

Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher  
of Pakistan

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## *The Life of the Poet-Philosopher*

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**I**QBAL, the poet-philosopher of Pakistan, was born on November 9, 1877 at Sialkot,<sup>1</sup> and died at the peak of his glory and fame in the early hours of April 21, 1938 at Lahore.

Sialkot is a border town of the Punjab; only a few miles beyond the city begins the state of Jammu and Kashmir, now a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Sikhs, who had established their rule in the Punjab, ousted the Afghans from Kashmir with the help of a Dogra chief, Raja Gulab Singh. The Sikhs rewarded him by establishing Gulab Singh's control over the province of Jammu. In 1837-1839 he extended his rule by seizing from Tibet the northern areas, Ladakh and Baltistan. Seven years later the British waged war against the Sikhs and ordered them to relinquish their hold over Kashmir. Taking advantage of his former allies' military defeat, the Dogra chieftain offered the British 7.5 million rupees (£750,000) for the possession of Kashmir. This arrangement was consummated in the Treaty of Amritsar, signed in 1846. From then on Kashmir was to belong "forever, an independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh, and the heirs male of his body."

Thus began the modern history of Kashmir. Commenting on the Dogra rule of Kashmir, Josef Korbel says: "It was for the Kashmiris another tragic experience in a millennium of tragedies. Though once Hindus, they had for 500 years been Muslims. Now, by the terms of the Treaty of Amritsar, the Hindu Dogras possessed the territory; they immediately set out upon a policy of unlimited cruelty that seemed to vent upon the hapless Kashmiris pent-up hatred of the Hindus for the five centuries of Muslim rule."<sup>2</sup> Consequently many Kashmiri families migrated from Kashmir to the Punjab. Iqbal's grandfather Shaikh Rafiq left his ancestral village of Loochar in Kashmir not long after

1857, and came to settle in Sialkot along with his three brothers. Although the family never returned to Kashmir, the memory of the land and its people was never erased from the mind of Iqbal. Lamenting the fate of the Kashmiris, Iqbal wrote several verses which evoke deep sympathy and pathos.

Shaikh Rafiq was a peddler of Kashmiri shawls, whose two sons Shaikh Nūr Muhammad (the father of Iqbal), and Shaikh Ghulam Qādir were probably born in Sialkot soon after the family's arrival at their new home. Shaikh Nūr Muhammad learned the trade of a tailor and embroiderer, and Shaikh Ghulam Qādir eventually found a job in the Department of Irrigation, probably as an unskilled worker. Neither brother acquired any formal education, and like many Kashmiri families who followed them they joined the ranks of the working classes in the urban areas of the Punjab.

Shaikh Nūr Muhammad, Iqbal's father, was not only endowed with the gift of native intelligence and natural curiosity, but also was complimented with a handsome appearance. He had a ruddy complexion, a platinum white beard, and a pair of penetrating, keen eyes. He was generally respected by his peers because of his religious piety and mystic temperament. He kept the company of the Sufis, from whom he acquired a great deal of mystic knowledge. Out of affection Shaikh Nūr Muhammad's friends used to call him an *un parh falsafi* (untutored philosopher).

Iqbal's mother, Imam Bibi, was also a deeply religious woman. As the child of a working-class family she acquired no formal secular education except an elementary knowledge of the Qur'ān, different forms of *'ibadāt* (religious duties), and deep consciousness of *imān* (belief) and *ihsān* (right-doing). These qualities she firmly instilled in their three daughters and two sons—Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad (the eldest child, born in 1860) and Muhammad Iqbal.<sup>3</sup>

Shaikh Nūr Muhammad acquired a reputation as a highly skilled tailor. A local official, Deputy Wazir Ali Bilgrami, had hired him and purchased especially for him a new Singer sewing machine, which was then an object of curiosity. Imam Bibi suspected the legitimacy of the Deputy's income, believing that a large part of it had been derived from un-Islamic and illegal pursuits and thus refused to spend any part of her husband's income on herself. This eventually compelled Shaikh Nūr Muhammad to leave his job, and he opened a small millinery of

his own, specializing in embroidering the caps of Muslim women's *burqa* (the outer garment concealing their appearance). As a capmaker he was a modest success, and eventually hired a few skilled workers to meet the increasing demand. When Shaikh Nūr Muhammad grew old he transferred his shop to his son-in-law, Ghulam Muhammad. Under the latter the trade soon languished and in a short time the shop closed.

Despite his skill and enterprise as a tailor, Shaikh Nūr Muhammad had a hard time supporting his large family. His oldest son, Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad, did not even complete high school, and his parents married him to the daughter of a retired soldier of the British Indian Army. His father-in-law secured a position for him in the Army, and after a few years he entered the Engineering School at Rurki. A few years later he graduated from the school and rejoined the Army as an overseer of the Mechanical Engineering Service. Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad's success paved the way for the progress of Iqbal, and raised the social status of the family from a working-class to a middle-class position.

#### EARLY YEARS IN SIALKOT

THE Sialkot which saw the childhood of Iqbal and his brother was no longer the Mughal city of splendor. The renowned *makatib* and *madāres* which once flourished in the city had disappeared with the empire. In February, 1846, three decades before the birth of Iqbal, the British had defeated the Sikhs and established the *Pax Britannica* in the Punjab. After 1857 the Aligarh movement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) had won over the Muslims of the Punjab, and *nai' ta'lim* (modern education) of the west was becoming popular. Western missionaries, particularly the Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, had already established in 1889 a junior college—The Scotch Mission College (currently named Murray College)—in Sialkot. The Scotch Mission College simultaneously offered courses in liberal arts then currently taught in English universities and some courses in Arabic and Persian in keeping with the classical traditions of Muslim India. The advantages to be derived from this dual curriculum lured a sizable number of young Muslims to the college. Persian was no longer the official language of the British Indian government.

nor the medium of instruction in schools. The supremacy of the English language had, by this time, been firmly established. However the Muslims of the Punjab were taking to Urdu under the influence of the Aligarh movement. Only sixty-five miles away from Sialkot, Lahore, the former Mughal capital, was vibrating with new intellectual trends. In Lahore Urdu poetical symposia were in vogue, and Altaf Husain Hali (a pillar of the Aligarh movement), and Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad were the shining literary stars. The cultural life of Sialkot echoed the trends prevailing in Lahore.

Iqbal's childhood and adolescent years in Sialkot were no different than the life of most young children of poor and middle-class parents. He was athletically inclined, and used to spend hours in the arena wrestling with his friends. Also, he loved partridges and until the end of his life retained very tender feelings for pigeons. Javid Iqbal, the son of the poet, recalls that during the last years of Iqbal's life when he kept indifferent health "he had a great desire that on the roof of our house he should get a large cage built, full with pigeons, and that his bed should be placed in the middle of them." Iqbal's teacher, Sayyid Mir Hasan, often observed him learning his lessons while tenderly holding a partridge in his hand. Once he asked him: "My dear boy, what peculiar enjoyment do you get out of this?" Iqbal promptly answered: "Please master, just hold it and feel."<sup>4</sup>

The atmosphere in the house was deeply religious. Although Shaikh Nūr Muhammad never tried to cash in on his religious piety as a professional holy man, he had the reputation of an accomplished Sufi. The Shaikh's family believed that he had intuitive knowledge of future events. 'Abdūl Majīd Sālik stated that Iqbal once told him that he was hardly eleven when the following incident occurred.

One night I awoke from a deep sleep . . . and saw my mother going down stairs, and I followed her. Finally we stood in front of a half-opened door of a room and saw rays of light streaming out of the room. Mother went in, and she peeped through the window; I also did the same. We saw that my father was sitting in the open courtyard surrounded by a halo of soft light. I wanted to go to my father, but mother put me to bed with some explanation [of this phenomenon].

