

ADHAN OF THE TRUE BELIEVER:  
ALLAMA MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND  
THE BILALIAN SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Katherine Schimmel

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the Islamic call to prayer, or Adhan, from the standpoint of being the ideal symbolic embodiment of some of the major themes present in the philosophical teachings of Muhammad Iqbal. As such, the idea of the ideal Islamic individual, as expressed both in the Quran and in the earliest days of the faith, is explored and developed along these lines. Key concepts such as Khidr, Khudi, and the poetic or lyrical use of the eagle are highlighted here and are tied in within a wider Islamic philosophical context.

“The dawn which causes the forces of darkness to tremble with fear, is brought forth by the Adhan of a true believer (momin)”<sup>1</sup>

The ritual of Adhan has survived but the Bilalian spirit has departed..., just as philosophy remains bereft of ghazals...<sup>2</sup>

We may ask ourselves, where is that dawn with the ‘clarion sound’, the one in which the great Philosopher-poet from Hind, Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), so yearned for and poetically refers to in his *Zarb-i-Kalim* (The Rod of Moses), a deeply moving philosophical work written at the end of his life? It is an exhaustive foray into what were some of his most powerful themes and is written with a clarity of thought and pen that is astounding in its breadth and depth. For according to Allama Iqbal, the dawn of which he speaks is one like none other, as it is a dawn that causes the forces of darkness to tremble, the mountains ‘to shiver’ with fear...bringing forth an Adhan of the ‘true believer.’ One can only imagine the power behind that Adhan, at a time when: ‘*the white thread from the black thread of the dawn.*’<sup>3</sup> meet and the voice of the Mu’adhdhin incants: ‘*As-salaatu khayrun min al nawm, As-salaatu khayrun min al nawm*’ or: ‘*prayer is better than sleep, prayer is better than sleep*’, ringing forth and waking every living creature in prostration and full remembrance of Him.

And it is in this way that one cannot help but try and imagine that very first Adhan, the Adhan of God’s humble servant, Bilal, which was given before the community of true believers who walked this earth as pilgrims in the earliest days of the faith. And so as the words: ‘Allahu Akbar’ rolled off of his Ethiopian tongue, its Ge’ez tinged sound cloaked in his sonorous voice, it surely must have quaked the soul of absolutely every living thing. And just as there are stories which attest to how the Prophet’s recitation of the Quran was so beautiful in its day that it had the power to pull all believers and non believers alike toward His Divine message, I imagine that Bilal’s own Adhan must have done the same with respect to prayer.

But what is ‘the Adhan of the true believer’ and the dawn to which Allama Iqbal refers, this poet-Philosopher who was no doubt touched by none other than Gabriel’s very own wing<sup>4</sup>? And can we not view ‘the Adhan of the true believer’ from within the brilliant prism of being the complete and perfect embodiment of all his

philosophical ideals? As such, Iqbal's Adhan serves as a massive wake-up call for humanity, a call in which *'The secret of the self is hid, in words "No god but He alone,"* and in which the heavy veil of falsehood is lifted, allowing for a new dawn of consciousness that is guided more by action and by spiritual grace than it is by idle thought. For Iqbal knew that in order for the human being to reach a much higher spiritual state that it would have to go through a constant process of polishing the Self and that the clearest path to this end lies encoded in the *Shabada: 'Ashhadu 'an la ilaha illa Allah'* and in constant prayer, dhikr, remembrance of Him:

The self is just a dull-edged sword, No god but He, the grinding stone...<sup>5</sup>

And so, within this context the daily prayers and the continuous remembrance of Him may be thought of as the spiritual grinding stone which steadfastly separates the wheat from the chaff until the husk of the human soul eventually falls away revealing a near perfect kernel or state within.

When Iqbal speaks of the Adhan, and refers to it as a 'clarion sound' and in metaphorical terms, 'of the light of dawn', we may think of it as being akin to the unveiling of the human spirit as it passes through the various spiritual stages and humanity's desire to find meaning and form in its own more limited existence:

He yearns that self may last' yond Time and Space.

To have a life steadfast is his desire,

He seeks some rules to guide his life entire.

The source, that gloom dispels, spreads light around,

Is worship call at morn with clarion sound.<sup>6</sup>

The word 'clarion', is perhaps an interesting choice of words, even for Iqbal, as traditionally speaking it refers to a shrill medieval brass instrument. But within the Iqbalian universe it makes complete sense, as it is a most apt way to refer to the way in which the sleeping person will be jarred awake, seized by the moment of Truth in this worldly life (al-hayat al-dunya) and brings to mind the well known Hadith qudsi: *'people are asleep and when they die they awaken (al-nas niyam fa-idha matu intabahu)'* Or in the case of the early Morning Prayer, which stands to be the most important prayer of the day.

But perhaps the use of the word 'Clarion' is also a veiled reference to 'The Day of Noise and Clamour' which we find in the Quran:

... Yawma yakunu al-nasu ka-al-farashi al-mabthuthi... (It is) a day whereon men will be like moths scattered about... wa takunu al-jibalu ka-al-AAihni al-manfooshi ... and the mountains will be like carded wool<sup>7</sup>.

Within this context, Iqbal's 'clarion call' is a loud and brassy sound, the ideal instrument with which to shake the believer to his or her core, instilling the fear of the Day of Resurrection and an awareness of one's own temporal place in this world. And within a broader context, does not Iqbal's own voice ring forth as an ideal reminder, a heart wrenching call to human kind to wake up...and join the spiritual chorus of the true believer by not forgetting its Lord?

But we may also wonder, where did, as Iqbal coined the expression, that 'Bilalian spirit' of Islam depart to? For according to him, it is not to be found in the masjids who also '*mourn the loss of true believers*'... those '*noble souls adorned with the attributes and qualities of Hijaz*...' <sup>8</sup> For the masjids, according to Iqbal, appear as living, breathing things capable of knowing the difference between a believer and a non-believer. And this poetic concept - or even device - only reinforces the idea of an entire world in waiting and in which every living and non-living thing is a veritable witness to the long, deep slumber of His human creation.

We are caught as though in a Bilalian time warp when we try and imagine what the early days of Islam were like. And it becomes easy to understand Iqbal's affinity for Rumi, who in a similar vein once said:

The great scholars of the age have gained total knowledge and complete mastery of things that have nothing to do with them. But that which is important and closer to him than anything else, namely his own self, this he does not know.... Wretched humanity! Not knowing his own self, man has come from a high estate and fallen into lowliness!

The idea of going back to the earliest days of Islam for answers, to the time of the Prophet when Islam's first followers were just starting to pray five times a day and where stories abounded on how the Prophet handled this situation or that, is not a new one and is one which has been explored heavily. His prayers have been recorded and recited for their beauty, and much Hadith literature exists on the subject. Allama Iqbal had a deep abiding love for the Prophet and in the following two verses alone one can easily ascertain the full extent of his admiration and awe:

If you owe love and loyalty to Muhammad (S.A.W), I am yours. This whole universe is insignificant-- you will have The Pen and the Tablet to write your destiny yourself, as you wish.<sup>9</sup>

And also in the verse:

Lift yourself to the feet of Muhammad (S.A.W), because he is the faith, the entire faith; if you fail to reach him, the rest is all pagan hood and heathenism.<sup>10</sup>

In the above two sayings that we find the perfect expression of not only complete faith, but also in the idea that the Prophet is the absolute measure, the pristine example, the heart and soul of the religion and the one for whom all should aim to emulate. And this reality was taught by the Prophet's wife 'Aisha and is explained in the Hadith literature; for it is she who once proclaimed that the personality of the Prophet was in fact the Quran. So this idea of unity, of becoming one with the faith, has its roots in both the Quran and in how the Prophet lived his life but also in how this perfect example of his was reported in the Hadith literature.

