

Classic Poetry Series

Allama Muhammad Iqbal

- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Allama Muhammad Iqbal(9 November 1877 - 21 April 1938)

Sir Muhammad Iqbal, also known as Allama Iqbal, was a philosopher, poet and politician in British India who is widely regarded to have inspired the Pakistan Movement. He is considered one of the most important figures in Urdu literature, with literary work in both the Urdu and Persian languages.

Iqbal is admired as a prominent classical poet by Pakistani, Indian and other international scholars of literature. Although most well known as a poet, he has also been acclaimed as a modern Muslim philosopher. His first poetry book, *Asrar-e-Khudi*, appeared in the Persian language in 1915, and other books of poetry include *Rumuz-i-Bekhud*, *Payam-i-Mashriq* and *Zabur-i-Ajam*. Some of his most well known Urdu works are *Bang-i-Dara*, *Bal-i-Jibril* and *Zarb-i Kalim*. Along with his Urdu and Persian poetry, his various Urdu and English lectures and letters have been very influential in cultural, social, religious and political disputes over the years. In 1922, he was knighted by King George V, giving him the title "Sir".

During his years of studying law and philosophy in England, Iqbal became a member of the London branch of the All India Muslim League. Later, in one of his most famous speeches, Iqbal pushed for the creation of a Muslim state in Northwest India. This took place in his presidential speech in the league's December 1930 was very close to Quid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Iqbal is known as *Shair-e-Mushriq* meaning Poet of the East. He is also called *Muffakir-e-Pakistan* "The Inceptor of Pakistan", and *Hakeem-ul-Ummat* "The Sage of the Ummah". Pakistan has officially recognised him as its "national poet". In Iran and Afghanistan he is famous as *Iqbal-e Lahori* (Iqbal of Lahore), and he is most appreciated for his Persian work.

His birthday is celebrated on November 9 and is a holiday in Pakistan.

Biography

Iqbal was born in Sialkot, within the Punjab Province of British India (now in Pakistan). Iqbal ancestors were Kashmiri Pandits, the Brahmins from Kashmir who converted to Islam. In the 19th century, when Sikhs were taking over rule of Kashmir, his grandfather's family migrated to Punjab. Iqbal often mentioned and reminisced about his Kashmiri Pandit Brahmin lineage in his writings.

Iqbal's father, Shaikh Noor Mohammad, was a tailor, not formally educated but a religious man. Iqbal's mother Imam Bibi was a polite and humble woman who helped the poor and solved the problems of neighbours. She died on November 9, 1914 in Sialkot. Iqbal loved his mother, and on her death he expressed his feelings of pathos in a poetic form elegy.

"Who would wait for me anxiously in my native place?
Who would display restlessness if my letter fails to arrive?
I will visit thy grave with this complaint:
Who will now think of me in midnight prayers?
All thy life thy love served me with devotion—
When I became fit to serve thee, thou hast departed."

When Iqbal was four years old, he was sent to the mosque to learn the Quran. Later, Syed Mir Hassan, the head of the Madrassa in Sialkot, became his teacher. Iqbal received the Faculty of Arts diploma from Scotch Mission College in 1895, where his teacher Hassan was the professor of Arabic. In the same year Iqbal married Karim Bibi, the daughter of a Gujrati physician Khan Bahadur Ata Muhammad Khan, through a first arranged marriage. They had daughter Miraj Begum and son Aftab Iqbal. Later Iqbal's second marriage was with Sardar Begum mother of Javid Iqbal and third marriage with Mukhtar Begum in December 1914.

During first marriage at the same time, Iqbal also began to study philosophy, English literature and Arabic in Lahore's Government college. He graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Higher Education in Europe

Iqbal was close to Sir Thomas Arnold, an philosophy teacher at the college. Iqbal was influenced by Arnold's teachings and so traveled to Europe for his higher education. Iqbal qualified for a scholarship from Trinity College in Cambridge in 1907, and was called to the bar as a barrister from Lincoln's Inn in 1908.

During his study in Europe, Iqbal began to write poetry in Persian. He prioritized it because he believed he had found an easy way to express his thoughts. He would write continuously in Persian throughout his life.

Iqbal went to Heidelberg Germany in 1907. His German teacher, Emma Wegenast, taught him about Goethe's "Faust", Heine and Nietzsche. Iqbal had feelings for her, but no relationship developed.

