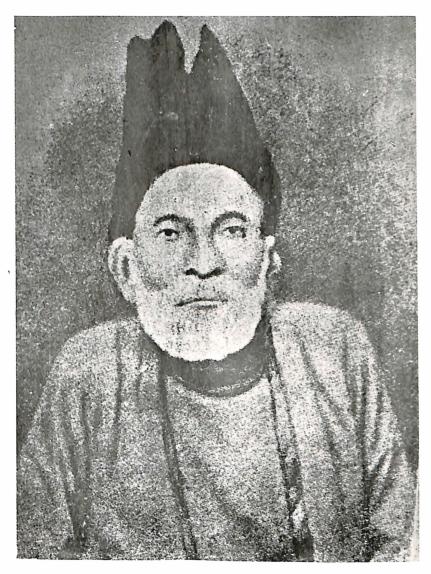
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OF THE TWO MASTERS
IN A SELECT AND
SENSITIVE TRANSLATION

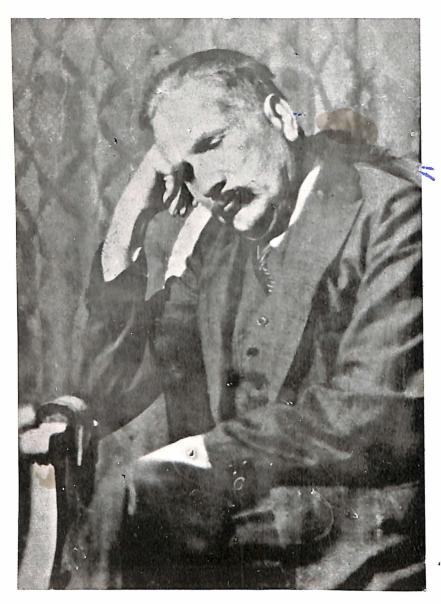
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Mirza Ghalib



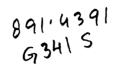
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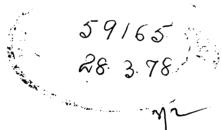
Selections from Ghalib and Iqbal

Translated by K. N. SUD



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Selections from Ghalib and Iqbal

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Foreword

Urdu poetry is enthusiastically admired by the elite as well as the masses. Their fascination for it is attested by two facts—crowds that throng the mushairas and popularity of the film songs mostly composed by Urdu poets. The reasons for this curious phenomenon are not far to seek. Urdu poetry vibrates and pulsates with life and its musical metres, dictional elegance, graceful symbolism, glowing imagery combine to create a rapturous delight in the minds of the listeners.

Most of these features of Urdu poetry are reflected in the verses of Ghalib and Iqbal—two internationally known Urdu poets produced by the undivided India during the last two centuries. Iqbal was born within a decade after the death of Ghalib and was much impressed by his great predecessor. Iqbal's infatuation for Ghalib is evident from the poem he wrote in his praise as early as 1901 A.D. In this poem, he ranks Ghalib with Goethe who symbolised the greatness of the creative artist. In his *Pyam-i-Mashriq* (Message of the East), Iqbal has brought together four poets of the world in a symposium of life; two from the West—Browning and Byron; and two from the East-Rumi and Ghalib.

Iqbal's independence of thought and action as also his spirit of revolt against the commonplace are due to the marked influence of Ghalib. Ghalib was indeed a poets' poet, to whom poetry was a form of ecstasy. He was mainly concerned with emotions and culture of the language. His diction is more polished and chiselled than the thought it embraces. Iqbal, on the other hand, was a philosopher-poet. He had a message and a mission. He was a "poet of action" with a sword for the tongue in his mouth. His sole mission was to rouse the nations of the East from their deadening languor and slothful slumber.

In order to introduce these two poets to those whose admiration for Urdu poetry remains nonetheless for their ignorance of the language, Mr K.N. Sud, veteran journalist, has written this delightful book which contains brief biographical sketches of the two poets as also English translations, in free verse, of some of their poems. It was indeed difficult to render all the varied nuances of the muse of Ghalib and Iqbal into English but Mr Sud has succeeded, to a large extent, in transcreating the ideas behind their verses.

New Delhi

S.A.I. TIRMIZI Deputy Director, 21 November, 1977 National Archives of India

Preface

Ghalib and Iqbal are the two brightest stars in the firmament of Urdu poetry. Their place is undoubtedly among the greats of the literary world. The non-Urdu knowing people in India and abroad with a taste for poetry are keen to get at least a feel of the muse of these geniuses. A modest effort has been made in this book to satisfy this urge by rendering into English, mostly in free verse, selected poems and some frequently quoted couplets from their works.

Most poetry when translated comes out the poorer at the other end for having lost its delicacy and varied nuances in the process. That seems rather inevitable with cadence of the original line ever refusing to go along with the version in a new medium. Urdu poetry, particularly Iqbal's, is full of Qoranic and other allusions to events and personages of ancient Arabia and Iran. These cannot, in all cases, be rendered into English. Besides, in the case of a ghazal each couplet expresses an independent thought, unrelated to the rest of the composition except in the matter of its prosodic structure and rhyming. When translated into English, such verses appear all the more disjointed. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to give thematic treatment



My aim in this book has been for the most part to get into the spirit of a couplet and to transcreate the idea rather than translate the lines in the literal sense. Many poems have been abridged on account of untranslatability of certain verses. I have also provided titles to the poems chosen for translation though in the case of ghazals it is not the practice to do so for obvious reasons. I may, however, be forgiven for any inadequacies and deviations from the text.

There is nothing in the whole history of the world's classics reflecting its author better than the collected works (Diwan) of Ghalib. This poet neither enjoyed the peace of mind so much needed by a writer nor did he attain recognition in his lifetime commensurate with his talents. Immortal fame came to him long after his death when a grateful world finally gave its verdict in his favour, placing him among the very best poets not only of his own age but of all times.

Ghalib as a ghazal maestro is unexcelled to this day. The ghazal lakes pride of place in Urdu poetry and has overshadowed all other forms of versification even in other Indian languages. What is a ghazal? Briefly stated, it is the medium of expression of a man's love for his beloved. It is an Arabic word which means talking to women or talking love. As originally composed, the ghazal was a

song consisting of the stray thoughts of a lover complaining of separation, longing for union, berating the rival and giving expression to sensations of pain and pleasure that characterise the experiences of love. Ghalib was a master of this art in the fullest sense of the word. Evermore poets will compose verses on evermore subjects but the ghazal and the way Ghalib handled it will continue to rule supreme in the realm of Urdu letters.

More than a hundred years have passed since Ghalib died but there has been no diminution of the lustre of his verse. He will continue to be regarded by the generations to come as the Omar Khayyam of India.

While Ghalib owes his fame mainly to the thought content and turn of phrase in his ghazals, Iqbal's forte is nazam. This genre gave the latter sweeping scope for covering a wide range of subjects, something entirely beyond the ghazal's compass. As a poet of nature, Iqbal is grouped with Wordsworth and Shelley and as a romanticist with Coleridge. He was a poet of faith, vision and change. Two predominant features of his muse were his intense patriotism (the early phase) and earnest devotion to the cause of Islamic revival and resurgence (the later phase). No wonder he is regarded as the spiritual father of Pakistan.

Iqbal's political predilections must not, however, interfere with our assessment of his poetic genius.

He enjoyed complete mastery over the art which he used in full measure to give expression to his patriotic, religious, philosophical and metaphysical ideas. The richness, resonance and eloquence of his verses rarely failed to evoke a ready response in his listeners and readers. He sang of man, of life, of faith, and of hope. What distinguishes him from other Urdu poets is the vigour of his verse and the sweetness of his song.

I am principally indebted to Mr O.P. Ghai, Chairman of Sterling Publishers, for originating the idea for this book. Perhaps he felt encouraged to undertake this project after the success of my two earlier books, Eternal Flame—Aspects of Ghalib's Life and Works and Iqbal and His Poems—A Reappraisal. These also were brought out by Sterling Publishers and are recommended for further reading to those who would like to know more about these poets.

I am particularly thankful to Dr S.A.I. Tirmizi for writing the Foreword.

I am also grateful to my friends, Mr R.L. Saggar and Mr Manohar Bandopadhyaya, for their valuable cooperation in the preparation of the manuscript.

