

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Khatam Sharif

In Honour of the Venerable
Hadrat Allama Muhammad Iqbal Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

سالارِ کارواں ہے میرِ حجاز اپنا
اس نام سے ہے باقی آرامِ حباں ہمارا

The Lord of Hijaz is the leader of our community;
From this name comes the contentment of our soul

“Hail Iblis. O Master of Evil, there is absolutely no question about your reign over the world. Beyond a shadow of a doubt you have delivered on your promise to us. Indeed, you have conquered mankind and brought them to the point of annihilation.”

Standing at the edge of Hell, I witnessed the demons praise their leader as the parliament of Satan assembled. I listened carefully to their master’s opening statement. *Iblis* savoured the moment of his success, relishing the chaos he had caused by misleading all of mankind. With sheer arrogance he marvelled at his skilled approach to finally having overcome his nemesis; the offspring of Sayyiduna Adam عليه السلام. He boasted about his greatest achievement, having an absolute hold over man by means of intoxicating him with lust for this world, and taking away from him the soul and spirit of his faith. He gloated how men’s lives were now meaningless and without purpose, full of worthless actions which inevitably lead them to self destruction.

One of the demons shouted,

“For sure, even the Almighty will now be thinking of destroying them. We have left them without any determination or will power, they shall never be free from our rule. Those handful that have even the minutest thought of rebelling against us, soon lose hope and give up quickly. What’s more, the only real threat that remained, the Muslims, Sufis and Mullahs, they too have surrendered to our way.”

Each of his advisors gave their opinions on the social, political and religious situation of the world. Some reported on the latest commotions and disturbances, whilst others warned *Iblis* of the

change in the air they sensed. Though it seemed only a flicker, they felt it had the potential to catch traction and destroy his entire work.

After considering the advice of his ministers, *Iblis* concluded the assembly by addressing his council,

“I can take care of all these leaders and people of religion. I am not worried in the slightest about these penniless beggars. Do you seriously believe that they will upset the balance of my kingdom here on earth? They are nothing! Nevertheless, there is one thing I do fear. I tremble before that nation which still has a spark burning deeply within. I know the Muslims no longer carry the order of the Qur’an, having traded their faith for my wonders. However, every so often I see those exceptional ones, those who in the early hours of the morning make ablution with their tears. It is these rare individuals that I fear the most. They are the ones who can ignite that spark. For this reason, I shudder at the thought that the religion of Muhammad might still return to power!”

“What are you doing here my friend?”

Startled, I spun around. Seeing him standing there, I immediately bowed my head in shame and dared not reply. He smiled at me affectionately and signalled that I walk back with him. I could sense his disappointment and I cursed myself for giving in to curiosity as we headed away from that place. He most likely noticed my regret and consoled me saying, “Don’t worry my friend, we also come here from time to time just to see what’s going on.”

Overwhelmed by his kindness, I responded by firstly seeking his forgiveness, and then thanked him for finding me, rather than me being caught by Sayyiduna Malik رضي الله عنه, whom I greatly feared.

He laughed, “Actually, Malik رضي الله عنه doesn’t miss a thing. It was he who asked that I go and tend to a certain trespasser. Anyway, tell me, what great spectacles have you encountered on your visit thus far?”

I was humbled but at the same time delighted at being in his blessed company. I then recalled in detail the gathering of *Iblis* and his ministers, accurately reporting all that I had heard and seen.

“Are you not supposed to be working on producing the article for Muhammad Iqbal رحمته الله? Instead, we find you wandering all this way. It’s hardly surprising a few moments in the vicinity of darkness has had this effect on you and completely altered your state. We see that your contentment and certainty has been replaced with confusion and curiosity. What else can one hope to achieve from such an escapade?”

The reality of his words rapidly deflated my excitement and made me question the method I had adopted in initiating this task. Embarrassed, I replied, “My Lord, it was a very foolish ploy on my part. I wanted to avoid repeating anything that was included in the previous article. So, I was hoping to attempt this task from a different perspective. Ironically, I was anticipating some sort of praise for using this initiative. Instead, I now stand here ashamed at having overstepped my boundaries, and I ask forgiveness for my transgression.”

Once again, he gently smiled, probably in amusement of my stupidity. He asked me to continue walking with him, which I took to mean I had been pardoned. Daringly, I went on to voice my thoughts about what I had observed, focusing particularly on what *Iblis* had said. His compassion compelled him to entertain my enquiries quite mercifully.