He continued with his PhD degree, receiving admission to the Faculty of Philosophy of the Ludwig Maximilian University in 1907 at Munich. Working under the guidance of Friedrich Hommel, Iqbal published his doctoral thesis in 1908 entitled: The Development of Metaphysics in Persia.

Academic Career

Iqbal took up an assistant professorship at Government College, Lahore, when he returned to India, but for financial reasons he relinquished it within a year to practice law. While maintaining his legal practice, Iqbal began concentrating on spiritual and religious subjects, and publishing poetry and literary works. He became active in the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam, a congress of Muslim intellectuals, writers and poets as well as politicians. In 1919, he became the general secretary of the organisation. Iqbal's thoughts in his work primarily focus on the spiritual direction and development of human society, centred around experiences from his travels and stays in Western Europe and the Middle East. He was profoundly influenced by Western philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and Goethe.

The poetry and philosophy of Mawlana Rumi bore the deepest influence on Iqbal's mind. Deeply grounded in religion since childhood, Iqbal began intensely concentrating on the study of Islam, the culture and history of Islamic civilization and its political future, while embracing Rumi as "his guide." Iqbal would feature Rumi in the role of guide in many of his poems. Iqbal's works focus on reminding his readers of the past glories of Islamic civilization, and delivering the message of a pure, spiritual focus on Islam as a source for socio-political liberation and greatness. Iqbal denounced political divisions within and amongst Muslim nations, and frequently alluded to and spoke in terms of the global Muslim community, or the Ummah.

Allama Iqbal's poetry has also been translated into several European languages where his works were famous during the early part of the 20th century. Iqbal's Asrar-i-Khudi and Javed Nama were translated into English by R A Nicholson and A J Arberry respectively.

Political Life

While dividing his time between law and poetry, Iqbal had remained active in the Muslim League. He did not support Indian involvement in World War I, as well as the Khilafat movement and remained in close touch with Muslim political leaders such as Maulana Mohammad Ali and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He was a critic of the

mainstream Indian National Congress, which he regarded as dominated by Hindus and was disappointed with the League when during the 1920s, it was absorbed in factional divides between the pro-British group led by Sir Muhammad Shafi and the centrist group led by Jinnah.

In November 1926, with the encouragement of friends and supporters, Iqbal contested for a seat in the Punjab Legislative Assembly from the Muslim district of Lahore, and defeated his opponent by a margin of 3,177 votes.[22] He supported the constitutional proposals presented by Jinnah with the aim of guaranteeing Muslim political rights and influence in a coalition with the Congress, and worked with the Aga Khan and other Muslim leaders to mend the factional divisions and achieve unity in the Muslim League.

Literary Works

Persian

Iqbal's poetic works are written primarily in Persian rather than Urdu. Among his 12,000 verses of poetry, about 7,000 verses are in Persian. In 1915, he published his first collection of poetry, the *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self) in Persian. The poems emphasise the spirit and self from a religious, spiritual perspective. Many critics have called this Iqbal's finest poetic work. In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, Iqbal explains his philosophy of "Khudi," or "Self." Iqbal's use of the term "Khudi" is synonymous with the word "Rooh" mentioned in the Quran. "Rooh" is that divine spark which is present in every human being, and was present in Adam, for which God ordered all of the angels to prostrate in front of Adam. One has to make a great journey of transformation to realize that divine spark which Iqbal calls "Khudi".

The same concept was used by Farid ud Din Attar in his "*Mantaq-ul-Tair*". 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 a viceregent of God.

In his *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi* (Hints of Selflessness), Iqbal seeks to prove the 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 realise the "Self" outside of society. Also in Persian and published in 1917, this group of poems has as its main themes the ideal community, Islamic ethical and social principles, and

the relationship between the individual and society. Although he is true throughout to Islam, Iqbal also recognises the positive analogous aspects of other religions. The Rumuz-e-Bekhudi complements the emphasis on the self in the Asrar-e-Khudi and the two collections are often put in the same volume under the title Asrar-e-Rumuz (Hinting Secrets). It is addressed to the world's Muslims.

