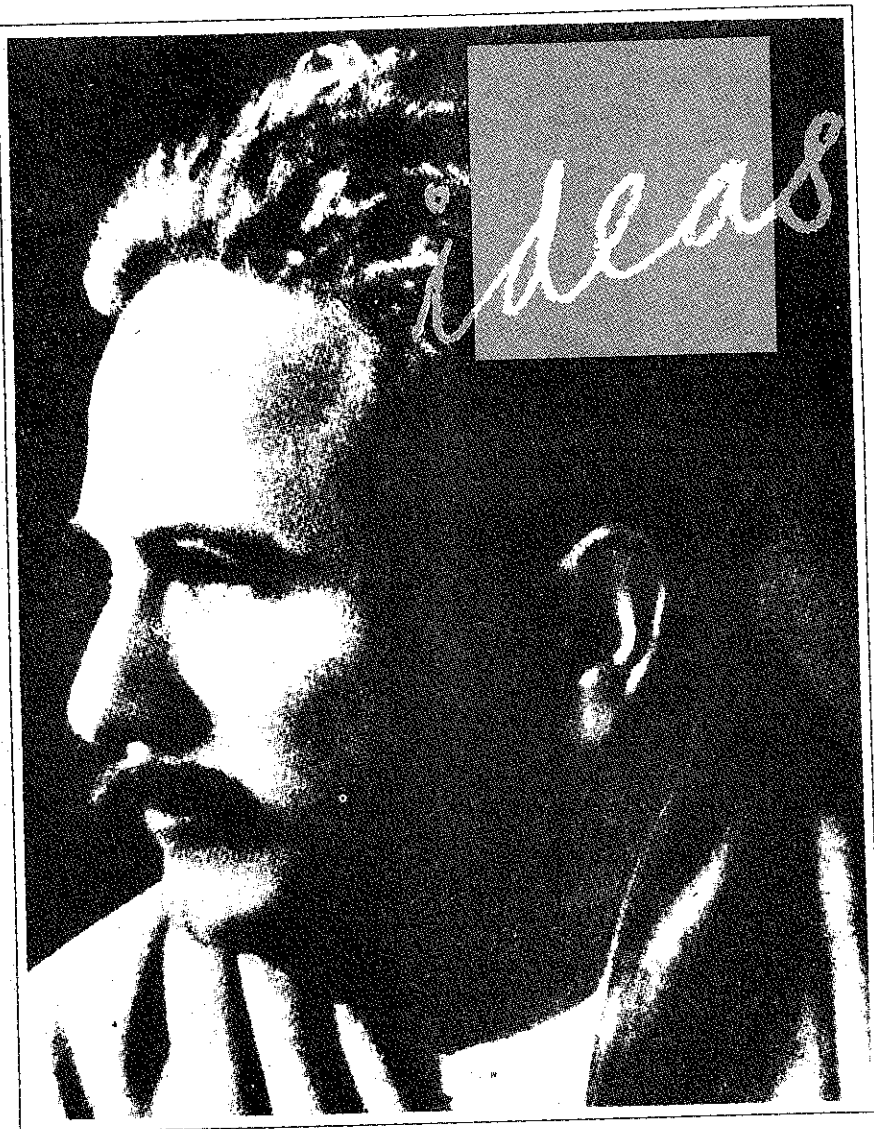


*Nations are born in the hearts of Poets; they prosper and die in the hands of politicians. (Iqbal)*