Next morning I rushed to father and found mother sitting next to him listening to his intuitions. "I intuitively comprehended," said father, "that a caravan has come from Kabul and was encamped some miles out of

Sialkot. There was a sick man among the people desperately in need of help. I feel I should go to their help." Then the parents hired a *tonga* (horse drawn carriage), and we proceeded to the camp of the caravan. Father inquired from the head of the caravan about the sick man, and asked to be taken near his bed. Father discovered that the patient was in critical condition due to a severe infection. Then he took out something from his pocket which looked very much like ashes and rubbed it on his infected limbs. Father said *Inshā Allāh* (God willing) the patient would recover. No one believed it but within twenty-four hours the condition of the patient turned for the better. [In appreciation of this] his parents sent money to my father, but he did not accept it. A few days later the caravan came to Sialkot, and we discovered that the patient had regained his health.<sup>5</sup>

It is entirely probable that Iqbal had this experience in his dreams, and later confused it with actual reality. Be that as it may, stories like this provide us with significant insight into Iqbal's psychological and religious orientation. Khalifah 'Abdūl Hakīm, who knew Iqbal intimately, has stated that in his old age Iqbal often said that "he did not develop his philosophic *Weltanschauung* through philosophic speculation, but has inherited it [from his parents]."<sup>6</sup> There is a measure of truth in this statement. Some of the lessons learned in his early years remained ever with him; one is tempted to hypothesize that Iqbal's broad humanism also owes much to the religious orientation of his parents. Iqbal has highlighted this aspect of his character in *Asrār-i Khudī* (The Secrets of the Self).<sup>7</sup>

"A beggar once appeared at the door of our house," Iqbal tells in his elegant Persian verses, "and incessantly demanded alms. I lost my temper and hit him with a staff. Consequently, the harvest of his beggary spilled from his hands. My father saw this and in anguish tears rolled down his cheeks. He said 'On the day of Resurrection the followers of the Prophet Muhammad including the *ghazian* (warriors of the *millat*), the martyrs, the learned and the sinful, will gather around him. Then in the midst of this company the suffering beggar's cries will attract the Prophet's attention, and he will ask me:

When this the Prophet asks me: 'God to thee  
Committed a young Muslim, and he won  
No portion of instruction from my school;  
What, was this labor too, too hard for thee  
So that that heap of clay became not man'?

'What am I to say to my master?' Finally father advised me, saying:

Reflect a little, son and bring to mind  
The last great gathering of the Prophet's fold;  
Look once again on my white beard, and see  
How now I tremble between fear and hope;  
Do not thy father this foul injury,  
O put him not to shame before his Lord!  
Thou art a bud burst from Muhammad's branch;  
Break into bloom before the genial breeze  
Of his warm spring; win thee the scent and hue  
Of that sweet season; strive to gain for thee  
Some fragment of his character sublime!"<sup>8</sup>

In the choice of early teachers for Iqbal, his parents also reflected their devotion to Islam. During the period of Iqbal's childhood four *makatib* in Sialkot (those of Mawlana Ghulam Murtaqa, Mawlana Abū 'Abdūllah, Mawlana Muhammad Muzammal, and Mawlana Sayyid Mir Hasan) enjoyed a reputation for scholarship and were, even in those days of decline, reminiscent of the Mughal days. Although the first three concentrated exclusively on Islamic studies and theology, the last one also included offerings on Arabic and Persian literatures.

Sayyid Mir Hasan (1844-1929), who recognized early Iqbal's poetic talent, was not only an acknowledged scholar of Arabic and Persian literatures, but was also in sympathy with the aims of the Aligarh movement. He knew Sir Sayyid personally, subscribed regularly to the *Tahdhib al-Akhlāq*, and often sought Sir Sayyid's help in understanding his *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Qur'an). In fact when Shām Bihari Lāl, the treasurer of the Anglo-Muhammadan College at Aligarh, embezzled Rs. 100,000 from the college, Sayyid Mir Hasan, in order to partially compensate Sir Sayyid for this loss, regularly contributed from his personal funds and also collected sizable donations from others.<sup>9</sup> Sayyid Mir Hasan knew no English, nor did he ever make an attempt to learn it, yet he was keenly aware of the pragmatic and broad educational values of western education. His appreciation of the new times had made him accept the position of a professor of oriental literature at the Scotch Mission College.

Fortunately for Iqbal, Sayyid Mir Hasan knew his father, and lived in Kucha Mir Hisām-ud Din of Sadr Bazaar, not too far from the house of Iqbal's parents. (Sadr Bazaar was later named Iqbal Street in

honor of the poet-philosopher.) Sayyid Mir Hasan offered to tutor Iqbal, and when Iqbal graduated from high school (1892) with honor and an award of a scholarship from the Scotch Mission College, Mir Hasan persuaded Shaikh Nūr Muhammad to let Iqbal continue his education. Consequently, on May 5, 1893, Iqbal entered the college as a first-year student, taking courses in liberal arts.

Intellectually, Iqbal blossomed at the Scotch Mission College. After attending classes at the college, Iqbal attended the discourses of Sayyid Mir Hasan at his home. Mir Hasan had committed to memory thousands of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu verses of great masters. He tutored his students, and particularly Iqbal, with an eye to cultivating in them a refined taste and a feeling for Persian and Arabic poetry. He never composed a verse himself, but taught Iqbal the mechanics of classical Urdu and Persian poetry.

Like all beginners, Iqbal needed the help of a master of Urdu poetry, and he found one in Nawab Mirza Khan Dāgh (1831-1905), a poet par excellence, who had the position of poetical preceptor to Nizam Mir Mahbūb Ali Khan of Hyderabad. Young Urdu poets from all over India sent him their works for his comments. In order to deal effectively with this correspondence Dāgh established in his home a secretariat of poetry, which kept track of the master's corrections. Dāgh's poetry did not bear the burden of philosophy or mysticism or great depth of thought. He was a *ghazal* writer, and his poetry was cherished for its purity of idiom, the sparkle of its simple language, and its brilliant wit.<sup>10</sup> Sir 'Abdūl Qādir, a life-long friend of Iqbal, has stated that Iqbal sent Dāgh his early lyrics for correction. Recognizing the poetic talent of Iqbal, Dāgh informed him after a short period of time that there was little room for improvement in his poetry. Nevertheless, both the teacher and the pupil were proud of this short-lived relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Iqbal was now on the road which was destined to bring him success and international fame. However, the year of his high school graduation laid the foundation for the personal anguish and unhappiness which was to mar his life during most of his remaining years. In 1892 his parents married him to Karīm Bibi, the daughter of Khan Bahadur 'Atta Muhammad Khan, an affluent physician in the city of Gujrat. Three children were born to the couple. Mi'rāj Begum, the eldest child and the exact image of her father, was born in 1895. After a prolonged

illness, punctuated by eleven operations for scrofula, she died in 1914. The second child, Aftab Iqbal, was born in 1899. Like his father, Aftab studied philosophy, and obtained from the London University a bachelor of arts degree with first class honors in 1923, followed by a master's degree in philosophy two years later. He also qualified as a barrister-at-law at Lincoln's Inn, London, and is currently practicing law in Karachi as an international corporation lawyer. Iqbal's third male child, who was born in 1901, died soon after birth.

The couple lived together in relative harmony for more than two decades, but differences began to develop and finally became intolerable, especially after Iqbal's return from Europe in 1908. "My life is extremely miserable; they forced my wife upon me," confided Iqbal to a lady friend, Miss 'Atiya Begum Faizee, in 1909, adding: "I have written to my father that he had no right to arrange my marriage, especially when I had refused to enter into any alliance of that sort. I am quite willing to support her, but I am not prepared to make my life miserable by keeping her with me."<sup>12</sup> Iqbal's affections were largely alienated from Karim Bibi because of his prolonged separations from her and also because of his attachment to Miss Faizee, whom he came to know in Europe. Despite her love and respect for Iqbal, Karim Bibi preferred not to live with a husband who failed to reciprocate her feelings. Finally, in 1916 they decided to live separately, and Iqbal agreed to support her. Karim Bibi died on February 28, 1946, but Iqbal had supported her until his death in 1938. The broken home had a telling effect on Aftab Iqbal, who grew up nurturing a resentment of the treatment accorded his mother and keenly missing the presence and affection of his father. However, in spite of the alienation of father and son, Aftab Iqbal has not allowed personal feelings to affect his wholesome respect for his father's poetic accomplishments, philosophic excellence, and political judgment.

### QUADRANGLE DAYS

In 1895 Iqbal completed his second year at the Scotch Mission College in Sialkot. His teacher and parents recognized his talents and encouraged him to pursue higher studies. The same year Iqbal went to Lahore and entered the Government College, which was (and still is) considered

to be the best institution of higher learning in the subcontinent. The subjects Iqbal studied for the bachelor of arts degree included Arabic and English literature and philosophy. He graduated *cum laude*, and was also awarded a scholarship for further study leading toward a master's degree in philosophy. Two years later (1899) he won a gold medal for the unique distinction of being the only candidate who passed the final comprehensive examination.

Iqbal's early years in Lahore opened new vistas of learning and experience. Away from the scrutiny of parents and early teachers Iqbal tasted an unknown freedom. As a young man he sowed his wild oats in the streets of Lahore, and yet had the good sense to benefit from the best of the city's intellectuals.