C-17, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110 016 K.N. SUD



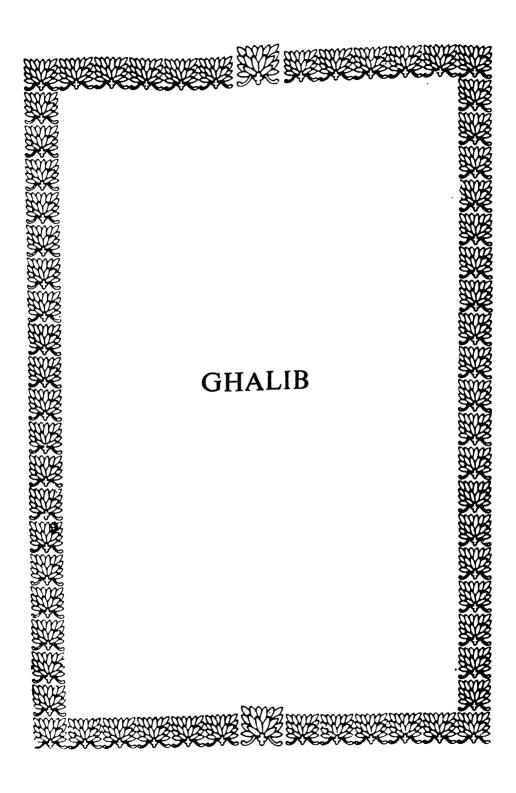
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The Poet of Poets

Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib genealogy to the Seljuk dynasty which ruled over an area stretching from Turkestan to the Mediterranean for nearly three centuries, eleventh to thirteenth. When the house of Seljuks broke up, some of its scions took to looting and killing, while others armed with swords, fanned out in search of adventure. Among the latter was Tursam Khan who settled in Samarkand. He was the great-grandfather of Ghalib. His son, Kokan Khan, quarrelled with him and in protest left home for India around the year 1750 in the company of Qasim Jan, Alam Jan and Arif Jan who were the earliest forbears of the princely family of Loharu State. He was employed by Nawab Moinul Mulk of Lahore. On the Nawab's death, Kokan Khan moved down to Delhi and through the good offices of Nawab Zulfigar-ul-Daula joined the forces of Mughal Prince Ali Guhar (later King Shah Alam). The prince at that time was busy quelling revolts in the eastern parts of the empire. He gave Kokan Khan the charge of a cavalry unit. But the fortunes of the Mughal dynasty were on the decline with large areas slipping out of its control one by one. Kokan Khan shifted his loyalty to the Maharaja of Jaipur. He also left Delhi and

settled permanently at Agra.

Kokan Khan had four sons and three daughters. Ghalib's father, Mirza Abdullah Beg Khan, took service in the court of Nawab Asif-ul-Daula of Lucknow but soon went over to the Nizam of Hyderabad. After several years' service he lost his job as a result of family quarrels. Thereafter he joined the forces of Raja Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar. The Raja sent him to put down a revolt by one of his chieftains and Abdullah Beg was killed in action in 1820. His two sons were assigned revenue from two villages and given a modest pension for their upbringing. Their uncle, Nasrullah Beg, took up the responsibility of looking after them.

After the British had by and large established their authority in India, Ghalib's uncle was taken as a risaldar in the army. He was allotted two revenue circles for meeting the expenses of the unit under him. When he died his British employers arranged pensions for his descendants from the revenues of Firozepur Jhirka. The martial tradition of the family ended with the death of Ghalib's father and uncle. Neither the poet nor his brother Yousaf Khan showed any inclination for military service. The latter died as a lunatic in 1857.

Ghalib's mother, Begum Izzat-ul-Nisa, was the daughter of Mirza Ghulam Husain Khan Kamidan, a commandant in the army and leading citizen of Agra. He owned a number of buildings in the city,

the biggest known as Kala Mahal. It was in this house that Ghalib was born on 27 December 1797. Izzat-ul-Nisa lived in her father's house until the end.

Ghalib writes feelingly of his early days in Agra where the muse first inspired him. At night he used to sit in the room right over the portico of Kala Mahal, "playing chess, gossiping and discussing love affairs." In the morning he would fly kites with young Balwant Singh, son of Raja Chet Singh of Benaras. There are a number of other houses in Agra to which Ghalib has referred in his letters and which still exist. Two mohallas are named after him—Bara Ghalibpura and Chhota Ghalibpura.

Not much is known about Ghalib's early schooling. His biographer, Altaf Husain Hali, writes that the boy was under the tutelage of Sheikh Muazzam, an eminent teacher of Agra those days. When Ghalib was 14 years old, an Iranian scholar, Mulla Abdul Samad, came to Agra in the course of his peregrinations. He stayed with Ghalib for two years and then for some time in Delhi. The poet says that he owes his command of the Persian language to this Iranian traveller.

At the age of 13 Ghalib married Umrao Begum, 11-year-old daughter of Mirza Ilahi Baksh Khan, younger brother of Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan. Though Ghalib had visited Delhi a few times from the seventh year onwards, his visits became more

frequent after marriage as his father-in-law was a resident of Delhi. In 1812 Ghalib took a house of his own and settled in the Mughal capital. Association with the Nawab family enabled him to move among the elite of the city and get acquainted with leading litterateurs of the day. Though the balmy days of Mughal splendour were over, in the literary world a good deal of activity was still going on. Eminent poets of this period included Zauq, Momin and the Mughal King himself who wrote poetry under the pen-name of Zafar.

Though devoted to the study of literature and writing of poetry from a very young age, Ghalib could not altogether escape from the enticements of the affluent society to which he belonged in the early part of his life. After the death of his father and uncle there was nobody to exercise restraint on his youthful escapades. The atmosphere in the house of his maternal grandfather where he was brought up had been one of indulgence towards him and his brother on account of their having been orphaned at a tender age. Besides, Ghalib had a tall, handsome figure and robust health with princely garments adding charm to his personality. He has confessed that as a young man he was under the spell of a dancing girl of low caste.

The poet's relations with his wife remained rather strained. While he had a penchant for licentious living, she strictly followed the tenets of the faith, e.g., fasting and praying. The ways of the two had been so different that they were never known to have sat at one table, or together, for a meal. Unfortunately, Umrao Begum had no taste for literary values and could not appreciate her husband's poetical talent or the subtleties of his expression. The marriage, therefore, seems to have remained at best a tie of duty and convention. It only added to the feeling of solitude in the poet's heart.

Apart from the incompatibility of temperament between the husband and wife, there was another reason for Ghalib to feel unhappy in the domestic sphere. This was the death of all the seven children to whom his wife gave birth. They all died in their infancy leaving the parents lonely and heartbroken. A few years before the Mutiny, Umrao Begum's nephew, Zainul Abdin Khan Arif, died leaving behind two minor sons. Ghalib and his wife took upon themselves the responsibility of bringing up the orphans. They too died young.

Ghalib had a very large circle of friends among whom were nawabs and the elite of the city. His congenial nature and habit of cutting jokes made him so popular that everybody sought his company. To the poet it gave immense pleasure to entertain visitors. He shared their joys and sorrows like an intimate. His pupils submitted their verses to him for correction and improvement as was the time-honoured practice among poets in the East. He never

disappointed them by not attending to their requests. Even in his old age when he was troubled by various ailments, he took pains over this labour of love and retouched every piece of writing sent to him. No one ever informed Ghalib of his difficulties without eliciting from him a sympathetic response. He helped several of his needy friends with money even though he himself was not financially well off.

Ghalib relished good food and ate well except in old age when most of the time he remained unwell. He was particularly fond of meat, grapes and mangoes. A fancy hubble-bubble was a constant companion. He dressed like an aristocrat. Though by no means rich, he generally moved among nobles and nawabs. After Zauq's death, Bahadur Shah engaged him to correct his verses.

Ghalib did not stick to one house throughout his stay in Delhi, nor did he buy or build one. He changed his residence as soon as he got tired of one place but mostly remained in Gali Qasim Jan of Mohalla Ballimaran near Chandni Chowk. The rent ranged from four to six rupees a month.

At no time had Ghalib fewer than five servants, including a maid who helped the ladies with their chores. One of the servants was a Hindu. Their total wages came to 25 rupees a month. The male attendent accompanied him when he went on a journey. The poet always travelled in a palanquin carried on shoulders by four men.

Poets in the past, particularly those of the Orient, depended for their livelihood on the munificence of their patrons or pensions and grants from royal courts. They did not work for a living in the modern sense of the term. If someone was a poet, he was a wholetime poet and would do no more than write poetry. As a poet Ghalib received occasional grants and stipends from princely families but he also received a regular pension from the British rulers of India on account of the services his uncle had rendered This was stopped on the outbreak of the to them. Mutiny and when things had quietened down Ghalib moved earth and heaven to have it restored and also raised. He went from one nobleman to another, from one obdurate official to another pleading his case. The pension was finally restored in May 1860.