PHILOSOPHICALLY and ideologically, Pakistan is the legacy of Iqbal. To say this, however, is to overstate the significance of his role. Pakistan is the outcome of the struggle of Indian Muslims during the British Raj; it is the embodiment of their concrete political vision and the inevitable heir to the millennium-long Muslim presence in India. Ultimately, however, the nascent Muslim state owes its genesis to the perennial logic of Islam which conceives the paramount role of faith as the creation of a political community. Nevertheless, it was Iqbal who, coming at a propitious moment, sublimated the pristine emotions of the Indo-Muslim community by the refined vision of a poet and articulated its political aspirations in the reasoned language of a philosopher. Dutifully thus he is acknowledged as the poet-philosopher of Pakistan, and even more justifiably, acclaimed as a great thinker of modern Islam, because his ecstatic poet's image of a 'Muslim national state' is informed with an understanding of the nature of Muslim polity that is remarkable for its philosophical acumen. In him do we find the happy coalition of the three extraordinary gifts: the ferour of faith, the wisdom of sages and the inspiration of the muse.

In his straddling of philosophy and poetry, Iqbal is deeply rooted in the tradition of Sufism, of which he is sometimes ambiguously censorious. Quite like the Persian mystics, he pours his philosophy in the vessel of poetry, mingling rhapsodic intuition with reasoning intellect. The borderline between ecstasy and sobriety, between poetic licence and philosophic restraint, between rhetorical truth and logical statement is often imperceptible in his writings. He wrote poetry in the manner of a philosophical discourse and his reflections on philosophy and theology read like poems. Moreover, the teacher and reformer in him often takes priority over the poet and the philosopher: much of what he wrote, especially during the later part of his life, is self-consciously didactic; so that he has often been indicted for being an incoherent and unsystematic thinker. Then, the vicissitudes of his life and of the age he lived in have taken their own toll on this thought: he is frequently inconsistent with himself, shifting ground more often than not. In all this, however, he is no more than human: logical consistency



## The Faithful as a Nation

The political vision of Pakistan was distilled in the rhapsodic poetry of Iqbal. **S Parvez Manzoor** examines the thought of the man who achieved a contemporary synthesis of philosophy, poetry and politics.

and systematic coherence belong more to the realm of abstraction than the world of living souls. Nonetheless, a systematic recapitulation of Iqbal's thought, it goes without saying, is a tenuous exercise in subjectivity, not only because what he said was stray and impressionistic, but what he meant was also elusive and elliptical. Having said all this, one must remind the reader that despite all his difficulties, Iqbal is not at all obscure, opaque and inaccessible. Unlike, for instance, Ghalib or Bedil, his diction

and imagery never acquire frustrating subtlety and ambiguity. He is difficult but not impossible.

Like every child of his age, Iqbal was seduced at first by the intensely emotional ideology of nationalism that provided educated Indians with a measure of self-respect and dignity in the days of colonial humiliation. His early poetry is a lucid testimony to the intoxicating vigour of the nationalist sentiment; there is much in the way of patriotic panegyric and nature worship in it, just as there are traces

of conscious efforts to establish rapport with the pre-Islamic Sanskrit tradition. However, the collectivist, nationalist ethos it lauds is informed, if at all, with a very feeble and vague political vision. There is ecstasy and pain at the discovery of the nationalist being, but of moral dynamism and the imperative of the political will which is so characteristic of Iqbal's 'Islamic' philosophy, as yet there is no trace.

Iqbal's visit to Europe brought a radical change in his whole mental and emotional outlook. He went there as a sentimental nationalist and a romantic pantheist, but returned as a radical 'pan-Islamist' and a puritanic moralist. The change was partly a result of his researches in the history of Sufism, of which the doctoral thesis "The Development of Metaphysics in Persia" was the visible outcome. Through these, Iqbal came to the realisation that *tasawwuf* not only was something alien to the original vision of Islam, but that it also represented a harmful sclerosis of the healthy body of Islamic morality. At the same time his close observation of the assertive European personality impressed him with its boundless activism and its intrepid search for power, just as Western society taught him a thing or two about the moral efficacy of the political and social institutionalisation. Not surprisingly, therefore, Iqbal rebelled against the quietist ethos of Sufism, challenging it with an activist philosophy of his own.