“My dear friend the fear that haunts *Iblis* is indeed quite real, because after all, it is Allah’s decree. From the very beginning his role has been to lead mankind astray. However, he will never succeed with those whom Allah has favoured. It is these people and what they possess that threatens him. Allah has graced these individuals with the greatest of his favours; *Ishq e Mustafa* (the love of His Beloved Sayyiduna Muhammad al Mustafa ﷺ). Their influence has the potential to abolish him and deem all his efforts worthless. This is the secret which *Iblis* fears most. All his strengths and struggles are concentrated on removing this love from mankind. Once this is achieved, the rest of his deception and scheming is easy work for him and his devils. Iqbal رحمه الله expresses this concept throughout his work. In fact, his whole life revolves around this principle. He emphasises its power, saying whoever possesses *Ishq e Mustafa* will be the commander of land and sea, and that *Ishq e Mustafa* is the pillar on which all of creation rests.”

Although I was battling to keep a thousand thoughts at bay, I was equally taken in by his warmth and consideration. I forced myself to remain focused on the joy of being in his blessed company. Tranced, I relished each word: listening carefully to his mesmerising voice.

He continued, “Allah Almighty graces those who adopt and instil this love in their hearts with great blessings and divine manifestations. These individuals are protected and cannot be subdued by *Iblis*. He cannot hold sway over them because their hearts have embraced this love, and they have attached themselves to RasulAllah ﷺ. Unfortunately, such people are a minority and the state of the Muslims is that they are divided in factions and sects. Today, though they have formed many versions of their faith, the only true measure of its authenticity is in the direction their belief leads them.

Iqbal رحمه الله affirms that Islam centres around the Beloved of Allah, because he is the *Deen* (religion). The search for religion and faith is in vain if it does not begin and end with RasulAllah ﷺ. He simplifies the ordeal by saying that your version of Islam must take you to the Beloved of Allah,

if it does not then know that your religion is that of Abu Lahab. Abu Lahab was devoid of this *Ishq*, as his reliance on *Aql* (intellect) obstructed him with misleading reason, greed for power, and worry of material loss; all of which prevented him from accepting the truth. Likewise, those who deny themselves of this divine attribute, share his fate. On the other hand, those who possess this *Ishq*, accept everything that comes from their Beloved without any hesitation. They seek to sacrifice their lives for him and strive to attain his pleasure and nearness in all they do. These people do not distinguish between Islam, Qur'an and RasulAllah ﷺ, because to them the Beloved encompasses the whole of Islam and the whole of Qur'an."

I felt not only the intensity of his dialogue but even the heat resonating from his passion. He paused for a while and then sighed. Looking upwards, he then closed his eyes and continued, "I adore one of Iqbal's ﷺ descriptions of RasulAllah ﷺ in which he captures these expressions beautifully saying;

That greatest intellect and guide, seal of Messengers, Lord of the Worlds, who transformed the ordinary dust with his honour into the blessed mount of Sinai. If you see him with the eyes of love and devotion, you will realise that he is the first, he is the last, he is the Qur'an, he is the Furqan, he is Yasin and he is Ta-ha."

His impenetrable eyes looked towards my inscrutable face and he laughed at my blank expression, "I guess this poetry is beyond your comprehension my friend. In simple terms, Iqbal ﷺ attributes everything of Islam to the Beloved, as he stipulates RasulAllah ﷺ is not separate from the *Deen*. In another poem, he discloses that he learned a significant reality from the *Mi'raj* (ascension journey). He says that the universe revolves around Man, alluding to the fact that when RasulAllah ﷺ went on the *Mi'raj*, the whole universe came to a standstill. He explains the reason for this was because the soul of the universe had been taken away from it, so it became lifeless and died. Only when RasulAllah ﷺ returned, was it revived then resumed to function.

Iqbal ﷺ, like many others graced with the ability to witness its reality, knows the true power of *Ishq e Mustafa*. He compares RasulAllah ﷺ to the lamp that appeared in the darkness of existence, which was present when Adam ﷺ was still between water and clay. In this manner he describes that if it had not been for RasulAllah ﷺ then nothing would have been created, as he is the purpose and essence of all existence. It is he who gives meaning and value to the rest of creation, and everything in existence is in need of him.

In one of his devotional poems, Abd ar Rahman Jami ﷺ also expressed that it was the *Nur* (light) of RasulAllah ﷺ which rescued the ark of Nuh ﷺ, and it was the same sacred light that came to save Ibrahim ﷺ from the fire. Adam ﷺ was granted forgiveness after using the name of RasulAllah ﷺ as a means to implore Allah, having seen the name Muhammad ﷺ written

on the *Arsh*. Adam ﷺ recognised that this could only be the name of the one most dearest to Allah, since it was written right beside His own exalted name. Iqbal ﷺ says that the honour of the Muslims is directly connected with this blessed name, asserting that acceptance in the divine presence is completely dependent upon the love of RasulAllah ﷺ. In fact, this dependency on the Beloved of Allah transcends time and space, as even in the hereafter everyone will be in need of him. He is the means to encounter eternal truth and thereby the means to being saved from all suffering. Is it not so that all the previous prophets and their nations will also be reliant on his testimony and intercession in the hereafter? The entire creation owes its very existence to Allah Almighty's love for His beloved. Most importantly, Allah Almighty loves RasulAllah ﷺ and favours him above all else, calling him, 'My Beloved.' What a great honour it is then, to instil the love of the beloved of Allah in one's heart. This is the only means of guidance to knowledge and to the love of Allah Almighty Himself."