At age twenty-two Iqbal's poetic reputation began making its way into a more public light. In the last decade of the nineteenth century a *musha'ra* (poetical symposium) was regularly organized in the Bazaar Hakimañ inside Bhati Gate of the walled city of Lahore. Hakim Amin-ud-Din, a local attorney, was the host and initiator, and Hakim Shuja'-ud-Din often presided over the sessions of the *musha'ra*. Noted Urdu poets including Mirza Arshad Gorgani and Mir Nazir Husain participated in these sessions. Bhati Gate was then the center of Lahore's intellectual and cultural activities. Students of local colleges often came, sometimes to enjoy the recitation of poetry, sometimes to compete as budding poets. Iqbal, who was then the poet laureate of the quadrangle, was lured to the poetical symposia of Bhati Gate. In the presence of Gorgani, Iqbal once recited a lyric containing this famous verse:

*Moti samjh kay shān-i karīmi nay chun li'ay  
Qatray jo thay mary araq-i infa'l kay.*

His Grace gathered them as pearls, so shining and bright—  
The pearls of perspiration of my remorse.

Mirza Gorgani immediately exclaimed: "Iqbal! Such beautiful verse at your tender age!"

Nor was this his only early public recognition. During these years the Kashmiri families of Lahore had organized an Anjuman Kashmiri Musalmanan to implement social and educational reforms. Muhammad Din Fauq, a well-known publicist and ethnographer of the peoples of Kashmir, was the most active member of the Anjuman. Under his influence Iqbal became a supporting member and at the meetings of

the Anjuman recited several poems dealing with the political and cultural problems of the Kashmiris, including *Flah-i Qawm* (Welfare of the Nation), emphasizing self-help and mutual solidarity.<sup>13</sup> By the time Iqbal obtained his master's degree in 1899 he was recognized as a promising young poet in the literary circles of Lahore.

By far the most pervasive influence on Iqbal's intellectual development at the Government College came from Sir Thomas Arnold, an accomplished scholar of Islam and modern philosophy. After teaching for almost ten years at the Anglo-Muhammadan College, Aligarh, Sir Thomas became professor of philosophy at the Government College in February 1898. At a farewell party in Aligarh, Maulana Muhammad Shibli Nu'mani delivered a speech highlighting Sir Thomas's personal qualities. He said: "It is not the sword of Europe alone which conquered all the nations of the world, and won their allegiance; it is their admirable moral character which has won all hearts. And Arnold is the best living example of [Europe's] virtuous conduct and praiseworthy character."<sup>14</sup>

Unlike most western missionaries, who presented Islam as the religion of the sword, Sir Thomas wrote at Aligarh a monumental study, *The Preaching of Islam*, emphasizing the peaceful "propagation of the Muslim faith." The study owed much, as he admitted in the preface, to the "abundance of [Shibli's] knowledge of early Muhammadan history" (p. ix). "Shibli too," maintains Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi, "benefited from Arnold. He taught Shibli modern principles and techniques of research and acquainted him with the western criticism of old disciplines of knowledge."<sup>15</sup> Shibli's familiarity with western scholars of Islam and modern research techniques is visible in his well-known historical studies, including *Al-Farūq*, *Al-Mamūn*, *Al-Kalām*, and in his definitive biography of the Prophet Muhammad, *Sirat al-Nabī*. For these Indic-Islamic studies owe much to the intellectual generosity of Sir Thomas. Such then, was the sympathy and scope of wisdom that Sir Thomas brought to his relationship with Iqbal.

At the Government College in Lahore the relationship between Sir Thomas and Iqbal was that of a disciple and a teacher. In Arnold, Iqbal found a loving teacher, who combined in himself a profound knowledge of western philosophy and a deep understanding of Islamic culture and Arabic literature. This happy melange of the East and West Arnold helped to develop in Iqbal. Also, Arnold became a bridge of

friendship between Shibli Nu'mani and Iqbal. (When Iqbal published in 1901 his technical study of economics, *Ilm-i Iqtisād*, Shibli edited his prose style.) Arnold also inspired in Iqbal the desire to pursue higher graduate studies in Europe. In 1904, when Arnold left Lahore for London, Iqbal composed a beautiful poem, *Nalā-i Firāq* (Lament of Separation), indicating the student's devotion to his teacher and his determination to follow Arnold to England in quest of knowledge.

In May 1899, a few months after Iqbal's graduation with a master's degree in philosophy, he was appointed Macleod-Punjab Reader of Arabic at the University Oriental College of Lahore. His salary was seventy-three rupees a month, and he was required to teach history and economics in addition to Arabic. Probably Sir Thomas, who was then the acting principal (president) of the Oriental College, was instrumental in his appointment, because Iqbal did not possess the requisite terminal degree in Arabic literature, even though the University Syndicate, in its proceedings of June 23, 1899, had noted that he "stood first in Arabic both at the B.A. and Intermediate examinations." From January 1901 to March 1904, when he resigned from the position of reader, Iqbal taught intermittently as assistant professor of English at Islamia College and at the Government College at Lahore. During this period he spent no more than a few months of teaching at the Oriental College. As a junior faculty member of the Punjab University he was not entitled to live in any of the comfortable and spacious houses surrounding the Punjab University and the Government College, as these houses were then reserved exclusively for the British professors. Consequently, he rented the second story of a very modest house inside Bhati Gate directly across the street from Mahala Jlotiañ. (Today, the number of this house is eleven, and the first floor is rented by a potter.)

For Iqbal, the span of time from 1900 to 1905 was filled with hopes and frustrations. The academic profession which was most congenial to his temperament had lost its luster. The social prestige of a professor ranked rather low in the hierarchy of professions (and this is still true sixty years later). Positions in the civil service and the practice of law offered greater economic and social rewards. In addition, since education was controlled by the British government, freedom of thought and expression was limited—even much more so than during the Mughal period when the private academies of eminent scholars could get generous state subsidies without loss of academic freedom.

For the ambitious Iqbal, therefore, the professorial role was constricting. (His dissatisfaction with the academic profession is vividly reflected in some of the quatrains included in the *Zarifanā* [satirical] section of *Bāng-i-Dara* [The Call of the Highway].) In order to escape from the academic profession, he studied law simultaneously with his master's course of philosophy. His heart, however, was in philosophy rather than in law; consequently, in December 1898 he failed the preliminary examination in law because he had obtained insufficient points in jurisprudence. Two years later, when he was already Macleod Reader of Arabic at the Oriental College, Iqbal petitioned the chief justice of the Chief Court of the Punjab in Lahore to allow him to retake the law examination without repeating the schedule of lectures. A great stickler for the rules, Chief Justice Chatterji turned down his petition.<sup>16</sup> Probably this rebuff prompted him to study law later in England.

In 1901 Iqbal tried to enter the civil service of the Punjab and applied to take the examination for the competitive position of extra assistant commissioner (E.A.C.). This ambition also was thwarted when he was removed from the list of the candidates by the medical board. In reaction, the leading Muslim periodicals of Lahore criticized the medical board and the procedure of the examination. "The elders of the [Muslim] nation know several promising young men including Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal, M.A., who has achieved a considerable reputation for his unmatched intellectual ability," commented Muhammad Din Fauq and Maulavi Mahbūb 'Alam, "but he became a victim of the medical board of examination along with a Hindu candidate. A day before the examination the candidates are given a thorough medical checkup and for minor physical defects they are forbidden to take the examination. . . . Shaikh Muhammad Iqbal's health seems to be suffering from no defect, but one has to bow before the verdict of the doctors. Would it not be desirable if the applicants are given a medical checkup before their admittance to candidacy? After they have gone through the ordeal of preparation to compete in the examination their eleventh hour rejection on account of minor medical reasons causes them a great deal of spiritual agony."<sup>17</sup>

The denial of an opportunity to compete for a rewarding position was indeed a spiritual agony. Iqbal must have felt that the built-in mechanism of the sociopolitical order of colonial India provided no

outlet for the fulfillment of his talents. Viewed retrospectively, however, Iqbal's early failures were proverbial blessings in disguise. As an extra assistant commissioner he would have achieved empty but glittering success and spent the remaining years of his life in the wilderness of the rural Punjab as a little czar of the British colonial administration, but he would have cheated his destiny.

