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SPACE TRAVEL IN POETRY OF IQBAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the complex historical link that exists between humans and the celestial realm. It explores how early humans found comfort and hope in the sky—the first human theater—during existential crises and natural disasters. Drawing from the thoughts of notable philosophers like Bertrand Russell, Vincent van Gogh, and Albert Camus, the work compares the existential struggles of modernity with the faith and curiosity inspired by the sky in ancient times. The text analyzes Iqbal's conceptualization of humanity as cosmological beings aspiring to rise above the confines of the earth and accept the immensity of the universe. Moreover, the text delves into poetic and philosophical aspects of space travel, viewing it as a symbolic journey towards cosmic enlightenment and self-discovery, beyond conventional goals. Through the prism of Iqbal's poetry and mystical philosophy, the narrative encourages readers to embrace the limitless horizons of discovery and rethink their role in the cosmos.

Keywords:

Space, Modernity, Faith, Curiosity,
Enlightenment, Mystical Philosophy

The Forgotten Connection of Man and Sky

The sky is considered to be the oldest theatre of mankind. Bringing curiosity, light, rain, and hope to human beings who were crushed by the natural forces in primitive times. It was a relief for the primitive man to look at the sky while bearing the existential crisis. Sometimes we can see the sky as the opening of a jar, and it's an escape and a metaphor for hope when the world becomes tight around us.

Let's recall a few great minds who found life challenging and not worth living. Bertrand Russell wrote in his *Autobiography* of the footpath at Southgate: "I used to go there alone to watch the sunset and contemplate suicide."¹ Vincent shot himself while whispering his last words: "Sadness will last forever".² It was Comte or Wittgenstein who pondered and entertained the thought of suicide. Just imagine the key existentialist works produced in the 20th century, a century of invention, amenities, discoveries, and luxuries. Yet, the modern man felt alone and purposeless and felt like falling into the abyss carrying a pain that he never signed for. Camus opened his famous work *Stranger* with the statement: "Mother died today. Or maybe it was yesterday, I don't know".³

While these geniuses of modern times couldn't find any substantial meaning, what mainly gave meaning to man in older times? No established civilization could create fictive relationships for them, so what allowed primitive man to have faith in this material hotchpotch around him? Let's go back to the opening line of this book. The sky is considered the oldest theatre of mankind; it gave hope to primitive man in the day when animals used to chase him and at night when it was pitch dark on Mother Earth. Sky gave hope and light. We simply can't escape the outstanding value of the sky as a metaphor for hope and curiosity. If we imagine ourselves as dwarfs caught in the jar, the sky is the lid, open and calling us. Sky gives freedom, and stars invite mankind to travel through them to other universes out there. Pythagoras once asked why does man exist? His reply was simple: "To observe the sky".⁴

Man of the digital age has established a particular fact that religion makes people passive. They fill all the gaps with God. Comte revealed this fact in his work *The Course in Positive Psychology*, where Comte states that human intellectual development evolved in three main stages, namely, "the Theological stage, the Metaphysical stage, and the Positivist

age”.⁵ Comte, like many modern thinkers, considers religion as a barrier to progress. For Iqbal, a religious thinker is more curious than a scientist. But this stands today as a definition with no practical manifestation or evidence.

Let's go back in time and see how primitive man was inspired by the sky and the stars. Earlier scientists thought that human settlement was linked to agriculture. Hunter-gatherers were nomadic, and agriculture brought permanence to human beings' lives, who then settled, learned to be patient, and so on. Recent discoveries are challenging this paradigm, such as Gobekli Tepe being an anomaly to the earlier findings and theories. Just imagine a site from 9600 B.C. reflecting that it was used as a temple. Primitive man who was struggling to find shelter in 9600 years B.C. erected a temple to appease his vital need but when we take a deeper dive to see Gobekli Tepe, the pyramids of Egypt, Cholula, Mexico, and Gunung Padang, Indonesia, there is one thing in common in all these prehistoric sites. All these sites are pointing towards the sky and are tuned with stars. Now the question here is how exactly did the primitive man, who hardly had a wheel and a shovel, learn the art of knowing about stars? Or, more interestingly, what forced them to move their attention toward the skies? A recent theory suggests that a meteor kicked off the cataclysm on Earth, and a great flood took over the world. This must have happened before all these sites were constructed or thought of. The same great flood story is found in all traditions across the globe. Interestingly, when we look at civilization after this flood, all religious sites point to the sky and the stars. The hypothesis is that as civilization started again, all the cultures turned their faces toward the sky, knowing that the sky has a supernatural power to destroy human beings and everything that they have created. The man emerging after the great flood was interested to know about the stars and to predict when the next meteor might wipe out human civilization.

Then we got busy in this world, and we started making the physical conditions of this world more productive and efficient for mankind. Megacities emerged into the world, and Earth was believed to be the utopia in the universe. The golden age, or the age of science, brought countless discoveries to human beings that brought new trust of people on planet Earth. People realized it was the Eden Garden, the heaven God promised as if we would live here forever, and it is the kingdom of heaven.

In many religions, the House of Lords was also established on Earth. Trust was restored, and instead of burning and cremating, some civilizations even agreed to bury their loved ones on Earth. The journey was getting much more captivating. From sea and sky to land, beings were now cherishing this planet. They were thankful for gravity, which kept them glued to this Earth. We never liked darkness anyway since Freud discovered that we don't like darkness and that the abyss is very dark. It is not a good place for human beings. Stars were the hope, and the sun was worshipped as God as it brought so much light.

However, the people who had the chance to leave the environment of the Earth and spend some time in space or at the International Space Station, surprisingly, all came back with a new love for planet Earth. That's the overview effect when we realize that we aren't developing as planetary beings while living on Earth, but instead, we are obsessed with our local conditions of community, city, country, etc. Things that we prioritize, such as the economy, are not visible from space. However, global warming and fragility are visible even hundreds of miles from the top. This gives an overview effect, a new arrow by Cupid that reestablishes our faith and love in this piece of land floating in space. But what if there is something subliminal that is pushing an overview effect in the minds of astronauts? Being in space they realize that it is so fragile being up in the atmosphere and that it's dark, very dark.

While this book will explore the religious and poetic urge for interplanetary travel, Earth will still remain superb where we find rainbows, streams, daffodils, and butterflies. This planet Earth left Wordsworth and Ghalib stunned by its beauty. Leaving this planet will never be easy. Not in terms of power and energy that we need to leave this planet but the emotional power required to leave the home of Keats and Shelly permanently. It would be tough to live without the green and indigo colours as we might not find this beauty anywhere across the universe. However, this book is a little invite to make us curious about the space. Yet the only people who left planet Earth for a quick space visit came back with a new resolution for planet Earth. They came back with a new spirit to make Earth the “*perfect home*” where humanity can live in harmony with each other without any disparity and discrimination.