Little commentary however, exists on the concept of the Adhan in Iqbal's thought and this is certainly true when thinking of its central importance for the individual and within the wider context of the Islamic faith. In my field research on the Adhan which focused on its impact on the individual living in Cairo, Egypt, this reality became all too well known. The Adhan has enormous transformative qualities, and in some way affects every, living thing. But with respect to Iqbal, we find what Annemarie Schimmel terms as the spiritualization of the Adhan; "*Iqbal has spiritualized the Adhan in the same way as he has transformed most of the Islamic symbols*". And it is easy to be reminded of Rumi here, whom one can easily imagine expressing himself in the same way that Iqbal does:

You find yourself the time to your  
standing in prayer:

There is no Adhan for the ritual prayer of love and intoxication<sup>11</sup>

But it is in the sentiment below that we find the perfect expression of what can only be Iqbal's utter frustration and despair at the human condition as he looks to Bilal – who is almost interchangeable with Iqbal's concept of the eagle here - and the mosques once again as this idea of mosques that mourn the presence of the noble, true believer is presented:

Lifeless hangs the call to prayer, with no Bilal to lend it wings,  
Silenced is the voice of worship,  
the deserted mosques lament<sup>12</sup>

And so, in the context of examining the heart of Islam, we will recall the Islamic oral call to prayer, or Adhan, a word with its Arabic etymological roots in the word to 'hear' to 'listen', and one which is forever historically tied to Bilal, who gave that very first call to prayer. The Adhan may be viewed as a pristine embodiment of the major tenants of the faith, a brilliant lighthouse for the pilgrims of this earth, illuminating the vast gateway to prayer and to the rewards in the hereafter associated with the continuous remembrance of Him:

la hawla wa la quwata illa billah... la hawla wa la quwata illa billah... la hawla wa la quwata illa billah

We will at the same time recall the essence of the Islamic spirit, captured so compellingly by one of the earliest followers of Islam, a freed Ethiopian slave who was born in sixth century Mecca and who was known simply by the name of Bilal, or Bilal ibn Rabah al-Habashi, but sometimes too as: Bilal ibn Riyah, Ibn Rabah, or Bilal al-Habashi. We will recall his spirit, the early days of Islam and the Divine Message that was sent down to its Prophet.

More than a thousand years separate Allama Iqbal and Bilal, this Indian poet-philosopher who once inhabited an Urdu shore and appears in an entirely different contextual setting than Islam's first Mu'adhdhin. However, they are forever tied together. Bilal, with his beautiful spirit and relationship to the Prophet provides the template from which humankind can learn from by example; while Iqbal is a great call to humankind to return to a higher state of being, to rekindle the true spirit of Islam and to be awakened from what he considered to be a deadly earthly slumber. And as such, his message may be viewed as an Adhan to return to the Islam of Bilal and the one for which the Prophet Muhammad so inspired in the hearts of the people.

Ascension means to gauge a Muslim's heart, the Pleiades are the target of his dart.<sup>13</sup>

The luminous personality of Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of Allah and the man for whom an ideal role model springs forth...the al *Insan al-Kamil* of which the Quran speaks, was a spiritual being with the highest level of Iman imaginable...a Vicegerent, Pole (Qutb), Reality of Realities, the Messenger of Allah, the one who engenders hope for all of humanity and provides a template for a far more evolved state of being. And it is the example he set while here on this earth that provided much inspiration for Iqbal, who once wrote, "...*He slept on a mat of rushes...*" And: "...*At prayer time, tears fell like drops of rain from his eyes.*"

For he is the one whom the angel Jib'reel mysteriously appeared before, asking him about the meaning of Ihsan, to which the Messenger of Allah replied:

...It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you.<sup>14</sup>

### **Khudi, Khidr and the Path of Knowledge**

And the bright moon lays her head on the knees of Night... Ah, is there no moth worthy of me? <sup>15</sup>

A core belief in Allama Iqbal's philosophy is that of the idea of the 'higher self' or 'khudi.' This idea that the human soul or 'rooh',

the divine spark of which the Quran speaks and the one which he asserts needs to go through many stages of development and enlightenment before reaching its truest, highest possible elemental form, forms the cornerstone of his philosophy and is spelled out in breathtaking detail in his first published work, the *Asrar al-Khudi* (1915). In the end of that work however, we are left with the feeling that the soul who reaches the highest state of Khudi is that which is destined to be most alone in this world. And in this poem we catch glimpses into the heart and soul of the man himself, for whom I am convinced was not unlike the candle of which he writes. And so the words laid out in: 'Invocation', the last section of the *Asrar al-Khudi*, rise up and off the page as though a dialogue, a desperate call to the One, and may in fact be viewed as a type of lament which alternates between several deep emotional states as it and cycles in and out of moments in which he begs for companionship along his solitary path and between moments of profound questioning that can only accompany such a state:

Take back what Thou hast put in my breast,  
Remove the stabbing radiance from my mirror...

In the next breath we find him begging for a 'confident.' Or:  
...one old comrade to be the mirror of mine all-burning love!" 'How long shall I wait for one to share my grief?

A question he so emphatically asks. But perhaps most revealing of the extent of his solitary state is his admission: '*in the midst of company I am alone*' and in his heartbreaking plea for spiritual companionship which may be likened to that of the state of the candle who patiently waits for a moth that never comes:

It is not easy for the candle to throb alone;  
Ah, is there no moth worthy of me?  
How long shall I wait for one to share my grief?  
How long must I search for a confidant?  
O Thou whose face lends light to the moon and the stars,  
Withdraw Thy fire from the soul!  
Take back what Thou hast put in my breast,  
Remove the stabbing radiance from my mirror,  
Or give me one old comrade  
To be the mirror of mine all-burning love!  
In the sea wave tosses side by side with wave:  
Each hath a partner in its emotion.  
In heaven star consorts with star,  
And the bright moon lays her head on the knees of Night.  
Morning touches Night's dark side,  
And To-day throws itself against Tomorrow.  
One river loses its being in another,  
A waft of air dies in perfume.



There is dancing in every nook of the wilderness.  
Madman dances with madman.  
Because in thine essence Thou art single,  
Thou hast evolved for Thyself a, whole world,  
I am as the tulip of the field,  
In the midst of a company I am alone.  
I beg of Thy grace a sympathizing friend,  
And adept in the mysteries of my nature,  
A friend endowed with madness and wisdom,  
One that knoweth not the phantom of vain things,  
That I may confide my lament to his soul  
And see again my face in his heart.  
His image I will mould of mine own clay,  
I will be to him both idol and worshipper.<sup>16</sup>

In an excerpted poem written by Annemarie Schimmel, called 'Khidr's Complaint', we find the same sense of profound longing and loneliness, only here it is expressed by the saintly immortal guide Khidr, who drank from the Water of Life in darkness and now has the eternal fate of accompanying the Wayfarer in his or her quest for God. For Khidr, his immortality has become torturous in its infiniteness, and whatever relief he finds can only provide temporary solace as eventually even: *'The narcissus fades, and the rose petals drop like blood.'* And he is left endlessly wandering the desert of this earth over and over again, seeking relief in the occasional mortal bloom which seems to wither and turn to dust before his very own eyes.