Ghalib was as great a master of prose as of poetry. If his poetry is full of deep thought and meaning, his prose is a model of simplicity combined with elegance of style and purity of diction. He writes as he would speak and there is a certain amount of flow and rhythm about his narrative which is spontaneous and highly satisfying to the mind. However, his fame as a poet has all but eclipsed his work as a prose writer. His prose writings mainly comprise his numerous letters to friends and others. These have been collected in a book called *Urdu-i-Mualla*.

Ghalib's letters have great historical value. They give us information about the conditions in Delhi in

the middle of the nineteenth century. Some of them give a graphic account of the happenings during the Mutiny. These letters also serve as the best introduction to his personality and if arranged in the chronological order they tell the story of his life more faithfully than even the best of biographers could do.

For a long time Ghalib devoted his literary energies to writing verses in Persian. He considered it, like other leading poets of his day, something below his dignity to write in a language that was not yet thought ripe for literary expression of a high order. Even when he did turn his attention to writing in Urdu, his verses contained an overdose of Persian words and phrases. He was so proud of his Persian Diwan that he declared that he must not be judged on the basis of the quality of his Urdu poems! Little did he know at that stage that his fame in India would entirely rest on his Urdu ghazals.

Wit and humour permeate through most of Ghalib's writings and remarks. Though he was a man of an extremely tender and lovable nature, he always enjoyed an edge over others in repartee. He did not spare even the King and his courtiers whenever they tried to be funny with him. He particularly relished his sallies at the rival poets and detractors whose criticism of his poems was motivated more by malice than genuine love of the art of versi-

fication.

Most of Ghalib's verses are on love, despair and wine. But they are free from obscenity and lewdness. His life was a long tale of despair and disappointment which made him take a sympathetic view of man's failings instead of making him bitter and spiteful. This is because he found a good companion in wine which he compares to breeze in the spring.

Though alcohol shattered Ghalib's health, notwithstanding the virtues he ascribed to it, his verse received from it lustre and nourishment. Whatever else he might miss, he could not afford to miss his glass of wine. When he had no money he borrowed from friends or bought his requirements on credit. His favourite drink was Scotch Whisky. He particularly liked a brand called 'Old Tom'.

Ghalib's difficulties were not limited to money matters. He had a Weakness for gambling which often landed him in trouble and made him once serve a jail term.

Towards the end, the poet suffered from illness for a long time. He had stopped moving out of his residence for two years before his death. Most of the time he lay in bed. His hands trembled. Several times in the day he would fall unconscious. On 15 February 1869, the greatest of ghazal masters breathed his last.





It's long since I had her as guest, my evening brightened by the bubbling cup.

I piece together fragments of my heart for her eyes to smash it again.

My breath comes hot shedding sparks after years without illumination.

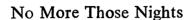
Love comes back to find how I fare and pour salt on my bleeding heart.

Old rivals, eye and heart, get together pining for a chance to see and desire.

Ignoring humiliation and pain, the heart goes back to love's lost lane;

Longing again for her to come on the balcony, with the wind blowing the tresses on her face.

O for those days and nights, Ghalib, spent in beloved's contemplation!



Gone are the days of union, separation; no more those nights, months and years.

No time for affairs of the heart now; no more that passion for beauty's wiles.

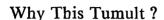
Of the heart and mind nothing remains; no more that joy at seeing her face.

Gone is the delicacy of my thoughts, remaining absorbed in the beloved's contemplation.

Difficult now to shed tears of blood; no more strength in the heart to bleed.

Retired at last from love's pastime; lacking the means to indulge any more.

Decay has set in, faculties are fragile; no more that moderation, that tranquil mind.



When there's no cure for love's pain, why, my silly heart, then get it again?

While I'm pining, she remains sore; what does it all mean, O God?

I too carry a tongue in the mouth; I wish I'm asked to state my purpose.

When nothing can exist without You, then why all this tumult, O God?

Who are these nymph-faced persons here? Why this winking, ogling and coquetry?

Why these curls in her tresses?
And what are those kohl-darkened eyes?

What are breeze, rose and garden?
And wherefrom has the cloud come?

My life I'm willing to lay before You; prayer and piety I know not, O God.

Agreed that Ghalib is of little use; but what harm if he serves You free?



If my death doesn't satisfy her, let it not; for me it matters not.

If she wants to test me further, my body is there; it matters not.

I've thorns of my desires to comfort me; if love's rose is denied, it matters not.

Drink, O lovers, direct from the flask; if the saqi is missing, it matters not.

My life rests on tumult in the house; revelry or grief, it matters not.

Who cares for their praise or reward? If my verse lacks meaning, it matters not.

Joy of her company is blessing enough; life may be long or short, it matters not.

Counselling Not Needed

I wasn't fated to meet my love even if I lived till eternity.

Think not I lived on her promises; would have died of joy if I did.

Her half-drawn arrow leaves me in pain; why doesn't it pierce the heart full?

If my grief were to shed sparks, it could turn stones into streams of blood.

Whom shall I tell my tale of sorrow? Were I to die once, I wouldn't mind.

Counselling me, O friends, is no favour; better be a cure or become confidants.

Such thoughts, such style, O Ghalib! We'd regard you a mystic were you not an addict.



Nothing comes easy in this world, not even for man to be a man.

My tears beg my home's destruction; don't the walls show its desolation?

What madness to go again and again and yet be surprised at her absence!

Beauty is there to be seen; even the mirror wanting to take it in.

With unfulfilled desires I now leave; let her adorn herself evermore.

Vowing not to torment after killing!
What use repenting after inflicting cruelty?

Pity that little piece of cloth, Ghalib, fated to become the lover's dress.



What if there's the Son of Mary? Can't someone heal my wounds?

Who can find place in a heart that acts like a drawn arrow?

She cuts me short as I begin to speak; wants others only to listen.

What am I talking in my madness? O God, let no one understand.

Who in the world is not needy? Whose need should one satisfy?

Know what Khizer did to Alexander? Whom now to choose as guide?

When all hope is lost, Ghalib, what use your complaining?

No Way Out

No hope seems to get fulfilled nor do I see a way out.

I used to laugh at myself but nothing now makes me smile.

A day is already set for my death; then why can't I sleep whole night?

On purpose I remain tongue-tied; otherwise know I not what to say?

Blessings of prayer and piety I know but nature doesn't take me that way.

I now live wherefrom I get no news of my own entity.

How I wish I would have been dead; but death eludes me cunningly.

To Ka'aba with what face will you go? Are you not ashamed of sins, O Ghalib?

Cravins Galore

Cravings galore but few satisfied, each one needing a lifetime.

Let not my assassin feel guilty; haven't I been shedding tears of blood?

Adam's ouster from God's paradise was less disgraceful than mine from your lane.

My name is linked with drunkenness; the age of Jamshed is back, they say.

Those expected to show me sympathy were themselves victims of cruelty.

In love the sight that spells death is also a source of life for me.

Preacher and wine, they say, are poles apart; Yet I saw him entering the wineshop yesterday.

Love's Radiance

Why did not love's radiance burn me? I burn with envy of my sight.

They call me worshipper of fire, seeing my wails shed sparks.

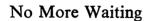
There she comes to kill but I die from jealousy of the sword she carries!

On her neck is many a man's blood; even wine trembles seeing her step.

Along with the poems I sell myself but only on testing the buyer's taste.

My sores had scared me stiff; glad I am to see the thorny path.

The sight of her wall reminds me again striking my head like mad.



Come, my love, I feel restless, bereft of power to wait any longer.

I wouldn't trade earth for paradise; not worth life's intoxication.

Tears force me to leave your assembly; wish I could control my crying.

See glimpses of beauty in heart's mirror and charms of spring in the rose.

You want to behead me? How nice! I wish you fulfil your pledge.



Pawning the Rags

Unashamedly I sat among the gathering, though they kept pointing at me.

Wouldn't have come back without calling, but I panicked on seeing her watchman.

My rags and rug I pawn for wine to greet the wind and rain again.

May I ask miserly earth what it did to all the beauties buried in it?

Among strangers she must have learnt offering kisses without request.

She is intransigent, not ill-natured; often she agreed to remain faithful.

Even if she listens to you, O Ghalib, you know her response; then why go?



It needs a lifetime of sighing for her to be moved at my plight.

A shark and snare in every wave! What trials undergoes a drop to become a pearl!

Love needs patience but desire is restless; how to restrain the heart till it's fully bled?

Granted she will not delay departure, but I'll be in dust when news reaches her.

Dew learns to die from sunrise; I too shall live till she looks at me.

Life's leisure is no more than a wink, nor assembly's warmth a spark's dance.