The end of his frustrations was not yet in sight. In 1903 his elder brother, Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad, who was then a subdivisional officer in the Department of Military Works, was dragged into a criminal conspiracy by his jealous rivals and colleagues. In the belief that Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad would not get a fair trial, Iqbal sent a memorandum to Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India, describing in detail the facts of his brother's case. Lord Curzon ordered the Baluchistan political agency to put an end to this conspiracy.

The period of his brother's oppression, however, provided Iqbal the occasion for notable poetry. Acutely disturbed by the injustice to his brother, he gave release to his anguish in a pathetic ode, *Berg-i Gul*, to Khawja Nizām-ud Din Awliya,<sup>18</sup> asking the saint to intercede with Allah for His mercy. Khawja Hasan Nizāmi, the custodian of the saint's shrine and a friend of Iqbal, had the ode sung at the annual festival (*urs*) of 1903. One of the verses of the ode was suspended from the door of the saint's mausoleum.

In 1905, on his way to Europe for advanced graduate studies, Iqbal visited the saint's mausoleum and brought another ode with him expressing his gratitude for past favors and indicating his future aspirations and quest for knowledge. In the stillness of the mausoleum sitting near the head of the saint's grave, Iqbal recited the ode, *Iltajā-i Masafer* (Request of the Traveler).<sup>19</sup>

Iqbal's generous compassion for his brother was met equally by Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad's generosity in love and financial help for his younger brother. No degree of frugality within a faculty salary could have sponsored his European studies; nor in fact, even allowed its consideration. Those who knew Iqbal maintained that he did manage to put aside some funds for his future educational expenses in Europe; but the remainder was paid by Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad. Iqbal never forgot his help, and in fact helped to support his brother when he retired. Later, differences in religious beliefs developed between the brothers because Shaikh 'Atta Muhammad had joined the Ahmadi

movement.<sup>20</sup> This did not diminish Iqbal's love or respect for his elder brother, although he generally deplored the Ahmadi schism for its corrosive influence on the Muslims' national solidarity.

To his European departure (1905) Iqbal provided a fitting prelude. The recitation of his poetry at the annual sessions of Anjuman-i-Himāyat-i-Islam of Lahore catapulted him to all-India fame. The advent of the Anjuman in September 1884 was inspired by the Aligarh movement, and its annual meetings attracted the leading literary and political collaborators of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Muslims made pilgrimages to these meetings to reaffirm their social and cultural solidarity and to take part in the efforts of their national leaders. Parents often took their children to the Anjuman's annual sessions "so that they might learn the views of the national leaders in their formative years."<sup>21</sup>

It was at the Anjuman's annual session of 1900 that Iqbal made his national debut. While Maulana Nazir Ahmad presided over the session of February 24, Iqbal sung his poem *Nalā'-i Yatim* (Orphan's Cry). It had a remarkable impact, moving the audience to the depths of their souls. Many of them wept, whereas the pragmatic ones donated generously (almost three hundred rupees) to the Anjuman's funds. The printed copies of the poem designed to sell for pennies fetched four rupees each. When the meeting was over the people nearly mobbed the poet.<sup>22</sup> Not wanting to compliment the poet extravagantly, Maulana Nazir Ahmad remarked: "I have heard several elegies of Anis and Debir, but never did I hear before such a heart-breaking poem [as that of Iqbal]."<sup>23</sup>

At the subsequent four annual sessions of the Anjuman, Iqbal recited *Yatim Kā Khatāb Hilāl-i 'Id sāy* (Orphan's Plaint to the Crescent of 'Id) (1901), *Islamia College Kā Khatāb Punjab Kay Musalmānu sāy* (Islamia College's Address to the Muslims of the Punjab) and *Din-o-Dunyā* (Religion and World) (1902), *Abr-i Gawher Bār* (Blessed Showers) dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad (1903), and *Tasvir-i-Dard* (Portrait of Anguish) (1904). Not all of these were included in *Bāng-i-Dara* (The Call of the Highway), but like the first, they became very popular and by 1905 had endeared the poet to the hearts of his Muslim audience.

Also, during this period, Iqbal's popularity was at its peak among the Hindus. Although he was to emerge from his stay in Europe as a Muslim Nationalist, they hailed him now as a Nationalist Muslim

preaching (they thought) the Congress' brand of nationalism which aspired to envelop Hindus and Muslims in an Indian nationality. There was justification for this interpretation. Iqbal composed several poems on the theme of Hindu-Muslim amity, including *Tārāna-i Hindī* (The Song of India), *Hindustani Bachoñ Kā Qawmi Git* (National Anthem of Indian Children) and *Nayā Shiwalā* (New Temple). In the last poem he chided both the Hindus and the Muslims for their narrow mental horizons:

I'll tell you truth, Oh Brahmin, if I may make so bold!  
Those idols in your temples—these idols have grown old;  
To hate your fellow-mortals is all they teach you, while  
Our God too sets his preachers to scold and revile;  
Sickened, from both your temple and our shrine I have seen,  
Alike our preachers' sermons and your fond myths I shun.  
In every graven image you fancied God: I see  
In each speck of my country's poor dust, divinity.<sup>24</sup>

When Iqbal arrived in England in 1905, he was already well-known in India.

### THE YEAST OF THE WEST

DURING his three years of residence in Europe, Iqbal composed twenty-four small poems and lyrics, averaging eight compositions a year. Although poetry had made him famous in India, in Europe he began to doubt the usefulness of his being a poet. "I have made up my mind that I will give up poetry; instead, I would devote my time in the pursuit of something more useful," he confided to Shaikh 'Abdūl Qādir, his life-long friend and companion for two years in Europe. Qādir reasoned with him to the contrary, saying that his poetry had a magnetic quality capable of inspiring a new life in the backward Muslim nation. The final decision was left to Sir Thomas, who fortunately agreed with Qādir. Iqbal bowed to their collective judgment.

One decision which Iqbal did implement in Europe was of major poetic importance. From Urdu, he shifted to Persian as the vehicle for his poetic composition. "His host at a dinner party asked Iqbal to recite his Persian verses," narrates Qādir, "and the poet had to confess that



he never composed more than a verse or two in Persian." The next morning Iqbal met Qādir and recited to him two fresh Persian lyrics. From then on, Persian became the medium of his poetic inspirations, while he used Urdu only occasionally after 1908. Seven years later, in 1915, Iqbal published his magnum opus, *Asrār-i Khudī*. He felt obliged to explain his reasons for this switch to Persian, especially in a country where very few of his audience understood Persian:

Poetizing is not the aim of this *mathnavi*  
 Beauty-worshipping and love-making is not its aim.  
 I am of India: Persian is not my native tongue;  
 I am like the crescent moon: my cup is not full.  
 Do not seek from one charm of style in exposition,  
 Do not seek from me Khansar and Isfahan.<sup>25</sup>  
 Although the language of Hind is sweet as sugar,  
 Yet sweeter is the fashion of Persian speech.  
 My mind was enchanted by its loveliness.  
 My pen became as a twig of the Burning Bush.  
 Because of the loftiness of my thoughts,  
 Persian alone is suitable to them.  
 O Reader! do not find fault with the wine cup,  
 But consider attentively the taste of the wine.<sup>26</sup>

Originally Iqbal composed 150 verses of *Asrār-i Khudī* in Urdu; subsequently, however, he destroyed these verses, feeling that he had failed adequately to convey his ideas. Some years later he made another attempt and then forsook the idea of composing *Asrār-i Khudī* in Urdu. The critics of Urdu literature do not agree with Iqbal that Urdu was unequal "to the strain put upon it by his feelings and imagination," because "some of the poems in *Bāng-i-Darā* are a standing refutation of this view."<sup>27</sup> Probably he wanted a wider public than the Urdu-reading Muslims of India, and Persian appeared to him as the lingua franca of the Muslim world. His contemporary, Tagore, had also sought a wider audience, through English. It won him the Nobel Prize for what Nabaneeta Sen calls, "nebulous, mystic, and sentimental verses," but Tagore made no lasting impression on the western audience. American and Indian scholars of Bengali literature agree that "Rabindranath only became a temporary craze, but never a serious literary figure in the western scene."<sup>28</sup>

Although Iqbal's Persian is not the contemporary Iranian *Farsi*, and modern Iranis do not read his Persian works for their beauty of expression,<sup>29</sup> nevertheless Iqbal's switch to Persian enabled him to win a large following in the Muslim world. There is hardly a Muslim country in the world where his original works or local translations have not appeared.

