

IQBAL'S INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY: FROM
ENLIGHTENMENT TO QURANIC
REVIVAL AND REFORM

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the intellectual and spiritual transformation of Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) in the context of 19th-century thinkers and the role of his mentor, Syed Mir Hasan, in shaping Iqbal's understanding of Islamic teachings, the Quran, and Islamic history. It delves into Iqbal's exposure to the Quranic knowledge and the Prophetic sayings, highlighting the Prophet's warnings about following in the footsteps of Jews and Christians in distorting the divine message. Iqbal's intellectual journey, marked by his dissatisfaction with the conventional understanding of Islam, led him to Europe, where he encountered Western scholarship and philosophy, significantly influencing his thought process. The article traces the impact of European intellectual movements, particularly in Biblical studies, on Iqbal's evolving critique of religious distortions and his deep engagement with the Quran. It examines how Iqbal, through his study of Western historical criticism and the methods used to analyze the Old and New Testaments, came to understand similar distortions within the Muslim world. This realization led Iqbal to emphasize the importance of reformation and returning to the original doctrines of the Quran.

Furthermore, the article discusses Iqbal's internal conflict between abandoning poetry for prose, influenced by his desire to focus on research and reform, and how his mentor, Professor Thomas Arnold, guided him to continue using poetry as a means to convey his philosophical and religious ideas. The article concludes with a reflection on Iqbal's poetry as a medium for his intellectual, religious, and societal reforms, underscoring his call for a revival of the true spirit of the Quran and Islamic thought to rejuvenate the Muslim Ummah.

The 19th C. of human history is regarded as the century of thinkers, philosophers, and ideas. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Mirza Asad-Ullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869), Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914), were among the notable ones. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was also born in the 19th C.

Syed Mir Hasan (1844-1929) a distinguished scholar of the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic history, a renowned professor of Arabic at Scotch Mission College in Sialkot imparted knowledge of Arabic and Persian to Iqbal and trained him in the Quran, Statements of the RasoolAllah (Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic history and thus through his knowledge influenced him deeply. It seems that Syed Mir Hasan, who had met Mirza Ghalib and was an ardent supporter and admirer of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan introduced Iqbal to these two great luminaries of his time, and thus directed and helped Iqbal to write poems like “Mirza Ghalib” and “*Syed ki Lob-e-Turba*”. Otherwise, such writings could not be expected from Iqbal before 1905. The lower and higher criticism of the poem “Mirza Ghalib” depicts the thoughtfulness and innovativeness of Iqbal’s mind. An in-depth reading of the poem “Mirza Ghalib” gives an insight into Iqbal’s thorough understanding of the Quran, Statements of Rasool Allah (Prophet Muhammad), and Islamic history. Moreover, Iqbal’s poem “*Syed ki Lob-e-Turba*” is a substantial proof of his command and thoughtfulness over the Quran, Hadith literature, biography of the Prophet of Islam, and Statements of the Prophet of Islam.

Definitely, Iqbal would have gone through the following statements of the Prophet of Islam and would be aware about their implications:

1. “You will certainly follow the ways of those who came before you, hand span by hand span, cubit by cubit, to the extent that if they entered the hole of a lizard, you will enter it too.” We said: “O Messenger of Allah, (do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?” He said: “Who else?”¹

2. “O Messenger of Allah! Make a Dhat Anwat (Nabk – Ziziphus spina-christi) for us as they have a *Dhat Anwat*.’ The Prophet (SAW) said: “*Subhan Allah!* This is like what Musa’s people said: Make for us a god like their gods. By the One in Whose control is my soul! You shall follow the way of those who were before you.”²