Death alone can rid you of sorrow, Ghalib; the candle has to burn till it's dawn.



My pain begged no medicine; how nice I didn't get well!

Why does she gather my rivals?
My complaint merits no street show.

Where else shall I try my luck If she refuses to use the dagger?

Abuses couldn't wipe from rival's lips the sweetness of her kiss!

They say she'd visit me today; how unlucky I don't have a mat!

Was it the kingdom of Nimrod that my obeisance brought no fruit?

Like robbers on a highway, she stole my heart and rode away.

Recite something, for they say: why is Ghalib silent today?

She Hesitates

Wanting for once to be good to me, she hesitates remembering her cruelties.

Long is my tale, short her temper; even my messenger is tired of listening.

Pride prevents her from asking and weakness lets me not tell my purpose.

Let me come to my own, O despair; I seem to lose my thought of her.

Formality aside, I cannot bear others too looking at my beloved.

My feet got hurt in the very first skirmish; neither can I stay nor flee.

Even to God I wouldn't trust her; yet she prefers to walk with my rival!

He Too Is Human

If the messenger turns my rival, blame him not; he too is human.

If death is to come, why not today? Why doesn't fate for once oblige?

If the rival lives in my beloved's lane, why shouldn't I call it enemy's den?

Knowing all, she pretends ignorance; what deceptions these beloveds practise!

In public she asks how I feel, knowing well I will not reveal.

She pre-empts the question; why argue? Know I not what she will say?

Ghalib, they say, is not bad; only he carries an insane head!



That Tearful Eye

Again I remember my tearful eye, heart and soul crying for justice.

The agony of separation was hardly over when again came to mind her departure.

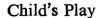
What simplicity of desire, O Ghalib!
The mind set again on that lustful look!

Life would have been spent anyway; why did I get into my beloved's net?

Again my thoughts go to her street, even though I lost my heart there.

What a desert and what desolation! It reminds me of my home again.

The stone I aimed at Majnu in boyhood had reminded me of my own head.



For me the world is child's play, a spectacle for the eyes to see.

I care not for Solomon's throne, nor for miracle of the Messiah.

The universe is there but only in name; illusory are all things I behold.

The desert hides from me in dust; the river bends to kiss the earth.

Ask not how I live in your absence but see yourself blush in my presence.

Keep my cup filled with wine if you wish to savour my style.

The hands shake but the eyes still can see; let the wine and cup remain in front of me.

Torn I am between faith and infidelity; behind is Ka'aba, in front is deity.



No use telling her my heart's tale; convincing her is not an easy task.

Let my passion become so strong that she cannot help responding.

The rival goes carrying her letter, ever eager to announce the writer.

I dare not touch her delicate body, even if she comes condescending.

The veil is too heavy to lift; whose handiwork I cannot say.

Death is certain, it will come; but she? No, even if I request.

Love is a fire that cannot be at will put out or lit.



May be I am mad, not in love, but owe you not your fame to my madness?

Let us not sever our links; if not friendship, keep up enmity.

Why be ashamed of my presence? It disturbs not your privacy.

Take me not for a foe though you think others love you more dearly.

Life is but a flash of lightning, an interlude for heart's suffering.

I shall make obeisance my habit, your indifference notwithstanding.

Even if there's no union, desire must live; keep up, O Ghalib, skirmishing.

The Pearl Scattering Cloud

(Abridged and translated from Persian)

I was sorrowful and wine drives away sorrow; what could I do, O the Merciful? Take account of wine, music, beauty and scent from Jamshed, Bahram and Parvez: not from poor Ghalib who, now and then, blackens his face with the fire of liquor. I had no garden where to enjoy a drink, nor a cellar where to store it. There's no musician to amuse me. nor a sweetheart to give me company; no fair-faced dancers to cheer me: no noise of minstrels in my courtyard. Periods of privation I had many; many a spring without wine; days when rain gladdened the earth, and nights when the moon lit the sky were dark for me without a drop of wine. The cloud of Bahman covered the horizon. but my earthen cup remained always empty. In spring I gathered necessaries of life, leaving the door of my house open with nothing in it to protect. Many a time the world has been gay with the rose and tulip,

while I lived sorrowfully in my cell. Any moments of joy that fell to my lot were like a dance of the half-dead. I never had a full measure of happiness as was my heart's desire. If I prepared a thread to make a necklace, the pearls would break; and if wine was procured, my cup got smashed. See not my dress besmeared with liquor. but look at my emaciated frame. You kept me poverty-stricken and my heart a prisoner of desires. Sorrow and privation have made life a thorn in my side. Whenever my heart boiled with desire. a cry of pain reached my ear. My disappointments will not let my heart rest even in paradise. For every sin that Your record will show I shall cite a privation I suffered. Then how, O God, will justice be done if my unfulfilled desires exceed my sins?

Rare Gems

Welcome, O heart, even strains of sorrow; life's harp will break one day.

With scars of longings unfulfilled I leave, unable to enliven the assembly any more.

Rose's fragrance, heart's wail, candle's smoke, distraught they leave your assembly.

In the school of sorrow I learnt the meaning of 'gone' and 'was'.

Enter the Somnath of my mind and see stirring forms adorned with sacred threads.

In my silence are buried a million hopes; I'm the burnt-out lamp in the poor's graveyard.

Life's bondage, sorrow's chains are same; deliverance comes only after death.

What pleasures we plan to satiate desire! but life's not worth if there's no death.

Sleep and bliss come easy to him on whose arm lie her tresses.

Who wants wine for pleasure? To forget myself alone I drink.

Sudden death is all that is left; I've taken, O Ghalib, every other test.

No sword in hand, yet she fights! Who wouldn't die at such naivete?

How can she now refuse to kill? Armed with sword and shroud I go.

Envy prevents me from telling her name; yet, which way to go, I ask everyone.

In the world are poets good, galore; but unique, they say, is Ghalib's style.

I was glad and didn't haggle when God gave me the twin worlds!

What beauties lie buried in earth! Some can be seen in rose and tulip.

Ghalib can afford wine no more, barring on cloudy days, moonlit nights.

The river of sins went dry, wetting not even the hem of my robe.

In vain I waited till the eyes shut; too late they brought her to my tomb.

Tears made me bold and pure; overwhelmed I lost all modesty.

The joy of every raindrop is to merge in the sea.
When pain passes the limit, it becomes its own remedy.

Ghalib was a good soul, they say; but love has made him useless.

On hope, I'm told, they live; but I hope not to live.

What would his dismay be whose hope his death be?

Drinking on credit was my habit, knowing some day I'll benefit.

O my love, come out, explore or I'll pretend drunkenness, rush forth.

When there was nought, there was God; had nothing been, God would've been. My being has been cause of my ruin; had I not been, what would have been?

Compensate me, O God, for pleasures omitted if I'm to be punished for sins committed.

The heart is no heart if not a fireplace; the breath is no breath if not a volcano.

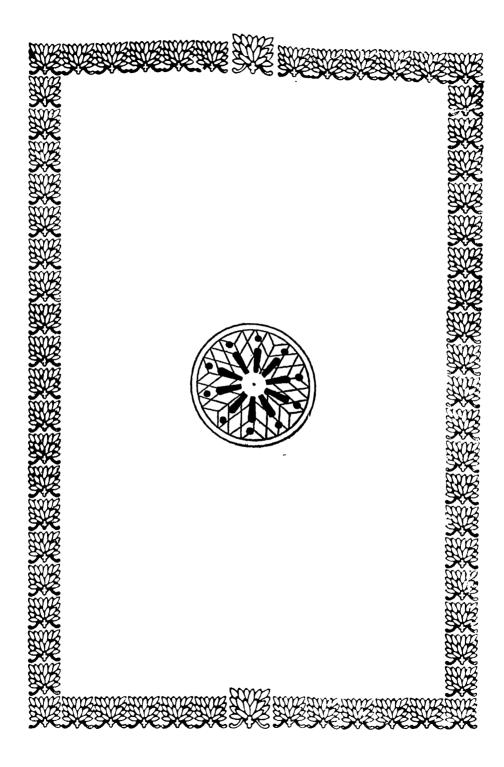
Seeing her I become cheerful; she thinks the patient is well!

I go alone with every traveller, but the real guide I do not get.



Epilogue

Now go and live in a land, O Ghalib, with none to share your secret and song; build a house without doors and walls, with none as guard and neighbours none; no one to care if you fall sick and none to mourn when you are dead.