Iqbal studied in both Britain and Germany. In London he studied at Lincoln's Inn in order to qualify at the Bar, and at the Trinity College of Cambridge University he enrolled as an undergraduate student to earn a bachelor of arts degree. This enrollment was unusual, however, since he already had a master's degree in philosophy from the University of the Punjab at Lahore and was simultaneously preparing to submit a doctoral dissertation in philosophy to Munich University. The German university not only allowed him to submit his dissertation in English, but also exempted him from a mandatory stay of two terms on the campus before submitting his dissertation, "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia," to Professor F. Hommel. After his successful defense of the dissertation, Iqbal was awarded the *doctoris philosophiae gradum* on November 4, 1907. The dissertation, which was published the following year in London, was dedicated to T. W. Arnold.

Philosophy being his first love, Iqbal probably wanted to benefit from the lectures of the neo-Hegelians, John McTaggart and James Ward, who lectured then at Cambridge to the undergraduates. Moreover, two outstanding orientalisks, E. G. Browne and Reynold A. Nicholson, were also at Cambridge lecturing on Persian literature. In view of this, Iqbal's admission as an undergraduate at Cambridge, though unusual, is understandable. Iqbal's intellect was sharpened, and his mental horizon widened under these eminent scholars; they also admired him and recognized his philosophic and poetic talent.

"The *Asrār-i Khudī* was first published at Lahore in 1915. I read it soon afterwards," writes Reynold Nicholson, "and thought so highly of it that I wrote to Iqbal, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Cambridge some fifteen years ago, asking leave to prepare an English translation."<sup>30</sup> Iqbal's reaction to this invitation was also characteristic of a poet who was passionately involved in his people. After reading Nicholson's letter Iqbal could not control his tears; when his friend Faqir Sayyid Najm-ud-Din asked for an explanation, Iqbal said, "that my people, whose self-hood I wanted to resurrect, neither care to

appreciate it nor recognize its value. Europeans, for whom this book was not intended, want to understand my message."<sup>31</sup> (Even though only five hundred copies of the *Asrār-i Khudī* were first published, it raised a storm of vilification against Iqbal because of his indictment of the *Wahdat al-Wujūd* [unitarian monism] school of Sufism.)<sup>32</sup>

Iqbal was never at home in politics, but he was invariably drawn into it. One year after Iqbal's arrival in England, the All-India Muslim League had been established in India. Two years later in London (May 1908) the British Committee of the All-India Muslim League was inaugurated under the presidency of Sayyid Amīr Ali, a former judge of the Calcutta High Court and the author of several scholarly studies on Islamic law and history, including *The Spirit of Islam* and *A History of the Saracens*. Even though Iqbal was to depart from England three months later, he was elected to the executive committee and, along with Sayyid Hassan Bilgrami and Sayyid Amīr Ali, Iqbal was nominated to a subcommittee to draft the rules and regulations of the British Committee of the Muslim League. With the exception of one brief interruption, Iqbal maintained this relationship with the All-India Muslim League throughout his life.

As to Iqbal's personal life in Europe, very little authentic information is available. Miss 'Atiya Begum Faizee, who knew Iqbal in Europe, has partially filled the gap. She said that Iqbal also studied at Heidelberg University, where he was tutored in philosophy and in the German language by Fräulein Wagnast and Fräulein Senechal. "Here at Heidelberg Iqbal acquired remarkable proficiency in German only in three months at which his German instructors were astonished; this firmly established his prestige among his professors."<sup>33</sup> (When he returned from Europe in July 1908, in addition to his doctorate in philosophy, he had obtained in 1907 a bachelor of arts degree from Cambridge and had also successfully qualified in July 1908 as a barrister-at-law at Lincoln's Inn, London.)

In Europe, Iqbal formed a deep and lasting friendship with Miss Faizee, an attractive and intelligent woman who personified a new spirit of awakening among Muslim women. In fact, Iqbal traveled from Cambridge to London on April 1, 1907 to meet her for the first time. "Why did you come to see me?" Miss Faizee asked Iqbal rather bluntly. "Because of your travelogue [serially published in India] you have become so famous both in India and Britain that I could not help

looking you up," answered Iqbal. "I can't believe that you traveled that distance just to pay me that homage," retorted Miss Faizee.

Iqbal gave a highly embellished answer: "I am here to invite you to come to Cambridge at the Bilgramis. My mission is to escort you there. If you decline the invitation the hurt of disappointment will ever remain with me. And I have never accepted such a disappointment. Your acceptance of the invitation will truly honor your hosts." She agreed to visit the Bilgramis on April 22, 1907.

Thereafter, Iqbal saw her frequently, entertaining her sometimes at the Frascoti in London and at other times at his residence. One day at the Frascoti he told her, she tells us, that his personality contained external and internal aspects—the former was utilitarian and pragmatic, and the latter was mystic and philosophic. Under his influence Miss Faizee's interest in philosophy deepened considerably. "We agreed to study philosophy together for two hours each day on July 13, 14, 15, 1907," writes Miss Faizee. Consequently, they spent several enjoyable hours of discussion, which she says were also shared by another scholar of German philosophy.

In August, Iqbal wrote Miss Faizee a letter inviting her to visit him in Germany for three weeks. He promised to show her around in Heidelberg, Munich, and Leipzig, especially the cities' libraries and museums. On August 20, she joined him in Heidelberg and remained with him until September 4, 1907.<sup>34</sup> Miss Faizee's diary gives us some interesting insights into Iqbal's personality. In London and Cambridge, he was vivacious, gregarious, eager to engage in verbal duels both with his peers and superiors, and relentlessly self-assertive. For instance, at a dinner at the Arnolds in London, Miss Faizee tells us, Professor Arnold told Iqbal that some rare manuscripts had been discovered in Germany, and that he would like Iqbal to examine them. "You are my teacher, I, your pupil, what could I do for you?" answered Iqbal. "Yes, sometimes a student excels his teacher; moreover, the student should obey the teacher," Arnold thus flattered Iqbal. Heartily conceding the point, Iqbal said: "As a teacher you know better; if that is what you want, I bow my head in submission."<sup>35</sup>

Occasionally, Iqbal could also engage in a harmless practical joke. In order to impress his German friends with the supernatural power so often associated with the "inscrutable East," he played the lost mystic. On the eve of a picnic in Heidelberg (August 22, 1907), while friends

waited outside of his room, Iqbal pretended to be in a trance. Finally, Miss Faizee entered his room and found that Iqbal's gaze was fixed on books and that his eyes had a dreadful glassy stare. Some thought that he had frozen to death overnight. Finally Miss Faizee shook him by his shoulders rather vigorously and quietly shouted at him: "Wake up, you are not in India, where an antic like this can be tolerated." Iqbal meekly mumbled an explanation for this strange act: "I was up in the heavenly spheres."<sup>16</sup>

Miss Faizee left for India in 1907, but she revisited Europe in 1908 for a brief period and spent some time with Iqbal. She has left no information about this short reunion except that Iqbal wrote on June 9, 1908 a few verses in the autograph album of her sister-in-law, Rufi'ah Sultan Nāzli Begum. However, when Miss Faizee went back to India Iqbal sent her a poem, *Wasāl* (Union) from Munich, which he subsequently incorporated in the *Bāng-i-Dara*. A few verses are translated here:

*Justjū jis gul key tarpāty thi ay bulbūl mujhay*  
*Khābi-i qismat sāy akhīr mil gayā woh gul mujhay.*

Hark ye Nightingale! the flower that I was restlessly  
in search of, I fortunately got.  
My restlessness was infectious for the garden-dwellers,  
When I heard your melody, I invariably blushed.

Like mercury my heart was in constant flux,  
Perhaps the "sin" of love made it so impatient.

The rouge of love has radiated the mirror of my dust  
[that is, life]

And in this mirror is reflected the image of the old beloved.

I gained freedom in my captivity,

The plunder of my heart rehabilitated my home.