If we go through the work *Case of Animals Vs Man before the King of Jinn* by Brethren of Purity, we find another odd reason for space

exploration. Plants are considered a vital element of the ecosystem, as they extract minerals from the underground and provide them to animals. The head of a plant is underground, and its body is in the air. On the other side, when we look at man, man's head is in the air, and his feet are on the ground, thus calling him to rise and transcend.

We can add countless meanings to these pearls shining up there; sometimes, they appear as the brail signs that we can use to understand the abyss. It is astonishing to know that few stars or planets are hundreds of light years away and are still visible. This adds a purpose to an object hanging thousands of miles out and shining, just like the SOS signal or a torch that signals us to leave everything and immediately head toward it. Being thousands of miles away, why are they visible to us? Why are such huge rocks hanging in space and holding themselves together by self-gravity? In *Magical Stories for Kids*,⁶ we read about the protagonist who went to the forest and kept throwing seeds of pebbles so he could come back home. These stars up there are those seeds that can guide us back home. What if Earth was a place for excursion and home is somewhere else? But these beautiful seeds and pebbles divided themselves into fixed stars and wandering stars. The fixed stars are good for the human eye as they provide stability and less confusion (for primitive man), and the wandering stars are for the saints and ascetics who want to get lost.

A conversation that took place between Dirac (an atheist and a physicist) and Lemaitre (a catholic priest and a physicist) is very relevant for two reasons. Primarily, we are using the text of a poet-philosopher on space travel though he's a religious person. Secondly, the answer given by Lemaitre echoes frequently in the works of Iqbal too.

Dirac was critical of religion yet stayed indulged in the works of Lemaitre. Dirac had told him that cosmology could be the closest science to religion. On the contrary, Lemaitre disagreed. This left Dirac astonished, and he inquired which science could be closest to the religion. “*Psychology*”, replied Lemaitre. Readers who have invested time in studying *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* by Dr Mohammad Iqbal know that Iqbal has explored the phenomenon of Psychology in depth in his lectures.

Moreover, using the work of poets to understand cosmology isn't new. Italian poet Leopardi wrote *History of Astronomy* (from its origins until 1813). Leopardi being a poet, found escape in astronomy as it

allows the self to meet and seek transcendence. Readers shall see a similar quest in the work of Iqbal with much more scientific expression.

This book attempts to push readers to move their heads vertically for the oldest & the largest theatre of the universe. Space travel is the modern buzzword. Teslas are floating in space, and space crafts are already touching the boundaries of our solar system. In this book, we shall see how Iqbal makes his readers curious about space and the abyss. It is essential to know that he made this attempt at the beginning of the 20th century (1910 onwards). In the times of Iqbal, even air travel was just in its infancy.

But before we head to the book's main theme, let's ponder why mankind was fascinated by another aspect of stars. The power of stars to control the fate of finite beings of this world is what we call astrology today. Richard Tarnas made a modern attempt in his work *Psyche & Cosmos*, but since antiquity, men saw shapes of humans and animals in star patterns and thought they influenced their lives. I personally believe, as a Muslim, that before outright rejecting astrology, a curious soul should know what made astrology so valid in the first place and how people benefited from it. More importantly, sages from various religions kept this special art with them, knowing that God holds all the fate of mankind. Still, stars are nothing but a creation of God. Just like I protect myself from the sun by the shade of a tree similarly, I take another advantage of stars and see how they add gravitational pressures to the planet Earth and might influence mundane affairs. Likewise, just imagine that as a new book or a vase in the room adds a new pressure to the room and how the space bends. Similarly, think about the countless stars out there adding their gravitational and other pressures on planet Earth. Astrology satisfies another desire of man, predicting, knowing more, handling the chaos, and stepping into the future before getting into the future. Now we do similar stuff with statistics and big data. Earlier, people used more physical and empirical methods to do so; they asked for the stars and not the numbers.

But initially, Iqbal breaks this shackle of fate in his work Gabriel Wing:

ستاره کیا مری تقدیر کی خبر دے گا
وہ خود فراخی افلاک میں ہے خوار و زبوں

How can the stars foretell what the future holds in store?
They roam perplexed and mean in skies that have no shore.

Iqbal was finding the place of man even in the presence of God as he wanted to add a newer meaning even to the idea of fate. Though Islamic thought was captivated by determinism yet Iqbal introduced man as the pen of fate. Man himself is fate (all known to God). Hence it's important for man to know himself before knowing the reality out there so he can carve the pen well before he touches material world. Iqbal quotes in his book *Gift of Hijaz*:

عَبَثَ هِيَ شَكْوَى تَقْدِيرِ يَزْدَا
تُوْخُوْدُ تَقْدِيرِ يَزْدَا كِيُوْنَ نِيْسَ هِيَ؟^۸

It is pointless to complain of God's decree –
Why are you, not God's decree?

The question of fate isn't the principal question of this book, but stars had some concern with our fate. Nonetheless, let's move to the major theme of our work. Stars, travelling into space, giving meaning to the abyss and why Iqbal as a thinker, brought this thought to naïve readers who were caught in the political slavery of the 20th century. It's essential for Iqbal, that man as a being is a cosmological being. Right now, we are caught in the very local context of life. Maybe we can't see beyond the scope of our country, region, continent, or world, but why is this massive reality out there? Why is there unfathomable space filled with shining stars and a myriad of meteors running in space wildly?

Similarly, this book pegs itself on the theory of Dr Idrees Azad, who asserts that we need to free ourselves from Earth's rootedness and that living on Earth isn't different from crawling on the Earth. Even the birds soar and land back on Earth. Dr Idrees Azad developed this theory from the work of poet-philosopher Dr Muhammad Iqbal, according to whom every living thing on Earth is firmly connected to it and requires an anti-gravitational force to lose its earth-rootedness. Dr Idrees Azad refers to this as “*being free of earth-rootedness*”. He claims that the worth of life is diminished as one gets closer to the Earth. The same phenomenon needs further exploration in the context of space travel.