These aforementioned statements were symbolic to the behaviour of Jews and Christians with regard to (i) *Kitab Allah* (Revealed Book), (ii) *Deen Allah* (Divine Law), and (iii) *Rusul Allah* (Prophets of God), which simply highlights their dubious intent towards the Divine Laws, the Revealed Books, and Prophets of God. These statements of the Prophet were prescient that the *Ulema* of Muslim *Ummah* and its Elders will do the same with *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah* (Quran), and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as Jews and Christians did before them to their prophets and Revealed Books.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal would have been well acquainted with the deeds of the Jews and Christians towards Allah's prophets, His *Deen*, and Books before 1905 based on his understanding of the Quran, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Confound Truth with Falsehood - Surah Al Baqarah 2:42
2. Knowingly Conceal the Truth - Surah Al Baqarah 2:42
3. O People of the Book! Why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and knowingly conceal the truth? – Surah Al Imran 3:71
4. Those unto whom We have given the Book recognize it as they recognize their children, but knowingly conceal the truth- Surah Al Baqarah 2:146
5. Truly those who deviate with regard to Our sign are not hidden from Us- Surah Fussilat 41: 40
6. When God made the covenant with those who were given the Book.....they cast it behind their backs and sold it for a paltry price-Surah Al Imran 3:187
7. It is they who have purchased error at the price of Guidance- Surah Al Baqarah 2:16; 86 Surah Al Tawbah 9:9;
8. Sell not the pact of God for a paltry price -Surah Al Nahl 16:95

Although, the details of such kind of treacherous behaviour are not found in the body of knowledge of *Ummat-e-Muhammadiyya*, therefore it is assumed that Iqbal would have been a seeker of all such details, which he certainly came across during his visit and stay in Europe. As far as the behaviour and deeds of Jews and Christians are concerned towards *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah*, and *Rasool Allah*, this article would have encompassed all the three aspects of their deeds. However, as per the title of the article, we will entail our discussion related to the Book of Allah i.e., the Quran.

As far as the attitudes and deeds of Jews and Christians towards the books of Allah i.e. Tanak and Gospel are concerned, before 1905, Iqbal might have been aware about it through the available body of knowledge that is found in the Muslim World, which may be

regarded as negligible as to get an insight of their methods and procedures of distorting the original message of Tanakh and Gospel. Moreover, this knowledge is only found in the following verses of Quran:

1. **Distortion of the original message-** “Among those who are Jews are those who distort the meaning of the word” (Surah Al Nisa 4:46)
2. **Breaking of Covenant and distortion of the word-** “Then for breaking of their covenant, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They distort the meaning of the Word” (Surah Al Maidah 5:14)
3. **Distortion of the meaning of the word -** “they distort the meaning of the word” (Surah Al Maidah 5:41)
4. **Listen to lies -** “Those who listen to lies” (Surah Al Maidah 5:42)
5. **Unlawful consumption-** “and consume what is unlawful” (Surah Al Maidah 5:42)
6. **Turning back from the Original Message of Allah-** “they turn their backs, and they are not believers” (Surah Al Maidah 5:43)
7. **Spreading Lies-** “Who listen to lies and spread it to others” (Surah Al Maidah 5:41)
8. **Distorting the Word of God after hearing-** “hear the word of God and then distort it after they had understood it” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:75)
9. **Writing Book by their hand selling it as Book of God-** “So woe unto those who write the book with their hands, then say, ‘this is from God,’ that they may sell it for a paltry price” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:79)
10. **Substitute the Book of God-** “But those who did wrong, substitute a word other than that which had been said to them” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:59)
11. **Hear and disobey-** “They said, ‘We hear, and disobey” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:93)
12. **Make Division-** “Such as We have sent down for those who make division” (Surah Al-Hijr 15:90)
13. **Made the Quran into fragments-** “Who made the Quran into fragments” (Surah Al-Hijr 15:91)