I began to understand and appreciate the true value of the principle of this love. In that moment, my mind wandered off in justifying *Ishq e Mustafa* as an obligatory tenet of faith. I first thought of how Allah commands the believers to remain obedient and devoted to RasulAllah ﷺ throughout the Qur'an. I recalled the famous *Hadith* (tradition) stating the importance of this matter, where RasulAllah ﷺ said, 'Not one of you truly believes until I am dearer to him than his father, his son, his own self and all the people.' I even remembered a specific verse from one of Allama Iqbal's ﷺ poems. In this verse, he goes to the extent of declaring a heretic as a faithful man so long as he possesses this love, whilst rejecting the faith of a Muslim who is void of this *Ishq*. My thoughts went on to deliberate another poet, Mawlana Zafar Ali ﷺ. He once wrote that even if he offered his prayers and gave charity, fulfilling all the commandments of faith, he swore by Allah that he could not become a true Muslim until he was willing to sacrifice his life for RasulAllah ﷺ.

"Are you still with us friend?" He said as he looked at me with concern.

Realising that I was drifting deeper into contemplation, I quickly composed myself to focus on what was being said.

"Since it is you who is supposed to be writing about him, we would be very interested in hearing your perspective. So please tell us, what do you know about Iqbal's ﷺ life?"

Although I was taken aback at being put on the spot unexpectedly, I obliged. I gathered my thoughts and responded, "My Lord, what I know of Allama Iqbal ﷺ is that he was born on the 9th of November 1877 in Sialkot. His forefathers originated from Kashmir and belonged to the Hindu caste known as Sapro Brahmans. His ancestors had accepted Islam around four hundred and fifty years before his birth. One of his great grandfathers of the 15th Century, Lul Hajji ﷺ, had travelled to *Hajj* (pilgrimage) passing through the holy lands of Iraq, Syria and Jerusalem. Upon his

return he had been instructed in a dream to go to Kashmir and become the disciple of a famous Shaykh, Shaykh Nur al Din Rishi رحمته الله. This Shaykh followed the Rishi Sufi order, which is linked with the Kubrawi order. Subsequently, he took *baiyah* (allegiance) from the Shaykh and served him until his death. After succeeding Shaykh Nur al Din Rishi رحمته الله, he continued to teach and serve in Charar Sharif, and upon his passing was buried next to his master.

Allama Iqbal's رحمته الله parents, Shaykh Nur Muhammad رحمته الله and Imam Bibi رحمته الله, were both very noble and pious people who lived a simple life. His father ran a tailor shop in Sialkot and was considered a very religious and spiritual man. He was brought up in a devotional and humble household. After receiving his early education in Sialkot, Mir Hasan رحمته الله, his father's friend, recognised his great potential and took responsibility for Allama Iqbal's رحمته الله further education. In 1895, he received a scholarship to study at the famous Government College in Lahore, where he studied Philosophy, English and Arabic. After completing his Bachelor's and Master's degrees, he was first appointed as a lecturer, then promoted to assistant professor, and later to a professor at the same institution. During his time in Lahore, he developed a great passion for poetry. In fact, poetry became his main vehicle for expression throughout his life, and he would frequently visit the *Mushaira* (poetry gatherings). At the age of 27, he read his poem *Nala e Yatim* at the annual function of *Anjuman e Himayat e Islam* for the first time. The poets among the audience were fascinated with the genius he displayed at such a young age. Allama Iqbal رحمته الله sought advice and direction from other poets such as Mirza Dagh Dehlawi, often writing to them, sending his work for correction and guidance. He was commended and recognised for his talent by everyone, and some of his poems were published in magazines and journals.

During his time in college he met Sir Thomas Arnold, an English teacher who guided him in his studies of philosophy and literature. Having a deep respect for Islam, Professor Arnold had written a book called, *The Preaching of Islam*, as well as completed a study on Shaykh Abdul Karim al Jili and his book, *Al Insan al Kamil* (The Perfect Man). The two men forged a great friendship. Seeing his intelligence and capabilities, Professor Arnold also recognised the potential in Allama Iqbal رحمته الله and encouraged him to pursue a higher education abroad. At the age of 28 he left for Europe, travelling through Egypt, Yemen, France and finally arriving in England in 1905.

