt*, p. 226, lines 3-14.

[25] See also *Ibid*., p. 87, line 12-p. 88, line 9.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 9, lines 7-8; p. 8, line 17.

[27] *Ibid*., quotation p. 3, line 12-p. 4, line 2.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 4, lines 3-4; for a criticism of Ibn Sīnā and Al-Fārābi, see *ibid*., p. 77, lines 12 ff.

[29] *Ibid*., p.220, line 11-p. 222, line 6.

[30] See reference in n. 14 above.

[31] *Al-Qabasāt*, p. 67, lines 1 ff.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 63, line 10-p. 64, line 21.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 47, line 15-p. 49, line 3
[35] Seen. 33 above, and *ibid*., p. 68, lines 18 ff.
[36] *Ibid*., p. 49, line 5-p. 51, line 9.
[37] *Ibid*., p. 75, line 4-p. 76, line 6.

SCIENCE EDUCATION PROJECT
EVALUATION OF SCIENCE CURRICULUM IN THE LIGHT OF IQBAL'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Ghazala Shaheen

Introduction

Science provides the basis for modern technology– the tools, materials, techniques, and sources of power that make our lives and work easier. Curriculum is a tool to facilitate the achievement of national objectives. It is defined as a reflection of how people of a society think, feel, believe and do. It is also the sum total of school efforts to influence the learning, whether in the classroom, on the playground or out of school.[1]

Pakistan is an ideological country and its education system stems from the philosophy of the great thinker of East, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who conceived the idea of Pakistan. The teacher is an important element in Iqbal's pattern of education. The main characteristic of Iqbal's view about the teacher is that he is the child's ideal, guide, and sometimes even a model to be followed. He is a leader who inspires and teaches by example as well as by precept. According to Iqbal the teacher during his life career is a learner continually engaged in his growth with an open mind and a broad horizon. According to him discipline does not come from the teacher– neither as obedience to his will nor from his interesting instruction– but from a social order of students as a function of a group purpose.[2]

In the education which Iqbal's philosophy of action postulates, there is room for that communion with self and with Nature which prepares one for spiritual communion with the Absolute or God. It is in these moments of quiet communion, when overt action has ceased and we allow the mysterious influence and impulses of the world of art and nature to play on us that our intuition and our emotions find genuine self-expression and our personality gains that inner poise and repose which is a source of true happiness and joy.[3]

Since the middle ages, infinite advance has taken place in the domain of human thought and experience. The extension of Man's power over Nature has given him a new faith and a fresh sense of superiority over the forces that constitute his environment. New points of view have been suggested: old problems have been restated in the light of fresh experience and new problems have arisen. It seems as if the intellect of man is outgrowing its own most fundamental categories of time, space and causality. With the advance of scientific thought even our concept of intelligibility is undergoing a change. The theory of Einstein has brought a new vision of the universe and suggested new ways of looking at problems common to both religion and philosophy. [4]

Iqbal asserts that nations can live a life of honour and dignity only when they acquire mastery over the sciences while holding fast to an unflinching faith in the one and only Omniscient and Omnipotent Allah who is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. It is only in this way that man can become the noblest of God's creatures and His vicegerent on earth. [5]

Iqbal was not only a philosopher and poet but also a vehement supporter of scientific education. He knew the requirements of the near future. Modern science ought not to mock at metaphysics, for it was a metaphysician– Leibnitz– who first gave science her working idea of matter by the saying that the 'substance' was essentially 'force' and 'resistance'. Borrowing this notion from metaphysics, science devotes herself to the study of the behaviour of this force; and it is clear that she could not have discovered it for herself. [6]

Ideas act and react on each other. The growing spirit of individualism in politics is not without its influence on contemporary scientific thought. Modern thought regards the universe as a democracy of living atoms.[7]

Iqbal realizes that science takes sectional snapshots of Reality and represents but one method of apprehending it. By itself it cannot give man a full, complete and emotionally satisfying picture of Reality. Religion, on the other hand, "demands the whole of Reality and, for this reason, must occupy a central place in any synthesis of all the data of human experience". [8]

Iqbal is in full agreement with the epistemology of Quran. The three sources, sense perception, intellect and intuition, are the fundamental ones, on which Iqbal bases his theory of knowledge. [9]

According to Taylor and Alexander (1954), curriculum is the sum total of school efforts to influence learning, whether in the classroom, on the playground or out of school.[10]

