

# Allama Iqbal And His Works

Altaf Ullah

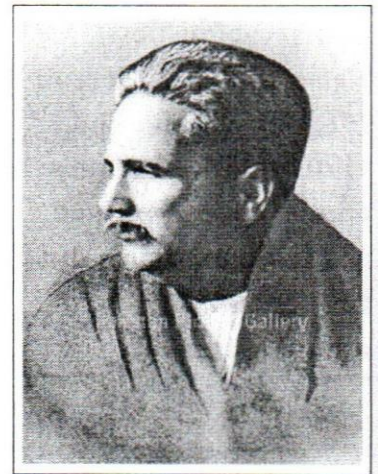
Iqbal (1873-1938) being an extraordinary Muslim thinker not only took interest in poetry and philosophy but his interests covered Religion, Philosophy, Art, Politics, Economics, the revival of Muslim life and universal brotherhood of man. He was a jurist high caliber, a politician, a social reformer, and a great Islamic scholar. He wrote his first book of poetry in 1924 in Urdu, *Bang-i Dara*. It consists of selected poems belonging to the three preliminary phases of Iqbal's poetic career. This beautiful work was followed by *Bal-i Jibril* which is the peak of Iqbal's Urdu poetry. In 1936 he wrote another poetic book, *Zarb-i Kalim*. Apart from these works he wrote *Asrar-i Khudi* in 1915, *Rumuz-i Bekhudi* in 1917. *Payam-i Mashriq* appeared in 1923, *Zabur-i Ajam* in 1927, *Javid Nama* in 1932, *Pas cheh bayed kard ai Aqwam-i Sharq* in 1936, and *Armughan-i Hijaz* in 1938. Besides poetic works he also worked on other aspects of life. His first work in this regard was *Ilm ul Iqtisad* (The knowledge of Economics) written in Urdu in 1903. *Zarb-i Kalim* was described by the poet himself "as a declaration of war against the present era". The main subjects of the book are Islam and the Muslims, education and upbringing, woman, literature and fine arts, politics of the East and the West. In *Asrar-i Khudi*, Iqbal has explained his philosophy of "Self". He proves by various means that the whole universe obeys the will of the "Self". Iqbal condemns self-destruction. For him the aim of life is self-realization and self-knowledge. He charts the stages through which the "Self" has to pass before finally arriving at its point of perfection, enabling the knower of the "Self" to become the vicegerent of Almighty Allah on earth/Khalifat ullah fi'l ard. In *Rumuz-i Bekhudi*, Iqbal proves that Islamic way of life is the best code of conduct for a nation's viability. A person must keep his individual characteristics intact but once this is achieved he should sacrifice his personal ambitions for the needs of the nation. Man cannot realize the "Self" out of society. *Payam-i Mashriq* is an answer to *West-Istlicher Divan* by Goethe, the famous German poet. Goethe bemoaned that the West had become too materialistic in outlook and expected that the East would provide a message of hope that would resuscitate spiritual values. A hundred years went by and then Iqbal reminded the West of the importance of morality, religion and civilization by underlining the need for cultivating feeling, ardour and dynamism. He explained that life could, never aspire for higher dimensions unless it learnt of the nature of

spirituality.

*Zabur-i Ajam* includes the *Mathnavi Gulshan-i Raz-i Jadid* and *Bandagi Nama*. In *Gulshan-i Raz-i Jadid*, he follows the famous *Mathnavi Gulshan-i Raz* by Sayyid Mahmud Shabistri. Here like Shabistri, Iqbal first poses questions, then answers them with the help of ancient and modern insight and shows how it effects and concerns the world of action. *Bandagi Nama* is in fact a vigorous campaign against slavery and subjugation. He explains the spirit behind the fine arts of enslaved societies. In *Zabur-i Ajam*, Iqbal's Persian ghazal is at its best as his Urdu ghazal is in *Bal-i Jibril*. Here as in other books, Iqbal insists on remembering the past, doing well in the present and preparing for the future. His lesson is that one should be dynamic, full of zest for action and full of love and life. Implicitly, he proves that there is no form of poetry which can equal the ghazal in vigour and liveliness. In *Javid Nama*, Iqbal follows Ibn-Arabi, Marri and Dante. Iqbal depicts himself as *Zinda Rud* (a stream, full of life) guided by Rumi the master, through various heavens and spheres and has the honour of approaching Divinity and coming in contact with divine illuminations. Several problems of life are discussed and answers are provided to them. It is an exceedingly enlivening study. His hand falls heavily on the traitors to their nation like Mir Jafar from Bengal and Mir Sadiq from the Deccan, who were instrumental in the defeat and death of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula of Bengal and Sultan Tipu of Mysore respectively by betraying them for the benefit of the British. Thus, they delivered their country to the shackles of slavery. At the end, by addressing his son Javid, he speaks to the young people at large and provides guidance to the "new generation".

*Pas Cheh Bay ed Kard ai Aqwam-i Sharq* includes the *mathnavi Musafir*. Iqbal's Rumi, the master, utters this gliding "East awakes from its slumbers" "*Khwab-i ghaflat*". Inspiring detailed commentary on voluntary poverty and free man, followed by an exposition of the mysteries of Islamic laws and sufic perceptions is given. He laments the dissention among the Indian as well as Muslim nations. *Mathnavi Musafir*, is an account of a journey to Afghanistan. In the *mathnavi* the people of the Frontier (Pathans) are counseled to learn the "secret of Islam" and to "build up the self" within themselves.

*Armughan-i Hijaz* consists of two parts. The first contains quatrains in Persian; the second contains some poems and epigrams in Urdu. The Persian quatrains convey the impres-



sion as though the poet is travelling through Hijaz in his imagination. Profundity of ideas and intensity of passion are the salient features of these short poems. The Urdu portion of the book contains some categorical criticism of the intellectual movements and social and political revolutions of the modern age.

Iqbal wrote two books in English. The first being *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* in which continuity of Persian thought is discussed and Sufism is dealt with in detail. In Iqbal's view true Islamic Sufism awakens the slumbering soul to a higher idea of life. The second book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, is the collection of Iqbal's six lectures which he delivered at Madras, Hyderabad and Aligarh. These were first published from Lahore in 1930 and then by Oxford University Press in 1934. Some of the main subjects are "Knowledge and Religious Experience," "The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer," "The Human Ego," "Predestination and Free Will," "The Spirit of Muslim Culture," "The Principle of Movement in Islam (Ijtihad)." These issues are discussed pithily in a thought provoking manner in the light of Islam and the modern age. These lectures were translated into Urdu by Sayyid Nazir Niazi.

In addition to these books he wrote hundreds of letters in Urdu and English. Urdu letters have been published in ten different books. He issued statements pertaining to the burning topics of the day relating to various aspects of social, religious, cultural and political problems of India, Europe and the world of Islam. For a few years he served as a Professor of Philosophy and Oriental Learning at the government College, Lahore and the Punjab University Oriental College. Many of his speeches and statements have been compiled and published in book form. Except for the last four years of his life he practised at the Lahore High Court Bar.