Allama Iqbal رحمته الله attained his Barr in Law at Lincoln's Inn and his Master's degree in Cambridge. Although he was not fluent in German, on the recommendations of Professor Arnold and other professors, he was given the concession to complete his PhD in English at Munich University in Germany. At this point in his life he was totally immersed in education, and even his poetry came to a halt. In only 3 years he completed his Law, Master's and PhD degrees. During his stay in Europe, he also travelled to Scotland, Italy, Sicily and Germany.

After his studies, Allama Iqbal رحمته الله decided to return to India to teach and practice Law in Lahore. His return journey took its route from Italy to Bombay and then on to Delhi. He spent a few days in

Delhi, visiting the shrines of Mahbub e Ilahi ﷺ and other saints as well as the famous poet Mirza Ghalib. Arriving in Lahore he was keen to get back to his family, but had to first deal with affairs relating to his employment and registration at the Barr. After a few days he travelled home to Sialkot where his family were eagerly awaiting his homecoming.

Over the next few years, Allama Iqbal ﷺ was predominantly engaged with work. He faced many difficulties, including an unsuccessful marriage. Eventually, he resumed his poetry when he was more settled. You could say there was a turning point for him in 1911. That year he attended the annual conference of the *Anjuman e Himayat e Islam* and recited his poem *Shikwa* (The Complaint). The profound sentiments and depth displayed in the poem, its structure and composition, along with it being delivered in Allama Iqbal's ﷺ eloquent voice, left the audience speechless and everyone was moved to tears. The content of the poem exhibited the heartfelt state of Muslims and their lament to their Lord, which even made his father cry in contemplation. A few years later he wrote *Jawab e Shikwa* (Answer to The Complaint), which followed on from the first poem. In this epic work he directly addressed the Muslims, showing them their own reflection. He revealed the causes and realities of their state and concluded with the solution of how their condition could be mended. Both these poems were presented in detail in the previous article.”

As I continued my monologue, I sensed the loss of being consumed and captivated by his words only moments earlier. By comparison, I now felt that my input was simply a senseless interruption. I wished to hear him go on speaking, and so tried to quickly conclude my response.

“So, Allama Iqbal ﷺ practiced Law at Lahore High Court along with teaching senior classes at the Government College. At the same time, he continued to express his concerns for the Muslim nation through his poetry. Many of his famous poems such as *Ramuz, Bang e Dara, Asrar i Khudi, Payam e Mashriq, Bal e Jibril*, and *Zarb e Kalim* were published over the following years. In 1922 he was awarded Knighthood by King George V and given the title of Allama 'Sir' Muhammad Iqbal ﷺ.

In 1930 he delivered his famous address in Allahabad which elaborated on the notion of an independent Muslim state. He then revisited England and travelled extensively through Europe over the next few of years, visiting France, Spain, Italy, Egypt and Palestine. He was greatly moved by his visit to the mosque in Cordoba, Spain. He saw it as an awe-inspiring landmark of the dedication and devotion of Muslims of the past.

In 1934 he ceased to practice law as his health deteriorated. The following year his second wife passed away. Over the next few years, Allama Iqbal ﷺ limited his travels and remained mainly in Lahore but continued to visit his family in Sialkot. Upon his demise in 1938 he was buried beside the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore.”

He looked at me with an unassuming smile and said, “We were actually hoping for some depth and wisdom in your somewhat intellectual account. However, it seems that perhaps you have just memorised text from Wikipedia. We sincerely hope that your final product is not as disappointing.

Have you considered who and what influenced Iqbal رحمته الله the most? It is apparent that he belonged to a family who inherited devotion and spirituality from their ancestors, always having a strong connection with the pious servants of Allah. Nur Muhammad رحمته الله was a follower of Qadi Sultan Mahmood رحمته الله, the Qadri Shaykh from Awan Sharif. He remained steadfast on his litanies and activities prescribed to him for his spiritual development. His son was exposed to these practices at an impressionable age. Iqbal رحمته الله was accustomed to waking in the early hours of the morning for prayers and reciting the Qur’an. He was advised by his father to recite it as if it was revealed to him directly, and he adhered to this advice until his dying day. Iqbal’s رحمته الله Qur’an was regularly left to dry out in the sun, having become soaked by his tears.