In the year 2022, mankind witnessed new corners of the universe. In 2022, James Webb Telescope captured pillars of creation some

6500 light-years away in the Eagle Nebula. James Webb Telescope is working as a spy for mankind, making us more curious about new space facts. In 2022, NASA altered the trajectory of an asteroid, calling it a test mission for planetary defence. The plot of the 1998 famous film *Armageddon* was turned into reality by NASA, saving Mother Earth from roaming huge pieces of rock in space. The discussion of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) is also catching the attention of policymakers at NASA. However, we know there is a Dark Forest Theory about why we or any other intelligent civilization can't find each other in space. As per the Drake Equation (equation used to determine the number of alien civilizations), there must be 20 other intelligent civilizations in our solar system's neighbourhood. Liu Cixin, in his novel *The Dark Forest*, gave the most inspiring explanation to scientists as to why other forms of civilizations aren't encountering each other in space. In 2022, space tourism caught a new hope, which is the book's main theme. The book's theme isn't space travel of elites or another adventure of rich boys. Going to space should be a serious enterprise, with the consent of the global community, for the next evolutionary step of homo sapiens. It's important to reiterate that Earth isn't any other random piece of land having a life, it's the house of Homer & Goethe, and this is the land that hosted Hellen and Heer. So far, it is the only known spot having active consciousness that provides meaning to darkness out there. However, a new evolutionary jump is required by travelling to an abyss with a light that snatches away the basic identity of darkness. Man has brightened Earth, and now the same must be tested in other corners of the solar system. As quoted by Iqbal:

اسی کوکب کی تابانی سے ہے تیرا جہاں روشن
زوالِ آدمِ خاکی زیاں تیرا ہے یا میرا؟

Your world is illuminated by the radiance of the same star (man)
Whose loss was the fall of Adam, that creature of earth? Was it yours or mine?

Hence, a newer meaning must be attached to the idea of space travel. A conventional aim of space travel can be found on the official website of NASA. It states that:

Human space exploration helps to address fundamental questions about our place in the universe and the history of our solar system. Through addressing the challenges related to human space exploration, we expand technology, create new industries, and help to foster a peaceful connection with other nations. Curiosity and exploration are vital to the human spirit, and accepting the challenge of going deeper into space will invite the citizens of the world today and the generations of tomorrow to join NASA on this exciting journey.

But when we dive into works of poets and philosophers, we see many colourful shades of space travel where poets provide a virgin motivation for sapiens to travel deep into space. It's not a survival tactic and it isn't an adventure of elites. It isn't another plan of space imperialism; instead, it is to provide a new hope for man. It is to complete another shade of man's being, and it is to see the flowers of some parallel universe. It is to have a cup of tea at the "restaurant at the end of the universe".

If we look conventionally at the problem of why we are rooted to the earth, then there is a hint of an answer in all the major religions. Man on Earth is due to some cardinal sin, or man is placed on Earth temporarily. In short, that's not his permanent position. It's a station from which his soul or any other eternal material in him wants to escape.

اس پیکرِ خاکی میں اک شے ہے، سو وہ تیری
میرے لیے مشکل ہے اُس شے کی نگہبانی^{۱۰}

There is something of yours in my body made of dust
And to keep it safe is beyond my power, O Lord!

Spiritual, Sufi or mystic philosophy also considers man as being part of his eternal source. Even though God is as near as the jugular vein, man still wants to transcend his physical being to unite with the eternal God somewhere up there in heaven.

Space Travel: A Metaphor for Iqbal?

There is a continuous transcendence in the poetry and philosophy of Iqbal. According to the theory proposed by Dr Idrees Azad, every living thing on Earth is firmly connected to it and requires an anti-gravitational force to lose its earth-rootedness. He refers to this as being devoid of earth-rootedness. He claims that the worth of life is diminished as one gets closer to the Earth. For Dr Idrees Azad,

Iqbal's poetry has an anti-gravitational invite or a push that allows beings to transcend the material surface of Earth. To transform planetary beings into cosmological beings. Iqbal quotes in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

The extension of man's power over nature has given him a new faith and a fresh sense of superiority over the forces that constitute the environment. New points of view have been suggested, old problems have been re-stated in light of fresh experience, and new problems have arisen. It seems as if the intellect of man is growing its own most fundamental categories – time, space, and causality.¹¹

Therefore, dynamism, a sense of freshness, and a hint of continuous change are available in all writings of Iqbal. This change or dynamic movement isn't horizontal or lateral; instead, it's vertical, it's skyward, it's pointing toward something up there. This dynamic thought of Iqbal is visible in this statement towards God:

God's life is self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached..... Not yet of God means unending realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being, which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process.¹²

While talking about God, man, or matter, Iqbal demands a fresh meaning, a movement, something creative enough to overtake itself. Travelling to space or leaving planet Earth isn't a poetic expression for Iqbal. It's a serious thought that demands action. We have been living on Earth for a long time, and now as quoted above from *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal assumes that the growing intellect of man is suffocating and finding a new space, a new horizon to express another possibility of being. Being needs a new expression. It has developed new tools, science, and motivation that can capture the stars.

مجت مجھے اُن جوانوں سے ہے
ستاروں پہ جو ڈالتے ہیں کند^{۱۳}

The youth to whom the stars are not out of bounds,
Are the ones I love indeed.

Iqbal is calling out to youth that is capable of harnessing the energies of stars. This reminds us of the Kardashev scale. Based on how much energy a civilization can use, the Kardashev scale can be used to gauge its degree of technological development. This scale was developed in 1964. This scale itself is hypothetical. Iqbal, as a poet-philosopher, demanded young minds to harness the stars (importantly, youth isn't humans of a particular age group for Iqbal as Iqbal calls someone youth who is curious to decipher the universe. Someone who is investing all of their energy to act as active consciousness in the world).

عقابی رُوح جب بیدار ہوتی ہے جو انوں میں
نظر آتی ہے اس کو اپنی منزل آسمانوں میں^{۱۴}

When an eagle's spirit awakens in youthful hearts,
It sees its luminous goal beyond the starry heavens.

Here Iqbal paints the picture of an awakened youthful heart, a heart and energy that Iqbal wants every man to carry. When the spirit of an eagle-eagle that is known to go above the clouds amidst all problems and is a symbol of unimaginable height-awakens in a youthful heart, that is when the old beliefs are challenged and man is on a new journey to start. The new vision here is not limitless like the sky, but it is even above that, it is on the heavens that is above the sky. The awakened heart has his goals set upwards; man's body might be on the ground but his vision is above the skies. He carries energies of the stars and has an entire universe shining inside of him. Such is the might invite of Iqbal to the readers to not just aim for the stars, but to aim for beyond the stars.

We are inching towards the primary concern of this book, where an invitation from Iqbal to all fellow beings is to rise and make the universe their home. Importantly, in this section, we are identifying a key question: Is space travel a method for Iqbal? While other poets talk about infinity or add a hyper meaning to the human condition or aspiration. Iqbal specifically urges us, with the attitude of scientists, to master the technology around us so we can add colours to the dark zones of the universe. For Iqbal, man isn't a feeble being tired of his existence. For Iqbal, man is the only hope of this universe, and the universe is changing its general structure to be suitable for man.