The aforesaid verses of the Quran in the light of statements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) highlight that the Muslim *Ulema* and Elders of *Ummat-e-Muhammadiyya* will do the same with the Book of Allah as People before them i.e., Jews and Christians did with the books of Allah as mentioned in the said verses of the Quran. Iqbal

having knowledge of Jews and Christians behaviour and attitude towards the book of Allah as mentioned in the Quran visited Europe for studies. It seems that his visit to Europe for studies was as per the Divine Plan so that he could get the answers of the questions which he could not find within the available body of Islamic Knowledge in the Muslim world. He stayed in Europe for three years (from 1905 to 1908). During his stay in Europe his efforts were focused to get the answers of the questions which would have been haunting him after coming across with the aforementioned statements of the prophet of Islam and verses of the Quran. These questions can be listed as follows:

1. Is the statement of the Prophet of God incorrect?
2. Is the knowledge of the Prophet of God imperfect?
3. Are the statements of prophet of God based on his assumption?

As per the Muslim *Ulema* and Jurists, the Quran which we have is as it was handed over by the Prophet of Islam to the Companions. As per the Muslim Scholars, *Ulema*, and Jurists, there is no chance of distortion of even a word, and punctuation. The dichotomy between the belief system of *Ulema* and the statements of *Rasool Allah* about the distortion of the original message of Allah made Iqbal an unsatisfied soul as he loved the Prophet of Islam to the core of his heart. Under such circumstances, he would have definitely decided to do research on (i) statements of the Prophet of God, and (ii) Truthfulness of the statements of the Prophet.

The 19th C. Europe delved into the explosion of Cognitive Intellect, Philosophy, and Knowledge. Muhammad Iqbal's contact with the early Twentieth Century European World, which was experiencing cognitive revolution made him Allama Iqbal. As per my knowledge, the Urdu world and Muslim *Ummah* is ignorant about the role of cognitive revolution of 19th C. Europe in transforming Muhammad Iqbal into Allama Iqbal. The forward of *Kulliyat-e-Iqbal* written by Shaikh Abdul Qadir elaborated a little bit of Iqbal's experiences in Europe and its role in his transformation. The impact of his visit in transforming him can be explained in hundreds of pages, which is not desirable here. According to Shaikh Abdul Qadir, "A new epoch in Iqbal poetry started from 1905-08. During this time he stayed in Europe.....During this time two drastic thoughts came to his mind.....One day, Iqbal told me that he would like to renounce poetry.....Prof. Arnold agreed with me and it was decided that renouncing poetry is not right for Iqbal.....However, this lead Iqbal to change his language of poetry

from Urdu to Persian, and Iqbal gave preference to Persian over Urdu language”.³

In the 19th C., Biblical study in the Jewish and Christian world exploded like a volcano. In actuality, the research and investigation in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) started in the 18th C., but it reached its zenith in the 19th C. The research and investigation in the OT and NT revolutionized the world and it affected each and every aspect of human life. The OT for Jews is called Tanakh, an acronym which derives from the three types of holy writings: *Torah* (Law); *Neviim* (Prophets); and *Ketuvim* (Writings). The discourses on OT and NT revealed that the division of scriptures into verses and chapters was not in the minds of the original authors, but later innovations. Verses were introduced in the 9th C., and chapters in the 13th C. The order of the books of the Hebrew Bible differs from that of the Christians Old Testament, while the Catholic OT has inter-testamental books and the Protestant OT does not. Moreover, there is a great disagreement on the meanings of the words used in OT and NT. Thus, the scholarship and analysis relating to OT and NT revolutionized all aspects of human life i.e., intellectual, philosophical, societal, political, economic, and civilizational. In fact, these discourses on OT and NT were going on between two groups of Christians and Jews i.e., Catholic and Protestants; Orthodox Jews and proponents of reformed Judaism, and they based their observations on research and Investigation of OT and NT. This discourse encompassed all the discipline of human sciences and revolutionized the process of cognitive explosion. In this reference, it feels pertinent to mention here the discourse which occurred among the notable scholars of 18th and 19th C related to OT.

