

# *Iqbāl-Nāmāh*

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## Ghazālī and Kant

*[In the following passage, from the opening chapter ("Knowledge and Religious Experience") of The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1989, pp. 4–5), Iqbal compares the medieval Muslim thinker Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) with the modern German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In Iqbal's view, Ghazālī's role in Islamic intellectual history is similar to that of Kant in the history of Western thought. Both Ghazālī and Kant maintain that reason is incapable of validating religion. Unlike Kant, however, Ghazālī thinks that religion can be grounded in mysticism—that mystic experience furnishes an independent basis for religion. Iqbal is critical of the compartmentalization of religion and reason, of intuition and thought, to which Ghazālī's view necessarily leads. Iqbal's own view, only briefly stated here, is that intuition and thought are organically related.]*

Ghazālī's mission was almost apostolic like that of Kant in Germany of the eighteenth century. In Germany rationalism appeared as an ally of religion, but she soon realized that the dogmatic side of religion was incapable of demonstration. The only course open to her was to eliminate dogma from the sacred record. With the elimination of dogma came the utilitarian view of morality, and thus rationalism completed the reign of unbelief. Such was the state of theological thought in Germany when Kant appeared. His *Critique of Pure Reason* revealed the limitations of human reason and reduced the whole work of the rationalists to a heap of ruins. And justly has he been described as God's greatest gift to his country. Ghazālī's philosophical scepticism which, however, went a little too far, virtually did the same kind of work in the world of Islam in breaking the back of that proud but shallow rationalism which moved in the same direction as pre-Kantian rationalism in Germany. There is, however, one important difference between Ghazālī and Kant. Kant, consistently with his principles, could not affirm the possibility of a knowledge of God. Ghazālī, finding no hope in analytic thought, moved to mystic experience, and there found an independent content for religion. In this way he succeeded in securing for religion the right to exist independently of science and metaphysics. But the revelation of the total Infinite in mystic experience convinced him of the finitude and inconclusiveness of thought and drove him to draw a line of cleavage between thought and intuition. He failed to see that thought and intuition are organically related and that thought must necessarily simulate finitude and inconclusiveness because of its alliance with serial time. The idea that thought is essentially finite, and for this reason unable

to capture the Infinite, is based on a mistaken notion of the movement of thought in knowledge. It is the inadequacy of the logical understanding which finds a multiplicity of mutually repellent individualities with no prospect of their ultimate reduction to a unity that makes us sceptical about the conclusiveness of thought. In fact, the logical understanding is incapable of seeing this multiplicity as a coherent universe. Its only method is generalization based on resemblances, but its generalizations are only fictitious unities which do not affect the reality of concrete things. In its deeper movement, however, thought is capable of reaching an immanent Infinite in whose self-unfolding movement the various finite concepts are merely moments. In its essential nature, then, thought is not static; it is dynamic and unfolds its internal infinitude in time like the seed which, from the very beginning, carries within itself the organic unity of the tree as a present fact.

## Verses

(1)

[The following lines (a single couplet in the original), in which Iqbal expresses his intention to turn aside from "outdoor matters" and focus on "inside matters," both introduce and sum up the subject matter of Zabūr-i 'Ajam ("Psalms of Persia"), a collection of Persian poems (1927): in this book, Iqbal will put aside matters that are "external" to the house—namely, matters pertaining to society and its institutions and to events and developments that take place in the outside world—and will focus, instead, on matters "internal" to the house—namely, matters pertaining to the inner realm of the heart, soul, and mind. Iqbal implies that he has dealt with the first type of matters in other works and that it is time for him to deal with matters of the second type. In being the outpourings of a passionate soul, Zabūr-i 'Ajam, Iqbal further implies, partakes of the character of David's Psalms (Zabūr is the Qur'anic name for the Psalms of David, which are called divine revelation in Qur'an 4:163 and 17:55; 'Ajam means "Persia"). It is because of the personal and affective character of this book that Iqbal, in Bāl-i Jibrīl ("Gabriel's Wing"), a collection of Urdu poems, advises the discerning reader (one who has dhawq, as Iqbal puts it) to read Zabūr-i 'Ajam in solitude, the state most conducive to reflection, since Zabūr-i 'Ajam calls for and deserves deep reflective attention. It should be noted that Zabūr-i 'Ajam consists of ghazals, a highly suitable vehicle for expressing feelings. Notwithstanding Iqbal's disclaimer about "outdoor matters," Zabūr-i 'Ajam contains comments—if often brief and oblique—on social, political, and historical matters.]