Again, coming to the principle question of this section: Is this a metaphoric travel carrying moral lessons for mankind? As usual, people consider that Iqbal took the general structure of the poem from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. However, when we look at *Divine Comedy* (which is an amazing piece of poetry and imagination that even fascinated young Galileo) with all its poetic might, it's still not congruent with current scientific theories of our solar system. Since all the major discoveries are made with reference to our solar system, the *Divine Comedy* isn't consistent. Primarily, it is geocentric; it assumes that our earth is the centre of the solar system. It was a masterpiece at those times (c. 1308), but scientific discoveries over the period reflected few inaccuracies. But Iqbal himself quotes in *Stray Reflections*:

It is idle to seek truth in poetry. The ideal of imagination is beauty, not truth. Do not then try to show a Poet's greatness by quoting passages from his work which in your opinion, embody scientific truth.¹⁵

However, largely Dante's *Divine Comedy* has an unorthodox, beautifully designed universe having an earth-centred Ptolemaic view of the solar system. The sequence of the planets is the same as our own, with the Earth and Sun switched around, i.e., Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn from the Earth outwards. There were no confirmed planets. So what to consider of Iqbal's work? Is it poetic imagination? Or Moral lessons? As Iqbal penned down the ascension of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to meet Allah beyond the skies as a moral lesson for mankind. What about other verses about space travel or urging humans to leave planet Earth? Is that a metaphor? Is that an example of overcoming the barriers of human limitations? Or is it a serious guideline? While acknowledging the ascension of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as a moral lesson for mankind in the work of Iqbal, harnessing stars or travelling beyond worldly lands is a practical matter, just like the political theory of Iqbal.

Before we head to the next section to explore Iqbal's work urging for travelling into space, it is important to learn that numerous thinkers, writers, poets, and film directors are trying to create possibilities on how we can master space travel and become

cosmological beings. Iqbal brings a serious passion for mankind. For those who can't fly, Iqbal calls them "*dust*" as they have settled to the ground. We shall try to see verses beyond another symbol of Iqbal, i.e. Eagle. Eagle is a strong symbol used by Iqbal, but certainly, it's not the central thought of Iqbal nor required for the current book. Therefore, we aren't using a metaphor to fly or rise to push human beings to get out of their comfort zone. We will see how Iqbal brings a newer passion for leaving the planet Earth for a celestial journey. Iqbal had a particular advantage over other classical thinkers. Quantum physics was catching a boom in the times of Iqbal; the universe was getting a new interpretation, fixed idea of time was getting challenged. It was the perfect time for Iqbal to peg on his religious knowledge and convince mankind to set a new target, to find a new home in the cosmos.

In the opening statement of the first lecture of *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal quotes:

What is the character and general structure of the universe in which we live? Is there a permanent element in the constitution of this universe? How are we related to it? What place do we occupy in it?¹⁶

What place do we occupy in the universe? Various disciplines can address this question, and we can extract diversified meanings and answers for it. Iqbal aims to attach a cosmological meaning to man. Iqbal wants man to consider the remaining universe as an abode and decorate it with mortal yet exciting colours of human beings. Iqbal wants man to use the colours of Picasso, the sounds of Wagner, the madness of Nietzsche and the tears of Rumi to paint the cosmos so this hotchpotch of matter can also be turned into a great piece of art. So, remaining mankind while waiting for Godot doesn't crush themselves with boredom. Therefore, in Iqbal's cosmos, Vladimir and Estragon (characters from Beckett's *The Theatre of the Absurd*) are smiling while waiting for Godot.

Iqbal felt sublime while witnessing a Comet

Famously, we heard about the pale blue dot, or how infinitely small we are in comparison to the universe and how indifferent the universe is from the ambitions of humans. Iqbal had a similar encounter on the 15th of May 1910 when he witnessed Halley's

Comet. Even in those times, Iqbal penned that encounter with scientific and poetic accuracy in his personal notebook, i.e. *Stray Reflections*. Halley's Comet is a short-period comet as it takes less than 200 years to orbit the sun. This comet appears after every 75-79 years for the dwellers of planet Earth. Iqbal had a sense of wonder while observing this comet, as it is one of the few comets that are visible to the human eye and that too once/twice in a lifetime. While I write this work, it was last visible in the year 1986, and it is expected to amaze the inhabitants of Earth in somewhere 2061.

Even Shakespeare was touched by these comets. Shakespeare included a now-famous line regarding comets as heralds in his play *Julius Caesar* around 1600, just 105 years before Edmond Halley calculated that the comet returns repeatedly. Shakespeare quotes:

When beggars die, there are no comets seen; the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.¹⁷

While our readers might search about Halley's Comet, they might also see a poem by Stanley Kunitz. This poem is also written on the existential theme, the entropic nature of the universe, and the mortality of beings. Kunitz wrote this poem when he was 95 years old, and he quoted:

The deepest thing I know is that I am living and dying at once, and my conviction is to report that dialogue, it is a terrifying thought that is at the root of much of my poetry.¹⁸

Halley's Comet brings the message of the smallness of our beings and how fragile we are in front of the cosmic plan. Most of us might only witness that mighty comet once in a lifetime, but along with its tail, it is a herald who shouts about the immortality of humans. Fragile beings create grand fictions on planet Earth to make their stay a pleasant illusion.

Iqbal had a similar experience when he saw Halley's Comet, and words from his pen echoed like thoughts of Sagan, Sagan expressed his view as:

Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it, everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of

our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every “superstar,” every “supreme leader,” every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.¹⁹

Now, let's take a view of Iqbal's sublime encounter with Halley's comet:

15th May 1910: Yesterday morning at about 4, I saw that the glorious visitor of our hemisphere known as Halley's Comet. Once in seventy-five years, this superb swimmer of infinite space appears in our skies. It is only with the eyes of my grandsons that I shall see it again. The state of my mind was quite unique. I felt as if something indescribably vast had been closed up within the narrow limits of my clay: Yet the thought that I could not see this wanderer again brought home to me the painful fact of my littleness. For the moment, all ambition was killed in me.²⁰

Take Off:

It's always better to have a simple start, and knowledge is all about bringing simplicity to complex issues. Iqbal quoted in his poetic work, i.e., Gabriel Wing:

ستاروں سے آگے جہاں اور بھی ہیں
ابھی عشق کے امتحاں اور بھی ہیں^{۲۱}

Other worlds exist beyond the stars—
More tests of love are still to come.