Iqbal achieved this fateful transformation of his philosophical outlook by advancing the concept of the *khudi* which, for all its novelty and radicalism, however, is essentially a construct of the Sufi theory of personality. Hereby discloses Iqbal his ambiguous, love-hate, relationship with *tasawwuf*: he is indeed a circumspect Sufi who is never able to sever himself completely from his tradition! What distinguishes him is that unlike his mystical predecessors, Iqbal does not envision the goal of human ego in terms of its psychological development alone. The Self, however conceived, is not an abstraction for his part: it is neither a purely spiritual entity in the manner of the Sufis, nor a mere internalised will, devoid of all historical actuality, as accepted by Paul and the majority of Christians. Human ego, for him, is composed both of the spirit and the matter and for its realisation the realm of history is as indispensable as is the world of the psyche. Or, the goal of the Self is, after attaining spiritual perfection, to manifest itself as matter-shattering will-in-history. Only the in-

dividual who can pass this test may claim his existence. Only such a person attains the station of Selfhood and secures the testimony of his individuality before God:

*Life means to adorn oneself in one's self,*

*to desire to bear witness to one's own being;*

*Art thou in the state of life, death or death in life?*

*Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify thy 'Station'*

*The first witness is thine own consciousness*

*See thyself, then, with thine own light*

*The second witness is the consciousness of another ego*

*See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee*

*The third witness is God's consciousness*

*See thyself, then, with God's light*

*If thou standest unshaven in front of this light,*

*Consider thyself as living and eternal as He!*

*(Iqbal's own translation)*

Thus far, Iqbal's *khudi* is a spiritual concept through and through and he himself stand firmly on the three squares of the metaphysical schema elaborated earlier by Abdul Karim Jili. Iqbal's stock image of the Perfect Ego, however, is a far cry from the Jilian *Insan-al-Kamil*. The difference, which is of seminal importance, stems from Iqbal's radical departure from the mystical tradition of Islam in perceiving the nature and function of Prophethood. Though it is true that like Jili, and of course every other Muslim, Iqbal too finds the paramount example of Perfect Egohood manifested in the person of the beloved Prophet of Islam, his understanding of the Prophetic consciousness integrates the Jilian conceptions of the metaphysical, almost quasi-transcendent, prophetic personality with the socio-political notions of his own. In the Prophetic personality, thus, there reigns a perfect balance between the spiritual-metaphysical and the moral-political poles of human nature. Iqbal himself illustrates the difference between the mystical and the Prophetic personality in the words of the Indian Muslim saint, Abdul Quddu of Gangoh. The latter says: "Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned." On this point Iqbal comments:

"In the whole range of Sufi litera-

ture it will be probably difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological differences between the prophetic and the mystic type of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of 'unitary experience'; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The Prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself in the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the repose of 'unitary experience' is something final; for the Prophet it is but the awakening within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated to completely transform the human world. The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world-force is supreme in the Prophet. Thus his return amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the values of his religious experience. In its creative act the Prophet's will judges both itself and the world of concrete facts in which it endeavours to objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the Prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history."

It is quite clear that Iqbal's philosophy of the Perfect Man issues naturally from his notions of the Prophetic personality, which he acquired in turn by meditating upon the figure of the Prophet of Islam. If the Prophet supplied Iqbal with the model for the most perfect human individual, it is equally logical to expect, then, that Iqbal's ideals of perfect polity also derive their rationale and authentication from the same source of inspiration. Such indeed is the personality of the Noble Prophet that, if understood properly, it provides guidance and light for the conduct both of the individual and the community. Iqbal seized upon this fact and constructed his philosophy of human individuality and collectivity, of spiritual perfection and political dynamism, from the perfect paradigm of the Prophet. Without the influence of the Prophet, so to speak, there would have been no philosophy of *khudi*, no image of *Mard-i-Khuda*, no metaphor of *Banda-i-Mu'min* nor indeed any poetic exhortation for the creation of Pakistan.