The poem bursts with candor of earthly emotions of man for woman. Iqbal planted a tree of joy in Europe and eventually it blossomed, but he adored it from afar and never did he permanently possess "that flower" to adorn his lapel. Reflecting on Iqbal's romantic involvements as portrayed through his poetry, Khalifah 'Abdūl Hakīm said that unlike traditional Urdu poetry "Iqbal's poetry was not artificial. If he dedicated a poem to a beloved (*mahbūb*) the beloved was invariably a human being. In love affairs Iqbal believed in doing and getting over it rather than in never giving his heart to anyone."<sup>17</sup>

Miss Faizee accused Iqbal of "indifference" and "hypocrisy." However, Iqbal vigorously protested against these accusations, saying "If opportunity comes I shall certainly show you how intensely I love my friends and how deeply my heart feels for them all. People hold life dear and rightly so. I have got the strength to give it freely away. . . . No! don't call me indifferent or hypocrite, not even by implication for it hurts my soul and makes me shudder at your ignorance of my nature. I wish I could turn inside outward in order to give you better view of my soul, which you think is darkened by hypocrisy and indifference."<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps Miss Faizee did not understand Iqbal's nature, but she was keenly aware of his emotional problems. She knew how unhappy he was, and she also knew what made him so, especially after his return from Europe to Lahore in 1908. Writing in 1947, almost ten years after Iqbal's death, she offered a very convincing analysis:

In India [Muslim] morés are not [always] directly related to religion; but they have gained compelling significance. An individual is obligated to bow before the wishes and orders of his family. In view of this, many men and women, though endowed with extraordinary intellectual abilities, ruined their lives. Iqbal's life was indeed a cruel tragedy, which developed as a result of his family's intransigence.

Iqbal was not in India what he had been in Europe. Those who did not have the good fortune of knowing him in his early life, can never imagine the quality of his God-given intellectual brilliance, which he exercised so well. In India his genius was corroded, and with the passage of time this overwhelmed his consciousness. He felt a measure of degradation, and his life, according to him, was constricted, because he always knew what he could have become.

As of this writing, I know two Indian girls who are good and gentle, and have the mental ability to soar high in life. But they had to sacrifice themselves at the altar of their family's wishes. The family wanted them to marry men in order to gain respectability as if their own lives had no intrinsic value.

In view of Iqbal's tragedy I appeal to my *millat* (nation) to be aware of this danger, and before they interfere in the lives of the young people, they must seriously weigh its pros and cons.<sup>19</sup>

Iqbal yearned for personal happiness and longed for self-fulfillment; however, both were to elude him. "To disburden my soul," as he

described it, Iqbal wrote often to Miss Faizee. In a letter of April 9, 1909 he wrote, "As a human being I have a right to happiness; if society or nature [culture] deny that to me I defy both. The only cure is that I should leave this wretched country for ever, or take refuge in liquor, which makes suicide easier. These dead barren leaves of books cannot yield happiness; I have got sufficient fire in my soul to burn them up and all social conventions as well. . . ."40 Why did he not propose to Miss Faizee? In view of their previous attachment in Europe the question is intriguing; however, no definite answer can be given. Only a plausible explanation can be offered.

Because she was an avant-garde female Muslim, Miss Faizee's friendship in Europe was probably very fascinating for Iqbal, but in the more conservative and sedate Muslim cultural milieu of the Punjab she would have been completely out of place. Their different social backgrounds also presented a formidable obstacle. Iqbal was a product of the middle class, aspiring to prominence by virtue of his talents, whereas Miss Faizee belonged to an aristocratic and princely family of Bombay. (She was the first cousin of Sir Akbar Hayderi, who was then the revenue minister of Hyderabad, and her sister was married to Nawab Sayyidi Ahmad Khan.) Such a marriage would have been repugnant to Iqbal's ego.

In 1909 Iqbal's family arranged a second marriage with Sardar Begum, a charming but physically frail young lady belonging to a respectable Kashmiri family from the neighborhood of Mochi Gate in Lahore. (Here sources disagree, some maintaining that the *nikah* [a ceremony solemnizing the contract of marriage, often without the consummation of the marriage, however] was actually performed, others asserting that only the engagement ceremony was celebrated.) It is established, nevertheless, that the bride did not come to the house of the groom. Iqbal had received anonymous letters impugning the character of the young bride. (Actually this was the mischief of a local lawyer, Nabi Bakhsh, who wanted very much to marry his own son to Sardar Begum.) This situation caused no small amount of misery to Iqbal, but it seems that he did not act prudently in handling this matter. Without terminating his formal matrimonial relationship with Sardar Begum, Iqbal married another girl, Mukhtar Begum, the niece of a very wealthy business man of Ludhana. She died in 1924.

A few years after the uncompleted marriage, Sardar Begum wrote

a letter to Iqbal chiding him for his injustice and lack of compassion. "I was married to you, a second marriage is now inconceivable to me," Sardar Begum wrote, adding: "I will remain in my present state til I die, and on the day of Judgment will hold you [responsible for ruining my life]."41 Her statement indicates that the *nikah* ceremony had been performed even though the marriage was not consummated. Iqbal, however, was not sure whether his negative intentions toward Sardar Begum had not constituted a virtual divorce, according to the Hanafi school of law. In order to clarify the status of his marriage in the light of the *Shari'a*, Iqbal sent Mirza Jalāl-ud-Din, a fellow barrister-at-law, to Hakīm Nūr-ud-Din of Qadian, to obtain his views. Hakīm Nur-ud-Din did not think that the undeclared intentions constituted divorce, but advised the performance of a second *nikah* as the best way out. Consequently, Iqbal was married to Sardar Begum for the second time in 1913. She gave Iqbal love, devotion, and peace of mind. However, she died prematurely on May 23, 1935, when she was only thirty-seven years old, and left Iqbal with a son, Javid Iqbal (born in 1924), and a daughter, Munirah (born in 1930). Following in the footsteps of his father, Javid Iqbal obtained his Ph.D. from Cambridge University, and also qualified for the Bar at Lincoln's Inn, London. (Currently, he is a practicing attorney in Lahore, Pakistan.)

## THE LAWYER AND THE POET

WHEN Iqbal came back from Europe in 1908, he started his professional career as an attorney, college professor, and poet—all at once. At length, however, the true poet won out at the expense of the professor and the attorney, but not before years of personal turmoil.

The yoking of the professor to the poet might have worked if Iqbal had been able to teach in a private university or college like Harvard or Amherst. But the position of assistant professor at the Government College in Lahore promised him only a modest monthly income without guaranteeing academic freedom as it was understood at Cambridge and Oxford or Yale and Princeton. In 1909 Aligarh Muslim University offered him a professorship of history, but he declined the invitation. After deciding to resign his temporary teaching position at the college, Iqbal confided (July 17, 1909) to Miss Faizee: "The

Lieutenant-Governor was willing to recommend me to the Secretary of State for India for the vacant Professorship in the Lahore Government College, but I gave up the idea of standing as candidate, much against my personal inclination. Force of circumstances compels me to consider things from [the] financial point of view—a point of view which was revolting to me a few years ago. I have decided to continue the legal profession trusting in God's help."<sup>42</sup>

Iqbal so repeatedly versified the proverb "God helps those who help themselves" that today every schoolboy in Pakistan knows it by heart. Yet he did precious little to help his own law practice, which started in October 1908, and virtually ended in 1934.<sup>43</sup> After ten years of law practice he wrote to his father in 1918: "I have made the determination not to personally benefit from the income derived from the sale of my prose and poetry. Because [poetry] is a God-given talent, involving no physical labor, and it should be exercised in the service of mankind, but I have been compelled by need to act otherwise."<sup>44</sup> According to his friends and associates Iqbal hardly ever earned more than a thousand rupees a month—the income of a moderately successful attorney of the lower courts in today's Pakistan.

Iqbal never really aspired to earn more than he actually needed. Performing the role of an appellate lawyer, he confined his practice to the High Court of Judicature at Lahore. It is estimated that including the house and office rent and the salaries of his clerk and domestic servants, his fixed expenses amounted to approximately seven hundred rupees. He would be quite content when he earned enough to cover his overhead, plus a few hundred extra for incidental expenses. Consequently, any additional cases coming to him after the tenth of each month were refused or referred to other attorneys; and if the client insisted on retaining him he was advised to come before the tenth of the following month.<sup>45</sup>

This self-imposed limitation naturally provided him the leisure which he thought he needed for the cultivation of his friends and his own soul. In the first years of his practice, after appearing before the courts, Iqbal regularly visited his friend Mirza Jalāl-ud-Din. He and his boon companions, including Nawab Zulfiqār Ali Khan, Sir Jogendera Singh, and Sardar Umrao Singh, regularly gathered at Mirza's residence. For their entertainment they arranged private sitar concerts, exchanged witticisms with each other, and then dispersed in the

evening. Iqbal often would stay overnight for more merriment. These scions of Punjabi aristocracy could very well afford this life of leisure, but Iqbal could not; his law practice never gave him the life of comfort and financial security which a man of his intelligence, had he been industrious, could have commanded.