There is a world beyond the stars that we observe. With all the collateral damage done in this history, we have somehow passed the test of adding colours to planet Earth. Therefore this universe,

comprising nine planets, has been captured by the powerful ideas of mankind. We have passed this initial test of love rather than an easy one. As Earth is a wonderful host, it provides abundant necessities to its residents. It was an easy mark, though we witnessed a few ice ages and storms, but at large, we had been fighting against tyrants. However, things are getting better now, and man is getting saner. Our bodies are getting fragile, but our minds are getting braver. We are all set to explore the next universe, the world beyond the stars. We are ready for the next level of love (let's add another meaning to this, in Islamic theology, God is up there – though also being nearer to our jugular vein, thus as we move beyond the stars, we are getting closer to the ultimate idea of love).

تہی، زندگی سے نہیں یہ فضائیں
یہاں سینکڑوں کارواں اور بھی ہیں^{۲۲}

This vast space does not lack life—
Hundreds of other caravans are here.

We already mentioned the dark forest theory on why humans are not encountering any other intelligent civilization in this vast universe, yet Iqbal thinks that we aren't the only beings enjoying the idea of life. He thinks that other forms of life must also be going through this experience of becoming. Iqbal writes that hundreds of different forms of life are expressing themselves in this infinite universe.

قناعت نہ کر عالم رنگ و بو پر
چمن اور بھی آشیاں اور بھی ہیں^{۲۳}

Do not be content with the world of colour and smell,
Other gardens there are, other nests, too.

It's a simple invite to curious souls of human beings to rise above this land of smell and colours. Other infinite colours and scents are waiting to be observed by human consciousness. It's an invite to souls, as souls aim to ascend to reach their original place, the sky, the zenith point. On the other hand, the body is happy and satisfied with the pleasures of this earth. Iqbal reminds mankind to not be satisfied

with this land of few colours; rather, countless gardens and hues are waiting to receive mankind.

اگر کھو گیا اک نشین تو کیا غم
مقامات آہ و نفاں اور بھی ہیں ۲۴

What is the worry if one nest is lost?
There are other places to sigh and cry for!

Iqbal symbolizes man as a bird and consoles the beings of this planet Earth. If Earth is a nest, then worry not, as there are a myriad of nests out there in the universe waiting to capture the laments of man. For Iqbal, in this inanimate world, man is the only being that brings music to the string of life. This life might have flow, creative energy, or a particular happening, yet only man can bring it music, literature, poetry, and theatre that makes life worth living. Secondly, we can interpret this verse in the context of 1910, when Iqbal saw the decline of Muslims in the sub-continent. Hence, he says that if you can't manifest your idea of existence on this earth, keep marching and explore another planet where you can create your ideas as other nests and homes are waiting for you.

تو شاہیں ہے، پرواز ہے کام تیرا
ترے سامنے آسماں اور بھی ہیں ۲۵

You are an eagle, and flight is your vocation:
You have other skies stretching out before you.

Certainly, an eagle is used as a symbol. An eagle can only make flights to the sky, and man as a being has reached the heights of the Moon and is targeting Mars as the next home. Iqbal has highlighted the idea of other skies in this verse. By different skies, Iqbal refers to other universes, other planetary ways waiting for the footsteps of man.

اسی روز و شب میں اُلجھ کر نہ رہ جا
کہ تیرے زمان و مکاں اور بھی ہیں ۲۶

Do not let mere day and night ensnare you,

Other times and places belong to you.

It is astonishing for various readers that Iqbal had a great interest in quantum physics. His lectures include various references to physics and how physics was shaping up as a new discipline. Iqbal wasn't only appreciative of the paradigm shift that was coming after the works of Einstein. He was also critically reviewing those and adding similar phenomena in his poetry, which might push his readers to show interest in these emerging science issues. In this verse, Iqbal directs man living on planet Earth not to trap himself in worldly time and space as other forms of space-time await the arrival of this active consciousness of the universe. As recent research unveils that this space-time might be one of many, there are possibilities for other forms of space and time. David Lewis as a philosopher, introduced the idea of the plurality of worlds. Similarly, an alternative, parallel, or some other form of space-time can exist in different regions of the universe. Man must experience those, says Iqbal, as man has an idea of such conditions as in this life we get moments when we feel free from time or space, thus other parts of the world where space-time will exist in more altered forms, man must experience that. Iqbal explored the idea of time with reference to human consciousness and even acknowledged the fresh view of Ouspensky to bring novel thoughts to these sacred concepts. Sacred as Allah quoted in Quran: "*Verily Time*" (103:1).

However, other philosophers also considered this world the best of all the possible worlds, specifically Leibniz. But again, Leibniz has used the expression "*best of all*", reflecting there are other worlds. Iqbal believes in an expanding universe, a universe that isn't a complete product but rather is becoming. As the only active energy after the creator, man is the hope of this dark abyss out there. Hence, other forms of space and time await man to give him new novel experiences. Due to time, the static world of matter is experienced and felt.

Interestingly, in the first poem of his Urdu book, i.e., Gabriel Wing, Iqbal reintroduces the energy concealed within Man. Iqbal writes:

میری نوائے شوق سے شورِ حریمِ ذات میں
نغلغله ہائے الاماں بُتِ کدہ صفات میں^{۲۷}

My epiphany of passion causes commotion in the precinct of the Divine Essence,
Strikes terror in the pantheon of His Attributes.

As per classical thinking, God or the Almighty resides beyond the skies in another space-time. Iqbal remarks that my voice powered by passion knocks at the door of infinity, the doors of skies that are locked on angels that can only be accessed by a man of passion. Again in *Gabriel Wing*, Iqbal reiterates his message of transcendence. Words of Iqbal again invite the reader to rise towards the sky.

عروجِ آدمِ خاکی سے انجمِ سہمے جاتے ہیں
کہ یہ ٹوٹا ہوا تارا میرِ کامل نہ بن جائے^{۲۸}

The rise of clay-born man hath smit the hosts of heaven with utter fright:
They dread that this fallen star to the moon may wax with fuller light.

Using his poetic imagination, Iqbal reminds mankind that the whole universe conspired against the man of clay to send him to planet Earth. The moment man transcends or travels against gravity, the cosmos trembles with fear that the fallen star (man) may not reach back to the highest point of the sky.

For every takeoff, we need continuous energy to soar to the higher skies. Iqbal's poetry is not only having an anti-gravitational invite or a push which allows beings to transcend the material surface of Earth. Iqbal also shares the quintessence secret of life, which is movement. Reminding words of Carlo Rovelli that there are no things in this universe but only events. What we call real and what we conceive as real is only an illusion of an object. It is an event that we are observing. The book which you are holding right now might appear to be a solid object. However, on closer observation, we realize that it's only a delayed movement and an illusion of a solid object when in reality countless sub-atomic particles are in motion. Iqbal also talked about this earlier in his poem *Saqi Nama*:

فریبِ نظر ہے سکون و ثبات
تڑپتا ہے ہر ذرّہ کائنات^{۲۹}

Stability is an illusion of eyes,
For every atom in the world pulsates with change

However, a similar message echoes in his book: *Call of the Marching Bell*. The poem's title is *Moon and Stars* (Iqbal was so eager to introduce diversified subjects, objects and phenomena to his reader). In that poem, stars inquire from the Moon that they are exhausted while floating in the darkness. Not being aware of rest and peace, the journey seems like a curse in which various forms of life are decaying.