At the centre of Muslim polity, the *Umma*, stands the Prophet of Islam rallying the collective will for the community around his person. Not only does he sustain the will of the *Umma* of which he is progenitor, his

own conduct (*uswah*) also requisitions that Muslim community too must integrate in its collective ego the dictates of an everlasting spiritual faith with the imperatives of a temporal social order. In Islam, therefore, the community of faith is indistinguishable from the polity of power. This is the legacy of the Prophet and Iqbal was acutely aware of the significance of the Prophet for the existence and integrity of the *Umma*. He expresses it, for instance, in *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi*, (Mysteries of Selflessness) in a very impassioned voice:

*Our universe exists because of the Prophet,  
Our religion and our Order are due to him.  
Myriads of us become one (entity)*

continues the Sufi tradition of metaphysical speculation centred around the person of the Prophet, but by his prophetology he also reaches back to the philosophical tradition proper of Islam. In more than one way, for instance, he may be regarded as an heir to the legacy of Ibn Sina. Like the ancient master, Iqbal too seeks a philosophical explanation of the phenomenon of Prophecy but unlike the former, with whom the psychological issues of Prophetic consciousness are of overriding concern, the contemporary philosopher's prophetology is essentially 'political'. In other words, Iqbal's philosophy attempts a 'politicisation' of the prophetologies of mysticism and philosophy both, and thus achieves a more dynamic conception

Iqbal's philosophy of history is more congenial to the spirit of Islam than, for instance, that of 'the father of historical science', Ibn-Khaldun, whose positivist reading of history as a set of impersonal laws, despite the formidable reputation of its author, poses many insurmountable difficulties for the Islamic world-view. Moreover, in Iqbal's thought there exists a happy balance between the role of the individual and that of the community regarding matters social and political (in spiritual matters, the individual remains supreme even with Iqbal because the conception of collective spirituality is unknown to Islam) which forms the secret of his special appeal to the moderns.

It was in his Persian poetry, written after his return from Europe in order to gain a wider readership for what was increasingly assuming the form of a message to the *Umma*, that Iqbal sought to give a more systematic form to his philosophical reflections. He chose the new medium in a spirit of self-consciousness, almost straining his resources for the sake of belonging to a prestigious and established tradition. Henceforth, his philosophy, radical and contemporary as it was, could easily be cushioned by the authority of the tradition; he adopted familiar poetic forms, imagery and diction for conveying thoughts and ideas which were essentially untraditional and modern. It is in this new poetry that his reflections on the nature of the relationship between the individual and the community are expressed with dialectical vigour. He says:

*For the individual association with the group is a blessing;  
His essence attains perfection in the nation.*

*The individual gains his dignity through the community;  
The community finds its order through individuals.*

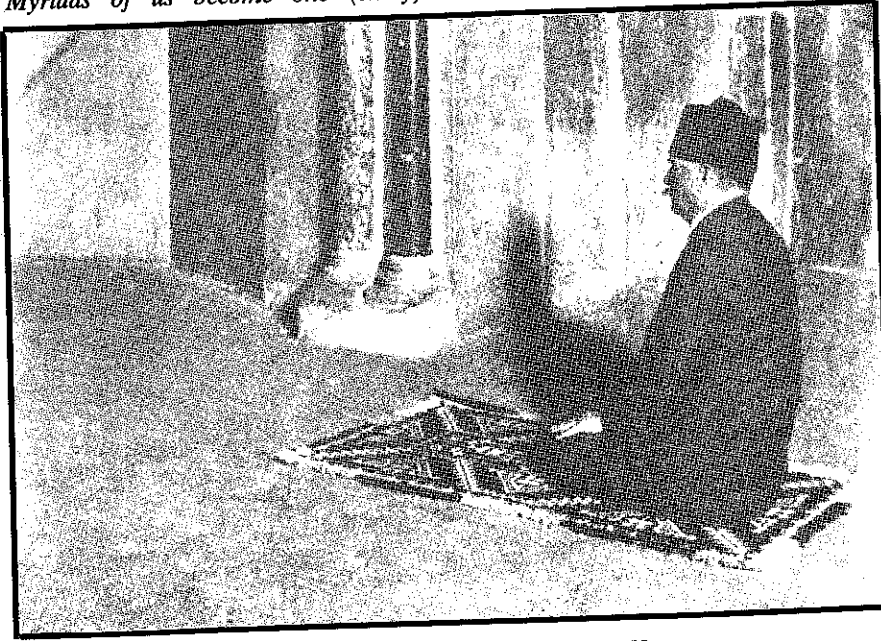
*So long as the individual loses himself in the community,  
Like the drop, seeking expansion, he becomes an ocean.*