In this poem, Schimmel paints for us the true image of the eternal wayfarer, the poor Faqir who with parched lips and red rimmed wet eyes sets about in a profound longing that time can never heal unless a glimpse of Him is finally caught:

You envy me  
But can you imagine what it means, not to die?  
Can you imagine, O men,  
How terrifying the valley was, and how dark  
Where I tasted the bitter Water of Life  
Unwillingly,  
Unwittingly?  
You envy me.  
But I roam, with parched lips and wet eyes  
Day after day, year after year  
In the purple shades of thirsty deserts,  
In the turquoise waves of pulsating seas  
Seeking  
Behind shifting dunes the origins of the sand,  
Behind restless waves the origins of the sea.  
Unending quest...  
Sometimes I find a garden, a meadow, a tree:

Rose-faces, narcissus-eyes, jasmine-breasts,  
And I forget my pain  
As long as a swallow's flight.  
But the jasmine withers,  
The narcissus fades,  
And the rose petals drop like blood...<sup>17</sup>

But in the earlier writings of Iqbal we find a yearning for that which Khidr so 'unwillingly', 'unwittingly' has. As here (in sharp contrast to the sentiment expressed in 'Invocation'), he begs for the eternal agony that only everlasting pain can bring:

...Grant me the bliss of eternal life, O Lord,  
And mine will be the ecstasy of eternal love.  
Give me the pleasure of an everlasting pain  
An agony that lacerates my soul for ever<sup>18</sup>

This duality of thought occurs in fact in many of his writings and may be viewed, at least in part, as profound commentaries on certain states in which the poet-philosopher invites the reader to understand in the fullest degree. And it is not impossible that Iqbal himself, vacillated at one time or another in his own heart based upon his level of spiritual progress at the time or based upon what response he wanted to incite in his reader.

But what is 'Khudi' and just where does it take the spark of the human soul once it has been ignited? The answer to that question lies within us. For sometimes that which we are searching for is with us all along, if we only but choose to see. It may appear mysteriously at first. As though a veiled guide or companion to our higher selves, an Iman of being that rises up at long last from deep inside our core, endowing us with the higher qualities we so need to move forward in our long spiritual journey while inhabiting this earth. "*Be in this world as though a wayfarer,*" advises the Prophet of Islam to the young Uthman Ibn Affan. Because it is in this way that the spark of our spirit is best able to serve as catalyst and to evolve more completely, reaching its fullest potential, the highest Ikhlas of spiritual being. And for some even, to reach the blessed, rare state of wali (pl. awliya). For it moves with us, to us and through us, lending further insight into the 'Momin' or true believer, the *al-muslim al-sadiq al-salib*, or the one who has been spiritually stirred to the point of being awakened within. It is that which is guided along the straight path of Islam, the *Ihidina al-Siratal mustaqim*<sup>19</sup> 'as spelled out clearly in the Surah al-Fatiha, the opening verse of the Quran. It is 'the Adhan of the true believer', the very one who in the end is consumed by the Light to which he or she is inextricably drawn, setting their ashes aflame' and their essence aglow:

I am but as the spark that gleams for a moment,

His burning candle consumed me - the moth;  
His wine overwhelmed my goblet,  
The master of Rum transmuted my earth to gold  
And set my ashes aflame.

And it is a pure place, one in which the earthly moth of being is finally pulled toward a most Brilliant and eternal Light. A flame that is lit from an 'olive neither of the east nor the west'<sup>20</sup> 'and from a wick that can never burn dry. It appears in his very well-known poem: *'Lab pe aati hai dua'*, (A Child's Prayer), as a longing for the Divine whilst ones goal in life is to be as though a candle:

My longing comes to my lips as supplication of mine O God!  
May like the candle be the life of mine! May the world's darkness disappear through the life of mine!  
May every place light up with the sparkling light of mine!

For its blessed '*oil is well high luminous*,'<sup>21</sup> its *Light upon Light*<sup>22</sup> scatters starry beams of Truth across the midnight sky. And its signs circumambulate the whole of the universe, appearing only to those who unlock their hearts and vision to at long last see it for what it is: faithful little signs of His Existence, of our state and of our fate.

...Then I was brought into the Garden and in it were strings of pearls and its earth was made of musk.<sup>23</sup>

### **Humanity and the 'Alam al-Quran'**

'Say: Allah is One:  
All things depend on Him;  
He begetteth not, and He is not begotten;  
And there is none like unto Him'<sup>24</sup>.

It was Allama Muhammad Iqbal who once coined the expression, 'The 'alam al-Quran' or 'World of the Quran.' And it was a world in which he felt was so vast that each and every time one would pick up this blessed book of God's words to humanity, many new layers of meaning would emerge before the true believer and glistening as though pristine rubies and pearls of thought. For the Sufis and the true believer, the ideal goal was always to reach the stage in which their character becomes one with the Quran itself:

To be fully human is to actualize the divine form. In order to achieve this, Sufis follow the Sunna of the Prophet and seek to embody the Koran. They want the Koran to be their character, just as it was the Prophet's character.<sup>25</sup>

For in the pristine verses of the Holy Quran, we are reminded time and again, that there exists a vast ocean of His signs which lay spread out before us like a heavenly banquet on the earthly shore of life. Yet we are reminded that these signs lie completely hidden to the ones devoid of 'insight', whose inner and outer eyes, the Quran

warns us, refuse ‘to see’, despite being alerted to their presence here on this earth:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for all those endowed with insight.<sup>26</sup>

The above Quranic verse is remarkable on several accounts. Here humankind is clearly given the message that the world is full of His signs, the all-encompassing evidence of His existence in the whole of the universe and beyond all that we can possibly imagine. One can think of it as the beyond the beyond ad infinitum, into every dimension and direction but beyond all confines of all dimensions and that which has neither beginning nor ending.

But the above verse is also very important because it is also a verse which was particularly loved by the Prophet, whom it was said, spent the entire evening crying when he first heard those words.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps this is because His signs were spelled out so clearly before him, accompanying him in his day to day life and the validation of this fact seemed comforting to him. Or perhaps it was because he was aware that so few others witnessed such signs for themselves, giving full realization to his unique role in this world. For one must take the time to uncover the meaning within the meaning. The Quran asks humanity to approach the task with an open, unlocked heart and mind:

Do they not, then, earnestly seek to understand the Quran, or are their hearts locked up by them?<sup>28</sup>

And in this one small example, the idea is clearly presented to the reader as a question that needs answering, the idea that it is the human being who locks up his or her own heart and is thus responsible for its liberation, and that the key to understanding can only be through repetitive earnest intent.

We have sent down this Quran so that ye might see

In the above two Quranic references, we can also draw inferences to the work of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, whose central message of action and Khudi only underscores this point. And perhaps led him to say: “*Taa Khilafat kee bina duniya main ho phir ustawaar, Laa kabein say dhoond kar aslaaf ka qalb-o-jigar.*” (In order to strengthen or vitalize the cause of (the restoration of) the Caliphate in this world, It is imperative that we locate and rebuild the heart and liver).

But the believer should take heart, because according to the Quran, God helps those who first try to help themselves. Even though, the Prophet makes it clear to us that the world of the unseen is God’s exclusive domain and His alone: *Utiytu mafatihun kulli shay’in illa al-khams.* “I have received the keys to everything (unseen) except

the Five (which Allah alone knows).<sup>29</sup> “And with this Hadith we are reminded once again of: “the Five Things” which appear in Surah Luqman<sup>30</sup> and which are:

- Knowledge of what is in the wombs
- Knowledge of when the Hour will rise
- Knowledge of what one will gain tomorrow
- Knowledge of the land in which one will die
- Knowledge of the time Allah will send rain

But with respect to the heart, there is also the well known story, of how two strange men appeared one day before the Prophet when he was quite young and took out his heart from his chest to remove the black spots from it before placing it back in his chest cavity and mysteriously disappearing. The imagery conveyed in this story has therefore appeared in one form or another in poetry, the idea of human beings having black spots upon their hearts and souls and that a fine ‘polishing’ of the heart is needed to rid it of all its uncleanness and sin. And so Sir Iqbal is no exception to this and even likens his own physical dust as to that of something that has the potential to turn into a heart again. Therefore, if we are to understand him correctly, he is likening the sum total of his physical self to being encapsulated within that of a single beating heart:

If my scattered dust turns into a heart again,  
It may pulsate again with the passions of the past.  
If the nymphs of paradise entice me to sing,  
The Fire within my heart will again warm their spirits.