Iqbal's 1924 publication, the Payam-e-Mashriq (The Message of the East) is closely connected to the West-östlicher Diwan by the famous German poet Goethe. Goethe bemoans the West having become too materialistic in outlook, and expects the East will provide a message of hope to resuscitate spiritual values. Iqbal styles his work as a reminder to the West of the importance of morality, religion and civilization by underlining the need for cultivating feeling, ardour and dynamism. He explains that an individual can never aspire to higher dimensions unless he learns of the nature of spirituality. In his first visit to Afghanistan, he presented his book "Payam-e Mashreq" to King Amanullah Khan in which he admired the liberal movements of Afghanistan against the British Empire. In 1933, he was officially invited to Afghanistan to join the meetings regarding the establishment of Kabul University.

The Zabur-e-Ajam (Persian Psalms), published in 1927, includes the poems Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadeed (Garden of New Secrets) and Bandagi Nama (Book of Slavery). In Gulshan-e-Raz-e-Jadeed, Iqbal first poses questions, then answers them with the help of ancient and modern insight, showing how it affects and concerns the world of action. Bandagi Nama denounces slavery by attempting to explain the spirit behind the fine arts of enslaved societies. Here as in other books, Iqbal insists on remembering the past, doing well in the present and preparing for the future, while emphasising love, enthusiasm and energy to fulfill the ideal life.

Iqbal's 1932 work, the Javed Nama (Book of Javed) is named after and in a manner addressed to his son, who is featured in the poems. It follows the examples of the works of Ibn Arabi and Dante's The Divine Comedy, through mystical and exaggerated depictions across time. 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. In a passage re-living a historical period, Iqbal condemns the Muslim who were instrumental in the defeat and death of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula of Bengal and Tipu Sultan of Mysore respectively by betraying them for the benefit of the British colonists, and thus delivering 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."

His love of the Persian language is evident in his works and poetry. He says in one of his poems:

"Even though in sweetness Urdu is sugar
(but) speech method in Dari (Persian) is sweeter "

Urdu

Iqbal's first work published in Urdu, the Bang-e-Dara (The Call of the Marching Bell) of 1924, was a collection of poetry written by him in three distinct phases of his life. The poems he wrote up to 1905, the year Iqbal left for England imbibe patriotism and imagery of landscape, and includes the Tarana-e-Hind (The Song of India), popularly known as Saare Jahan Se Achcha and another poem Tarana-e-Milli [Anthem of the (Muslim) Community], The second set of poems date from between 1905 and 1908 when Iqbal studied in Europe and dwell upon the nature of European society, which he emphasized had lost spiritual and religious values. This inspired Iqbal to write poems on the historical and cultural heritage of Islamic culture and Muslim people, not from an Indian but a global perspective. Iqbal urges the global community of Muslims, addressed as the Ummah to define personal, social and political existence by the values and teachings of Islam.

Iqbal preferred to work mainly in Persian for a predominant period of his career, but after 1930, his works were mainly in Urdu. The works of this period were often specifically directed at the Muslim masses of India, with an even stronger emphasis on Islam, and Muslim spiritual and political reawakening. Published in 1935, the Bal-e-Jibril (Wings of Gabriel) is considered by many critics as the finest of Iqbal's Urdu poetry, and was inspired by his visit to Spain, where he visited the monuments and legacy of the kingdom of the Moors. It consists of ghazals, poems, quatrains, epigrams and carries a strong sense religious passion.

The "Pas Cheh Bayed Kard ai Aqwam-e-Sharq" (What are we to do, O Nations of the East?) includes the poem Musafir (Traveler). Again, Iqbal depicts Rumi as a character and an exposition of the mysteries of Islamic laws and Sufi perceptions is given. Iqbal laments the dissension and disunity among the Indian Muslims as well as Muslim nations. Musafir is an account of one of Iqbal's journeys to Afghanistan, in which the Pashtun people are counseled to learn the "secret of Islam" and to "build up the self" within themselves. Iqbal's final work was the Armughan-e-Hijaz (The Gift of Hijaz), published posthumously in 1938. The first part contains quatrains in Persian, and the second part contains some poems and epigrams in Urdu. The Persian quatrains convey the impression as though the

poet is travelling through the Hijaz in his imagination. Profundity of ideas and intensity of passion are the salient features of these short poems.