*His lust for self-display comes from being in the community;  
His reckoning and his judgement is also the prerogative of the community.*

*He finds articulation in the language of the community;  
Treading the path of his forefathers.*

*Alone, the individual is indifferent to his goal;  
His powers are prone to get dormant.*

*The Community invests him with self-discipline,  
Making his movements supple like the breeze.* (my translation)



The philosopher praying for the ummah: Iqbal at Cordoba Mosque

*following the Prophet;  
Our diversity is 'diversity in unity'.  
Because of his wisdom, we are a nation;  
Proclaiming the message of mercy for mankind.  
Letting go our hold on his robe will bring us death;  
Like a rose we'll wither in the autumn wind.  
Our nation has received its life from his breath,  
Our morning has acquired its glow from his sun.  
In the assembly of time, we are the focus of grace,  
For, like our Prophet, we are the Seal of Nations.*

(my translation)

Iqbal's entire philosophic thought follows from his meditations on the nature of Prophecy. Thus, he not only

of morality. The focus of philosophical attention is shifted from the quasi-metaphysical ontology of the mystics as well as the equally spiritual psychology of the *faylasūfs* to the study of history. The issues of socio-political order thus become more paramount in Iqbal's thought, but the onus of spiritual and material development rests squarely with the individual and the Prophet of Islam retains his centrality through and through. By his philosophy of history, the motive force of which is the individual will, Iqbal is thus able to project into contemporary philosophical spectrum an Islamic vision, just as he succeeds in presenting an attractive venue for the modernisation of Muslim intellectual tradition. Certainly in emphasising the role for the Perfect man and modelling him after the Prophetic consciousness,

## IQBAL

Notwithstanding his eulogisation of the Perfect Individual, amounting at times to virtual apotheosis, and his assertive stance in favour of 'success in history', coming at times dangerously close to the tenets of historical materialism, Iqbal never becomes a secularist thinker in the atheistic sense of the term. This is pre-eminently due to his Islamic faith: his theism is as essential to his thought as the air he breathed was to his life. The question of the existence of God for him is not a matter of philosophical haggling at all, it is an axiom on which his entire system of thought rests. True enough, in his philosophical magnum opus, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he does advance philosophical arguments for belief in God, but these are more in the nature of explanations and emendations rather than any real bouts of sceptical despair. Iqbal's concept of God, like all strands of his thought, is complex but synthetic: it is partly rational, partly ethical and partly based on a direct spiritual experience. Or, conceiving it differently, the test of the genuineness of the religious experience of God is not exclusively pragmatic; it is philosophical and speculative as well because, as mentioned earlier, such an experience has an outward or empirical character but equally demonstrably an inward or mystical one as well. On these grounds, Iqbal criticises the three traditional arguments for the existence of God on the grounds that these advance proofs for the existence of Being only. He himself posits the unity of Being and Thought and upon this premise constructs his demonstration of the existence of God, referring all the time to isolated Qur'anic verses for the final authentication of his arguments. Herein lies the most salient feature of his theism: it is philosophical only marginally but scriptural in all its essentials because the final arbiter of its logical proofs is always the authority of the Qur'anic revelation.