Scientific and technical education is imperative to improve the technical skills of the individuals and progress of the country. The government is making all out efforts to enhance scientific and technical education. In this regard the first phase of Science Education Project (SEP) for secondary schools was completed with the assistance of Asian Development Bank (1995)[11] and the feasibility for launching phase-II (SEP-II) envisages up gradation of physical facilities in about 2000 schools, development of research based mathematics curriculum and introduction of human resources development programmes in science and mathematics education.[12]

Successive development plans for Pakistan have emphasized the need to improve science and mathematics education. This seems to be crucial for increasing the country's capacity to adopt modern technological processes. Under the National Education Policy (1998-2010) and the ESR Programme, the Government has been involved in an endeavour to improve the quality of education by establishing suitably equipped laboratories, revising science and mathematics curricula, developing a computer science curriculum and providing a critical mass of Lead Master-Trainers for science/maths teachers' training through the Science Education Project (Phase-II).

The Government of Pakistan launched the second phase of Science Education Project (SEP-II) with the financial assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1998. It was intended to improve the science and mathematics curriculum with a view to integrate 'General Academics' with the higher, state of the art skills (problem solving, etc.) on the one hand and technical/vocational skills on the other along with new areas to help develop an enterprising attitude in Classes VI-X. It was also aimed at developing computer literacy programmes for elementary class and computer curriculum for Classes IX-X.

Without quality science education the students' scientific concepts remain vague and the academic standard is not so high. It therefore looks appropriate to investigate the impact of the Science Education Projects on the promotion of science education in Pakistan.

Objectives

The study was conducted to evaluate the secondary school science curriculum in the light of opinion of the heads of institutions and science teachers.

Procedure

All the heads of institutions and science teachers of 528 government secondary schools were included in the 'population' for this study. The sample comprised of a hundred heads of institutions

and science teachers from the cluster of 528 project schools. Two types of questionnaires were developed in order to collect views of the heads of institutions and science teachers about the various aspects of the curriculum at secondary level in Punjab. The questionnaires, with a five-point rating scale, were administered to the sample for collection of data.

Data Analysis

For analyzing the collected data, the researchers counted, totaled and tabulated the responses of the heads of the institutions and science teachers on each category of the questionnaire, which were shown in terms of number and percentage of respondents in each category.

The Chi-square was used to examine the statistical significance of the responses. For judging the validity of results, percentages were also used to verify the significance of each statement.[13]

Results

The collected views were tabulated. The results, extracted by using the Chi-square, are presented as under:

Table 1: Current science syllabus is job oriented

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Heads	2	54	10	34	0	100	108.80
Teachers	2	48	18	26	6	100	67.20

* Significant df=4 χ^2 at 0.05 level = 9.49

Table 1 shows that the obtained values of χ^2 both for heads of institutions and science teachers were found to be significant at 0.05 level. Hence the statement that "Current science syllabus is job oriented," is accepted.

As far as the opinion of both the heads of the institutions and science teachers about the job-orientation of current science syllabus is concerned, it is supported by the Government's finding in 2000 that the job performance of graduates from project schools, as rated by their supervisors, was higher than that of graduates from non-project schools.[14]

Table 2: Current science syllabus creates creativity among the students

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Heads	4	54	14	20	18	100	72.60
Teachers	6	55	22	12	5	100	85.70

* Significant df=4 χ^2 at 0.05 level =9.49

Table 2 shows that the obtained values of χ^2 both for heads of the institutions and science teachers were found to be significant at 0.05 level. Hence the statement that "Current science syllabus creates creativity among the students," is accepted.

Table 3: Current science syllabus promotes rote learning.

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Heads	2	489	8	34	8	100	79.60
Teachers	4	48	20	26	2	100	70.00

* Significant df=4 χ^2 at 0.05 level = 9.49

Table 3 indicates that the obtained values of χ^2 both for heads of the institutions and science teachers were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. Hence the statement that "Current science syllabus promotes rote learning," is accepted.

A report of the Government from 1991 supports the opinion that examination system is only encouraging rote-learning with no emphasis on testing, understanding, comprehension and application of knowledge.[15]

Table 4: Current science curriculum is formulated according to policy objectives.

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Heads	2	60	28	10	0	100	124.40
Teachers	7	48	26	18	1	100	67.70

* Significant df=4 χ^2 at 0.05 level = 9.49

Table 4 indicates that the obtained values of χ^2 both for heads of the institutions and science teachers were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. Hence the statement that the "Present science curriculum is formulated according to the policy objectives," is accepted.

As far as the opinion of the experts is concerned, it contradicts Kiani (2002) that the science curricula at the secondary and O-levels were clear and well-formulated but not translated into curricula objectives.[16]

Table 5: Current science curriculum promotes critical thinking among students.