And he certainly drew heavily in his imagery from Maulana Jalalludin Rumi, who was his running stream, his ‘Zinda Rud’ the one who yearned to flow into this vast ocean of the Quran, and whom had a large number of verses focused on this theme. And the blessed Prophet of Islam who is reported to have said:

‘I have been ordered to speak with people according to what their hearts can contain’

and also: ‘Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.’<sup>31</sup>

And it provides a further example of this concept or idea, that all thoughts and deeds are contained within the heart of the human being.

We also learn, that having a heart which is locked up is not nearly as bad as having a heart in which there is a ‘seal’ placed upon it. For the sealed heart cannot ever be changed whereas the locked heart still has a chance of being rid of at least some of its black spots, of being polished through earnest intent and spiritual advancement

until the lock falls away and the believer is, in whole or in part, freed of his or her past sins.

In *'The Rod of Moses'*, Iqbal refers to himself as one, who although devoid of material skills, can nonetheless see with 'every vein of thought:

Iqbal devoid of skill and craft though be,  
Through every vein of thought can fully see.<sup>32</sup>

One should perhaps not forget that it is the veins that carry vital blood towards the pulsating heart and that the heart is on some level interchangeable in poetry and philosophical thought with the notion of the soul. And the idea that the pure intellect is a most lofty goal may be found in both the Quran and Hadith:

All the worshippers taken together cannot reach that height of excellence in their devotion to God as the man of pure, unsullied intellect does." (Hadith)

Yet, as Rumi was fond of saying, one does not want to be as though 'a donkey carrying books' or the human being who goes through all of life blindly, displaying the outward motions without having harnessed or developed the inner because his eyes are devoid of insight and because he sees with *taqlid* or dogmatic imitation, not through *tahqiq*, or direct experience.<sup>33</sup> And so it is the direct experience that allows the human being to understand more fully the subtle shadings and intricacies of the self, the faith and even be able to grasp just some of the inner workings of the universe.

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your tongues and your tongues and your colours.<sup>34</sup>

The Quran further lets us know that human beings, with all their cultural variety, lack the intellect or *aql* to grasp the full reality of His Reality or that which lies beyond the twin poles of their own more ephemeral existence which is by degree to one another and limited in its nature. This state of humankind is not a problem in itself, but only becomes a problem when what one does not grasp becomes the truth from which they operate:

They deny what their knowledge does not encompass.<sup>35</sup>

This very significant line in the Quran is a statement in support of the human being keeping his or her mind wide open and not closed off to other, greater, far larger possibilities. Allama Iqbal addresses this idea over and over again in various poems and in his philosophical writings and is the one who after all said: "Intellect leads a man from God astray.<sup>36</sup> 'But here it is beautifully expressed in this poem, in which he refers to the inability of the jurists to help themselves, thus focusing on changing everything around them to suit their own very limited and narrow world view:

Alas! The state of bondage deprives of zest,

Slaves tread 'the beaten path and relinquish quest.  
The jurists are helpless to such extent  
Can't change themselves, but would change Koran's content.  
How sad, the jurists can't shift their outlook,  
But would prefer to change the Holy Book  
These abject slaves opine and cling to creed  
That Holy Book is full of flaws indeed.  
They think it incomplete for this fact  
Because it fails to teach the slavish tact.

But here on earth, there exist small reminders which stand as fertile testament to our own smallness in the vast scope of things and to our own vulnerability which is as fragile as a plucked jasmine bloom under the relentless heat of the desert sun:

"Each and every part of the world is a snare for the fool and a means of deliverance for the wise." (Rumi)

Allama Iqbal also lets us know in his *Javidnamah*, that the '*alam al Quran*' has infinite layers of meaning that lie in wait for those who have the insight and will to open it over and over again. Can we not then view the 'Adhan of the True believer', as being the inner Adhan that pulls the believer toward His Word, His Light, His Signs, over and over again while each time an entire universe of Divine meaning is unveiled before them as though completely new, for those who believed in the unseen and heeded this most sacred inner call. As Annemarie Schimmel stated:

... reading and reciting the Koran is a dialogue with God, the true speaker of the Word, the possibilities of understanding are as infinite as is God Himself, and He and His word may appear to the reader in a new way, understanding every time.<sup>37</sup>

Within the bold ink that forms its classical Arabic letters, whose curves, whose Sukoon's and Tanwin's and letters of Mudd (the Fatha, Qasra and Dhamma), dried upon the velum pages that comprise the leather bound words of the Quran and encode the secrets to human existence, to God, the universe and to life itself. They rest solemnly, patiently even. Its message is spelled out clearly and lies imbedded within its 1400 year old text. And the words:

*Qul: law kana albabru midadan likalimati rabbee lanafida albabru qabla an tanfada kalimatu rabbee walaw ji/na bimitlibi madadan*

Say: "If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid." underscore this point beautifully.

But as the Quran lets us know, humankind has the possibility of understanding that which it needs to know. For within its Surahs' and His ninety-nine names lay a blueprint for human understanding, and as Iqbal pointed out when speaking of humankind: "*He seeks*

*some rules to guide his life entire.*' As such, the Quran is the perfect embodiment of such guiding rules, making the faith a roadmap for humankind to understand God's presence in this world and so was revealed in such a way as to make His message attainable to all of humanity. Mentioned in at least four places in the Quran we have the verse:

And We have indeed made the Quran easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?<sup>38</sup>

Likewise the qualities of Iman, the strength in a Muslims belief or faith, serve as spiritual companions to Islam's five Pillars (belief in One God, belief in Muhammad as His Messenger, Prayer, Fasting, Alms giving or Zakat) and are related as six articles of faith and are explained by the Prophet (pbuh) to the Angel Jibreel as follows:

1. Allah is One God
2. His angels
3. His books (The four holy books)
4. His messengers
5. The Last Day (The Day of Judgment) and the Akhirah or afterlife
6. Qadr (Fate); The good and the evil in it.

But a strong Iman requires more than just a ritualized belief in the above. It also requires an unwavering belief in the invisible or the unseen. And this is where true faith comes into play. Which brings us to the topic of prayer in which the ritualized daily form, the outer genefluxion or movement of the body which is always facing the direction of the *qibla*, thus becomes its own kind of prayer, leading the way to the inner spiritual movement for those who are steadfast and earnest in their efforts or 'intention' (niyah).