As with his concept of the Perfect Man, which transgresses the method of abstract reflection in order to return to the historic personality of the Prophet, for his philosophy of the community, Iqbal is forced to retreat from a vague philosophical humanism to the concrete universalism of the Qur'an. Thus terminates Iqbal's theory of society on the historic community of Islam, the Muslim *Umma*. His philosophy, his political theory and his own quest for moral imperative are then synthesised in the all-embracing unity of his being and thought: the idealist philosopher is transformed into

the poet of Islam and the moral teacher and the political activist in him replace the abstract thinker. Having achieved this synthesis, Iqbal became acutely aware of the historical vicissitudes of the *Umma* and took upon himself the task of rousing it out of its enervating slumber. What flowed from his pen thereafter was the seductive ideology of Islamic reassertion where the melioristic accent was clearly formulated in politicised metaphors. Ideological commitment and elaboration thus necessitated for Iqbal an analysis of the causes of the *Umma's* decline, just as the reasons for the ascendancy of the West were also deliberated upon. The shift from the ideal community to the actual *Umma* also meant indulging in polemics and apology, facile metaphorisations of historic personalities and a markedly defiant posture vis-a-vis the West. For instance, in his *Javid Nama* (The Book of Eternity), Iqbal makes the Turkish statesman Sa'id Halim Pasha say the following:

*For westerners intelligence is the stuff of life,*

*For easterners love is the mystery of all being.*

*Only through love intelligence gets to know God,*

*Love's labours find firm grounding in intelligence;*

*When love is accompanied by intelligence*

*it has the power to design another world.*

*Then rise and draw the design of a new world,*

*mingle together love with intelligence.*

*The flame of the Europeans is damped down,*

*their eyes are perceptive, but their hearts are dead;*

*they have been sore smitten by their own swords,*

*hunted down and slaughtered, themselves the hunters.*

*Look not for fire and intoxication in their vine;*

*not into their heaven shall rise a new age.*

*It is from your fire that the glow of life comes,*

*and it is your task to create that world.*

(Arberry's translation)

In similar vein, Iqbal presented some very perceptive criticism of the twin western ideologies of communism and capitalism: accusing both of crass materialism, spiritual impoverishment and the debasement of human person: *The westerners have lost their vision of heaven,*  
*they go hunting for the pure spirit of the belly.*



*The pure soul takes not colour and scent from the body, and Communism has nothing to do save with the body.*

*The religion of the prophet who knew not truth (ie Marx)*

*is founded upon equality of the belly; the abode of fraternity being the heart, its roots are in the heart, not in water and clay*

*Capitalism too is a fattening of the body*

*its unenlightened bosom houses no heart;*

*like the bee that pastures upon the flower*

*it overpasses the petal, and carries off the honey,*

*yet stalk and leaf, colour and scent all make up the rose*

*The soul of both is impatient and intolerant,*

*both of them know not god and deceive mankind.*

*One lives by production, the other by taxation*

*and man is a glass caught in between these two stones.*

*The one puts to rout science, religion, art,*

*the other robs body of soul, the hand of bread.*

*I have perceived both drowned in water and clay,*

*both bodily burnished, but utterly dark of heart.*

*Life means a passionate burning, an urge to make,*

*to cast the dead clay of the seed of a heart!*

(Javid Nama, transl. by Arberry)

In Iqbal's vision of the *Umma*,

destined to play collectively the role of God's vicergent upon earth, there is no room for the parochial sentiments of nationalism or any other form of amoral collectivism such as colour, race, territoriality or even language. He adduces in his support the very fact of *Hijra* so pivotal in the definition of a Muslim's identity, in these words:

*Our Master migrated from his native land*

*And thus unravelled the secret of the Muslim's nationalism!*

*On the foundations of the testimony of faith,*

*His wisdom established a universal community*

*By the bounty of that Sultan of faith,  
The whole earth became a mosque for us!*