Responses	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Heads	2	58	10	20	10	100	98.40
Teachers	7	48	26	18	1	100	84.20

* Significant df=4 χ^2 at 0.05 level = 9.49

Table 5 indicates that the obtained values of χ^2 both for heads of institutions and science teachers were found to be significant at the 0.05 level. Hence the statement that "Present science curriculum promotes critical thinking among students," is accepted.

Recommendations

As the study revealed that current science syllabus promoted rote learning and that syllabus for secondary classes was lengthy and was not meeting the present-day needs, it is recommended that curricula be revised and upgraded to meet the international standards. The curricula should be according to the present and future needs and demands of the society. It should be arranged in a way to discourage rote-learning. Creative thinking, logical reasoning and understanding of concepts should be ensured in the curricula. Philosophical thinking may also be encouraged during the teaching of science.

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IQBAL, THE POET

(Part II)

Dr. Thomas Stemmer

> Around the fountain fluttering,/The ever changing dragonfly,/My joy, it is a long while now,/To see its colours dark and bright (...) (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *The Joy*)[1]
> So let us transform our life into a piece of art, and we may boldly claim to be already immortal, while still living on Earth. (Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder: *Fantasies about Art, for Friends of Art*)[2]

If you allow me, I would like to continue my dream-like explorations into the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal, which I started in 2006,[3] and as I said at the end of my article then: *There will be more to come*.

Since then, I have kept on reading Iqbal's poetry and his prose, and I also tried to understand what has been written about him by different authors around the globe. All of this reading and studying added to my understanding. Yet, as I went along in this personal study, I came across one idea that crept up frequently in scholarly books and articles on him. In a way, it was a question put forward by many authors which might be rephrased like this: How can we see the work of Iqbal as a whole? Furthermore: Do we have the right to pick out the writings of *one* period of his work (while neglecting others that seem to be in contradiction)?

The fear behind this question seems to be: If a poet or a philosopher shows traits of contradictions, maybe he is not a serious poet or a serious philosopher... Or in other words: There is constant danger, that we might make this poet lose his eminence. Therefore, we have to find a 100% consistent picture, and if we cannot find it, we have to be tricky and construct it...

Hundred percent consistency, however, can never be attained. To a certain degree, every thinker is– somehow– at least a little bit inconsistent. There have been the systematic philosophers, but Iqbal himself has never claimed to be one. It has never been his intention

to be some kind of a second Kant or a second Hegel. He aimed at something higher.

As we, in writing about Iqbal, are in need of some kind of label on this way of 'avoiding orthodox consistency', I suggest that we might use a description offered by Khurram Ali Shafique. He connected Iqbal to romanticism, even calling him *the last romantic*.[4] After all, had not Iqbal himself stated that he owed much to the British romantic William Wordsworth, since reading Wordsworth had saved him from the danger of turning into an atheist? So, in another *bonmot*, maybe Iqbal is *a first and a last romantic*. One of the last old romantics, and one of the first new romantics? In other words: A bridge between two romanticisms?

Romanticism: So we are coming closer to Iqbal's poetry!

What is romanticism? It is an individualist approach to life, stressing a new way of life for oneself, yet discovering some old forgotten ways, too; for example, the romantics of the late 18th and early 19th century rediscovered the Sanskrit language, they also rediscovered some aspects of the Middle Ages and started to collect folktales, etc. This approach is connected to the feeling of an individual possessing the potential to be a hero, to the landscape as a mirror for Soul, to a fascination with death, mysticism and the beyond, to the night, to fantasy and to passion.

Today, there is a misunderstanding about romanticism. For more sophisticated people, it is something way back in history, long forgotten. On the contrary, but with the same result, to the ordinary man in the street it is just a mediocre candle-lit dinner in a middle class restaurant.

Yet, romanticism is a mode of living individually that returns again and again in history and which, as a form of being, is always available. Romanticism is not fixed to the time-period of– let's say– between 1790 and 1830. However, the 20th century has not been very romantic for a majority of people. It has been a century of depriving man of his individuality. (How bold of Iqbal to have been a romantic in the 20th century! Let us see what the 21st century will bring.)

So calling Iqbal a romantic is well-founded in the facts. And out of a romantic work, like the one of Iqbal, we can pretty well pick out one phase of his life– in a way of speaking, one *individual* phase– without necessarily constructing a continuum that maybe just isn't there.