IQBAL



Voice of the East

Mohammed Iqbal was born in a middle class family of Sialkot, now in Pakistan. There is a divergence of opinion about the date of his birth. Most biographers, including V.G. Kiernan, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, and Sachchidananda Sinha, have accepted it to be 22 February 1873. The introduction to Kulyat-i-Iqbal also mentions this date. But in his doctoral thesis the poet himself gives the date Dhu'l-Qa'da 2, 1294 (Hijra year), which corresponds to 9 November 1877. This date also matches better with the different phases of Iqbal's life in college and university.

The family had migrated from Kashmir where Iqbal's Brahman ancestors had been converted to Islam nearly 250 years back. He often alludes to the fact that he is "a son of Kashmiri Brahmans but acquainted with the wisdom of Rum and Tabriz." His deep rooted love for the ancestral land and his vivid interest in Kashmir affairs are reflected in his poetry and political life. Some of his best poems are devoted to the description of Kashmir's spring and its people's poverty.

Iqbal's father, Sheikh Nur Mohammed, was a pious and God-fearing man. He was a petty trader but was held in high esteem by the people of the

town on account of his acts of piety and saintly nature. Iqbal's only brother Ata Mohammed, who was 14 years older, took up engineering as a career. Iqbal joined college after passing the Entrance Examination from the local Mission High School. oriental languages, This school had a teacher o Maulvi Mir Hasan, who was widely known and respected for being a great scholar and authority on classical Arabic and Persian. Iqbal was greatly fascinated by this teacher and owes to him his command of these languages and his vast knowledge of Islamic history and polity. Mir Hasan took special interest in Iqbal who from the very beginning gave evidence of a literary bent of mind. This pupil did not have to be taught a thing for a second time; so strong was his memory and power of comprehension. Verses started flowing from his pen while he was a student in the school.

Urdu in those days was taking rapid strides in Punjab. A number of literary magazines made their appearance and mushairas (poetic symposia) began to be held in major towns. Iqbal attended some of them and also recited his compositions. He had a resonant voice which drew repeated applause from the audience. Nawab Mirza Khan Dagh of Delhi, popularly known as Dagh Dehalvi (1831-1905), was then the leading-most poet of the Urdu language. Poets of lesser merit, including the then Nizam of Hyderabad, got their compositions corrected by

Dagh. Iqbal too sent his ghazals to him for correction but, after going through a few of them, Dagh declared that Iqbal's verses did not stand in need of correction. He saw in his young pupil the makings of a great poet and encouraged him to write more frequently. Later when Iqbal achieved wider fame, Dagh took particular pride in the fact that he had been his pupil.

Though belonging to the second half of the nineteenth century, Dagh carefully preserved the traditions of such ancient masters as Wali, Mir, Sauda, Momin, Ghalib and his own mentor Zauq. He did not allow the purity of the Urdu language to be affected by Western influences which had begun to make inroads into Indian culture long before his time. This fact appealed to Iqbal and he wrote his early ghazals in his master's style but later adopted the pattern set by Ghalib.

Iqbal passed the Intermediate Examination from Sialkot and went to Lahore to join Government College for the B.A. degree. He took the M.A. degree in philosophy in 1899 and began life as a lecture in Oriental College. Later he served in Government College too. During his academic career he won several awards and scholarships.

While he was a student in Government College, Iqbal came under the influence of Professor T.W. Arnold (later Sir Thomas Arnold) who taught him philosophy. Professor Arnold was a person of

exceptional ability and took particular interest in Iqbal, recognising in him the seeds of a future great man. Arnold and Iqbal developed great affection and regard for each other and, when the former left for England after his retirement from service, the latter could not but follow him there to further enrich his treasure of knowledge.

Until the turn of the century Iqbal, though he recited his poems at mushairas, did not make an effort to get them published in book form or in literary magazines. In 1901, for the first time, he came into contact with Sir Abdul Oadir, a leading figure of the times. The two met at a mushaira in Lahore at which Iqbal recited a ghazal with which Sir Abdul Oadir was highly impressed. Igbal's fame at that time had not travelled beyond the precincts of the literary circles of the city. Meanwhile, the Urdu enthusiasts of Lahore formed an association at whose meetings lectures were delivered and poems recited. At one of these gatherings, attended by Sir Abdul Qadir, Iqbal read out his famous poem, "Himalaya". It took the Urdu world by surprise and thereafter Iqbal was in great demand at mushairas and public meetings.

Iqbal led an active but simple life during his stay in Lahore. He spent the best part of his days in reading and writing and participating in literary get-togethers. His poems were in great demand by newspapers and journals and the mail every day brought an ever-increasing number of requests for his personal appearance at various functions and gatherings.

His youthful exuberance was bursting at the seams and there was no restraining him once he had started pouring fourth in verse his feelings and effusions. Lying in bed in a contemplative mood, he would start speaking in the language of the poet and verses would flow from his lips like a torrent. For long spells he would remain in a state of ecstasy and those around him too would become enraptured. His melodious voice would add grace to his lyrics. was not his habit to sit down with a pen and paper in hand and exercise his brain to compose verses. It was foreign to his nature to be commissioned to write a poem suited to an occasion. verses only when he got into the mood. Even then he would not jot them down. He had a prodigious memory and would reproduce in the same order on a subsequent occasion any poem that he had recited before. However, when he sang his verses, his admirers would take them down on paper so that they could be published in magazines and thus benefit their readers. As his fame spread, the audiences grew larger and larger. He was the star attraction at the annual conferences of the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam.

When Iqbal left for England in 1905 he was 32. He joined Cambridge University for advanced studies

in philosophy under the guidance of Professor McTaggart. He also carried on research at the University of Munich in Germany which brought him the Ph.D. degree for writing *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. Next he qualified as a Barrister in London and was called to the English Bar in 1908. The same year he returned home and started practice in Lahore as an Advocate. But he did not make much headway in this profession as his mind was occupied by literary pursuits.

While in Europe, Iqbal did not get much time for writing poetry. In fact, one day he declared that he would no longer engage himself in this "useless pastime" and conveyed his decision to Sir Thomas Arnold and Sir Abdul Qadir who happened to be in England at that time. Iqbal thought that he should better devote his time to some constructive The two well-wishers told him that the type of poetry he was writing was no waste of time but a useful contribution to the wellbeing of his country and community. Perhaps it would inspire his dispirited and depressed countrymen to free themselves from alien domination. It was impressed upon him that he had a God-given gift which should be used for the good of humanity. He was thus prevailed upon to change his mind.

However, an incident that occurred during his stay in England changed the tenor of Iqbal's poetic career. He had been invited to dinner at a friend's

house. The host requested him to recite some of his Persian verses. Igbal told his friend and other guests that so far he had written only Urdu poems except a few stray couplets in Persian. The request however, gave rise to a chain of thoughts in his mind and when he returned to his residence he lay awake in bed far into the night musing over the idea. Next day when he met Sir Abdul Qadir, he recited two Persian ghazals that he had composed during the night. The latter appreciated their beauty and excellence of diction. The poet for the first time realised that Persian offered him a much better medium than Urdu to translate his thoughts into poetry and reach a much wider audience than hitherto. From then on, Iqbal composed poems mostly in Persian.

After his return to India in 1908 Iqbal busied himself with the task of writing a long Persian poem (masnavi) which he called Asrar-i-Khudi. He had been toying with the idea of writing this book for a long time and when it was published in Lahore in 1915, it established his reputation as an international poet of great merit. Soon other collections of his Persian verses were published in quick succession and, in recognition of his contribution to world literature, Allahabad University conferred on Iqbal the degree of Doctor of Literature honoris causa.

During the period when Iqbal was for the most part occupied with the writing of Persian verses, he did occasionally write poems in Urdu as well. But his Urdu poems mostly appeared in newspapers and magazines or were recited at public meetings. His admirers were keen to see them collected in book form. This was finally done in 1924 and his first Urdu collection was published under the title Bang-i-Dara. It consists of three parts, Part I containing poems composed before he left for England, Part II poems written during his stay in Europe, and Part III poems composed after his return home. This book was followed by three more collections of Urdu verses: Bal-i-Jabreel (1935), Zarb-i-Kalim (1936) and Armaghan-i-Hejaz (1938, posthumously).

Being a leading light of his community. Ighal was inevitably drawn into the vortex of party politics. He was a member of the Punjab Legislative Council from 1925 to 1928. In 1930 he presided over the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad. In his presidential address, he for the first time proposed a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. He said: "I would like to see the Puniab. the North-West Frontier Province. Sind Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Selfgovernment within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to be the final destiny of the Muslims of North-West India." How prophetic! Yet nobody at that time took these words seriously as Indian nationalism was at its zenith with the Congress dominating the political scene. The Muslim League was considered, perhaps rightly so, a party of reactionaries who were only interested in perpetuating their feudal and vested interests and did not want any reduction or interruption of the power and influence they exercised over the illiterate and ignorant masses.