Iqbal's vision of mystical experience is clear in one of his Urdu ghazals which was written in London during his days of studying there. Some verses of that ghazal are:

"At last the silent tongue of Hijaz has
announced to the ardent ear the tiding
That the covenant which had been given to the
desert-dwellers is going to be renewed
vigorously:

The lion who had emerged from the desert and
had toppled the Roman Empire is
As I am told by the angels, about to get up
again (from his slumbers.)

You the dwellers of the West, should know that
the world of God is not a shop (of yours).

Your imagined pure gold is about to lose its
standard value (as fixed by you).

Your civilization will commit suicide with its
own daggers."

English

Iqbal also wrote two books on the topic of The Development of Metaphysics in Persia and The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam and many letters in English language, beside of Urdu and Persian literary works. In which, he discussed about the Persian ideology and Islamic sufism in the way of his view that real Islamic sufism activates the awkward soul to superior idea of life. He also discussed philosophy, God and the meaning of prayer, human spirit and Muslim culture, political, social and religious problems.

Iqbal was invited to Cambridge to participate in the conference in 1931, where he expressed his inspired vision to students and other audience.

"I would like to offer a few pieces of advice to the youngmen who are at present studying at Cambridge I advise you to guard against atheism and

materialism. The biggest blunder made by Europe was the separation of Church and State. This deprived their culture of moral soul and diverted it to the atheistic materialism. I had twenty-five years ago seen through the drawbacks of this civilization and therefore had made some prophecies. They had been delivered by my tongue although I did not quite understand them. This happened in 1907..... After six or seven years, my prophecies came true, word by word. The European war of 1914 was an outcome of the aforesaid mistakes made by the European nations in the separation of the Church and the State".

Final Years and Death

In 1933, after returning from a trip to Spain and Afghanistan, Iqbal began suffering from a mysterious throat illness. He spent his final years helping Chaudhry Niaz Ali Khan establish the Dar ul Islam Trust Institute at the latter's Jamalpur estate near Pathankot, an institution where studies in classical Islam and contemporary social science would be subsidised, and advocating the demand for an independent Muslim state. Iqbal ceased practising law in 1934 and he was granted pension by the Nawab of Bhopal. In his final years he frequently visited the Dargah of famous Sufi Hazrat Ali Hujwiri in Lahore for spiritual guidance. After suffering for months from his illness, Iqbal died in Lahore on 21 April 1938. His tomb is located in Hazuri Bagh, the enclosed garden between the entrance of the Badshahi Mosque and the Lahore Fort, and official guards are maintained there by the Government of Pakistan.

Iqbal is commemorated widely in Pakistan, where he is regarded as the ideological founder of the state. His Tarana-e-Hind is a song that is widely used in India as a patriotic song speaking of communal harmony. His birthday is annually commemorated in Pakistan as Iqbal Day, a national holiday. Iqbal is the namesake of many public institutions, including the Allama Iqbal Campus Punjab University in Lahore, the Allama Iqbal Medical College in Lahore, Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad, Allama Iqbal Open University, the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, and Gulshan-e-Iqbal Town in Karachi. Government and public organizations have sponsored the establishment of colleges and schools dedicated to Iqbal, and have established the Iqbal Academy to research, teach and preserve the works, literature and philosophy of Iqbal. Allama Iqbal Stamps Society established for the promotion of Iqbaliyat in philately and in other hobbies. His son Javid Iqbal has served as a justice on the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Javaid Manzil was the last residence of Allama Iqbal.

A Cow And A Goat

There was a verdant pasture somewhere
Whose land was the very picture of beauty

How can the beauty of that elegance be described
Brooks of sparkling water were running on every side

Many were the pomegranate trees
And so were the shady peepul trees

Cool breeze flowed everywhere
Birds were singing everywhere

A goat arrived at a brook's bank from somewhere
It came browsing from somewhere in the nearby land

As she stopped and looked around
She noticed a cow standing by

The goat first presented her compliments to the cow
Then respectfully started this conversation

'How are you! Madam Cow'?
The cow replied, 'Not too well

'My life is a mere existence
My life is a complete agony

My life is in danger, what can I say?
My luck is bad, what can I say?

I am surprised at the state of affairs
I am cursing the evil people

The poor ones like us are powerless
Misfortunes surround the ones like us

None should nicely deal with Man
May God protect us from Man!