The Historical Method of Analysis: This method first used and developed by the German theologian and Biblical scholar named Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780-1849). His book *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel* (Textbook of the Historical-Critical Introduction to the Bible-1817) laid the foundation of higher criticism movement, which reached its apogee with the persuasive synthesis of Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), a German Biblical Scholar and Orientalist, who is known for his critical investigations into OT history and the composition of Hexateuch. However, this movement of historical criticism reached its zenith with the scholarship of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel's major works include “*The Phenomenology of Spirit*” (1807), “*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*” (1817) and “*Philosophy of Right*” (1821). Hegel proved to be one of the most important

scholar in this field who revolutionised the process of philosophical, and intellectual understanding of the OT and laid the foundation of Hegelianism, a Philosophical School based on his writings. Hegel's immediate followers in Germany are generally divided into the Hegelian Rightists (also known as Right Hegelians or Old Hegelians); the Hegelian Leftists (also known as Left Hegelians or Young Hegelians); and Centralist Hegelian. The Rightists Hegelians developed Hegel's philosophy along lines which they considered to be in accordance with Christian theology, and took his philosophy in a politically and religiously conservative direction. The Right Hegelians felt that the series of historical dialectics had been completed, and that Prussian society as it existed was the culmination of all social development to date. Among the Rightists Hegelians, Johann Philipp Gabler (1753 - 1826), Karl Friedrich Goschel (1784 - 1861), and Johann Eduard Erdmann (1805 - 1892) are very famous.

The Leftists Hegelians accentuated the anti-Christian tendencies of Hegel's system, and believed that there were still further dialectical changes to come, and that the Prussian society of the time was far from perfect. The list of Leftists Hegelians includes the names of those who changed the course of discourse in philosophy and started a new epoch of the Western Civilization. Famous Leftists Hegelians are as follows:

1. Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804 - 1872),
2. Max Stirner (1806-1874)
3. David Friedrich Strauss (1808 - 1874),
4. Bruno Bauer (1809 - 1882),
5. Karl Marx (1818-1883)
6. Friedrich Engels (1820 - 1895)

Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz (1805 - 1879) is one of the famous Centralists Hegelians. This German based Hegelianism also influenced British School of Philosophy and laid the foundation of British Idealism. Among British Hegelians T. H. Green (1836 - 1882), F. H. Bradley (1846 - 1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848 - 1923), J. M. E. McTaggart (1866 - 1925), H. H. Joachim (1868 - 1938) and J. H. Muirhead (1855 - 1940) are famous ones. During his stay in England, Iqbal came very close to McTaggart and benefitted from his ideas and work.

With reference to the Scholarship of OT, two more scholars are worth mentioning here:

1. Johann Karl Wilhelm Vatke (1806-1882), and
2. Georg Heinrich August Ewald

W. Vatke was one of the founders of the newer Hexateuch criticism. He published his book *Die Religion des Alten Testaments nach den kanonischen Büchern entwickelt* (The religion of the Old Testament developed according to the Canonical Books), which contained the seeds of a revolution in the ideas held about the Old Testament in the same year in which David Strauss published his seminal work *Life of Jesus*. Georg H. A. Ewald, was a German orientalist, Protestant theologian, and Biblical Exegete. H. Ewald's work on 'Hebrew Grammar' inaugurated a new era in biblical philology, and he was regarded as "the second founder of the science of the Hebrew language" by Ferdinand Hitzig (1807-1875), who was himself a Biblical critic. His seminal work, which was the result of his thirty years hard labour titled as "*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*", is considered outstanding work in Historical Criticism branch of research.

With regard to the Historical Method of the study of OT, five more scholars are worth mentioning here, as they are responsible to use this method extensively in their study of OT. They are as follows:

1. Edouard Guillaume Eugène Rues (1804-1891)
2. Karl Heinrich Graf (1815-1869)
3. Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891)
4. Julius Wellhausen, and
5. Bernhard Duhm (1847-1928)

Julius Wellhausen researched on Hexateuch published in 1833 titled as "Prolegomena to the History of Israel", which is one of the critical study on OT.