### **Bilal and the Adhan as a Sacred Dialogue**

If there were anything good in imitation, the Prophet would have taken the ancestors' path.<sup>39</sup>

We may by extension, apply the above sentiment made by Allama Muhammad Iqbal to the Adhan, which is a completely unique phenomenon within the Islamic world.<sup>40</sup> The Adhan, or Islamic call to prayer, may be viewed as just one of His many Ayah's or signs here on this earth as it is first and foremost, a divinely inspired oral call to prayer, a timely summons that was given to the world in the form of an ageless gift. An oral call to remember Him by, He who created both the heavens and the earth, the 'Master of the Universe and the Day of Judgment.'<sup>41</sup> As such it is a fluid sonic reminder of the infinite passage of time and may be thought of as something sacramental to recite as its words are cloaked in the remembrance of the Divine, delivered to the people by God's humble Khalifa, Bilal,



in the earliest days of the Islamic faith. It is in this way that the Adhan carries with it enormous transformative potential as it is the quintessential affirmation of both faith and time...a sonorous reminder of humankind's temporal place in this universe, and the supremacy of Allah's word over that of His entire Creation's. It is a daily reminder to all believers' that this world too will end. And in that end, to Him we shall return:

We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return (of all)<sup>42</sup>

It is a privilege to hear the Adhan, not only because it is first and foremost a divinely inspired call to prayer which can teach us so much about a new religion and its community of early followers, but also because the Adhan is as much about survival as it is about adaptation. It is about a faith that spread over an enormous expanse of land in a relatively short period of time, over vast changing cultural, physical and spiritual landscapes, and in Muhammad's (pbuh) day at least, was won more by the heart than by the sword. For did not Muhammad say: "*The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr?*" In this sense, the Adhan is a survivor, a fluid, dynamic force, a living, breathing relic to an era we can no longer be a part of... a quintessential mantle from which we can peer into the folds of a very old oral tradition, getting to the kernel of its essence, almost fifteen hundred years later.

But the Adhan, I believe, may be also viewed as a type of dialogue between God and humankind, similar to the way in which the Surah al-Fatiha is or in the Quran itself in which there are many examples of this. In the well known Quranic line: '*alastu bi rabbikum?*' 'am I not your Lord?', humankind responds: '*Bella Shahidna!*' or 'Yes we witness it!' and in the second to last verse of Surah al-Baqara we have further evidence of such a dialogue:

The Apostle believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."

Within this context, the words 'Allahu Akbar!' for instance, take on an even more significant meaning as we may view this phrase as a direct instruction or summons from God to humankind to further acknowledge His Greatness through submission and prayer.

While at the same time, mankind affirms His Greatness in the following phrase: '*ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah*' or "I swear there is no god but God." And in the phrase '*Asshadu anna Muhammadan rasulu Allah*' or: 'I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' In

this way, the Adhan may in fact be broken down into those phrases which are indicative of God addressing humanity or of humanity responding to God, and therefore seem reflective of type of dialogue with Him. The chart below outlines the format of the Sunni Adhan as well as underscores this point:

Recital	Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
4x	الله أكبر	<u>Allahu Akbar</u>	God is Great! ( <i>God addresses humanity</i> )
2x	أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله	<u>Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah</u>	I testify that there is no deity except God ( <i>Affirmation: Humanity responds to God</i> )
2x	أشهد أن محمدًا رسول الله	Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasulu Allah	I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God ( <i>Affirmation: Humanity responds to God</i> )
2x	حي على الصلاة	Hayya ‘ala as- salat	Make haste towards the prayer ( <i>God addresses humanity</i> )
2x	حي على الفلاح	Hayya ‘ala al- <u>falah</u>	Make haste towards success (reward) ( <i>God addressese humanity</i> )
2x	الصلاة خير من النوم	Al-salatu khayrun min an- nawm	Prayer is better than sleep ( <i>God addresses humanity</i> )
2x	الله أكبر	Allahu Akbar	God is Great
1x	لا اله الا الله	La ilaha illa Allah	There is no deity except for God

And the Shi’a Adhan, which differs from the Sunni Adhan by the addition of a few phrases, may nonetheless also be viewed as a dialogue with God and an affirmation of the status of Ali in the faith as well:

For Allama Iqbal, understanding - with complete knowledge - the perfect Oneness of God was absolutely necessary for the evolution of the human soul, if indeed it wanted to move through the various states toward Him:

We are travellers; give us resignation as our goal!

Give us the strong faith of Abraham!

Make us know the meaning of There is no God (but He).

Allama Iqbal knew that for the human being to be able to know the meaning of ‘no god but He’, one would have to arrive at this knowledge through experience and one such way is through continuous remembrance of Him as can be experienced through the

strict observation of the five daily prayers. Prayers which should not be followed in only a mechanical way, but should involve every hair, pore and cell of the believer who should prostrate himself to the degree by which he or she is utterly, irreversibly compelled to feel some connection to the Divine during the process. To ‘wake up’ and ‘make us know the meaning’ as Allama Iqbal would say, for he believed that the Muslim community had slipped into a precipice of blind ritual and in the process, had lost all of the meaning.

In Allama Iqbal’s ‘Travellers’, we find a similarity to the Prophet’s advice: *‘Be as though a wayfarer in this World’* but perhaps it appears more profoundly in the words Allama Iqbal penned in his *Javid Namah* in which he said: *“Live in the world like an eagle, and like an eagle die.”*<sup>43</sup> For it is here where we can best ascertain that the evolved self should understand that the material world with all its many temptations, will never be that for which it yearns and that this non attachment to it, is in fact an implicit acknowledgement of it being only a temporary stop along the way to a far Greater Reality in the endless caravan of life toward Him. For the real world or life, within this context, is the next life, the one which the soul will flee to upon leaving its present theatre of existence.

But the Adhan stands to be as much practical as it is inspirational. It offers quite literally, a sound solution to calling the newly formed Islamic community to prayer on a regular basis without drawing from other traditions and with strict rules that govern its delivery, hence the line: *“...Oh God, guide the imam and forgive the mu’adhdhin”*<sup>44</sup>.

At the same time, the Adhan has been reported as having qualities which give it the ability to reach into the heart of both the believer and the non-believer, making a ‘momin’ out of the non-believer as even the non-believer will be grasped by the ‘forelock’ or ‘nasiyah’ as it were and pulled as though by a magnet toward the lofty pillar of prayer, cleansing the soul of at least some of its blackness.

But just what is the true Momin? According to Allama Iqbal, it is an internal war, a jihad that is fought with the blade of spiritual sword, a blade which is sharpened by the ritual prayer and which is in ‘the tradition of the Prophet’ while at the same time being: ‘A migration towards the Beloved.

The last affirmation of Gods greatness on the battle-field!

The wars of the kings are but loot and destruction

The war of the Mumin is the tradition of the Prophet!

What is the Mumin’s war? A migration towards the Beloved!

But from whence does the Adhan come? In the days leading up to the first Adhan, the Muslim community needed a way to best to call everyone to prayer that differed from that of the Jewish,

Christian and other traditions. Should we use a bell some wondered? Or perhaps light a great Fire... or blow a 'trumpet-like horn? And from Ibn Umar we learn that:

When the Muslims arrived at Medina, they used to assemble for the prayer, and used to guess the time for it. During those days, the practice of Adhan for the prayers had not been introduced yet. Once they discussed this problem regarding the call for prayer. Some people suggested the use of a bell like the Christians, others proposed a trumpet like the horn used by the Jews, but 'Umar was the first to suggest that a man should call (the people) for the prayer; so Allah's Apostle ordered Bilal to get up and pronounce the Adhan for prayers.

The Adhan is referred to in no less than 122 times in 82 Hadiths of al-Bukhari, 60 times in 42 Hadiths of the Sahih Muslim, 15 times in 12 Hadiths of Sunan Abudawud and 30 times in 17 Hadiths of Malek's Muwatta, making the Hadith of al-Bukhari the most comprehensive Hadith source for information on the Adhan.

It is a pristine embodiment of the major tenants of the faith because its text has remained unchanged and in metaphorical terms, can be viewed as a brilliant lighthouse for the pilgrims of this earth, illuminating the vast gateway to prayer and to the rewards associated with the continuous remembrance of Him:

la hawla wa la quwata illa billah

And are not the lighthouses (Manara) of this world, not unlike the minarets (Manara)<sup>45</sup> from the tops of which the Mu'adhhdhin gives the Adhan which pulls the community away from the perils of this material world and toward the illuminating presence of prayer? For just as the lighthouse guides the weary ship away from the sharp reef or shi'b, illuminating the way safely to the shore, prayer delivers the true believer safely to the shore of His Absolute Divine Mercy.