*Hijra is the Muslim's code of life,  
It is the ground for his stability.*

*Like a fish make the sea as your dwelling,*

*Freeing thyself from the fetters of all locality.*

*Whosoever is free of the prison of the house of station,*

*Takes up his residence in the boundless lodge of the Heaven*

Indeed, Iqbal was extremely inimical to the doctrine of nationalism which in his opinion was 'racialising the outlook of Muslims, and thus materially counteracting the humanising work of Islam.' He was also proud of the fact that Islamic society had 'so far proved itself a more successful barrier in the way of humanitarian ideal but also warned that 'the race-idea was the greatest enemy of Islam'. In fact, in all his writings, Iqbal waged a relentless battle against every kind of ideology which was parochial in general and divisive of the *Umma* in particular. His own sentiments were expressed so many times in his poetry that his 'pan-Islamist' reputation seems well-grounded and secure. For him, however, the espousal of the Muslim *Umma* was merely an expression of his unnegotiable humanitarianism. And he found no contradictions in this duality. As he himself expresses it: 'The humanitarian ideal is always universal in poetry and philosophy, but if you make it an effective ideal and work it out in actual life, you must start, not with poets and philosophers, but with a society exclusive in the sense of having a creed and well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limits by example and persuasion'. Such a society, according to his innermost belief, was Islam.

Iqbal's ideal humanitarianism and universalism, as we have seen, was never uncompromisingly abstract and

totalitarian; it could be tempered by the demands for more viable foci of loyalty, so long as these remained true to ideals of a single humanity. Hence, Iqbal's quarrel with nationalism was strategic and ultimate and not at all tactical and immediate. He could therefore envisage certain limited utility for smaller national groups - but only as a step leading towards the inevitable goal of universalism. He expressed it thus: 'Tribal or national organisations on the lines of race or territory are only temporary phases in the unfoldment and upbringing of collective life, and as such I have no quarrel with them; but I condemn them in the strongest possible terms when they are regarded as the ultimate expressions of the life of mankind.' Iqbal's rejection of the 'nation-idea' was thus on ethical grounds. As a Muslim, he could hardly accept anything but the 'moral principle', which is a necessary concomitant to the Muslim's belief in God, as the 'ultimate expression of the life of mankind.'

The genius of Islam lies in its quest for unity and totality. It works by attempting a genuine synthesis out of the maze of apparent antithesis. The genius of Iqbal lies in his being true to the genius of Islam; in his thought, he transcends the distinction of poetry and philosophy; in his philosophy he achieves a synthesis of morality and politics and in his ideology he strikes a middle ground between abstract idealism and crass cynicism. So is it with his vision of the 'Muslim national State; more than a poetic image, it is a political formula capable of practical realisation. The ultimate synthesis that emerged out of his philosophy of the individual self, the universal community, the morally charged *Umma*, and the concrete reality of his own life-situation, was destined to transcend these contradictions in the ideology of 'the homeland for the Muslims of North-Western India, ie Pakistan. From the philosophical perspective, it was a defeatistic compromise, from the political angle, the creation of Pakistan, however, was merely to be the first step towards the realisation of a bigger dream. To achieve that, Iqbal the philosopher and Iqbal the poet both had to succumb to the dictates of Iqbal the reformer and move beyond the realm of poetry to the platform of politics.