Throughout his life he supplemented his income from the proceeds of his poetical works. He published all of his works himself and then franchised different booksellers, giving them a commission of three annas for a rupee on each copy. In the case of hard cover books the commission was considerably increased, but the bookseller had to assume the responsibility of advertising Iqbal's works.<sup>46</sup> His fame as a poet was also heightened by his recitation of his own poetry at the annual meetings of Anjuman-i-Himāyat-i-Islam (*Shikwah* or *Complaint* in 1911), and the specially called public meetings outside Mochi Gate (*Jawab Shikwah* or *Answer* in 1912), and the Shahi Mosque (*Fatimah binat 'Abdūllah* in 1912) in Lahore. Two years after the publication of *The Secrets of the Self* (1922), an English translation of *Asrār-i Khudī* by Reynold A. Nicholson of Cambridge University, the British government, recognizing his scholarship and poetic talent, knighted him. These were the days of the Khilafat agitation and noncooperation which had temporarily united the Hindus and the Muslims. Now that Iqbal was a Sir he was resented by the Khilafatists. It was probably Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (one of the Khilafat leaders) who satirized the occasion with these caustic verses:

*Lo madressah-i 'ilm hu'a qaser-i hakūmat,  
Afsus kah Alamah say Sir ho gai'ay Iqbal.  
Pahlay to sir-i millat-i baydā kay thay woh tāj,  
Ab awr suno tāj kay Sir ho gai'ay Iqbal.  
Kahtā thā yah kal thandi sarak per kowiy gustākh,  
Sarkar key dahliyz peh Sir ho gai'ay Iqbal.*

Lo and behold! the seat of learning has become the

Government House;

Alas! Iqbal stooped to knighthood from an Alamah [scholar]

Formerly, he was the crown of the Muslim people

Hark another news! Iqbal has become a knight

of the [British] crown,

An impertinent fellow said yesterday on the Mall:

"Iqbal bowed his head low at the threshold of Sarkar

[British government]."<sup>47</sup>

Iqbal devoted his time primarily to his legal practice and cultural activities, but when elections were introduced in the Punjab under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, his friends and admirers prevailed upon him to run. In November 1926 Iqbal contested a seat from a Muslim district of Lahore. Out of the total of 12,000 registered voters, 68 per cent actually voted; Iqbal obtained 5,675, and his opponent, Malik Muhammad Din, received 2,498.<sup>48</sup> True to his sedentary habits, Iqbal had hardly ever ventured to campaign outside of his residence. His popularity had ensured his success. When the result was declared Iqbal's volunteers and campaigners rushed to his home and repeatedly shouted, *Iqbal zindeh bād*, "Long live Iqbal." (For a description of his legislative and political role see Chapter 4.)

In December 1928, Iqbal traveled to South India in order to deliver six lectures on Islam at the request of the Madras Muslim Association. In these addresses Iqbal stated that he was attempting to "reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with due regard to the philosophical tradition of Islam and the more recent development in the domains of human knowledge."<sup>49</sup> Having taken three years to compose these lectures, Iqbal viewed them as indicative of his mature philosophic and rational approach to Islam. He expected that others would follow him in a responsible *ijtihad* (the right of interpreting the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* or of forming a new opinion by applying analogical deduction). Once he told an admirer, Professor Yusuf Salim Chishti: "If this book of mine had appeared during the reign of [the 'Abbasid] Khalifah Ma'mun al-Rashid [813-833], it would have had profound repercussions in the entire intellectual world of Islam."<sup>50</sup> At least for the present age, Iqbal hoped to lay the groundwork for religion and science to "discover hitherto unsuspected mutual harmonies."

#### BRIEF SOJOURNS IN EUROPE

TWENTY-THREE years after he returned from Europe in 1908, Iqbal had another occasion to visit Britain and other continental countries. The opportunity was provided by the second (September 7-December 1, 1931) and the third (November 17-December 24, 1932) London Round Table Conferences. (Iqbal had not been invited to the first conference.) The Round Table Conferences were called by the British government

to consult with Indian leaders on the problems of constitutional reforms for India. (For Iqbal's role in these conferences, see Chapter 4.)

Although he remained in Europe for less than a year, European diplomacy and the political and intellectual trends which engulfed Europe in the bloodbath of the late 1930s left a deep impression on Iqbal's mind. (Most of these impressions are reflected in the verses of *Darb-i Kalim* [The Rod of Moses], first published in July 1936.) During the second conference Iqbal was occupied with the business of the conference and had no significant opportunity to travel in Europe. In the third conference (1932) his participation was minimal. He spent four months traveling in Europe and meeting scholars and political leaders, including Henri Bergson and Louis Massignon of France and Benito Mussolini of Italy.

Accompanied by Sayyid Amjad Ali (later Pakistan's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations) and Sardar Umrao Singh Majithia, Iqbal visited Les Invalides. This visit to Napoleon's tomb brought forth a poetic expression of Iqbal's concept of activism and the role of sustained effort in the rise to power:

The prayers of God's folk treading  
 The battlefield's red sod,  
 Forged in that flame of action  
 Become the voice of God!  
 But only a brief moment  
 Is granted to the brave—  
 One breath or two, whose wage is  
 The long nights of the grave.  
 Then since at last the valley  
 Of silence is our goal,  
 Beneath this vault of heaven  
 Let our deed's echoes roll!<sup>51</sup>

Iqbal's visit with Massignon renewed his admiration for the French orientalist's profound scholarship in Sufism. Massignon had made a significant contribution to the understanding of Mansur Hallaj, a ninth-century Sufi, who was put to death for expounding a mystic view of reality which the contemporary Muslim world had failed to appreciate. (For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Chapter 15.) Rather directly Iqbal expressed the Muslims' grievance that many European

orientalists and historians appeared to study Islam primarily with a view to maligning it. Iqbal asked Massignon whether their prejudice and enmity was decreasing. Massignon pointed out that western scholars had come to adopt a relatively neutral attitude in their treatment of Islamic movements. As a gracious host he also indicated that Europe was indebted to Islam for diffusing certain traits of its civilization into Europe, thus enriching future possibilities of progress in the West.<sup>52</sup>

His visit with Bergson was an intellectual treat for Iqbal. Bergson's dynamic concept of time, in Iqbal's judgment, was close to the view of the Muslim mystics. Iqbal is said to have cited the Prophet Muhammad's Tradition to Bergson, saying: "Do not speak ill of time; God says, I am time." Bergson was pleasantly surprised and repeatedly asked Iqbal if that was an authentic Tradition.<sup>53</sup> (For Iqbal's concept of time, see Chapter II.)

Spain and Italy followed France on Iqbal's itinerary. In Madrid, Miguel Asín Palacios, who had earned a wide reputation for his *La Escatología Musulmana en la Divina Comedia* demonstrated the impact of Islamic legends on Dante, had invited Iqbal to deliver a lecture at the university. Appropriately, Iqbal highlighted the role of medieval Spain in the intellectual development of the Muslim world. However, Spanish traditions had more than intellectual interest for him. Iqbal was emotionally drawn to the culture and history of Spain. The fact that Spain had once been Muslim led Iqbal to call it "the treasure-house of Muslims' blood and the sacred land of Islam." Like a pilgrim he visited medieval Muslim monuments, which inspired three beautiful poems later included in the *Bāl-i Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing). At the mosque of Cordoba (which had been converted into a church in 1236) Iqbal offered a prayer of thanksgiving. When, in the traditional Muslim style, he raised his hands in supplication to Allah, tears rolled down his cheeks. In those intense moments of inspiration he composed *The Mosque of Cordoba*, a splendid poem on the cruelties of time and the immortality of love:

All Art's wonders arise only to vanish once more;  
All things built on this earth sink as if built on sand!  
Inward and outward things, first things and last, must die;  
Things from of old or new-born find their last goal in death;

Yet, in this frame of things, gleams of immortal life  
Show where some servant of God wrought into some high shape  
Work whose perfection is still bright with the splendour of love—  
Love, the well-spring of life; love, on which death has no claim.  
Shrine of Cordoba! from love all your existence is sprung,  
Love that can know no end, stranger to Then-and-Now.<sup>54</sup>

From Spain Iqbal went to Italy and visited with Mussolini. The visit took place before Il Duce's invasion of Ethiopia. The record of their conversation is not available; only a poem entitled *Mussolini* remains, in which Iqbal admired Il Duce's political vitality and the magnetic quality of his bright eyes. Subsequently, ill-informed critics charged that Iqbal was a Muslim Nietzsche propagandizing the worship of power. This criticism was grossly inaccurate because the poems in the *Darb-i Kalim* (first published in July 1936) contained a vigorous indictment not only of Mussolini, but also of the major powers in the League of Nations, which connived at Italian imperialism. (Jan Marek deals with this subject exhaustively in Chapter 7.)