He was only eleven when he woke up one night to see his father sitting in the courtyard surrounded by light. After a short while when the light disappeared, his father came and told him how amongst a group of people who had arrived outside the city, was a critically ill individual who required immediate attention. Nur Muhammad رحمته الله gathered some medicines and asked Iqbal رحمته الله to accompany him to go and tend to this person. Arriving at the place where the travellers had alighted, they were met by a shocked group of individuals. They tried to make sense of how these two strangers had come to their aid in the middle of the night. Iqbal رحمته الله and his father were taken to the dying man. Following a brief examination, he was given some ground herbs, and after a short while he began to display signs of recovery. As they left Nur Muhammad رحمته الله gave hope and assurance to the family saying Insha’Allah the man would make a full and speedy recovery. The tribesmen offered some gifts by way of gratitude, however, he bid them farewell saying that he could not accept any compensation for his service. Nur Muhammad رحمته الله possessed the *Ism ul Azam* (The secret name of God). Despite the repeated insistence of his family members that he teach it to them, he maintained that reciting *Salawat* in abundance is *Ism ul Azam* (The secret name of God). He did not share this secret with anyone, but Iqbal رحمته الله.

Iqbal رحمته الله kept to the traditions of his forefathers and held firmly to the teachings of his father. Since he had taken *baiyah* with him, Nur Muhammad رحمته الله was not only his biological father but his spiritual father as well. For Iqbal رحمته الله the concept of love, the reverence of RasulAllah ﷺ and the Qur’an, is not something that was realised gradually, he inherited *Ishq e Mustafa* and it was always a part of his reality.

Iqbal's ﷺ veneration of the *Ahl ul bayt* is evident throughout his poetry. He was close to many Sayyids including Najmuddin ﷺ and Jamait Ali Shah ﷺ for whom he had great honour and respect. His love for this household can be seen in his poem dedicated to his teacher Mir Hasan ﷺ. When offered knighthood, Iqbal ﷺ placed the condition that he will only accept this if his teacher Mir Hasan ﷺ was granted the award and title of *Shams ul Ulama*.

Then there is Iqbal's ﷺ mission and message. His upbringing, education, western experience and travels are but a precursor to his actual purpose. There is a great void of spirituality, which is of most significance in his life. His faith and perpetual love of RasulAllah ﷺ, the *Awliya* and those who share this connection, all of which you failed to mention in your intellectual narrative. Therefore, in order to give it some justice, it is a task which must be approached by the heart.

Reliance on your *Aql* is not the solution here my friend. Just as Shams Tabrezi ﷺ declared intellect can take you to the door, but not inside, Iqbal ﷺ says the exact same thing. Your intellect will instigate countless thought-provoking processes and even conclude to degrees of understanding, however, since it is not destined to achieve *Hudhur* (Divine Presence), it cannot take you there. That is why he advises you to ask Allah for light in your heart, as light in the eyes is not enough. The reality of matters will only be revealed to your heart when it sees with this light.

If you are to learn anything about Islam then it should be from those who spent their lives with RasulAllah ﷺ, the first generation of Muslims, the *Sahaba*. Amongst them you have the best examples of those who adopted *Ishq e Mustafa* in their lives. After the first revelation when RasulAllah ﷺ was shaking with a fever as he returned home from Jabal an Nur, it was Ummul Muminin Khadijah ﷺ who consoled him. She did not hesitate for even a moment to question what she was being told. She immediately accepted him as the final Messenger of Allah, offering him the utmost comfort and confidence. She supported him by highlighting some of his beautiful characteristics; being kind to orphans, supporting the widows, and helping those in need, asserting that Allah would never desert him. Indeed, she was a true *Ashiq* (lover) who harboured the greatest love for RasulAllah ﷺ in her heart.

Know that love and affection cannot reside in a heart where there is no stability, and as a result, no loyalty. Loyalty and self-sacrifice are the most important measures that indicate the level of the heart, whilst deprivation of these qualities is a betrayal of love. The *Sahaba* epitomise these characteristics in their connection with RasulAllah ﷺ. Their response to even his smallest wish would be, 'May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, and my life and wealth, O Messenger of Allah!' The companions devoted themselves entirely to RasulAllah ﷺ, cherishing every opportunity to make sacrifices with a sense of gratitude because of their love for him.

You can see this adoration in Hubayb رضي الله عنه, who, when asked whilst being tortured if he wished for RasulAllah ﷺ to take his place, replied that he would not even want for a thorn to harm his beloved so that he may be freed. Truly, when there is love, pain is transformed into mercy and hardship becomes ease. The difficulties either disappear or become completely insignificant in proportion to this love. You encounter such love in Sumayrah رضي الله عنها who upon receiving the news that both her sons, her father, her husband and her brother had been martyred at Uhud, asked not of them, but was anxious to learn of what had happened to RasulAllah ﷺ. You can also bear witness to this immense love when looking upon the two young boys who asked Abdul Rahman to point out Abu Jahl on the battlefield, so they could punish him for his insolent remarks towards RasulAllah ﷺ.