ز برون درگذشتم ز درون خاک گفتم  
سخنی بگفتم فی آنچه دستند زان گفتم

Passing over outdoor matters,<sup>1</sup>  
I have spoken of inside matters;<sup>2,3</sup>  
With what bold abandon<sup>4</sup> I have said things  
That had been left unsaid!<sup>5</sup>

*Zabur-i 'Ajam, in Kulliyāt-i Iqbal—Farsī*  
(Lahore: Iqbal Academy Paksitan, 1990), 353

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>outdoor matters: The Persian *birun-i dar* means literally "(that which lies) outside or beyond the door," hence, "matters external to the house." See the introductory note.

<sup>2</sup>*inside matters*: The Persian *darūn-i khānah* means literally “(that which lies) inside the house,” hence, “matters internal to the house.” See the introductory note.

<sup>3</sup>*Passing over . . . inside matters*: See the introductory note. The first hemistich might contain a pun. *Zi-birūn-i dar guzashtam* means “I passed over . . .” (in the sense of “I turned aside from . . .”), but it is, at the same time, suggestive of “I passed or walked by . . .” (the verb *guzashtan*, when used with the preposition *bar*, has this meaning). If the play between the latter meaning (the physical act of passing) and the former meaning (the metaphorical act of neglecting) is granted, then Iqbal would also be implying: I walked by the exterior of the house, and though I did not enter it, I was able to divine what was going on inside the house. In other words, Iqbal would be claiming to possess the ability to fathom the reality of things by looking at their outward appearance (elsewhere, Iqbal speaks admiringly of the man who can give an account of the entire garden by looking at a single thorn). See also n. 4.


<sup>4</sup>*With what bold abandon*: The Persian *qalandarānah* means “like a *qalandar*” or “in the style of a *qalandar*.” A *qalandar* is what some would call a God-intoxicated mystic who, typically, has a contemptuous disregard for wealth, fame, and power, has no ties to a place, and speaks and acts boldly. *Qalandariyyah* is the name of a Sūfi sect.

If the possible play on “I turned aside from outdoor matters” and “I walked by the outside of the door” (see n. 3) is kept in mind, then the word *qalandarānah* in this context would acquire added significance, for to a *qalandar* is attributed not only “bold abandon,” but also a certain kind of percipience. Thus, a *qalandar* might take a cursory look at the exterior of something and yet penetrate to its essence or fathom the truth about it. On this meaning, Iqbal would be identifying himself with a *qalandar* in more than one sense.

<sup>5</sup>*I have said . . . unsaid*: I have said things that other people were afraid to talk about, but which I have, like a *qalandar* (see n. 4), expressed fearlessly. Iqbal is, on the one hand, drawing attention to the importance of the subject matter that he will be dealing with in *Zabūr-i ‘Ajām*, and, on the other, laying claim to originality of thought and expression.

(2)

[The following poem (three couplets in the original) represents Iqbal’s fascination with the thought that human beings, though they have a physical constitution, are possessed of a certain element that impels them to break free of their earthly limitations and engage in ceaseless action and search. It is difficult to explain the origin of this element, and Iqbal repeatedly asks, Where does it come from? It is certain, however, that this element is distinct from the physical part of our being. The union of the physical (“tumbler”) with the nonphysical (“wine”) in the human being is a mystery. A greater mystery is that the nonphysical element drives the physical body, filling it with an “ardent longing,” with the “pain of quest,” with the “obsession” to rise to galactic heights. Iqbal’s question about the origin of the nonphysical element in the human being is, of course, rhetorical, for it expresses Iqbal’s deep sense of wonder.]

درون سینہ ما سوز آرزو ز کجاست  سوز مات ولی بادہ در سوز کجاست  
 کر قدم ایسکہ جهان خاک و ماکف خاکیم  رذره ذرہ مادر دست سوز کجاست  
 نگاہ ما بر گریبان کنکشان افتد  
 جنون ما ز کجاست شور نای و سوز کجاست

The ardent longing in our hearts—  
 Where does it come from?  
 Ours is the tumbler, but the wine within—  
 Where does it come from?

I know that this world is mere dust,  
 And that we, too, are a handful of dust.  
 But this pain of quest that runs through our being—  
 Where does it come from?