We do not have to follow the Hegelian approach, trying to dialectically dissolve contradictions into a synthesis. For a romantic, it is easy to live *right in the middle of contradictions*. Maybe this means

taking the middle path, avoiding the extremes, something that so many saints of many different religions have suggested.

It parallels the films of the dissident Russian film-maker Andrei Tarkowskij (like *Stalker* or *Nostalghia*), films of ruins: probably just in the same way ruins– as ruins– were consciously built in gardens. The literary scientist Hartmut Böhme stated that Tarkowskij's film *Stalker* turned Hegel around: Not that there was a natural evolution form religion to science, but– as shown in the case of Tarkowskij– from science back to religion! Important parts of his essay connect Tarkowskij to romantic poets/artists/thinkers.[5]

As a romantic, Muhammad Iqbal was one of the most interesting thinkers of religion. We– as his readers– can *use* seeming contradictions by selecting the phases of his work *that suit us best* in order to understand his words, to re-think them and to use them for our own further thinking along those lines. Iqbal himself stated, while talking about his own work:

> It must, however, be remembered that there is no such thing as finality in philosophical thinking. As knowledge advances and fresh avenues of thought are opened, other views, and probably sounder views than those set forth in these lectures, are possible. Our duty is carefully to watch the progress of human thought, and to maintain an independent critical attitude towards it.[6]

So, all in all, I suggest here that we can pick out certain works of Iqbal, in order to study them as single texts. We have the privilege to accompany Iqbal in this critical way, something that we can accept as this romantic's present to his readers. A gift.

Picking out fine parts of his work seems to simulate the activity of the self that *for the sake of a single rose, destroys a hundred rose gardens.*[7]

Almost as an effort in *antique skepticism*,[8] I feel free to use a quote by Muhammad Iqbal himself, in order to describe this poetic/romantic *separation* of one text from the whole of his writings while maintaining the romantic bond holding them together, just because Iqbal is a poet, and poetry is the art of separation *par excellence:*

Separation is better than Unity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] "Es flattert um die Quelle/Die wechselnde Libelle,/Mich freut sie lange schon:/Bald dunkel und bald helle,(...)" (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Die Freude*, 1768)

[2] "Lasset uns darum unser Leben in ein Kunstwerk verwandeln, und wir dürfen kühnlich behaupten, daß wir dann schon irdisch unsterblich sind." (Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder: *Phantasien über die Kunst, für Freunde der Kunst*, 1799)

[3] Stemmer, Thomas: 'Iqbal, the Poet', *Iqbal Review*, Vol. 47, No.2, Lahore, April 2006, p. 113ff.

[4] In Khurram Ali Shafique's book *Iqbal. An Illustrated Biography*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006. The most interesting connection of Iqbal to the spirit of romanticism is on p. 90, where Shafique compares him to the individualist US-American author Ayn Rand, and especially to her 1971 *Romantic Manifesto*.

[5] Böhme, Hartmut: Ruinen-Landschaften. Naturgeschichte und Ästhetik der Allegorie in den späten Filmen von Andrej Tarkowskij in Hesse, Heidrun (ed.): Natur und Wissenschaft. Konkursbuch 14. Zeitschrift für Vernunftkritik, Tübingen, 1985, p. 117 ff.

[6] Iqbal, Muhammad: *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, 4th Edition, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1999, 'Preface', p. xxii.

[7] Iqbal, Muhammad: *Secrets of the Self* (*Asrar-i-Khudi*), as quoted in Khurram Ali Shafique's *Iqbal: An Illustrated Biography*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2006, p. 86.

[8] The term *Antique Scepticism* describes the method of testing a theory by applying it to the theory itself. A simple form of *antique scepticism* is the answer one might give to somebody who says that there is no truth: After all, he must have spoken truth once by uttering the statement that there was no truth.
What I am trying to say here is that the test of *antique scepticism* was successful in this case!

WAKHAN: THE HOMELAND OF WAKHI COMMUNITY

Dr. Nadeem Shafiq Malik

From the view of a satellite's camera, Afghanistan looks like 'an irregularly-shaped leaf' attached by a thin stem to China.[1] This narrow finger of land, consisting of alpine valleys and high mountains is the Wakhan Corridor, now the Wakhan district of the north eastern Afghan province of Badakhshan. Considered as 'the safest place in Afghanistan,[2] the Corridor borders Pakistan to the south, Tajikistan to the north and China to the east.[3]