The *Sahaba* expressed their deep love towards everything associated with RasulAllah ﷺ. For them there was no distinction between their *Ishq* and the conviction of their faith. You need only to look at Khalid's رضي الله عنه belief that he owed every success on the battlefield to the sacred hair of RasulAllah ﷺ which he carried under his helmet. You can find this trust in Anas رضي الله عنه who never parted with the prophetic staff that he was given, requesting for it to be buried alongside him in his grave. This profound devotion is visible in all the *Sahaba* who would rush to the used water from RasulAllah's ﷺ ablution and rub it on their faces for blessings.

These expressions of love are the unifying traits of the companions, whose greatest fear was to be isolated from the attachment of their beloved. Like Abdullah ibn Zayd رضي الله عنه, who once came to RasulAllah ﷺ in tears expressing his sorrow at the likelihood of not being able to be with him in Paradise, since only the other prophets would be with RasulAllah ﷺ. At that point the verse from Surah Nisa was revealed:

'Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed, the Prophets and the truthful ones, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are!'
(Nisa 4:69)

Later, Abdullah's رضي الله عنه world turned upside down when the news of RasulAllah's ﷺ passing reached him. He prayed that Allah take away his sight so that he may never see anything other than the only one he loved. His prayer was answered, and he lost his sight immediately. That day the companions were scorched with the pain of being separated from their beloved, they became like candles, burning and melting in sorrow.

You can also see this reverence in the quivering lips of Bilal رضي الله عنه as he struggled to bring himself to utter RasulAllah's ﷺ blessed name in the *Adhan*. He would collapse looking at the altar where his beloved used to stand. The grief of separation and reminders of his beloved were so unbearable that he consequently left Medina and went to Syria.

Some years later when he came back to the city, upon the insistence of RasulAllah's ﷺ grandsons, he began to give the call to prayer. When he came to the line '*I bear witness that Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah,*' every man, woman and child came running to the mosque thinking that the Prophet ﷺ had come back to life. Not since the passing of RasulAllah ﷺ had the people of Medina cried so much.

Iqbal also wrote a poem in honour of Bilal رضي الله عنه and his love. In it he tells of how this Ethiopian was sold from master to master in slavery, but in reality, it was Allah that was pulling him towards his beloved. He suffered many hardships and persecution, but never let go of his love and loyalty to RasulAllah ﷺ. He offered his prayer and worship only because it gave him the opportunity to look at his beloved's face. Bilal رضي الله عنه was the one chosen for Allah's symphony (*Adhan*) and was granted this honour from the very beginning."

Once again, my mind began to drift as I thought about the companions and visualised their devotion. I marvelled at how they would conduct themselves in the presence of their beloved, and contemplated their passion to serve and support him in every conceivable manner. In that deliberation, I thought of an odd notion which I voiced to my guide without composure.

"O Master, I was thinking about the oath that Allah Almighty took from all the prophets to follow and support His beloved if they were sent in his time. Yet, as there were no other prophets during that period, it seems that some of his noble companions fulfilled that role perfectly. It is also said that some *Sahaba* resembled certain prophets reflecting their characteristics and personalities. Is there a correlation here?"

In response, he again just smiled at me and remained silent. I reproached myself for my insolence and foolishness, vowing to now remain quiet and attentive.

"Rather than I go on citing other examples for you, I think it may be worth your while to actually meet an *Ashiq* who personifies *Ishq e Mustafa*, and you can see first-hand the manifestations of this love."

He told me to close my eyes for a moment and I felt a gentle warm breeze. Then I saw myself standing outside a small lonely hut in a vast desert. My companion, who was now a handsome young man, instructed me to wait outside whilst he went in to seek permission. I stood patiently until he returned and asked me to join him. Upon entering the humble abode, I saw a slender middle-aged man sitting on a prayer mat on the floor. Although there was no evident fire in the room, I noticed a dark burnt patch where the ceiling was singed directly above where he sat. After

giving my *Salam*, I kissed his hand and sat down facing him. I could not look upon his illuminated face as the sheer brightness of the light was blinding.

“Dahyah رضي الله عنه tells us that you are working on an article about Muhammad Iqbal and relating to its theme you have come to meet an *Ashiq of Mustafa*.” He laughed saying, “It is only his good opinion and kind nature that he thinks so highly of Ibn Kuhafa رضي الله عنه. The reality is that our beloved Master is the paragon of perfection and beauty, who must be loved by everything. It is only Allah’s benevolence that He chooses whomsoever He wills to hold this love in their hearts. As for meeting an *Ashiq*, we suggest you seek out those whom Allah himself has acknowledged and praised in the Qur’an. Regrettably, we are of those reprimanded for our ill manners for raising our voices in the company of His Messenger. Whereas, Allah praises Fatimah رضي الله عنها and Ali رضي الله عنه for their good manners and conduct. He attests the purity of Ali رضي الله عنه and his family when He identifies them as members of His beloved’s household.