بے تاب ہے اس جہاں کی ہر شے
کہتے ہیں جسے سکون، نہیں ہے^{۳۰}

No creature of this world knows rest,
Nowhere can fabled peace exist.

رہتے ہیں ستم کش سفر سب
تارے، انساں، شجر، حجر سب^{۳۱}

All things condemned by tyrant laws
To wander, stars, men, rocks, and tress—

Moon replied to Stars:

جُنبش سے ہے زندگی جہاں کی
یہ رسمِ قدیم ہے یہاں کی^{۳۲}

On motion all this world's life hangs,
Such is the ancient doom of things.

The essence of life is movement, to unlearn, to outgrow yourself, to transcend your older self, to find a new height every moment. To go beyond the stars and to find new skies, man also needs to take the advice of Iqbal. Space travel is all about moving forward, finding newer depths of this universe and continuing the passion of movement to deeper corners of the cosmos.

The universe as a symbol of God

Iqbal puts forward a novel question to the religious mind to explore the remaining parts of the universe, as it is equally the symbol of God. As the religious psyche uses various inanimate objects of the Earth as signs of God, then why have they missed the chance to explore the remaining universe as a symbol of God? Earth doesn't even hold a place of a dot on a canvas that is a thousand miles long. The universe as we know it today is totally indifferent to this little pale blue dot. Then how come religious minds are keeping themselves oblivion from a much greater symbol of God? In one of his finest Urdu poems titled *Cordova Mosque* from his book *Gabriel Wing*, Iqbal quotes:

سلسلہ روز و شب، تارِ حریر دو رنگ
جس سے بناتی ہے ذات اپنی قبائے صفات^{۳۳}

The succession of day and night is a two-tone silken twine,
With which the Divine Essence, prepares its apparel of attributes.

Iqbal reminds Muslims and thinkers across the globe to ponder the idea of space-time and how space-time manifests infinite attributes of the Divine. Thus, reality around us becomes a symbol of reality and a symbol of divinity.

Furthermore, in his book, *Gift of Hijaz*, Iqbal echoed the message of God in his poem, *A Voice from Beyond*:

آتی ہے دم صبح صدا عرشِ بریں سے
کھویا گیا کس طرح ترا جوہر ادراک!^{۳۴}

From the Emperium enquires a voice at dawn: how did
You lose your essential quality of enquiry and understanding?

What has stopped you from investigating my universe? Or why have you stopped the investigation of the real universe? Earlier men, either from Greece, Rome or Egypt, examined all of the universes, especially the stars, the brightest and heaviest bodies in the universe. Modern man has simply focused on the multiplication of wealth, developing no cost of environment and has surrendered the

macrocosmic vision of this infinite universe. They have all eyes on petty issues of planet Earth. Ron Garan, who is also an astronaut, said: “*I went to space and discovered an enormous lie*”.³⁵ Ron says that the things we focus on, like the economy, politics, consumerism, and brands, all disappeared when he entered space, and he realized it while floating in darkness.

We create illusions and let our upcoming generations observe those as reality. But the louder existences are waiting for us to examine and conquer them.

کس طرح ہوا کُنڈ ترا نشتر تحقیق
ہوتے نہیں کیوں تجھ سے ستاروں کے جگرچاک^{۳۶}

How was blunted your scalpel of research?
Why do you not rend open the hearts of stars?

In the next verse, Iqbal expresses concern that mankind has given up on research, though it has thousands of research journals and hundreds of research-based products coming to the market, yet the mightiest part of the universe is in the veil from modern man. While we are developing an unequal world, we also miss discovering the secret lying inside stars. Strangely, while being a poet who cherished nature, Iqbal also called Earth a prison.

In another poem, Iqbal expressed the feebleness of Muslims, who have completely surrendered to this material world. Iqbal posted them a unique question that if you couldn't establish your government on planet Earth, weren't there countless other planets in space to manifest the miracles of your religion? (For Iqbal, religion is more than a set of laws and beliefs, it is an expression, which makes reality more attractive for human beings. Religion brings results for mankind instead of becoming a weight that provides nothing but idleness).

In another verse from his book Gift of Hijaz, Iqbal reminds Muslims that the boundless universe awaits their arrival. Critically, Iqbal's idea of religion is quite unorthodox from the usual ritualistic understanding of religion. For Iqbal, being called religious is a two-tier responsibility. It makes every normal being much more curious

than a scientist. Religion for Iqbal is a passion, a passion to express one's self in the highest way while unveiling each sign of Allah.

Iqbal's inspiration is a verse of the Quran which claims that all bodily humans aren't humans rather few are worse than cattle, herds or beasts.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الضَّمَمُ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Indeed, the worst of all beings in the sight of Allah are the 'wilfully' deaf and dumb, who do not understand.

غلام قوموں کے علم و عرفان کی ہے یہی رمز آشکارا
زمیں اگر تنگ ہے تو کیا ہے، فضائے گردوں ہے بے کرانہ^{۳۸}

This is the manifest symbol of the knowledge of the slave people:
What if the earth has limits! the whole expanse of Space is boundless

Thus, other spaces across the abyss could have been used and exploited to reflect the Muslim view of life. Alas, being slaves, they have hardly conquered their little regions on this blue planet. Iqbal criticises the current religious community who take refuge in blaming the West for keeping Muslims colonized or as a slave. Iqbal puts forward a new proposal that if we couldn't establish the kingdom as per scripture, then a much enormous universe is waiting for us to establish that kingdom in a less explored universe. All parts of the universe are expressions of God, and man being the only light, should bravely pierce through this void.

Iqbal's urge for interplanetary travel continues, as we see in this poem from Gabriel Wing:

تُو اے اسیر مکاں! لامکاں سے دور نہیں
وہ جلوہ گاہ ترے خاک داں سے دور نہیں^{۳۹}

Prisoner of Space! You are not far from the Placeless Realm—
That Audience Hall is not far away from your planet.

Iqbal calls man a slave of space, prisoned in this land made of dust. Iqbal had a great interest in physics from the East. He was the earliest scholar to quote terms of quantum physics in his work

(specifically in Reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in Islam). By space, Iqbal refers to space-time. Man has imprisoned himself in shackles of the bounds of space-time. A placeless realm and another world. A world beyond our current understanding of the universe lies out there, waiting for man to conquer it. For that, humans need to soar higher than the realm of space-time or create technology to pass the bounds of space and time.