The Wakhan Corridor is between 20 km to 60 km broad (north to south) and more than 200 km long (east to west) covering an area of about 10300 km.[4] Some of the tallest mountain ranges of the world like Hindukush, Karakarom, Kunlun and Tien Shan meet in this territory and create the important watersheds like Tarim basin, Amu Darya drainage and Indus Channel.[5] Two important rivers of the area, the Pamir and the Sarhad, spring from the high plateau land of Wakhan which is named as *Bam-i-Dunya* (Roof of the world) by the locals.[6]

The climate of Wakhan district is arid and precipitation is normally low between six and twelve centimeters.[7] The soil is quite poor and it is hard to cultivate any thing in large quantities. Being at high altitude[8] and 1700 Km away from the sea, winters are very severe and temperature remains below zero for most of the year and can even go below -50C. Contrary to that, summers are quite brief and temperature can rise up till 30C.[9]

Prior to civil war in Afghanistan, Wakhan was known for its biodiversity and preservation of high altitude wildlife. Even today, at least eight species of large mammals including snow leopard, ibex, brown bears and Marco Polo sheep are found in the region.[10] The area is also rich in lapis lazuli, 'the rare, bright blue semi-precious stone' which is highly valued for its antiquity.[11] Earlier to Soviet

invasion, the region was a big attraction for the mountaineers and adventure travelers which came to a halt during the civil war. Now the tourists are turning again to the Wakhan area to appreciate 'its stunningly beautiful wilderness'.[12]

Since the seventh century, Wakhan was regularly mentioned by early Chinese travelers like Hiuen Tsang in their chronicles.[13] The Arab scholars like Istahri and Ibn Rusta also mentioned Wakhan in their writings and earlier Persian geographical works like *Hudad al-Alam* described it in detail.[14] Famous European traveler Marco Polo also passed through Wakhan during his journey to China describing it 'a country of no great size, for it is three days journey across every way'.[15]

From the early times, Wakhan Corridor remained 'a highway of trade and communication' and had been used for traveling between the settled areas of northern Afghanistan like Balkh and Chinese Turkistan.[16] In the following centuries, although modest but a regular flow of trade continued passing through Wakhan which was a source of revenue for the local chiefs who levied taxes on the trade caravans passing through their territories.[17]

Until 1883, Wakhan was a principality on both banks of the Upper Amu River. It was governed by a hereditary chieftain, known as Mir who controlled all area in which Wakhi sedimentary mountain farmers and Kirghiz nomads lived. Both communities paid taxes and tributes in cash as well as in kind to Mir and also rendered services for him as load carriers and soldiers.[18] In 1883, the Mir of Wakhan, Ali Mardan Khan[19] managed a preventive migration of his family to Chitral in view of the raid of Amir Abdur Rahman, ruler of Afghanistan on Wakhan.[20] One quarter of his subjects also followed him. Later, after consolidation of power by Amir Abdur Rahman in the area, Wakhan was divided in two parts. The northern part was controlled by Russia while the southern part was managed by the Amir of Afghanistan.[21]

Wakhan gained much fame during the nineteenth century in context of 'Great Game' being played by Russia and Britain in Central Asia.[22] It led to extensive geographical research in the Pamirs which was largely motivated by Imperial interests of the two rival empires.[23] For instance, John Wood, who was in the service of the East India Company, visited Wakhan and adjoining areas during the years 1836-38 and recorded his observations regarding acute poverty, remoteness, internal strife and slave-trade prevalent in the region.[24] He also prepared a map of the region which was used as the basic document during future Russo-British negotiations to delimit

boundaries in Pamirs. In fact, the demarcation of Wakhan followed the line of Wood's journey to the source of the Oxus'.[25]

Wood was followed by Montgomerie who recorded in 1868 that area between Kabul and Wakhan was in a 'very lawless condition'.[26] In 1874, Douglas Forsyth dispatched the Wakhan Mission from Yarkand which surveyed Wakhan region and their report laid concrete grounds for delineation of the frontier between Russia, Afghanistan and British India some twenty years later.[27] In 1890, Francis Younghusband of the British India Staff College also visited Wakhan and noticed Russian presence there.[28]

In 1893, the Anglo-Russian and Russo-Afghan frontier differences in the Pamirs led to a series of negotiations between all concerned for a permanent demarcation of the boundaries.[29] During those discussions, Amir Abdur Rahman threatened to withdraw from Wakhan, however, the British who wanted to keep Russians as for away as possible, offered to pay a special annual subsidy of Rs.50, 000/- on which he agreed to retain the valley.[30] From the demarcation of the Afghan Frontier (1895-96), Wakhan formed a political buffer between Russian Turkistan, British India, and China.[31] Thus the British decision-makers were relieved that now nowhere did the frontiers of British India and Russia touch and above all, there was now 'an officially agreed frontier beyond which Russia could not advance except in the time of war'. [32]