Perhaps it was the fact that Bilal's voice - which has been reported in various Hadith accounts as being absolutely the most beautiful voice among all the Sahaba's - or maybe it can be attributed to the close relationship he shared with the Prophet or some combination of the two that led to his being selected to lead the Islamic community in prayer. But it was Bilal in the end who had the honor of being chosen by the Prophet to stand up and recite the very first Adhan before the nascent community of believers and it is the words of that first Adhan and the character of the man who gave it on that historic day that we remember here.

According to the available Hadith literature, a picture soon emerges of a man who was humble, kind, and quiet, and yet possessed a spirit as strong as molten iron. Born sometime between 578 and 582, Bilal is one who quickly captured the heart and attention of the Prophet (pbuh) and soon became a Sahaba, residing

in his inner circle of devoted friends and followers. Traditionally, Bilal is viewed in Islam as having a highly exalted status, (due to this close relationship with the Prophet), and to being chosen to give the first Adhan, making him the very first Mu'adhhdhin. But he is also often cited as being an example of the innately pluralistic nature of Islam. And this is easy to understand when one considers his history as a slave and his subsequent liberation under Muhammad (pbuh).

There are many stories which attest to the character of Bilal. His humble, quiet nature... his devotion to Islam while under the harsh control of his slave master Uthman, and his obvious ability to transcend even the most difficult of situations and where one can only recall the reassuring Quranic verse:

So verily with every difficulty there is relief: Verily with every difficulty there is relief.<sup>46</sup>

While humanity's relief came in the form as the gift of the Prophet to this world, Bilal's immediate relief came in the form of the Prophet acting through Abu Bakr. In one small story we learn for instance, that Uthman would take pleasure in torturing Bilal in the harsh heat of the desert sun. Which one of us can imagine what hours and hours of the intense rays of the sun would feel like under these circumstances? For they were rays which pierced the skin and turned it to leather like flesh being rotated on a spit. Or what a lack of water will do to the body and the mind under such circumstances? Bilal was made to lie face down for hours in the sand with heavy rocks piled atop his back, only to be flipped over later, only this time to be made to lie on his back with the merciless rays of the sun literally cooking his skin to such a degree that it is hard to imagine how he survived at all.

Bilal has been described as being of Ethiopian descent, being slightly stooped over and bearing a small hump in his back. It has further been reported that it wasn't long before the Prophet had heard of this new believer in Islam and of his great suffering. When relief finally came in the form of Abu Bakr, it was the Prophet who sent him to free Bilal. The story of the emancipation of Bilal, is just one example of how the Prophet surrounded himself with people of the highest caliber, the highest Iman. Here we learn for instance, that Abu Bakr had a sharp wit and tongue as is the time he set forth to purchase Bilal from his owner. It is clear from the reported exchange between the two men, the seller and the buyer, that Uthman is willing to let Bilal go for almost nothing, a mere ounce of gold, whereas Abu Bakr is willing to pay a high amount of gold as he knows Bilal's value which of course can only truly be measured in spiritual terms:

I would have sold him to you even if you had offered me but an ounce of gold. Abu Bakr answered: I would have bought him even if you had asked a hundred ounces.

As time progresses and the Muslim community expands and begins to take shape, Bilal ends up spending more and more time with the Prophet, becoming a close Sahaba of his, and accompanying him on various excursions in and around Mecca and Medina. Dozens of stories abound where Bilal and the Prophet will be travelling together on some journey and Bilal will be asked to give the Adhan while in transit. And many of these stories form the basis for our current day knowledge of where and how the Adhan should be given. One such colorful story exists in which the two are travelling together with a group of believers when they are finally able to stop and rest for the night. Clearly exhausted, they all scatter to the ground to get some rest and refreshment from the day's long journey. But as the sun begins to set, and the believers start to quickly drop off into sleep one by one, the Prophet (who must be tired too) can only think of prayer and asks Bilal to give the call. Whereupon, Bilal, who is obviously quite tired himself, falls into a deep sleep before being able to do so.

So when the first threads of light meet with the last threads of darkness and make their illuminating show across the once starry sky, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) tries yet again to rally the sleeping congregation to prayer. But he is not without his own humor and patience. As this time he asks Bilal if now he might finally do what he was supposed to do the night before. It is with these words, that Bilal leaps up to finally give that which he missed before and the call to prayer fills the early morning air once more:

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Abi Qatada: My father said, One night we were traveling with the Prophet and some people said, 'We wish that Allah's Apostle would take a rest along with us during the last hours of the night.' He said, 'I am afraid that you will sleep and miss the (Fajr) prayer.' Bilal said, 'I will make you get up.' So all slept and Bilal rested his back against his Rahila and he too was overwhelmed (by sleep) and slept. The Prophet got up when the edge of the sun had risen and said, 'O Bilal! What about your statement?' He replied, 'I have never slept such a sleep.' The Prophet said, 'Allah captured your souls when He wished, and released them when He wished. O Bilal! Get up and pronounce the Adhan for the prayer.' The Prophet performed ablution and when the sun came up and became bright, he stood up and prayed.<sup>47</sup>

But even Messengers of God must eventually die leaving this earth and its people with a very deep void where they once stood. And so in the year June 8, 632, when God called the Prophet

Muhammad (pbuh) to His heavenly side, the Muslim community of Medina was left without its beloved Messenger of Allah. No more would they witness his smile, his tears, his laughter, his wisdom and his inspirational guiding force amongst the people of Islam. And for a time, the community is left without the sound of Bilal's Adhan too.

Most Muslims know the story, which has been reported in the Hadith of Al-Bukhari, that the death of the Prophet caused such deep distress in Bilal that he left for Syria for some time and stopped giving the Adhan altogether. It wasn't in fact until much time had passed, that he decides to leave Syria and return to Mecca where Muhammad's congregation implores him to give the Adhan once more. It is that Adhan, the first Adhan by Bilal after Muhammad's death, and the one which he gave before thousands of followers, that must have been a tremendously moving event to witness. For this Adhan quaked the emotions of every living thing. And it is easy to imagine how the Islamic community would have eagerly gathered together to hear Bilal once more. The anticipation, the profound sadness, the tears that washed over them once they heard his voice again stood as just further evidence of their undying loyalty and love. For Bilal's was the voice that they had come to associate, not only with prayer, but with the very Prophet himself.

Imagine the moment, the one where Bilal, (who was used to pointing in the direction of the Prophet whenever he came to his name in the Adhan), now pointed only into the empty space where he once stood. Not only did Bilal break down and sob during his recitation when he got to this part, but it was reported that the entire congregation wept uncontrollably and with the utter despair that can only come from such an Adhan. How profoundly moving Bilal's Adhan must have been! And it is perhaps this Adhan, the one where the emotive element reigned supreme, that perhaps a more sonorous call to prayer was first born. An Adhan rooted in sorrow, huzn and tears, over the loss of a community's beloved Prophet, and the trembling voice of his faithful sahaba.