In 1931 Igbal attended the second Round Table Conference in London convened to find a solution to the political problem of India. The idea of a separate homeland for Muslims was mooted at this conference too but it did not catch on at that time. Inbal's voice at the conference was a voice in the wilderness. He was dubbed a reactionary and out of tune with modern tendencies. He fell foul with the leader of the Muslim delegation, Sir Akbar Hydari. After the conference Iqbal visited Spain, Italy and other European countries. The following year he was again sent, rather unwillingly, to the third Round Table Conference. While the conference was in progress, he resigned and returned to India. At a Muslim League meeting he strongly denounced British policy towards India. The fact is that he could not tolerate hypocrisy.

Financially, Iqbal was not placed in a very happy position. He had a knack of annoying persons in a position to help him. For example, he severely criticised the Punjab Unionist Party leader, Sir Fazl-i-Husain, on the rural-urban issue which was agitating

the people of the province those days. Yet the latter, who headed the provincial administration, went out of his way to help Iqbal. It was at his instance that the poet was nominated by the Viceroy to the second Round Table Conference. After Iqbal gave up legal practice altogether in 1931 due to failing health, his financial condition became worse. Sir Fazl-i-Husain approached the Nizam of Hyderabad for an arrangement under which the poet was to deliver six lectures on Modern Islamic Thought for a fee of Rs 10,000 but Iqbal stipulated stiff terms which the Nizam's G overnment refused to countenance. Ultimately, the Nawab of Bhopal came to his help and sanctioned for him a monthly stipend of Rs 500 which he continued to receive until death.

Not much is known about Iqbal's private or family life, except that he married thrice. He, however, led an austere existence getting up very early, saying his prayers regularly, eating sparingly and dressing plainly. He generally wore a shirt and salwar (baggy trousers) and sported a Turkish cap. During his visits abroad he put on European dress. In spite of the various titles, including knighthood, conferred on him, he remained to the end an extremely unassuming person. He sat in his house reading, writing and talking to callers who came in ever-increasing numbers.

Among the poet's distinguished visitors was Jawaharlal Nehru. The latter writes his impressions

of the visit in *The Discovery of India*: "A few months before his death, as he lay on his sick bed, Iqbal sent for me and I gladly obeyed the summons. As I talked to him about many things I felt how much we had in common, in spite of differences, and how easy it would be to get on with him. He was in a reminiscent mood and wandered from one subject to another, and I listened to him, talking little myself. I admired him and his poetry, and it pleased me greatly to feel that he liked me and had a good opinion of me. A little before I left him he said to me: 'What is there in common between Jinnah and you? He is a politician, you are a patriot."

Dr Amiya Chakravarty, an eminent author, wrote after a visit to Iqbal at Lahore: "In Iqbal's house there was little obvious modernity; in fact, an old air of indifference oppressed you as you waited to be ushered into his presence. With rare charm, taking the stem of his hubble-bubble out of his lips, he would greet you, raising himself on his couch where he lay reclining in oriental fashion, clad in garments of a Punjabi gentleman. His smile would put you at ease; in flawless English he would begin discussing on modern themes as to the manner born."

Iqbal possessed an extremely genial nature and had a very large circle of friends. He was witty, brilliant in conversation and informal in approach. He could speak with equal felicity in English, Urdu and his mother-tongue Punjabi. His fondness for

Punjabi is testified by his request only a few hours before his death to a friend to sing a Punjabi song. The latter sang a few verses of Punjab's mystic and most popular poet, Bulleh Shah. Iqbal was so much touched and overwhelmed by the pathos of the song that tears rolled down his cheeks. How unfortunate for Punjabi that this great genius did not write in this language!

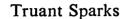
For some time Iqbal resided in the congested Bhati Gate area of Lahore. From there he shifted to a house in Anarkali. Here he stayed for about ten years. Then he moved into a bungalow on Macleod Road and spent fourteen years of his life there. Three years before his death he built a house on Mayo Road which was named Javid Manzil.

Iqbal's third wife died in 1935. This left him very unhappy. Thereafter he kept indifferent health and developed kidney trouble. His eyesight too became weak and breathlessness increased. He now knew that the end was near but did not despair. One day he sat up in bed alone and wrote his will. As his condition grew worse, two prominent Unani hakims from Delhi treated him but could do little to save his life. He began vomitting blood and the voice that captivated vast audiences in India and abroad was stilled for over on 21 April 1938. The news of his death spread in the city like wildfire and people of all communities and from all walks of life

poured into the lawns and roads round Javid Manzil. Over 70,000 mourners are said to have joined the funeral procession. Hartal was observed in Lahore and many other towns and public meetings were held by the score to pay him tributes. In a condolence message Rabindranath Tagore, another literary giant of this century, observed: "The death of Iqbal has created a void in literature. India, whose place in the world is too narrow, can ill afford to miss a poet whose poetry had such universal value." But Iqbal's soul was now in search of pastures new as he had said in one of his couplets:

Bewildered eye looks for some other, newer vision evermore; wrecked ship of life, distraught, by storms purblinded, pines for the shore.





My poems, like a truant spark or like a secret cherished, choose to leave me, betray. I feel depressed; why, why couldn't these my little dearies with me ever stay, as a glow within, if not also a guide, in the cruel world outside?

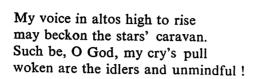
No Land Like Our Hind

(Hindustan Hamara)

Our Hind is the fairest land. our garden; we its nightingales. In climes diverse we might live; our heart, our love to Hind we give. Its loftiest peak, sky's neighbour, is our tireless guard, sentinel. In its lap frolic many rivers making it the envy of Paradise. O Ganga's waters, remember the day when camped on your shore our caravan? Religion teaches not to bear malice; Hindi we are and Hind is ours. Gone is the glory of Greece, Rome, Egypt; but survives till today our name and fame. There's something that keeps us alive, though the times have been hostile. In the world, we have no confidant, aware of our pain within.

A Wish

Sick of the madding world, O God, for a peaceful nook I long, beseech; A hut on a lonesome hill. serene, solitary. defying description, and free from earth's tumult. No cares of life like thorns in the side to distract me evermore: in peace my time I pass. To music I lend my ear, to birds' chirps, rills' rolling. In the goblet I may see the universe, and in bud's opening get the message. My arm may be my pillow, meads my bedspread; the birds my friends, least scared; trees shading my soul's path and the stream taking a photograph. Enchanting such be the scene. water popping its neck to see; enraptured in the earth's arm the verdure and bushes sleep.



(abridged)

The New Moon

The sun's ship foundered in the Nile. a fragment left aloft? A red drop in heaven's bowl or the sun's vein cut by nature? A ring stolen off evening's ear by Azure in love? Or a silver fish in the Nile deep aglide? No bells beg your caravan's march, O moon; it's on, ever soundless on! Waxing and waning of life you show, but where's your home, which land you go? And here on earth in fright I grope for light, a mercury-footed child in the school of life!

To The Saqi

Spring's caravan has pitched its tent, turned into paradise are mountain's skirts; rose, lily, narcissus, daffodil and poppy, the eternal martyr in blood-stained shroud. The earth is a riot of colour, blood coursing in stone's veins. Heady breeze and the sky is blue. The birds stay not in their nests. And look at that mountain stream, creeping, gushing and rippling, jumping, swaying and crawling, downhill its way winding; over and beneath the rocks, it pierces mountain's heart. O Saqi, see this brook's passage, conveying us life's message! Spring comes not so often; pour me some fiery wine, wine that life illumines, keeps nature alive, eternity's secret ever holding, mystery's curtain raising!

The New Temple

Shall I tell you, O Brahman, the truth if you don't mind? The idols in your temples have become outdated. They taught you hatred, to disown your own; to fight, struggle is God's will, a truth known to the wise. Tired of your words of wisdom, I quit scriptures, shrines. To me not stones alone but the meanest dust of my country's earth is sacred, holy, God's own. Come, let's lift afresh veil of enmity that us divide. and bring once again together our brethren. The heart's land lies desolate, let's build a new temple there. The highest shrine it should be. its spiral reaching heaven's skirt. Votaries all to it must wend, singing songs to gain new strength. Vigour and peace lie in their chant: in love lies man's deliverance

Sorrow's Profile

No ear begs this, my silent, tongueless tale; yet my lips yearn to break rules of the assemblage. My wail too is not mine; it's whole garden's travail. My hidden, cherished wounds I must bare today; shed tears of blood to make the gathering red. With my secret pain I must enkindle a candle to illume your dark nights. Think not of self, O fool, think of the country, ill bodes ahead. Get freed of past, live here in the present, future's dread. Cry, ring with resonant plaints and rend the skies. Come, wake up or you die; no mention of your name or tale in books of history will ever one find. No trace of a petal left. poachers picked all clean while Hind's gardeners fighta fight so mean!