The tight control of Russian frontiers after the Soviet Revolution of 1917 put an end to use of that area for traditional Silk Road trade. However, trade between northern Afghanistan and Chinese Turkistan continued.[33] After the communist victory in China in 1949, the trade with Chinese Turkistan was also stopped, thus putting an end to 'a highway of trade and cultural exchange ', which had served the humanity for more than 2000 years.[34] The Wakhan corridor re-gained importance during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as Russians built two military camps, one signal intelligence post and several missile sites in the area. Naturally, Pakistan was much concerned about those developments, especially installation of 'sophisticated ballistic missiles' as according to a contemporary defense analyst, 'Wakhan has become a wedge which can disturb the existing alignments.'[35]

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban movement gained control of the country but Wakhan region remained outside of its sphere of influence mainly due to its inaccessibility and remoteness.[36] However, it faced the economic effects of the civil war (1997-2001) as it was completely cut off from rest of the country and the international borders were also sealed.

Consequently, the area was driven into a state of 'sever economic deprivation 'forcing it to depend solely on its indigenous meagre agro-pastoral economy'.[37]

The Wakhan region is inhabited by several communities.[38] However, two major ethnic groups i.e. Wakhi and Kyrgyz formed the major part of the area's population which has been estimated around 14000 souls. The Wakhis formed the majority and their number is about 12,000 persons which mostly live in 39 villages in the valley bottom between Ishkashem and Sarhad-e-Boroghil. On the other hand, the Kirghiz have been numbered about 1400 persons who mostly live in the high altitude area of Pamir. On the average, each household has 11 persons while half of the population is below 16 years old.[39] Besides these two ethnic communities, a small number of administrative personals and traders also live in the area that belong to several ethnic and linguistic groups of Afghanistan including Pushtuns, Uzbeks and Tajiks.[40]

The Wakhis are Ismaili Muslims[41] whose ancestors centuries ago migrated from Iran. They are basically agriculturists and grow wheat, barley, peas, potatoes and other crops besides maintaining some livestock and also work as manual labourers.[42] The Kirghiz are Sunni Muslims and are basically livestock herders, maintaining sheep, goats, yaks, horses, Bactrian camels and donkeys. They move along with their livestock between summer and winter pastures at least three times a year.[43] Generally, Kirghiz are healthier and wealthier than the Wakhis.[44] They also have unconcealed contempt to Wakhis;[45] but they maintain working relationship as the Kirghiz want grain and the Wakhis need livestock which is bartered among them.[46]

All the Wakhis do not belong to a common ancestral background. They came from six different divergent aguatic-descent groups including Sayyed, Khuja, Mir, Shaana, Khyberi and Kheek.[47] Sayyed and Khuja claim direct descent from the Prophet of Islam [SAW] and are called by the prestigious titles like shah (monarch) and pir (spiritual leader). Both groups provide spiritual leadership to semi-hereditary disciples from rest of the community.[48] Mirs are the successors of the former Wakhi chieftains and feudal lords who still own large tracts of land although with little political influence.[49] Shaana are the off springs of those male members of the Mir family who married with common Wakhi women while Khyberis are scion of the courtiers of former Mirs.[50] The common Wakhis are called Kheek who form the largest group in the community.[51] Sayyads, Khujas and Mirs are considered of 'high blood' while Shaana, Khyberi and Kheek are thought of 'common blood'.[52]

The Wakhi struggle hard to 'live a hand-to-mouth existence' and put their children to work in the wheat fields as young as three.[53] Wakhan's high altitude coupled with little medical facilities[54], scarce utilities, low nutrition and absence of education has led to spare health care system.[55] The number of opium-addicted Wakhis is also on the rise as being 'impoverished, disease-ridden, and weather-beaten, they depend heavily on opium to reduce the impacts of cold, illness and hard living conditions'.[56]

NOTES AND REFERENCE

[1] Quoted in Amin Saikal and Willam Maley, ed., *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.18.

[2] Aryn Baher, "The Wakhan Corridor, *"Time,* April 24, 2008.

[3] M. Nazif Mohib Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan: Adaptation to Closed Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), p.3. According to Kreutzmann, these territories have been separated since the late nineteenth century by international boundaries which were demarcated as a 'result of the Imperial Great Game'. For details, see Hermann Kreutzmann, "Ethnic Minorities and Marginality in the Pamir Knot: Survival of Wakhi and Kirghiz in a Harsh Environment and Global Context," *The Geographical Journal,* Vol.169, Issue 3, (September 2003), pp.215-235.