When the shadows of the hillocks appear...<sup>48</sup>

Next to the Quran, the Adhan is the greatest expression of the core tenants of Islam. It offers the believer a way to remember Him but also to have some redemption on the Day of Resurrection as we learn in this reference in al Bukhari:

Narrated by 'Abdul Rahman: Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri who told my father, "I see you liking sheep and the wilderness. So whenever you are with your sheep or in the wilderness and you want to pronounce Adhan for the prayer raise your voice in doing so, for whoever hears the Adhan, whether a human being, a jinn or any other creature, will be a witness

for you on the Day of Resurrection. Abu Said added, I heard it (this narration) from Allah's Apostle.<sup>49</sup>

It was, and is, a perfect example of *Tawhid*, or the central belief in one God, a banishment of all other idols and false gods, a colossal quantum shift toward a far Greater Reality as it represents the moving away from the profane distractions of the material world and a shift into total submission under One Supreme God. This concept is evinced most clearly in the line: "*Allahu Akbar*" which is repeated for a total of six times and marks the beginning of the Adhan, as well as being the seal of its completion, making it the central and most important theme in the entire call to prayer. Although Hadith literature forbids the intentional drawing out of the incantation and text of the Adhan hence: "*do not draw out the Adhan or we will dismiss you,*" traditionally one will often hear that in the third repetition of '*Allahu Akbar*', the '*Allahu*' is drawn out the longest in its delivery, being held for a number of beats as we might find in certain phrases in Quranic recitation or Tajweed, and further emphasizing the central point of God's all encompassing imminence. However, holding the word 'Allah' the longest, with the 'hu' connected to the 'Akbar' and said more quickly, makes complete sense. Especially if one considers how in speech, one would probably do the same thing when repeating the same line over and over again as when calling out to the masses such as in the days of the Town Crier for instance, before the days of recording devices and megaphones. With a word as important as 'Allah' it becomes only natural that it would be held in such a way, for emphasis, as a way of distinction and perhaps to give the community more time to gather together for the prayer.

It is also worth mentioning that many Mu'adhhdhin's will use an ascending pattern when incanting the last Akbar in every line. This further underscore the point of God's all encompassing Greatness and I am of the belief that every Adhan should be given in this way, that is to say, with a conscious effort to mirror God's Greatness with a higher note being expressed for His qualities or name. For ending with a descending scale on the Akbar, does not carry the same weight, except for at the very end.

And we learn from the Messenger of Allah in several Hadiths that a reward exists, on the Day of Resurrection, for those believers who should utter the following words upon hearing the Adhan:

Allahumma Rabba hadhihid-da`wati-ttammati, was-salatil-qa'imati, ati Muhammadanil-wasilata wal-fadhilata, wab`athu maqaman mahmuda nilladhi wa `adtahu [O Allah, Rubb of this perfect call (Da`wah) and of the established prayer (As-Salat), grant Muhammad the Wasilah and superiority, and raise him up to a praiseworthy position which You have



promised him]’, it becomes incumbent upon me to intercede for him on the Day of Resurrection.” (abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi)

And we also learn that any prayer made between the Adhan and the Iqamah, which of course is generally the same as the Adhan except in its vocal delivery<sup>50</sup> and in the addition of the line : *qad qama tis-salaat*, that:

The supplication made between the Adhan and the Iqamah is never rejected.

In the next line of the Adhan, following the words ‘Allahu Akbar!’ we have the ‘*Shabada*’ or “*Asb hadu anna la ilaha il Allah*” which reads in English: “*I testify that there is no deity except for God.*” This line is repeated two times as are all remaining verses. Individually, each line bears a marked significance within the religion itself, but together when combined as a whole and in a sequence, they form a unique cornerstone of the faith underscoring and reaffirming the central tenants of Islam on a daily basis by reminding the believer their importance.

It is also worthy of note that there exist numerous variations and interpretations of the sonic contour of the Adhan. Each region of the Islamic world has its own Adhan which is not only influenced by the rules of tajweed but also, in some cases by the local folk music tradition itself. This is most clearly heard in the Turkish Adhan for instance, where a highly ornamented glottal trill may be heard and is typical in the traditional Turkish music tradition. This wide variety in the presentation of Adhans has led some, with more traditional views to be concerned. But if we view the Adhan from another angle, as a dynamic force that remains intact yet fluid with time, a different picture emerges. We may, for instance, draw a direct parallel between the cultural preferences exhibited in a regions architecture to that of the melodic contour of the Adhan in that place. For instance, in the more complex architectural renditions of the Turkish or even Chinese Mosques, we find a highly ornamented Adhan, complete with vocal contours that are more ornate or complex. However, regardless of the differences in the sonic presentation of the Adhan, its delivery should be viewed as a sacramental act, an event that unites all Muslims together under the One True Creator. Therefore, hearing the Adhan should be the reminder to all of humanity that it is time to stop, face the qibla and remember their Lord.

### **Thus Soars the Eagle**

*O God sent Guide, let Muslims know, What to do and where to go?*

The above referenced lines from Allama Muhammad Iqbal, in which he asks the Prophet of Islam, “*what to do and where to go*” stand

as a further testament to his absolute and utter desire to find a new direction for the Islamic community. Much of his works focus on this theme and of how to wake up the sleeping masses but also on how to best lead them forward, when awake, in creating a new, more cohesive Islamic order. There is no doubt that Allama Iqbal drew much inspiration from the sunnah of the Prophet. But as nostalgic as he was for the early Islamic days of yore, he was also quite realistic in his philosophical grounding and called for a broader more open interpretation of the Quran. For this reason, much of his plea, his hope for change, was placed squarely upon the shoulder's of the nations youth whom he hoped would sprout the wings necessary to fly. And so, the 'shaheen's, or falcons of the Islamic world as he saw them, would one day unite in creating the ideal Islamic state.

I am grateful to Dr. S. M. Zaman who ended his fine essay on '*Iqbal and the Fundamentals of Islam*' with a quote from Annemarie Schimmel who once said:

I sincerely hope that Iqbal will continue to inspire the people of Pakistan by reaching them (and giving them) the important role of the human being as the Khalifa of God, working on His earth and called to ameliorate it in responsibility for his fellow human beings while never forgetting that the earth belongs to God.<sup>51</sup>

And can we not view Allama Iqbal's core message as being akin to a type of Adhan, in that his message pulls God's Khalifa not only toward remembrance of Him, but also imposes on the listener a call to take action, to soar like the eagle through "this maze of night and day"...and to internalize the inner teachings of the Prophet and the Quran?

Tawhid, or the belief in One Supreme God, is the conviction that Iqbal referred to in the past tense, as something which was once present here on earth as he referred to it as: '... a living force in the world'.<sup>52</sup> These words imply, that the world is now bereft of all its former spiritual lifeblood, no doubt sapped by the sleeping masses whose children he implored to arise and waken in his famous: *Letter to the Muslim Youth*. Much of Iqbal's poetic works are in fact, devoted to this concept of waking up, of being liberated from the material chains that bind so that one may live freely and soar high above unstagnant waters like the eagle:

Parwaz hai dono ki ek hi jahan main.....  
Shaheen ka jahan aur hai kirgas ka jahan aur.....  
Alfaz o Muani main tafawat wa badal to nahi lekin.....  
Mulla ki Azaan aur hai..... Mujahid ki azaan aur....."

And so Iqbal's "Adhan of the true believer," may be thought of as the call of all calls, a Divine message that rises up from deep within, pulling each and every believer toward the lofty gates of

prayer and remembrance of Him. As it is an Adhan rooted in the pure spirit of Bilal, but mostly in the Sunnah of Islam's beloved Prophet, whom Iqbal mournfully implores: "*Where may the guard of God's portents go?*"<sup>53</sup>

For is not the Adhan of which we speak the ideal wake up call, the loud clanking spiritual alarm that compels the individual to fulfill his or her truest destiny while on the path of life and always in accordance with Islamic principles? To become the eagle who does not forget the infinite expanse of skies, whose talons nary touch the ground as he is one who is not:

... nest-bound, abject, crestfallen,

And does not flap its wings in the blue space.<sup>54</sup>

but instead is the one who soars in 'a different time and space' because he is the eagle whose flight is powered solely by the memory of the spirit of Islam's luminous Prophet, his humble, kind and faithful servant Bilal and a burning desire to return to the wisdom contained within that most beautiful Sunnah. This is an eagle whose 'crooked hands'<sup>55</sup> clasps the truth 'in lonely lands' as easily as it does its prey which he finds on the sharp, rocky crags of the majestic Himalayas. We may ask ourselves, what of the cry of that most perfect eagle? That shrill, ear-splitting call which rings forth over all lands and is noticed by every single living thing? Can we not think of this cry as nature's own Adhan to remember Him by? And does it not provide the perfect metaphor for the clarion sound described in Iqbal's 'Adhan of the true believer?' An Adhan in which all of nature surely takes part.