Our glances reach the neckline of the Galaxy;  
This obsession of ours, this tumult and clamor—  
Where does it come from?

*Zabūr-i ‘Ajam, in Kulliyāt-i Iqbal—Fārsī, 354*

*Mustansir Mir*

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## Some Remarks on the ‘Nietzsche-Conception’ in the Works of Mohammed Iqbal

*[The life and thought of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) intrigued Iqbal, who, in many places in his prose and poetry, cites and discusses the German philosopher’s views. Iqbal’s interest in Nietzsche has been the subject of several studies. We are grateful to Professor Bernd Manuel Weischer for the permission to reprint the following article, which originally appeared as a contribution in H. R. Roemer and A. North, eds., Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients. Festschrift B. Spuler (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981). Iqbal’s well-known observation about Nietzsche, namely, that his heart believes but his mind disbelieves (quoted in the beginning of this article), occurs in “Nietzsche,” a poem in Payām-i Mashriq (in Kulliyāt-i Iqbal—Fārsī, 329), the original Persian being: qalb-i ū mu’min dimāghash kāfar ast. Here, following, is a translation of Iqbal’s Urdu note to the observation (see the Ghulam ‘Alī and Sons edition of Kulliyāt-i Iqbal—Fārsī, Lahore, 1970, p. 371):*

*Nietzsche subjects Christian ethical philosophy to severe criticism. His mind is a disbeliever in God since he denies God, though his ideas are, in respect of some of their implications, very close to the religion of Islam. “His mind is a disbeliever, but his heart is a believer”—the Noble Prophet [Muḥammad] made a similar remark about Umayyah b. Abī ṣ-Ṣalt (an Arab poet): Āmana lisānuhū wa-kafara qalbuḥū (“His tongue believes, but his heart disbelieves”).*

*The word Allama, “Great Scholar,” which occurs before Iqbal’s name more than once in the following piece, is often used as an appellation for Iqbal.*

*In this reprint, the footnotes of the original article have been converted to endnotes, and one or two minor typographical errors have been corrected; otherwise, the format of the original has been retained.]*

When I discussed some time ago with a leading German philosopher some aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy and quoted to him Allama Mohammed Iqbal’s statement on Nietzsche, expressed in one of the poems in the ‘Payām-i mashriq’: the ‘Message of the East’: “His brain is unbelieving, but his heart believing”<sup>1</sup>, he said to me: “Never did I hear a more concise and appropriate judgment on the life and work of Nietzsche!”—That the tragic figure of Nietzsche occupied Iqbal’s mind more than any other Western philosopher is widely known. And as we know Iqbal planned to write a book in the style of ‘Thus spoke Zarathustra’ under the title of ‘The Book of a Forgotten Prophet’, but unfortunately this plan was never carried out. A contemporary of Allama Iqbal and a religious poet like him was the Libanese Jibran Khalil Jibran who among other poems and novels wrote a book with the title ‘The Prophet’. He admired Nietzsche deeply, but the influence of Nietzsche’s work on him originated more from its style than from its content. Jibran Khalil Jibran, not being a philosopher, rejected the main ideas of Nietzsche and was shocked by his atheism.<sup>2</sup> Allama Iqbal on the other hand, while also not agreeing with Nietzsche’s atheism and many of his ideas, yet, as a philosopher, poet and mystic had a much deeper insight into the personal experience as well as the philosophical system of Nietzsche, its suppositions and consequences. Thus he discovered common ideas and attitudes of mind.

If we now speak about the ‘Nietzsche-conception’ of Allama Iqbal, it must be made clear that we cannot expect from him a dry philosophical treatise about the development of metaphysics in Europe and the decisive role Nietzsche played in it. But his often aphoristic remarks on Nietzsche in the context of very different writings are so striking, fundamental, and comprehensive—because Iqbal as an Oriental thinker did not separate the tragic life from the intellectual achievements of the German philosopher as many Western philosophers do—that we can rightly call it a ‘Nietzsche-conception’. Iqbal was already strongly influenced by the vitalistic current of Western philosophy, by R. Eucken and especially H. Bergson, although he criticizes them sometimes. The dynamic concept of this philosophy, involving the gradual development of the self in the reality of this world,—a kind of prophetic outlook—was very close to Iqbal’s intentions in his philosophy of personality and the rediscovery of the dynamic concept of Islam. L. Massignon made the remarkable statement on the relationship of M. Iqbal with H. Bergson: “Une affinité spirituelle sémitique!”<sup>3</sup>