[4] *Afghanistan Wakhan Mission Technical Report* (Geneva: UNEP, 2003), p.3.

[5] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan,* p.3.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.,* pp.8, 13.

[8] The entire Wakhan district is above 2,500 meters altitude. The valley is about 3,500 meters high while mountains bordering at South are 7000 meters high. Quoted in Aunohita Mojumdar, "Killing Fields of Wakhan", *The Hindu,* December 2, 2007.

[9] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan,* p.13.

[10] Charudutt Mishra and Anthony Fitzherbert, "War and Wildlife: A Post-Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor," *Oryx*, Vol. 38, (2004), pp.102-105.

[11] http:// 64.4.22.250/cgi-bin/gestmsg/Wakhan History% 2d aizi% 2ehtm? Emsg=MSG 116641. (accessed on December 19, 2006).

[12] Now the Agha Khan Foundation has launched a programme to train the locals as guides and also helped them to set up simple guests houses in the area. As a result, about 260 tourists visited the area during 2006-2007. For details, see Aunohita Mojumdar, "Afghanistan Gets Ready for Tourists," *Aljazeerah. NET*, January 02, 2008.

[13] V. Minorsky, "Wakhan," *The Encyclopedia of Islam,* Vol. IV, (London: Lazac & Co, 1934), p.1103 ; Syed Abdul Quddus, *The North-West Frontier of Pakistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1990), pp.253-54.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Quoted in Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan,* p. 26. Even today, it takes just four days to traverse the entire valley. Quoted in Aryn Baker," Best Place to Escape the Office: The Wakhan Corridor," *Time*, May 5, 2008.

[16] V. Minorsky, "Wakhan," p.1103.

[17] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, p.30.

[18] For details, see *ibid*., pp.28-30.

[19] For a brief life sketch of Ali Mardan Khan, see Inyatullah Faizi, *Wakhan: A Window into Central Asia* (Islamabad: Al-Qalam, 1996), pp.140-141.

[20] For background of Amir Abdul Rahman's raid on Badakshan and Wakhan, see Andre Singer, *Lords of the Khyber: The Story of the North West Frontier* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1984), pp.144-151.

[21] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, p.31.

[22] It has been observed that British spies in Wakhan disguised themselves as scholars, explorers, merchants and Muslim holy men and played 'cat and mouse' with the Russian agents during the Great Game. Quoted in "Through the Valley of Blood", *The Herald, Glasgow,* April 18, 1998. http://w3.nexis.com/new/delivery/Print.Doc. (accessed on February 15, 2007).

[23] The prominent travelers /researchers included John Wood, (1841), T.E. Gordon (1876), J.L. Jawarskij (1885), C.A. Dunmore (1893), O. Olufsen (1904), A. A. Bobrinskiy (1908), and A. J. Synesreff (1909). For their works, see John Wood, *A Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Source of the River Oxus by the Route of the Indus, Kabul and Badakhshan* (London: John Murray, 1841); T.E. Gordon, *The Roof of the World: Being the Narrative of a Journey over the High Plateau of Tibet to the Russian Frontier and the Oxus Sources on Pamir* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876); J. L. Jowrskij, *Reise der Russichen Gesandts – Chaft in Afghanistan and Buchara in den Jahren, 1878-79* [Journey of the Russian Embassy to Afghanistan and Bukhara during 1878-79] (Jena: Costenoble, 1885); Earl of Murray CA Dunmore, *The Pamirs : Being a Narrative of a Year's Expedition on Horseback and on Foot Through Kashmir, Western Tibet, Chinese Tartary, and Russian Central Asia*, 2 Vols (London: John Murray, 1893); O Olufsen, *Through the Unknown Pamirs: The Second Dutch Pamir Expedition, 1898-1899* (London: William Heinemann, 1904); A. A. Bobrinskiy, *Gortsy Verkhover Pyandzha* [Mountain Dwellers of the Upper Pyandzha Valley] (Moscow: A. A. Leverson, 1908); and A. J. Synesreff, ed., *Eastern Bokhara : A Secret Collection of Geographical, Topographical and Statistic Material Concerning Asia* (Simla: Government of India, 1909). It may be pointed out that the almost entire knowledge about the Pamirs at the end of the nineteenth century was compiled by Lord Curzon in his three piece treatise published in 1896. This document, which highlighted the remoteness, harsh living conditions and geographical feature of the region, paved the way for formulation of British diplomacy about the Pamirs. For its text, see G. N. Curzon, *"The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus," The Geographical Journal,* Vol.8, pp.15-54, 97-119, 239-64.