As far as New Testament (NT) is concerned, Tübingen School and its critics played an important role in it. David Strauss (1808-1874) laid the foundation of Tübingen School with the publication of his book "Das Leben Jesu" (The Life of Jesus) in 1834. Bruno Bauer's book on "Kritik der Evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker" (Criticism of the Evangelical History of the Synoptics), published in 1841 is also one of the fundamental book in this series. Among critics of Tübingen School are J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889), B.F. Westcott (1825-1901), and A Von Harnack (1851-1930). Moreover, it feels pertinent here to mention a book titled as "Die Geschichte des Koran" (The History of Quran) written by Theodore Noldeke, a famous disciple of Georg H. A. Ewald. It is certain that Iqbal had gone through this book in particular and the writings of Western scholars pertaining to OT, NT and Quran in general. After having gone through the scholarly work of aforementioned Biblical Scholars, he became aware about the methods and procedures of Jewish and Christians priestly class

which they used to distort the original message of Holy Scriptures as highlighted in the Quranic verses (2:42; 3:71; 2:146; 41:40; 3:187; 2:16/86; 9:9; 16:95; 4:46; 5:14; 5:41; 5:42; 5:43; 2:75; 2:79; 2:59; 2:93; 15:90; 15:91). Besides, he also became aware about the condition and pattern which would have to develop in the body of Muslim *Ummah* after the Prophet as per his (PBUH) sayings about the role of *Ulemas* and Elders in the distortion of the original message of Quran. Thus, Iqbal became more focused towards the Quran and tried to understand the reality of the statements of the Prophet of Islam, which could not be wrong as per his thoughtfulness. This was the time when Iqbal faced the worst crisis in his intellectual life and decided to leave poetry. However, a question arises here, why did he want to renounce poetry? Or what did he want to do instead of writing poetry? A close and in-depth investigation of the matter reveals that he would like to renounce poetry for prose writing. He intended to focus on research in *Deen Allah*, *Kitab Allah*, and *Rasool Allah* as this work could not be possible in poetry. Iqbal shared this idea of renouncing poetry with prose with Abdul Qadir, and he did not endorse Iqbal's views. Since Iqbal was adamant to renounce poetry, the matter was placed before Prof. Thomas Walker Arnold for an insightful guidance and direction. The decision of Prof. Arnold pertaining to Iqbal's intellectual crisis is one of the most critical decision in the history of mankind as it was related to a thinker, and philosopher like Iqbal. His decision reveals his comprehensive understanding of Islam and the profoundness and astuteness of Iqbal's mind. However, it is not easy to comprehend the insight into Arnold's decision for which he had gone through an extraordinary contemplation of mankind's history as explained in the Quran, OT, and NT, which is a prerequisite of such a critical decision. To understand the vision of Arnold's decision, three aspects should be kept in mind about the Thomas Walker Arnold, which are as follows:

1. Capability and competencies of Arnold.
2. His understanding of mankind's history, and role of societies and individuals in pushing the human race ahead.
3. Extensive understanding of Iqbal's intellect.

To get an idea about the capabilities and competencies of Arnold, an overview of his accomplishments will be worth mentioning, which are listed as follows:

1. His early education took place in the City of London School and higher education in Magdalen College, Cambridge University, London.

2. He was appointed as a Professor at Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh.
3. He was appointed as a Professor of Philosophy at Government College, Lahore.
4. He became Dean of the Oriental Faculty at Punjab University.
5. He also worked as Librarian at the India Office in London.
6. He was appointed as Education Advisor to Indian students in Britain.
7. He was appointed as Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London.
8. His perspicacity and insight into Islamic history could be best understood by his writings i.e., *The Preaching of Islam* (1896); and *Al-Muatazilah* (1902).