And is not this Adhan that perfect call with which to ignite a Divine spark? A spark which will grow into a fire and a fire which will enable the human being to at long last shed the material shackles of this world so that he or she may rise up, phoenix-like from the ashes of stagnation, corruption and despair, to be fully reborn with a renewed vision and clarity of spirit, claiming the noble crown reserved only for the eagles head. And to at long last fly.

## NOTES AND REFERENCE

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- <sup>1</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. As quoted in: *Iqbal and the Fundamentals of Islam*, Dr. S. M. Zaman, The Development of the Naqshaband, Allama Iqbal website.
  - <sup>2</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Bang-i-Dara*, op. cit. 'Jawab Shikwah', p. 231.
  - <sup>3</sup> Al Bukhari Hadith, *Book of Fasting*, XII:1816
  - <sup>4</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie, once said: "Nobody will assert that he was a prophet, but we may admit that he has been touched by Gabriel's wing."
  - <sup>5</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Rod of Moses*.
  - <sup>6</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. The Rod of Moses (Zarb-i-Kalim), in: *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal* op. cit. 'Subh' p. 526.

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- <sup>7</sup> Holy Quran, Yusuf Ali English Translation. Surah 101:4,5
- <sup>8</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Rod of Moses* (Zarb-i-Kalim), in: Kulliyat-i- Iqbal
- <sup>9</sup> 'Jawab Shikwah' *Bang-i-Dara*, in Kulliyat-i-Iqbal Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1993, p. 237. As read in 'The Development of the Nqshaband', Dr. SM Zaman
- <sup>10</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*, Published post humously in 1938
- <sup>11</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie. *Gabriel's Wing: a study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, 1963, (p.177) Verse appears in Iqbal's: *Armaghan-i-Hijaz*, p.205 published post humously, 1938
- <sup>12</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie, Ibid
- <sup>13</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Rod of Moses* (Zarb-i-Kalim), 1936, *The Collected Poetical Works of Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore
- <sup>14</sup> The Holy Quran: Sura: 40, al-Momin
- <sup>15</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. "An Invocation" (Asrar al-Khudi) *The Secrets of the Self*. Reynold A. Nicholson Translation, 1920
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie. *Nightingales under the Snow*, "Khidr's Complaint," Khaniqahi Nimatuuahi Publications, London & New York, 1994, p. 24
- <sup>18</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, *Gabriel's Wing*, trans. Naim Siddiqui. *The Collected Poetical Works of Iqbal*, sec. 5, p. 251
- <sup>19</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah al-Fatiha, Yusuf Ali Translation.
- <sup>20</sup> Holy Quran, Surah an-Nur (25:35), Yusuf Ali Translation
- <sup>21</sup> Holy Quran, Surah an-Nur (25:35), Yusuf Ali Translation
- <sup>22</sup> Holy Quran, Surah an-Nur (25:35), Yusuf Ali Translation
- <sup>23</sup> Al Bukhari (Muwatta, Book 9, 9)
- <sup>24</sup> Holy Quran, Surah (112:1-4). Yusuf Ali Translation
- <sup>25</sup> Chittick and Murata, *Vision of Islam*, Paragon House 1994, p. 304
- <sup>26</sup> Holy Quran 3:190
- <sup>27</sup> This is reported in Hadith as: "Woe to anyone who hears that verse and does not meditate upon it!" Tariq Ramadan mentions this story in his book: *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* Oxford University Press, 2007, pg 13
- <sup>28</sup> Holy Quran, Surah 47: 24
- <sup>29</sup> Narrated from Ibn `Umar by Ahmad (2:85); Tabarani in the *Kabir* (12:361), Hatythami in *Majma` al-Zawa'id* (8:263), Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* 6:355, and Suyuti in his *Tafsir al-Durr al-Manthur* (5:169). Haythami said: "The sub-narrators in Ahmad's chain are the men of sound (sahih) narration."
- <sup>30</sup> Holy Quran, Surah Luqman (31:34)
- <sup>31</sup> Hadith Qudsi:22:46
- <sup>32</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Rod of Moses*, Admonition to A Philosophy Stricken Sayyad.
- <sup>33</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie. *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*, SUNY Press, 1994
- <sup>34</sup> Holy Quran, Surah 30:22
- <sup>35</sup> Holy Qurán Surah 10:39
- <sup>36</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad. *The Rod of Moses* (Zarb-i-Kalim), 1936. As found in: *The Collected Poetical Works of Iqbal*. Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, p.3
- <sup>37</sup> Schimmel, Annemarie. *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam*, pg.164-165, SUNY Press, 1994
- <sup>38</sup> Holy Quran, Surah: (54: 17,22,32, 40)

- <sup>39</sup> Iqbal (1923), *Payam-i-Mashriq*, p. 264. As quoted in: Schimmel, Annemarie: *Deciphering the Signs of God*, SUNY Press, 1994
- <sup>40</sup> Schimmel, Katherine. *The Adhan and the Imminence of Allah: The Impact of the Adhan on the Muslim Community of Cairo*. (Manuscript in review).
- <sup>41</sup> Holy Quran, Surah al Fatiha (1:3)
- <sup>42</sup> Holy Quran, Surah al-Baqarah (2:285)
- <sup>43</sup> Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i Iqbal*: Persian [Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1994], 654/182
- <sup>44</sup> Hadith of Abu Dawood, ( Book 2, Number 0517) Narrated by Abu Hurayrah
- <sup>45</sup> I am grateful to Harvard Professor Wolfhart Heinrichs for reminding me that the Arabic word ‘Manara’ is used to denote both a lighthouse and a minaret.
- <sup>46</sup> Holy Quran, Surah Ash Sharh (94:5/6)
- <sup>47</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari (book 10, Hadith 569)
- <sup>48</sup> Hadith al Bukhari: 511: Narrated Abu Dhar: The Muadhhdhin (call-maker) of the Prophet pronounced the Adhan (call) for the Zuhr prayer but the Prophet said, “Let it be cooler, let it be cooler.” Or said, “Wait, wait, because the severity of heat is from the raging of the Hell-fire. In severe hot weather, pray when it becomes (a bit) cooler and the shadows of hillocks appear.”
- <sup>49</sup> Hadith of al Bukhari, Book 11, Hadith 583
- <sup>50</sup> It is generally recited in a more monotone voice than the Adhan
- <sup>51</sup> Dr. S. M. Zaman, *Iqbal and the Fundamentals of Islam*
- <sup>52</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, Zarb I Kalim ‘Taqrir’, (1936) pp. 559-560.
- <sup>53</sup> Allama Muhammad Iqbal, “Invocation to the Soul of Muhammad.”
- <sup>54</sup> Iqbal, Muhammad, Letter to the Muslim Youth
- <sup>55</sup> Alfred lord Tennyson described an eagle in his famous poem, “The Eagle” which he published in 1851 and which fits very well within the Iqbalian construct of an eagle:
- He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.*