[24] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, pp.28-30.

[25] John Keay, *When Men and Mountains Meet* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.159.

[26] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, p.31.

[27] *Ibid*., p.33; Algeron Duran, *The Making of a Frontier* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.4.

[28] *Ibid*., pp.35-36. According to a report, Russian Cossacks had even crossed into the Ishkoman valley of Yasin and crossed the Darkot and Baroghil passes back to Wakhan. For details, see John Keay, *The Gilgit Game: The Explorers of the Western Himalayas, 1865*-95 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.211.

[29] *Ibid*., p.36-37.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] "Vakhan," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006), Vol.12,p-236.
[32] Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 2006), p.499. Earlier, on June 17, 1809, Britain and Afghanistan had entered into an agreement pledging that Persia and France would not be allowed to enter India through Afghanistan. Quoted in Khawaja Hameed Yazdani, *Kashmir ki Farokht: Tarikhi Dastawaizat* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1990), p.16.
[33] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, p.41.
[34] Mike Edwards, "The Adventures of Marco Polo", *National Geographic*, May 1, 2001, p.6.
[35] D. Shah Khan, "Wakhan in Historical and Political Setting", *Regional Studies*, Vol. IV, No.2 (Spring 1986), p.50.
[36] Aunokita Mojumdar, "Afghanistan Gets Ready for Tourists", Aljazeerah.net. January 2, 2008. (accessed on March 9, 2008).
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] In fact, the entire population of Afghanistan has been divided into "myriad ethnic, linguistic, religious, kin-based and regional groupings". For details, see Richard F. Nyrop and Donald M. Seekins, eds., *Afghanistan: A Country Study* (Washington D. C: American University, 1986), pp.1-15.
[39] Wakhan Development Partnership, *Wakhan Area & People* (London: Wakhan Development Partnership, 2007), p.3. http://www.wakhandev.org.uk.
[40] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan,* pp. 50-51.
[41] However, according to a study, some Twelver Shia and Sunni Wakhis also exist. Richard F. Nyrop and Donald M. Seekins, eds., *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, p.24.
[42] "Afghanistan: Community Conservation in the Wakhan," http: //www.wcs.org/globalconservation/Asia Copy/Afghanistan/ (accessed on September 5, 2008).
[43] Idid.
[44] Mark Jenkins, "A Short Walk in the Wakhan Corridor," *Outside Magazine*, November 2005, p.25.
[45] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, p. 45.
[46] Mark Jenkins, "A Short Walk in the Wakhan Corridor," p.25. After the Soviet-inspired communist *coup* of April 1978 in Afghanistan, the Kirghiz were among the first refugees to migrate to the Northern Pakistan. They fled in August 1979, that is, within four months after the *Khalqi coup d'etat*, as they immediately recognized the *Khalqis* as a communist threat. There they spent four hard years (1972-82) and then eventually re-settled in the eastern Turkey. However, the Wakhi community remained in the Wakhan district and did not oppose the Soviet backed government in any way. For details, see *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.63, No.3, (August, 2004), p.796.
[47] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan*, pp.55-57.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.* According to an estimate, the vast majority of the Wakki people i.e. more than 95% belong to a common background. Quoted in Herman Kreutzmann,

"Ethnic Minorities and Marginality in the Pamirian Knot: Survival of Wakhi and Kirghiz in a Harsh Environment and Global Context, "*The Geographical Journal*, Vol.169, No.3 (September 2003), p.219.

[53] Kate Mansey, "From Sussex to Kabul," *Sunday Mirror*, October 14, 2007.

[54] Reportedly, there is only one clinic in the entire Wakhan Corridor and even it is ten days donkey ride away from the farthest villages in the area. Quoted in Robert Lindsay, "Ossama Bin Laden on Top of the World," https: //w3. nexis.com/new/delivery/PrintDoc. (accessed on February 15, 2007.)

[55] Aunokita Mojumdar, "Wakhan Corridor", *HIMAL: South Asian*, Vol.21, No.5, (May 2008), p.39.

[56] Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan,* p.79. Also see Aunohita Mojumdar, "Killing Fields of Wakhan," *The Hindu*, December 2, 2007. It may be noted that opium is not locally produced in Wakhan. In fact, it is mainly produced in the province of Badakhshan but mostly consumed in Wakhan. Moreover, Wakhan has also become a transit route for opium trafficking between Afghanistan and Central Asian republics.