There's lightning up there hiding in dark clouds; let nightingales remain not complacent in their nests in the garden. These scattered beads in a rosarv once more I must knit. Communalism is a tree of which bigotry is the fruit, a fruit that had poor Adam from heaven exiled. This hatred divides, enslaves, imprisons men in vices low. This curse has uprooted men, communities, families whole. Have you, my countrymen, some regard for your land, motherland? Long is my tale, my tragedy; it's endless, so I must stop though I possess a tongue and the power to wail! (abridged)



Beauty's Essence

Beauty asked God one day: "Why didn't You make me a joy for ever ?" Replied the Creator: "A picture gallery, a lightless tale of an endless night is this world, of passing shadows formed, founded on unreality. That alone is beautiful which knows decline and decay." That moon passing by overheard and slipped. The whisper went across, spread through space; heard the morning star and betrayed the secret to earth which in turn told the dew. The flower when it heard shed tears of sorrow, and bud's heart turned red. Spring left the garden crying; youth, come to stroll, went away sighing.

Children's National Song

This was the piece of earth where Chishti preached the gospel of truth; where Nanak sang the song of unity; where Tartars found sweet home; which the Arabs, weaned from deserts, won't leave evermore to roam.

Mine is this land, mine is this land.

This was the piece of earth which wonderstruck the Greek, gave art and wisdom to all; whose dust could turn gold and fill Turks' chest with jewels. Mine is this land, mine is this land.

This was the piece of earth where stars, fallen from the Iranian sky, regained their lustre; which told us of the oneness of God, sent fresh breeze to the Meer of Arabs. Mine is this land, mine is this land.

This was the piece of earth where Moses abound and Sinais stand; where Noah's ark anchored; whose mountains scrape the skies, living in whose breeze is heaven's envy. Mine is this land, mine is this land.

Solitude

Sweet solitude—
that calm of pain, of night,
of stars for listening partners;
bright, majestic all around
unfolds the scene.
The sleeping earth,
the heavens on watch,
smooth carousing moon,
wilderness and hills,
a rosy spread of white
and tears—those pearly hues.
How Nature with one's heart
in harmony blends!!
To its feelings how a form,
a melody and a meaning lends!

The Mountain Cloud

High in the sky is my nest; flower-bedecked on the hillside is my bed. Here in the garden, there in the forest stay where I will. Over sands, seas and pastures, cities and wilds I fly. Over them I fly, in them I rest; exhausted fall asleep in meads of valleys green. Nature has taught me pearls to strew on land, cheer the heart of the peasant, give hope to the youth in parks gathered. Like beloved's tresses on the earth I spread. Often I tease the upturned eye in a city as I pass by. Of ocean born, by sun bred, a hope to plants, boon to rivers.

(abridged)

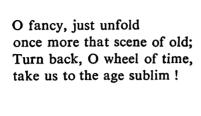
The Himalayas

O Himalaya! Rampart of our realm! To kiss your brow stoops heaven. Ageless and young, defying time's revolution! One vision for Moses at Sinai; your light eternal for the seeing eye.

A mountain though you are, but for Hind a defensive wall. The crown of snow resting on your head, adding to your glory, keeps the sun illumined.

Down your side flow streams shaming Kausar and Tasnim; with pebbles playing, mirroring nature, singing songs to passing strangers.

Perennial snows, tell us the tale when Adam chose you for his abode; tell us of that life plain when formality left no stain.



(abridged)

The Withered Rose

Shall I still call you a flower, nightingale's dream? O rose. Breeze soft once caressed you, raised you like a nurse expert. The gathering in the garden called you the laughing rose. Zephyr for your sweet breath would wait all night to see the garden filled with scents diffused. And now my tearful eyes shed drops of dew on you. In your suffering is hidden my heart's desolation. A little tragedy mine in your lot I find. Reflected in your fate is my life's finale.



Ram

Brimful with wine of truth is the cup of Hindustan.
All thinkers of the West say Hind's philosophy is best.
Hind's thoughts are high, taller than the sky.
Her sages and seers have left her sans peers.
Proud of her Ram, in reality her Imam; his lamp of guidance illumines her evenings.
Courageous, adept in sword play, peerless in piety, eager to pray.

An Evening Scene

When Laila of the night comes with curls dishevelled; when stillness defies description, and trees go into meditation; when a crimson glow spreads, trembling on the mountain and rouging its face; the heart goes into trance.

Two Planets

Two planets came face to face. One to the other said: "How wonderful life would be should we for ever together be; should heavens one whit only relent, together let us shine, die!" But hardly the words were out, the call came for them to part. It said: "To revolve is your fixed lot, a determined chartfor each one his course forelined. There is little perpetuity in familiarity; friendship is a dream, separation is Nature's law supreme!"

Loneliness

(From: Pyam-i-Mashriq)

I stood beside the ocean and asked the restless waves—
To what eternal troubling, to what quest are you slave?
With orient pearls by thousands your mantle's edges shine, but is there in your bosom one gem, one heart, like mine?
—It shuddered from the shore and fled; it fled, and did not speak.

I stood before the mountain, and said—unpitying things!
Could sorrow's lamentation your hearing never wring?
If hidden in your granite one ruby blood-drop lie, do not to my affliction one answering word deny!
—Within its cold unbreathing self it shrank, and did not speak.

I travelled a long pathway, and asked the moon—Shall some far day, oh doomed to wander, or no day, end your doom?

Our earth your silver glances with lakes of jasmine lace; is it a heart within you whose hot glow sears your face?

—It stared with jealous eyes towards the stars, and did not speak.

Past moon and sun I journeyed, to where God sits enskied—
In all Your world no atom is kin of mine, I cried:
Heartless that world, this handful of dust all heart, all pain; enchantment fills Your garden, but I sing there in vain.
—There gathered on His lips a smile; He smiled, and did not speak.

(Translation by courtesy V.G. KIERNAN)

The Complaint

Knows not all the world our nature is to salute? Yet, feeling constrained for once, for one small complaint to make, here we are at Your door, repressed like an unstruck lute!

It was a different scene till the faithful came: they worshipped stones, trees, men alive! How God could they recognise till Muslim sword made them wise?

We lived to fight for You and died to make You great; desired not power or pelf. wielded the sword for Yourself. Had we wanted gold and riches would've sold, not broken, statues.

Who banished untruth from the world? Ended man's bondage? Embraced the holy word? To the Ka'aba paid homage? And yet You dub us godless! If we're godless, You too are heartless!

What justice is this?
The kafir gets all—
wealth, women and wine—
and the Muslim sweet words,
privations, piety!
Gone are the days
when, with us, sweet were Your ways!

There are nations galore, men of sin, humility and fame, slothful, forgetful, learned, but resentful of Your name. Your blessings they all command, lightning strikes the poor Musalman!

The idols laugh and say:
"Muslims have deserted;
Ka'aba's watchmen on camels gone;
with Qoran under arm they bolted."
Know You not how infidels scoff
and make us world's laughing stock?

The world is now for others; for us it's only a memory.

We leave it but tell us not "The people are no more godly."

We wanted Your name to revive but without saqi can the cup survive?

(abridged)

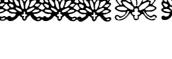
God Replies

Then a voice from Heaven was touched sore, moved to say: "Sad, too sad is indeed your tale, know I not your tears and wail? Your true cry pierces the skies and makes man's kind to rise.

I thought my gifts were there but none came up to take; my guidelines none to follow, none of you is awake. The deserving I help always, to the seeker I show new ways.

Who prays but the poor?
Who fasts but the poor?
Who calls me but the poor?
Who shields you but the poor?
The rich, drunk with wealth, neglect me,
The poor keep alive my community.

You are busy with life's comforts;
These are not Muslim's manners,
Hyder's thinking or Usman's living,
with the noble past not keeping.
Respected, they were the nation's pride;
leaving Qoran, you got into a sorry plight.



Fan out like bud's fragrance, like the garden breeze. From dust become a desert, from tide a storm. Illumine the world with Mohamed's name, Therein lies your strength, your fame."