Undoubtedly, the best embodiment of *Ishq e Mustafa* is Fatimah رضي الله عنها. RasulAllah ﷺ and Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها adorned their daughter with the finest virtues and most beautiful characteristics. We recall that as a child she would often accompany her father when he prayed and met with people. We heard him say about her that she was a part of his heart, and if she was harmed then he too would be hurt. We would all express our undying love for RasulAllah ﷺ by saying, ‘May my mother and father be a ransom and sacrifice for you, O Messenger of Allah.’ Whereas, RasulAllah’s ﷺ love for Fatimah رضي الله عنها was such that he would often say to her, ‘May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, my dear daughter.’ She was the last person he met when leaving on a journey, and the first he would meet upon his return. He would kiss her forehead and hand, and she would do the same. Whenever she entered his presence, he would rise for her out of love. We were all witness to the immense love between them. There was no one amongst the men or women who resembled RasulAllah ﷺ more than Fatimah رضي الله عنها. She even walked and spoke exactly like him because she was completely annihilated in his love, she was in a state of *Fana* in RasulAllah ﷺ. You do know this term and its meaning, don’t you?”

I was so overwhelmed that despite trying to respond, I had no control over my voice and was left dumbfounded; literally speechless. The silence was eventually broken by my companion who replied on my behalf, “Yes of course he is aware of the term and its meaning. In fact, he was somewhat participant in a recent *Khatam* held in honour of another *Ashiq*, Bulleh Shah رحمته الله, where the concept of *Fana* was celebrated. He knows what you mean very well.”

Sayyiduna Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه continued, “In our view, such was Fatimah’s رضي الله عنها capacity that in her short life RasulAllah ﷺ transmitted to her from his perfection, unique qualities that were passed to no one else. Though we were all devastated and heartbroken after RasulAllah ﷺ passed away,

what Fatimah رضي الله عنها went through and the burden she carried, no other could bear. She was never seen smiling after that day and referred to it as the most tragic and painful time of her life. The impact of separation from her beloved was such that within six months she too passed away.

Iqbal رحمته الله pays homage to Fatimah رضي الله عنها by saying that Maryam عليها السلام has one *Fadhila* (superiority), she is the mother of Isa عليه السلام. However, Fatimah رضي الله عنها has not one but three superiorities; she is the daughter of RasulAllah ﷺ, she is the wife of Ali ibn Abi Talib, and she is the mother of Hasanayn Karimayn. He also recognises Fatimah رضي الله عنها as an example of someone who possesses *Ishq e Mustafa* in its highest form.

Ali Ibn Abi Talib رضي الله عنه is of course another fine example of an *Ashiq*. Iqbal رحمته الله reveres him as the Master of human conduct due to his distinction as a minister, an imam, a warrior and a disciple. Truly, his standard in every capacity is unmatched and he is the ideal model of a perfect believer, *Mard e Mumin*. This should not be surprising at all, as he was raised with the best qualities in the purest household. He shared unequivocal love for RasulAllah ﷺ from the earliest time. In fact, the degree of his love is such that at birth he kept his eyes shut, refusing to look upon anything other than his beloved first. RasulAllah ﷺ prayed and blew upon him, and only then did he open his eyes to see his blessed face. In his whole life, never did RasulAllah ﷺ once raise his voice to reprimand him, nor did Ali رضي الله عنه ever do anything to gain the displeasure of his beloved.

Ali رضي الله عنه was only ten years old when RasulAllah ﷺ gave him the responsibility of preparing the feast for the gathering of Banu Hashim. Following the meal, when he addressed the family and invited them to Islam, Abu Lahab stood tall cursing and rebuking him, whilst the others remained silent. It was only this young boy who stood up with great courage and might to declare, “Ya RasulAllah ﷺ I accept, and I am with you, and I will be your helper.”

The reciprocal trust between them is like no other. When it came to the *Hijrah* it was Ali رضي الله عنه who was chosen by RasulAllah ﷺ to stay behind and occupy his bed, whilst we left during the night. The disbelievers had plotted to attack and kill Allah’s beloved, but little did they know there slept the Lion of Allah instead. Ali رضي الله عنه was fully aware of the danger but did not hesitate even for a moment. Regarding this matter, Allah even asked the two archangels, Jibra’il عليه السلام and Mika’il عليه السلام, that as brothers would they sacrifice their lives for each other in this way? When both replied in the negative, they were commanded to go and stand guard over him that night.