He was having amplitude and profound understanding of crisis which occur in the life of thinkers, and how do it affects the society at large before giving his decision on Iqbal's intellectual crisis, such as:

1. The intellectual struggle of great Jewish philosophers and history of reformation in Judaism i.e., Moses Ben Maimon/Musa Bin Maymun (1135-1204); Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677); Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819); and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and its effect on society.

2. The history of reformation in Christianity and intellectual struggle of Christian Philosophers i.e., John Calvin (1509-1564); Martin Luther (1483-1546); and Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) and its effect on society.

3. The history of reformation in Islamic Society, and the contribution of great Islamic Philosophers and reformers with special reference to Indian Subcontinent, which was Arnold's specialization. He had witnessed the same during his assignments in India as Professor of MAO, Professor in Government College, and Dean in Punjab University. In this reference two points were his focus of attention:

- i. Improvisational, reversing and lagging nature of prevalent Educational curriculum of Islamic World-Based on his personal interaction with Shibli Noumani and analysis of his imperatives, Arnold concluded that the current state of Educational curriculum found in Islamic World is unchangeable as it is highly conditioned, centuries would require for any change directed towards breaking this conditioning and taking the Muslims out of this conditioning.
- ii. The efforts and consequences of implementing any strategic change agenda to reform educational curriculum prevalent in

the Islamic World- Having Observed Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's efforts of reforming education system in the Islamic World and the resistance of Muslim Ulemas and Elders to Syed's call, Arnold came to know that Muslim world of Syed Ahmad Khan is more conditioned and dangerous than the Christian World of Martin Luther.

Arnold had an insight of Iqbal's innovative and thoughtful mind, which is evident from Iqbal's poem '*Nala Firaq*'. With this reference, he had many points in his mind related to Iqbal's decision of leaving poetry for prose writing, such as:

1. Iqbal was an extension of Sir Syed's efforts to take the Muslim World out of darkness. Moreover, Iqbal was well aware of the Western Knowledge base and its objectives.
2. Iqbal's prose might be more catastrophic than Sir Syed's prose to the Muslim World for which Muslim World was not ready. In this backdrop, Iqbal's efforts of reformation in the Islamic World might prove catastrophic and fail in the first step.
3. On the other hand, preventing Iqbal's intellectual journey would be a great crime against humanity.
4. Keeping in view the Muslim World, their history and polity, poetry is the only way out to reach the elders and masses and calling them towards reformation in such challenging circumstances.

Thus, in the light of his knowledge of Islamic World and Western reformation movements, Arnold pronounced his decision that Iqbal should not renounce poetry.

Iqbal's intellectual journey in the enlightened environment of Europe enhanced his academic acumen and transformed him into a philosopher, thinker, and reformer, who directed his poetry as a means to reform Islamic society, which had become corrupt through its continuous living in a conditioned environment. This feature has been aptly presented by Sir Muhammad Iqbal as-

*Tasawwuf Tamaddun Shariat Kalam; Butan-e-Ajam Ke Pujari Tamaam!
Haqeeqat Khurafat me Kho Gayee; Yeh Ummat Riwayat me Kho Gayee!*⁴

In Mysticism, Culture, Fiqh and Theology; All follow their primordial faith of worshiping idols! The true Islamic doctrine has been lost in absurdities!

Therefore, Iqbal was confronted with the problem of choosing the language for his poetry, as Urdu was not regarded much advanced to express the gravity of his ideas, so he decided on Persian to express his ideas and thoughts. The same problem was faced by Mirza Ghalib, and he said:

Farsi Been Ta bah Beeni Naqsh Haya Rang Rang

Bagzar Aaz Majmua-e Urdu ke Berange Man Ast!

Look something over my Persian (Poetry) so that you could find myriad of (enchanted) colours. So far as my Urdu (Poetry) is concerned it is just like my sketch.

Therefore, Iqbal made a drastic decision of choosing Persian over Urdu for expression of his ideas into poetical form.