But Allama Iqbal drew much more support for his dynamic philosophy from Nietzsche, who in one sense can be seen as the culmination of the vitalist movement. Some thoughts, allusions, and symbols (e.g. diamond and coal) in the ‘Asrār-i Khudī’ may be traced to Nietzsche’s ‘Thus spoke Zarathustra’, and the whole set of Iqbal’s book and his main idea of the ‘Perfect Man’, which of course stems from Islamic mysticism, can be compared in a certain way with Nietzsche’s Superman. The idea of the ‘Superman’ perhaps acted as a catalyst in the formulation of Iqbal’s ideas. The great difference between the ‘Perfect Man’ and the ‘Superman’ is the following: In Nietzsche’s system the exaggerated affirmation of this world and the intellectual self-realisation of the human being to the highest and most independent degree—to a quasi-divine existence—is conditioned by the negation of God, of the transcendental world, and immortality. The will to power (*Der Wille zur Macht*) explains being as a continuous becoming or development to a higher state, the eternal recurrence (*Die ewige Wiederkehr*) being the existential basis of the liberty and independence of the individual in a world which becomes quasi-eternal, a kind of secularisation of eternity. Allama Iqbal, as a religious genius, immediately and intuitively realized the ‘punctum saliens’ for the failure of Nietzsche, namely his Luciferian basis: I will not serve! This is where the great difference lies between Nietzsche and Iqbal, who had a certain sympathy with this brilliant Western thinker in his quest for the absolute. So he contrasts the Superman (*Übermensch*) independent from God with the idea of the ‘Perfect Man’ in Islamic Mysticism whom he describes in his *Bāl-i Jibrīl* as follows: “The perfect man’s arm is really God’s arm, dominant, creative, resourceful, efficient, human, but angel-like in disposition, a servant with the Master’s attributes”. And in his *Jāvidnāme* Iqbal describes how Nietzsche is flying between the heaven of Saturn and Paradise in eternal circles—a symbol of the eternal recurrence, which Iqbal strictly rejected—and he says about him:

“In his inebriation he broke every glass,  
separated himself from God and at the same time from the Self”  
and some lines further on he says about Nietzsche in an Islamic way of expression:  
“He did not come from ‘lā ilāh’ to ‘illā llāh’ (i.e. from the negation to the affirmation of God)  
and he did not know the meaning of the word ‘abduhu’ (his servant)”.<sup>4</sup>

This brilliant statement touches again on the point of difference described above.

Another time Iqbal wrote in a letter: “Poor Nietzsche thought that his vision of the ultimate Ego could be realized in the world of space and time”.<sup>5</sup> In the ‘Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam’ he describes and rejects Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal recurrence in a very enlightened way, first in the lecture ‘The Human Ego, his freedom and immortality’ and then in the lecture ‘Is Religion Possible?’. Rightly he points to Schopenhauer’s influence on Nietzsche in

this respect, through his main work 'The World as Will and Imagination'. He says<sup>6</sup>: "In modern Europe Nietzsche, whose life and activity form, at least to us Easterns, an exceedingly interesting problem in religious psychology, was endowed with some sort of a constitutional equipment for such an undertaking. His mental history is not without a parallel in the history of Eastern Sufism. That a really 'imperative' vision of the Divine in man did come to him cannot be denied. I call his vision 'Imperative' because it appears to have given him a kind of prophetic mentality which, by some kind of technique, aims at turning its visions into permanent life-forces. Yet Nietzsche was a failure; and his failure was mainly due to his intellectual progenitors such as Schopenhauer, Darwin, and Lange, whose influence completely blinded him to the real significance of his vision. Instead of looking for a spiritual rule which would develop the Divine even in a plebeian and thus open up before him an infinite future, Nietzsche was driven to seek the realisation of his vision in such schemes as aristocratic radicalism. As I have said of him elsewhere:

The 'I am' which he seeketh,  
lieth beyond philosophy, beyond knowledge,  
The plant that groweth only from the invisible soil of the heart of man,  
Groweth not from a mere heap of clay!