فضا تری مہ و پرویں سے ہے ذرا آگے
قدم اٹھا، یہ مقام آسماں سے دور نہیں^{۳۰}

Your station lies a little ahead of all the stars and Pleiades:
Move on, for it is not a long way from the skies.

In this verse, Iqbal has pointed out the real podium of man. Iqbal claims that the real station of man is beyond this decaying land. Iqbal considers man a universal being enslaved in this Earth's bounds. Certainly, man is made up of flesh and blood, which grows on the fruits of Earth. However, man has an energy/spirit which is finding its real station. Most Sufis claim that beings are like flutes. They crave to meet their eternal tree. Similarly, man's energy/spirit craves its eternal spirit. Thus, man aims to leave the land of matter and move toward the planes of higher energy. But to be a universal being, Iqbal never underestimates or belittles the flesh. It is an initial ground of existence. Importantly, to be universal, man has to exist and taste both worlds: the world of matter and spirit. This completes his equation of existence.

Again, Iqbal invites space travel which is the central theme of this book. Iqbal urges beings to take the step, and soon, they shall witness the world and space contracting around them. Just ahead of a visible sky lies another land/plane of existence, which will quench the thirst of the soul of man. Certainly, man's energy can push for this rise, it might look very far, but it's just a step away.

کھول آنکھ، زمیں دیکھ، فلک دیکھ، فضا دیکھ
مشرق سے ابھرتے ہوئے سورج کو ذرا دیکھ^{۳۱}

Open your eyes and look above,
Look at the streak of dawn.

In Gabriel's Wing, Iqbal again invites and urges man for a constant inquiry towards the sky. Iqbal repositions the sky as the focal part of the focus although man is being sent down to land. Although man is being sent downwards, he wants the focus to be upwards. Iqbal wants man to look at the grand sky and play a key role as its observant. Iqbal wants man not to forget the sky.

ہیں تیرے تصرف میں یہ بادل، یہ گھٹائیں
یہ گنبدِ افلاک، یہ خاموش فضایں^{۴۲}

Yours are the clouds, the rains, the skies,
Yours are the winds, the storms.

In another verse of the same poem, Iqbal highlights that it is man who is the center of the universe and who is the primal force of the universe. The clouds, the rains, the skies are all secondary to man and it is indeed man who is now being received by the spirit of Earth will give meaning to Earth. Man will add colors to Earth and will forever keep it enchanted. Iqbal takes a hit at our disinterestedness to explore and be curious and not settle as mere insects crawling on Earth. Iqbal is waking man from a deep sleep and reconnecting man to his initial focus i.e. Sky as in between man lost his focus in other mediocre paths.

سمجھے گا زمانہ تری آنکھوں کے اشارے
دیکھیں گے تجھے دُور سے گردوں کے ستارے^{۴۳}

You wilt rule it like a king;
The stars will gaze in wonder.

Iqbal considers Earth a temporary place for man, and here Iqbal paints the picture of the sky and the stars also having their focus on man. What man will create and craft on Earth will equally awe the stars and the sky.

ناپید ترے بحرِ تخیل کے کنارے
پہنچیں گے فلک تک تری آہوں کے شرارے^{۴۴}

Your vision will encompass the earth;
Your sighs will reach the heavens.

Here Iqbal indicates that man's chorus, melody, colors, wonders, and rhythm will shine the stars, will affect the warmth of the sky, and will make a mark in the heavens. Man has infinity bestowed in himself and his mighty works will reach infinite horizons. Although man is being descended down to Earth, he has the power to influence the skies and the stars. Man is connected to the skies and man equally will create waves in the skies and the stars as he is doing on Earth.

نہ تو زمیں کے لیے ہے نہ آسماں کے لیے
جہاں ہے تیرے لیے، تو نہیں جہاں کے لیے^{۴۵}

You are neither for the earth nor for the heaven:
The world is for you, and not you for the world.

In the above-mentioned verse, Iqbal, like Tagore and other humanist thinkers, proposes man as the central measure of the universe. Iqbal considers man as the centre of the universe. A new poetic expression of making man the centre of the complete cosmos, a parallel view to the geocentric or heliocentric universe. Further, Iqbal clarifies his view by stating that the whole cosmic dance demands your sight, the sight of living beings rather than conscious beings. Man, as a conscious existence, is beyond the world of matter. The cosmos exists only to bring more wonder to man. It is created for man, and man is created for higher journeys, inward or outward.

To get a deeper understanding of this verse, we can take a quick view of the chapter *The Man* from *The Illustrated Man* by Ray Bradbury. In that short tale, a captain lands his rocket on another planet. However, he doesn't receive any adequate attention. Therefore, he dispatches his subordinate to check on why there is no curiosity on their arrival on the rocket. His subordinate returns with the news that the person for whom the people of the planet were waiting arrived yesterday; therefore, all curiosity of the residents of that planet had faded away. The man, the messiah, had taken away all the thirst of the residents of that planet. This story of Ray Bradbury

has relevance with this verse, as Iqbal also considers the perfect man as the reason for the growth and shine of this universe.

نشانِ راہ دکھاتے تھے جو ستاروں کو
ترس گئے ہیں کسی مردِ راہِ داں کے لیے^{۴۶}

Once who were beacons to the brightest stars,
Have long been awaiting a guide to show them the way now.

Here again, Iqbal reminds us of esoteric beings who would become guides for the stars. From where we started the book, the primitive beings who captured the mystery of stars and rather became the light for the stars. Now this universe is waiting for those men like beacons that can again take the universe to a brighter future. Iqbal as a poet considers the universe as a matter waiting for its guide and also a man who can guide the universe to its moral corners.

مرے گلوں میں ہے اک نغمہ جبرئیلِ آشوب
سنجھال کر جسے رکھتا ہے لامکاں کے لیے^{۴۷}

I am saving a song for the place-less realm—
A song that could shake even the trusty Gabriel.

This verse again highlights Iqbal's urge for a place-less realm. A realm beyond our stars and skies. Iqbal is looking at the space beyond human understanding. Recalling Douglas Adam's novel *Restaurant at the End of the Universe*. Even at the end of the universe, there is space. Iqbal is even looking beyond that space and calling mankind to rise and transcend.