This detailed note on Iqbal's intellectual journey and influence of Enlightenment is necessary for us to get a proper view of Iqbal's perspicacity of the Quran. Moreover, the above discussion was desired to portray his real image as a philosopher, thinker, and reformer, since the Muslim society considers him as a poet. Iqbal had serious objection upon his recognition as a poet, which is evident from the given couplet.

*Meri Nuwa-e-Preshan Ko Shayari Na Samajh
Ke Main Hun Mebram-e-Raaz-e-Darun-e-Maikhana*

Do not take my confounded notes as poetry, I am, indeed, one who knows the secret of the tavern.

*Dar-e-ghame Degar Basouz Deegra Ra Ham Basouz;
Ghuftmat Roushan Hadeesi, Gartawani Dar Goush*

Smolder for other's agony and let other's smoulder too. I am telling you an elucidative thing listen if you possess (a hearing) ear.

*Keh Gye Hain Shayari Juzweest Aaz Peghambari
Haan Suna De Mehfil-e-Millat Ko Pegham-e-Sarosh*

It is told that poetry is part of Prophecy (which Prophets do accomplish). So, go and tell the people what heaven does pronounce.

Iqbal's ideas on Quran can be best understood through his following couplets:

1. The Ummat-e-Muslima has abandoned Quran-

*Wob Zamane Mein Mu'azzaz Thai Musalman Ho Kar
Aur Tum Khawar Huwe Taarik-e-Quran Ho Kar*

They were honoured in the World because they were true Muslims,
And You live a disgraced life as you have abandoned Al Quran.

2. In actuality, the message of Quran has become incomprehensible for common man-

*Aah, Iss Raaz Se Waqif Hai Na Mullah, Na Faqeeh
Wahdat Afkar Ki Be-Wahdat-e-Kirdar Hai Kham
Qoum Kya Cheez Hai, Qoumon Ki Imamat Kya Hai
Iss Ko Kya Samjhain Ye Bechare Do Rakat Ke Imam!*

Ah! Neither Mullah nor faqih envisages the fact that Unity of thought without unity of actions is imperfect! What is a community, and what is the meaning of leadership to the community? These Ulemas who lead community prayers have no clue of that

3. The meaning of Quran and its interpretation- Iqbal was well aware about the methods of tampering the scriptures, and he gave special emphasis on one aspects of it and that was Fiqhization of the Quran. Iqbal Said:

*Khud Badalte Nabin, Quran Ko Badal Dete Hain
Humre Kis Darja Faqeehan-e-Haram Be-Toufseeq!*

The jurists do not change their outlook but would prefer to change the Quran as per their outlook. Up to such extent Jurists have become corrupt and ignorant!

*Abkaam Tere Haq Hain Magar Apne Mufassir
Taveel Se Quran Ko Bana Sakte Hain Pazand*

Your laws are just, but our exegete; transformed Quran into the footnote of Avesta-e-Zind through inauthentic, biased exegesis!

Iqbal was well aware about the statement of the prophet of Islam which is narrated as follows: “Indeed, Islam began as something strange (unrecognized) and it shall soon return as it did occur earlier. Thus, there is good news for the strangers (unrecognized)”⁵⁵, and for the actualization of this statement of the Prophet of Islam, Muslim *Ummah* is in need of having thorough understanding of the Quran as it was possessed by the Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and developing a true Islamic Spirit in the heart of each and every individual Muslim so that he could be called *Momin*. Therefore, Iqbal said:

*Tere Zameer Pe Jab Tak na Ho Nuzool-e-Kitab;
Girah Kusba Hai Na Raazi Na Sahib-e-Kashaf*

Unless the Quran’s each verse and part be revealed unto your heart; You cannot be benefitted with the knowledge of Islam which has been given in the form of the Quran.