(abridged)

I Beg No Redress

You may respond, may not. but hear my lament;
My soul walks free, I beg no redress.
The dust, the wind and the vast sky, what made You create? Mercy or curse?
The rose's petalled tent could not stand wind's hiss; is this Your bountiful Spring?
I sinned, left Paradise alone, but which angel filled my place?
My nature, in love with tyranny,

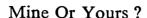
A spirit that craves danger is lured not by a park free from lurking enemy.

Love's lane is out of bounds to Your seraphs;

It's reserved for those

is blessed by the realm You left to anarchy.

who dare and do.



If the stars wander off their course, is heaven mine or Yours?
Why should I worry for the world?
Is the world mine or Yours?
If eternity is devoid of love's passions, whose fault? Mine or Yours?
If Satan rebelled at first dawn, to whom had he belonged?
To me or You?
Mohamed is Yours, Gabriel Yours, Qoran Yours; whose words they interpret? Mine or Yours?
It's Your star that lights the world; yet, if man of the world decays, whose loss is that? Mine or Yours?

All Is Topsy Turvy

The earth is back-pedalling, the stars whirling mad, hell-spitting is every atom in this universe; O Saqi!

Reason and faith are casualties and godlessness the freshest fad. The same chronic sickness, the same wavering heart; its cure the same nectar drop, O Saqi!

No more passion fires a trail, no need in the temple for veil. Unchanged is Iran's garden, the same soil, stream, same Tabriz; no new Rumi has that land graced, O Saqi!

Iqbal despairs not of his barren land; there is your wine to moisten it, O Saqi! This beggar's gifts are kindly, his song worth the wealth of Parvez, O Saqi!



Bring me back that cup of wine, O Saqi!
Let my lost place be mine, O Saqi!
For centuries have been kept slammed
Hind's bars;
time for your bounty to reach all, O Saqi!
My flask of poetry held last few drops;
unlawful, says accursed divine, O Saqi!

Lion hearts hide in Truth's forest no more; left are the slaves to priest and saint, O Saqi!

Love's valiant sword wherefor has left, leaving empty sheath in wisdom's hand, O Saqi?

Verse lights up life as hearts burn bright, but dies when those rays decline, O Saqi!

Deprive not my night of its moon, when full moon shines in your goblet, O Saqi!

The Fire Of Longing

No riches better than pain of longing; wouldn't trade my mat for God's chair.

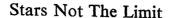
This world is not for free men, nor that; Here shackles of death, there of life.

The veil whets loiterer's thirst in love's lost lane as your reluctance fans my passion's fire.

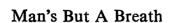
The hawk, born free, passes his days in hills and dales; no caged nest he ever would want.

Was it a book or father's look that taught son of Abraham the ways of obeisance?

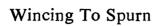
Strong hearts, bold souls visit my tomb; I taught poor dust to tower high in air.



Worlds more lie beyond the stars; your love faces trials galore. Devoid of life are not these winds, with a thousand caravans on the move. Be not content with colourful earth, gardens, nests more lovely are there, Why mourn for the home you lost? Places enough for lament and wail. You are a falcon born to fly; enough skies for you to soar. Let not day-and-night hold you back; yours are another time and space. Gone are the days of my loneliness; Others are here to shere my secrets.



A tiny breath of air, a whiff, a freak—is all what man's life is. "No," said the rose, "it's a blush!" "Nothing but pain," put in the candle. Life's secret knows nobody, when found, it's no secret any more. Let Iqbal ask pilgrims to Ka'aba: "Is Zamzam its only gift?"



What was it that held you back?
Not that I mind your breach of word.
Your own emissary gave you away;
blame not this humble being.
Spotting the lover in an assembly!
Oh, the alertness of the drunk!
Though hesitant, tell me friend,
the manner of her spurning my plea.
Wasn't Moses attracted to Sinai?
What power in passion to see!



My Dust

By nature left lightless, witless, my dust has power to rise high; dust that sees Gabriel pass and rend his apron apart; dust that will not pick straws to make a nest for rest; gifted by God, its tears shame the stars in brightness.

Whose Sigh?

O morning breeze, take my words to the sage: "Your people, your trust, have lost their value, their faith."

To the restless ripple, the shore said: "Far is still the midsea, and you pulverised!"

Love's honour is safe so long there's some veil, and sense of decency; be morbid or play with it, all ethics part, all modesty.

The pearl loses its lustre as drop gives up struggle; gone is freedom and the pleasure of fight.

We know not whose sigh it was, sigh that came from Iqbal's lips; it set the assembly afire, yet gave the message of peace.

Satire

The Sheikh is no votary of the veil, Why agitated then the collegians feel? Did he not say in his sermon: "Why veil when men are no men!"

The elite patient needs not the pill. For cure he wants doctor's bill, Gone are the days when pupil on his part to the teacher he offered his heart. Now before receiving the lesson-to-be he wants to pay the tutor's fee.

"Cross not bounds of propriety," she said as I resolved to die.
"Neither courage nor dagger you carry, why then kill yourself, why?"
I said, "Give me some cash, dear, to get an Afghan from Frontier."

A mosquito laid bare his heart; to me he told in part: "I work the whole night but what do I get from the bite? One drop of blood just to quench my night-long thirst, while biswadar without fuss leaves his tenant bloodless!" Land is his who tills, said the tenant one day.
No, put in the owner, it's not that way.
Asked "who is the owner," the earth replied, "Your honour, all under the sky fine is rightfully mine."

O Sheikh and Brahman, know what the wise say? All idle nations of the world the tide will wash away.

Ruba'iyat

Sweet is springtime, but sweeter it is to bask in spring's sweet shades; and sweeter still to lie in spring's soft niche, unless swooned in some lovely tress.

Time's tireless march alone is reality; The rest is a fairy tale. Past and future matter not, the present is your chance to avail.

Speak not of love or of lover's parting, friend; life is worth at bloom. The pearl when stirred up from her bed parts and there the story ends. No storms in you left to rage? No self-respect for wars to wage? Fool, fate is not to fret against, bewail; Wake, rise, be a man, maker of your own destiny.

"Who sleeps there, there under the arch?" of the priest I asked. "Who is lost there, there in the temple's darks?" to me, instead, the walls echoing unmasked.

Now like a tide stirred up, surged; now like an ebb, sinking, settling; now like a ripple, gliding past the shore; explore, explore, the secret of self, explore.

Love's blissful madness gone, no passion, warmth left in blood; ranks rent asunder, hearts bewildered, lips cold, zestless prayer; there my lifeless Muslim brother on his senseless path wends, aimless drifts, floats. While in the Muazzin's call all Nature's notes softly blend, like one vision of Truth the Arab's God lends charm to temples everywhere, the West, ever godless, ever a thing restless, is tortured by its own doubts.

Tomorrow's not for him who lacks passion, sorrow and joy. A nation too that masters not the present has little claim to strife or life.

Only fools take pride in origin and birth. The wise seek their talent and worth and are off to a lightning start, fashioning their own fate.

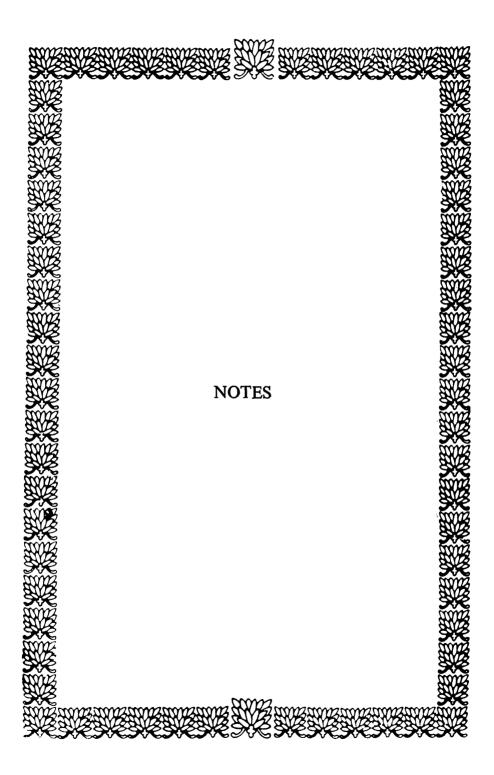
Blessed is my poverty that makes proud men covetous. Beware those rags and the begging bowl that make the Muslim pusillanimous.

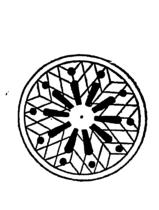


Plunge into the darkest depths but lose not your balance, peace of mind; fall, break, snap loose but soon come inward inclined. No peace for you, O wave; Your shore was never your mate, your home, O restlessness, accursed.



As I take leave, they all say: "I knew him, I knew him." None knew, however, whence I came. what I said, to whom.





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