Celestial Journey of Iqbal to Mars

Iqbal took a celestial journey with his mentor Maulana Rumi in his Persian poetic work *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity). In the work, Iqbal's soul laments and desires to travel to other realms of space-time. During the journey, Iqbal meets various sages and characters from history. Looking at the scope of the book, when we explore *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), Iqbal took a particular interest in Mars, the 4th planet from the Sun, as per our solar system. Iqbal gave a detailed overview of Mars. Interestingly, *Javid Nama* (Book of

Eternity) was written and published in 1932, and Mars became the subject of interest for aerospace engineers in the 1940s. However, Mars has been of great interest in mythology, astrology and astronomy. In modern poetry, Iqbal using his imagination, talked about a complete sociological system of Mars.

Apart from the sociological system of Mars, Iqbal also pictured the atmosphere and physical environment of the red planet. Iqbal said that it is like our planet Earth in many ways. Iqbal is passing these remarks in the 1930s. In contemporary times (2022), investors and scientists started looking at Mars as the next destination for mankind. Iqbal was prophesizing or rather imagining it in the 1930s. Our readers should also take an interest in writers like Italo Calvino. Italo Calvino, in his work *Cosmicomics*, takes his readers on an extra-terrestrial journey. He further creates imaginative tales around scientific ideas. Iqbal introduces the same genre to his audience in the 1930s if not earlier.

Importantly, Iqbal left the planet Earth to find the essence, to find the real position of man in the universe. To find the origin where all real can be verified and to find the spot where light finds its definition. Just like other poets, writers and thinkers from the past, Iqbal laments to find the Real, to see the truth, to find the final destination of man and to read the epilogue of this great cosmic drama. This is equally an important lesson for modern explorers of space that seek more control of space than their competitors.

In *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), Iqbal forwarded virgin ideas on how life is practised on Mars. From daily chores to commerce, from living to death, Iqbal opened a new window for his readers to imagine life on Mars. Interestingly, the person whom Maulana Rumi and Iqbal met on Mars was also an astronomer by profession. He started the conversation with Iqbal in the Persian language. To Iqbal's excitement, the astronomer replied that people from Mars also take an interest in exploring the lives of other planets. Specifically, astronomers talked about a pious person who travelled to Earth in the time of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (S.A.W). He archived the conditions of the planet Earth and pictured it with vivid colours as bright as the sacred heaven. The astronomer further elaborated that he also visited the blue planet of the solar system,

tasted the lands of Iran and Europe, and then travelled to China, Japan and America to understand the minerals and metals of planet Earth. However, the astronomer was also astonished that the man made up of clay and dust had flown beyond his boundaries. That the man of clay has broken his limitations and has ascended for a higher experience of life.

For the reader of this book, Iqbal, at the beginning of the 20th century, was speculating about the role of various nations on Earth. Though China was at its ebb in those times, Iqbal, in another work, *Stray Reflections*, also talked about the duty of the German Nation. Iqbal expressed his high views on Germans about how it was their duty to organize human knowledge. Interestingly, Iqbal further predicted their downfall in the field of philosophy and literature due to trading of their ideals for commerce.

The astronomer in *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity) quoted that people of Mars are fully aware of life on planet Earth; however, citizens of the blue planet aren't aware of Martians. Iqbal hinted at other forms of life in our solar system. We already discussed Dark Forest Theory at the beginning of this book. Iqbal had similar views about other forms of life in our universe.

Just to draw a complete system of society, Iqbal introduces a character titled "Barkhiya", the ancestor of all beings on Mars, similar to Adam as the first man. Barkhiya also receives bait from the evil (named "Farzmurz" by Iqbal); however, the great ancestor (of beings on Mars) doesn't fall for the bait. As Barkhiya doesn't fall victim to the evil plan, God, in return, bestows a new world on them, which is called "Marghadin". This thought might capture our readers as our great ancestor, Adam, fell for the bait from Satan and ate from the tree of Eden Garden. This is why as a result, we (beings of Earth) live in a land of colours and pain. Beings of Mars never had to descend to the lows of life as their ancestor took the right decision, and subsequently, all expressions of life are pure on Mars and without any oppression.

Mars and Knowledge of the Sun

In *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), the astronomer enlightened Iqbal and Maulana Rumi about the scientific thirst of Martians and

how the people of Mars were well aware of the internal composition of the Sun. By using the energy of the Sun, they fulfilled all their material needs and desires through Gold and Silver and just like man on Earth could extract salt from seawater, Martians enslaved the energies of the Sun. The knowledge of the Martians was only for the benefit of others.

Iqbal further highlighted the critical area of air pollution, which is now catching the attention of our scientists, along with space debris, which is the next challenge for scientists and space travellers. The Martian astrologer spoke about clean space around Mars and also criticized the practices of dwellers of planet Earth.

Is Universe Moral?

Discussion about Mars in Iqbal's Persian work reflects that Iqbal's idea of conquering or exploring comes with a lot of moral responsibility. Before man leaves dark matter with a stain of his greed and obsession with ownership, we must realize and redraft the answer to the question of why we are travelling to space and whether we want to repeat the mistakes that we made on planet Earth. Will the same vendetta and evil habits be carried across the universe?

Ahmed Javaid Sb considers the universe as a moral being. In its final definition, it might turn out to be a moral being rather than an object made up of dead matter. Earlier attempts at space travel turned toxic among countries, and space became the arena of the next competition.

Poetically, sometimes I feel that the universe might hide its moral, alive or conscious self while looking at the evil intentions of our space programs. Space programs run only to show superiority in neighbouring countries. Just like we conceal our real selves when we feel that the other person is deceiving us, therefore, the universe might not open up its secrets. Let's take another fresh look at the universe; our earth is surrounded by countless stars and galaxies. The universe is so vast that light has to take a break and catch its breath to run again. It is finite yet expanding, and we hardly know anything about it. What if all the stars are neurons of a huge brain? What if the Earth is nothing but a living consciousness, which is breathing (and

as we are in the expansion phase, therefore, it's breathing out nowadays?)? What if there is a Sun outside the complete universe, and we are only experiencing the nighttime? And after a trillion years, the Sun will rise again, and all the secrets will be unveiled.

Importantly, when Iqbal discusses Mars in his *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), through Martians, he reminds mankind of morality and living with a conscience. What if we explore the complete universe and there is a board at the end stating “*Be Moral*”? What if reality is turned the same way as expressed in the famous *Ten Ox Herding Pictures* from Japanese culture? When I know myself and self-actualize my being, I am asked to go back and serve others. Thus, it is crucial to define the real purpose of why we are travelling to space. Are we travelling to know the space to boost our ego? Or to start another toxic race into infinity? Or belittle others by our victories in space? With this attitude, it's better to stay on Earth. Iqbal scientifically chose Mars as the accurate spot to have a utopia for his *Javid Nama* (Book of Eternity), but Iqbal also chose a character of an astronomer who left an important message for mankind. What if we find a distant planet, a replica of our Earth with more abundant resources? What will we do then?

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