#### A VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

In February 1933 Iqbal was back in Lahore. Seven months later Muhammad Nādir Shah, the King of Afghanistan, invited him along with Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi and Sir Sayyid Ross Mas'ūd to visit Kabul. The Afghan king asked them to advise his government in the establishment of a new university and in utilizing the best of modern western and traditional Islamic values in the reorganization of higher education. By the end of October 1933 Iqbal and his fellow delegates reached Afghanistan and remained there for almost four weeks. Iqbal recorded the impressions of his visit in a Persian poem, *Masafer* (The Traveler). The poem lacks the vitality and freshness of ideas evident in many of his earlier works, but as a record of his travels in Afghanistan it is a useful source of information. In addition to Kabul, Iqbal visited the wilderness of Ghazni, the capital of Sultan Mahmūd's Empire. During the eleventh century the empire of Ghazni had included the province of Lahore, and was one of the most powerful and civilized

states in the medieval world. The ruins of bygone glory filled Iqbal's heart with emotion, and the poet gave vent to his anguish in verse:

*Al-āman az makr-i-ayyām al-āman.*

*Al-āman az suboh-o-shām al-āman.*

Protect us O! Lord from the treachery of time, O! Lord.

Protect us O! Lord from the days and nights, O! Lord.

With tears in his eyes for the decline of the Muslims, Iqbal asked Allah: "Why are you so kind to the British, they have confined mankind to the house of bondage?" Unhesitatingly, the poet answered this rhetorical question. "The Muslim has lost the zest for life and his heart beats no more. He was the *israfil* (the angel of resurrection), but his *saūr* (the trumpet of life) blows no more." Iqbal expressed similar sentiments at the mausoleums of Sultan Mahmūd and Emperor Babūr, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India. When Iqbal had an audience with Nādir Shah he presented the Afghan king with a copy of the Qur'ān, saying: "It is the beacon-light of those who follow the truth."<sup>55</sup>

Not much is known about the educational recommendations of Iqbal and his associates. On October 10, 1933 he issued a statement saying that "an educated Afghanistan will be the best friend of India." He decried secular education for Afghanistan, because the "complete secularization of education has not produced good results anywhere, especially in Muslim lands." Despite Afghanistan's general backwardness and the conservatism of the royal family, Iqbal complimented the Afghan regime in a statement of November 6: "All the ministers are discharging their duties. Even the orthodox party stands solidly behind these workers and consequently there is—as was stated in our presence by a leading Afghan divine—no difference between the *mullas* and the young men in the Afghanistan of today."<sup>56</sup>

Iqbal admired the Afghans, not because their government was progressive, but because they had escaped colonial domination. The fact that it had been the clash of Russian policy and British imperial interests which had allowed Afghanistan to survive as a buffer state was not of much significance to Iqbal. In his judgment the Afghans' love for freedom and their rugged individualism were the decisive factors. Precisely for these reasons, Iqbal's poetry exudes admiration for the Afghans.

## THE LAST FIVE YEARS

AFTER his return from Afghanistan Iqbal's health steadily deteriorated. However, his intellect remained sharp, and during this time he conceived many new projects, including proposed studies on Islamic jurisprudence and *Aids to the Study of Qur'ān*. An interpretive study, *Islam As I Understand It*, was to reconcile modern science and philosophy with Islam. In the style of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Iqbal planned to write *The Book of an Unknown Prophet* discussing metaphysical problems. Iqbal spent considerable mental effort in determining the exact literary style for his bible. None of these studies saw the light of day; political preoccupations and indifferent health made their execution impossible.

One academic project (which was to widely influence the Muslims after the establishment of Pakistan) did materialize. Iqbal wanted to establish an Institute of Advanced Research in the Punjab, where the studies of Muslim scholars of classical Islam and of representatives of contemporary social sciences would be subsidized. These scholars were to have a tenured appointment and freedom from want, enabling them to investigate contemporary political and economic problems from the viewpoint of Islam. Iqbal hoped this would create a revolution in the intellectual climate of Indic Islam. Iqbal wrote to Shaikh Mustafa al-Maraghi, rector of al-Azhar, explaining the nature of the proposed institute and asking him to send an accomplished Egyptian scholar at the institute's expense. Shaikh al-Maraghi promised to help, but nothing came of it.

In 1937 Niyāz Ali Khan, an admirer of Iqbal, and an influential landlord in the district of Gurdaspur, offered Iqbal a vast tract of his agricultural land in Pathankot to build the institute. From Hyderabad-Deccan Iqbal invited a young scholar of thirty-five, Abul 'Alā Maudūdi, to found Adarah Darul Islam in Pathankot on the land donated by Niyāz Ali Khan. Maudūdi transferred himself to Pathankot in 1938 and founded not only his *Jama'āt-i Islami*, but also started to publish *Tarjmān al-Qur'ān*, which became the vehicle of his conservative Islamic and political interpretations. After 1947 Maudūdi moved to Lahore and involved himself in a struggle for power in Pakistan. His critics have charged that Maudūdi has merely used Iqbal's name without the latter's balanced emphasis on modernism.



Although Iqbal's religious and political ideas were gaining wide acceptance and his popularity was at its peak, his personal life became bleak. To Sayyid Nazir Niyazi he wrote on March 27, 1935 that "for more than a year I have done nothing [that is, not practiced law] and the sources of income have dried up." In view of this he requested Niyazi to persuade Hakim 'Abdul Wahab, the famous blind physician of Delhi, to examine his sick wife at Lahore for a moderate fee. On June 1, 1935 in another letter Iqbal confided to Niyazi that "the Nawab of Bhopal has granted me a pension of Rs. 500/- monthly. He helped me out just in time."<sup>57</sup> His wife's health failed to improve, however, (see Chapter 3 by Javid Iqbal) and he himself succumbed to several illnesses in quick succession. He lost his voice and had to decline Oxford University's invitation to deliver the Rhodes lectures in 1935.

Iqbal went to Bhopal for medical treatment three times during 1935-1936. In Bhopal his friend, Sir Sayyid Ross Mas'ud (grandson of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan) was the minister of education. Although Iqbal considerably reduced his travels because of his illnesses, he managed to attend Altaf Husain Hali's centennial celebrations (October 26, 27, 1935) at Panipat. While the Nawab of Bhopal, Hamid Allah Khan, presided over a meeting of the centennial, Iqbal recited his four Persian verses in homage of Hali, the first Muslim nationalist poet of Muslim India. Even though Iqbal, in his last years, was surrounded by admirers whose devotion he cherished, he suffered from a gnawing sense of isolation. When Mas'ud died in July 1937 he composed an elegy which mourns not only the national loss in Mas'ud's death, but also portrays his feeling of loneliness.

With the start of 1938 Iqbal's health sharply deteriorated. Overwhelmed by asthmatic attacks, he steadily grew weaker, but his mind suffered no disability. On April 20, only a few hours before his death, he recited a Persian quatrain to Hasan Akhtar, a young admirer. Probably it had been composed a few months earlier. The quatrain is indicative of his own significance in history:

The departed melody may or may not come,  
The breeze from Hedjaz may or may not come.  
The days of this *Faqir* have come to an end,  
Another wise one may or may not come!

When the news of Iqbal's death was broadcast from the Lahore

Radio Station government offices and private stores were closed as a mark of respect. The leading Muslim citizens of Lahore (including Khalifah Shuja'-ud-Din, Mian Nizam-ud-Din, Mian Amir-ud-Din, and Ghulam Rasul Mehr) successfully sought the permission of the Punjab governor to bury Iqbal on a spot to the left of the steps leading to the Badshahi mosque in Lahore. On the evening of April 21, 1938 Iqbal was lowered into the grave.

The construction of the present mausoleum on the grave was started in 1946, when the Mausoleum Committee accepted the plan of Nawab Zin Yar Jung, a noted Muslim architect of Hyderabad. As a token of its admiration for Iqbal, the government of Afghanistan donated the lapis lazuli marble for the structure. On the front of the mausoleum one of Iqbal's quatrains is inscribed, reflecting the poet's sentiments about the unity of the Indic Muslims:

Neither are we Afghans nor Turks,  
nor yet from the lands of Central Asia  
We belong to the garden, and descend from the same ancestors.  
Forbidden unto us are the distinctions of color or race,  
Yes! we are the harvest of a new spring.