However, before the poetic vision could be distilled into a political manifesto, poetry had to strike the emotional chord. Thus outpours Iqbal his passionate love for his native land in a Urdu poem, *Shu'a-i-Ummid* (The

Ray of Hope):

*The centre of the hopes of the West is this very land*

*Watered by the tears of Iqbal is this very land.*

*The eye of the Moon and the Pleiades is radiant because of this land.*

*Precious pearls are shamed by the earthenwares made out of this land.*

*Many profound sages have arisen out of this soil,*

*For whom every tumultuous ocean of thought remained fathomable*

*The harp, the sounds of which formerly warmed our hearts,*

*Alas, lies today silent and unthrummed in the assembly.*

*The Brahmin is asleep at the gate of the temple,*

*While the Muslim bemoans his destiny under the Mihrab.*

*And yet, be neither weary of the East nor turn away from the West,*

*Nature beckons thee to transform every night into dawn.*

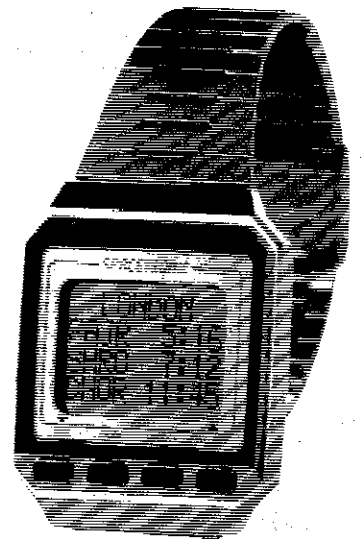
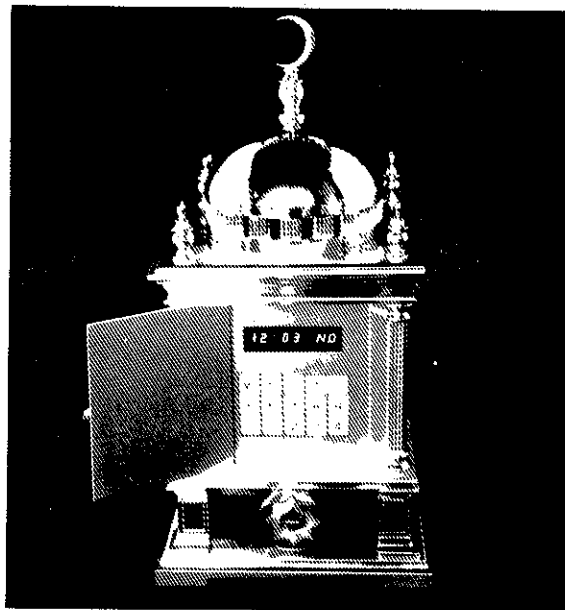
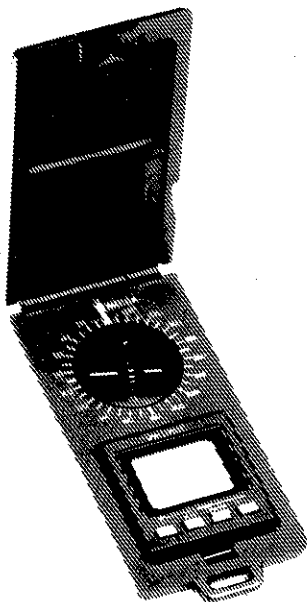
(my translation)

In his Presidential Address, delivered at the Annual Session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad on 29 December 1930, Iqbal spelled out his vision of 'Pakistan', without probably ever hearing the word itself. In the very speech where he recognises Islam to be 'an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity', Iqbal expressed his concrete hopes in the following now historic, formulation: "I would like to see the Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State...The formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India." Ten years later, Iqbal's embryonic vision was enshrined in the political manifesto of the Pakistan movement and a further seven years later, an independent Muslim state in Iqbal's native land came into being. Before he could see the fulfillment of his dream, however, the poet lay dead. The cries of jubiliations resonating from the land whose creation was supposed to provide 'a pragmatic test of the values' he espoused and under whose soil he rested did not disturb him.

Thus proved true Iqbal's insight that 'nations are born in the hearts of poets', but as to the second part of the maxim, namely, that 'they prosper and die in the hands of politicians', no definite verification has emerged as yet. Whether the final verdict would be life or death of that fateful Islamic state, only the will of the Muslim polity of Pakistan can supply the answer. ■



# SPACETRONIC



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