Thus failed a genius whose vision was solely determined by his internal forces, and remained unproductive for want of external guidance in his spiritual life".—I do not want to discuss the second text of Iqbal on Nietzsche because it would lead us to the complicated question of time-problems found also in the work of H. Bergson.<sup>7</sup>

But let us come back to some aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which are near to Iqbal's concept. I mean the fight of Nietzsche against Platonism and its wrong interpretation, especially in the Christian theology of the last centuries: i.e. the concept of God as a pure 'causa prima' supported by philosophical terms and concepts, a concept of God which is quite the opposite of the notion of God in the prophetic religions and in the Semitic way of thinking. In this context Iqbal said in his *Jāvidnāme* about Nietzsche<sup>8</sup>:

"Had he ever lived in the times of Ahmad,  
he would have entered into the eternal joy".

That is to say: Had Nietzsche known the prophetic notion of God, as found in the Islamic tradition, he would not have failed. Thus Nietzsche in his first period was not just an atheist and nihilist who preached the complete revolution and conversion of all values, and his sentence 'God is dead' is not to be understood in this simple way: it rather means that occidental metaphysics with its Greek and Platonic heritage in Nietzsche's philosophy came to an end. He once said: "The greatest recent event—that God has died, that the belief in the Christian God has become untrustworthy, begins to throw its first shadows over Europe".

The leading philosopher of this century, M. Heidegger, in his profound studies on Nietzsche, his phrase 'God is dead' and its role in the movement of European nihilism, has something in common with Iqbal's intuitive remarks on Nietzsche. He says that Nietzsche remained Platonist in spite of his sarcastic fight against Platonism, because he remained on the same basis, the belief in an intellectual truth. Nietzsche himself was of course not conscious of it. The conversion of all values or the negation of known values is for Nietzsche only the starting point for the affirmation, of the 'will to power', according to him the most intrinsic essence of all beings. After giving up the belief in the divine essence as the inmost essence of all beings, Nietzsche had intellectually to fill up this emptiness.

If we now once again look at Iqbal's statement "His brain is unbelieving, but his heart believing", we see how rightly it describes the case of the German philosopher. That Allama's philosophy of personality differs basically from the system of Nietzsche is evident. In Iqbal's

concept the ultimate Ego is God himself, and the highest development of man consists in his gradual growth in self-possession and self-realisation, in the uniqueness and intensity of his activity as an ego. But the emphasis on will and activity in the higher and real ego of man and mankind in general—this dynamic concept of life and development—is very near to Nietzsche’s Superman and is a prototype of developed and perfect humanity. The difference is that Allama Iqbal develops his philosophy clearly on the ground of the Islamic faith, on the basis of the principle of the submission to the Divine, the ultimate Ego of the whole cosmos.

<sup>1</sup>Kulliyāt p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>St. Wild, Friedrich Nietzsche and Gibran Kahlil Gibran, in: *Abhath XXII*, no. 3 & 4 (Beirut 1969) 47–57.

<sup>3</sup>Gabriel’s Wing p. 323.

<sup>4</sup>Kulliyāt p. 741.

<sup>5</sup>Gabriel’s Wing p. 324.

<sup>6</sup>The Reconstruction p. 174f.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. A. Bauani’s article.

<sup>8</sup>Kulliyāt p. 741.

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## Iqbal on Poets and Poetry

[The following sayings of Iqbal are taken from his *Stray Reflections*, rev. ed. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1992); page numbers are given in parentheses.]

A prophet is only a practical poet. (111)

The psychologist swims, the poet dives. (118)

A mathematician cannot but a poet can enclose infinity in a line. (98)

Nations are born in the hearts of poets; they prosper and die in the hands of politicians. (110)

Matthew Arnold defines poetry as criticism of life. That life is criticism of poetry is equally true. (49)

The popularity of a poem does not depend on the amount of logical truth revealed in it. Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" is extremely popular, yet the poem is full of scientific inaccuracies and bad economic reasoning. (60)

It is idle to seek logical truth in poetry. The ideal of imagination is beauty, not truth. Do not then try to show a poet's greatness by quoting passages from his works which, in your opinion, embody scientific truth. (34)

The world-spirit conceals the various phases of her inner life in symbols. The universe is nothing but a great symbol. But she never takes the trouble to interpret these symbols for us. It is the duty of the poet to interpret them and to reveal their meaning to humanity. It would, therefore, appear that the poet and the world-spirit are opposed to each other, since the former reveals what the latter conceals. (98)

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