There is a general belief that above mentioned couplets from *Bal-e-Jibril* have been dedicated to Fakhruddin Raazi, however, I am sure that this interpretation is incorrect. As per my study, Iqbal would like to state that without having a sound understanding of the original doctrine of Quran as possessed by the Prophet of Islam and his Companions, one cannot get an insight of real Islamic Knowledge as given in the form of the Quran as well as could be benefitted out of it.

4. Original Quranic doctrine cannot be possessed with the help or assistance of prevalent Islamic educational curriculum, knowledge of Quran, and Islamic Educational System.

5. The reason of centuries old intellectual, ideological, and scientific insensitivity among the Muslims is the erosion of Quranic Language, Informed Understanding of Quran, Quranic Science from the Muslim Society. Therefore, Iqbal Said:

Magar Woh Ilm Ke Moti, Kitabain Apne Aaba Ki;

Jo Dekhein Inko Europe Me To Dil Hota Hai Seepara!

When one finds those pearls of knowledge- the works of our forefathers in Europe the heart is broken into pieces.

Ghani Rozē Siyah Peer-e-Canaa Ra Tamasha Kun

Ke Noor Deeda Ash Roshan-e-Kund-e Chashm Zulekha Ra

O! Ghani! Look at black (agonizing) days of the blind old man of Canaan (Jacob), how the light of his eyes enlightens the eyes of Zulaikha (instead of his).

6. The Muslims are being annihilated across the globe due to their ignorance of Original doctrine of the Quran. Iqbal addressed them as Ignorant and conditioned falcon in these couplets from *Bal-e-Jibrik*:

Who Faraib Khurda Shabeen Jo Pala Ho Kargason Mein;

Ussay Kya Khabar Ke Kya Hai Rab-o-Rasm-e-Shabbazi

A falcon who has been raised and nurtured among the vultures remains ignorant of its strengths and strategies of hunting.

7. The Muslim *Ummah* is without Quranic Leadership and has become priest ridden, the Ulemas of Ummah due to their anti-Quranic behaviour and attitude have lost all their potential which is required to give leadership to Ummah. Now these Ulemas are bound to slavery, blindly following their ancestors in defiance of the prohibition of ancestor worship by Allah, lacking all initiatives to research of research of the Quran and Statements of Prophet of Islam. Iqbal Said:

Halqa-e-Shouk Mein Who Jurrat-e-Andesha Kahan

Aab Mehkoomi-o-Taqleed-o-Zawal-e-Tehqeeq!

The mystics, who were keen to spread their faith, are silent now and thought for them a dread; Alas! The state of bondage deprives of zest, slaves tread the beaten path and relinquish quest to know the truth.

8. According to Iqbal, following steps are needed to revitalize the Ummah and to actualize the statement of prophet of Islam i.e., Islam will return as it began:

- i. Restoration of Original doctrine of the Quran through reinstatement of Quranic language, and informed understanding of the Quran.
- ii. Replacement of prevalent Islamic educational curriculum with the restored Quranic curriculum.
- iii. Restoration of Quranic Curriculum shall be followed by Quranic Science.

Therefore, Iqbal said in his famous poem "The Rise of Islam":

Sabak Phir Pad Sadaqat Ka, Adalat Ka, Shujaat Ka;

Liya Jayega Tujh Se Kaam Duniya Ki Imamat Ka!

Once Again Read the Lesson of Truthfulness, Justice, and Bravery;
Then you will be asked to lead the World

Notes and References

- ¹ *Sahib Bukhari*, Hadith No.7320
- ² *Jami` at-Tirmidhi* 2180; Book Reference: Book 33, Hadith 23; English Translation: Vol. 4, Book 7, Hadith 2180
- ³ Excerpt from the Forward of *Kulliyat-e Iqbal* by Shaikh Abdul Qadir
- ⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, Saqi Nama, *Bal-e-Jibril, Kulyat-e-Iqbal*, Educational Book House, Aligarh, 2013, p.124
- ⁵ As reported by *Sahib Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad*, and Al-Albaanee