Upon arrival in Madinah, when each Muhajir was paired with an Ansari as brothers, only Ali رضي الله عنه was left out. RasulAllah ﷺ told him that he was his brother in this life and the next. On another occasion he confirmed Ali رضي الله عنه was to him as Harun عليه السلام was to Musa عليه السلام. This can be seen during our return from *Hajj*, when RasulAllah ﷺ was upset about some people cursing Ali رضي الله عنه. He

gathered everyone at *Ghadir e Khum* and took hold of Ali's ﷺ, raising it in the air he declared, 'Whosoever's Mawla I am, Ali ﷺ is his Mawla; and Ali ﷺ is the Mawla of all believers.'

We hope you realise everything we are saying about Ali ﷺ is not a mere opinion. Rather, it is the stance of RasulAllah ﷺ. We never heard him praise anyone more than Ali ibn Abi Talib ﷺ. He entrusted his most precious reality to him, saying this bond was decided by Allah, as he had already seen that Fatimah ﷺ was to marry Ali ﷺ written on the *Arsh*.

RasulAllah ﷺ passed on some of the divine secrets that were given to him on the night of *Mi'raj* only to Ali ﷺ. He also said that where he is the city of Knowledge, Ali ﷺ is its gate. Ali's ﷺ prodigious sincerity, intelligence and eloquence is unparalleled. Yet, his respect and humility in front of the beloved was such, that we hardly ever heard him speak in his presence, and we never saw him ask a question. There were many occasions which tested the resolve and loyalty of the companions, to the extent that often reassurance and comfort became necessary, such as the incident in Hodaybiyah. However, in all his life, Ali ﷺ never hesitated even for an instant and always remained steadfast to his beloved, fulfilling the promise he made as a child. His refusal to strike the title of RasulAllah ﷺ when composing the agreement treaty with the disbelievers, was an illustration of his firmness to the truth, and an expression of his absolute love. RasulAllah ﷺ told us that Ali ﷺ is on *Haq*, and *Haq* is always with Ali ﷺ, asserting that when Ali ﷺ takes a stance on a matter, then he is on *Haq* (the truth).

RasulAllah ﷺ affirmed Ali's ﷺ love during one of the battles. He told us that he would be giving the standard to the one whom Allah and His messenger loves, and he likewise loves Allah and His messenger. O how we all desired to be that person! But the very next day the pennant was given to Ali ﷺ, the most deserving.

In your search for an *Ashiq of Mustafa*, there is no one comparable to Ali ﷺ, the one whom Allah and his Messenger have endorsed. I pray that the nation of our beloved holds firm to his example. Please also pray for us that we may too achieve the love and pleasure of our beloved. It is all that matters, everything else is tributary only to this."

We then left the meeting as our host walked us to the door bidding us farewell. I was in absolute awe of having just met the most beloved companion of RasulAllah ﷺ. I was trying my very best to carefully commit everything I had just experienced to memory.

"Well my friend, as they say, do you feel the love?"

“My Lord, indeed, I do. However, I cannot help but notice the fact that firstly everything he mentioned was from RasulAllah ﷺ, and secondly it was all about Sayyidah Fatimah ؑ and Sayyiduna Ali ؑ.”

“That, my friend, is the sign of a true *Ashiq*; to love what the beloved loves. That is why from such people you will only hear about the beloved or what the beloved adores. We don't suppose you were able to recognise the indication you were given?”

I had no clue about any indication, so I replied that I hadn't noticed anything in particular.

“For all that is your purpose, you remain to be of great concern for us. It was very clear; you were being told to visit Ali ؑ. So, if you are ready, we shall go to him now.”

Everything around us gradually transformed from the desert sand dunes to the ocean, to land, to clouds, until we finally found ourselves standing in a forest. We walked a short distance to find Sayyiduna Ali ؑ lying on the ground resting. Reminded of the title RasulAllah ﷺ gave him, I stood admiring the sight of the dust on his bare back. The master got my attention as I interpreted his gesture for me to take the opportunity to kiss the soles of his feet. As I did this Sayyiduna Ali ؑ sat up slowly and welcomed us both. I stood to one side as the two embraced each other and kissed each other's hands. Once again, I was introduced as Kashf who was working on the theme of *Ishq e Mustafa* for the *Khatam* dedicated to Allama Iqbal ؑ.

Sayyiduna Ali ؑ nodded his head and roared, “Welcome to you! *Ishq e Mustafa* and the nightingale of India, a sound combination indeed! Yes Sir, have you come to tell us or come to ask?”

I humbly replied that the purpose of our visit was merely to do *Ziyarah* and to take from his company.

Sayyiduna Ali ؑ rubbed his hand over his head and smiled. After a short silence he looked at me and quoted a verse from the *Mathnavi* of Mawlana Rumi ؑ,

*‘Know that the one whose heart is without Divine love or passion is wretched.
The dog of the Companions of the Cave searched for the souls of love,
and thus found them and reached a spiritual stage and those servants attained paradise.’*

He continued, “The word for love as used by Allah Almighty is *Habbah* and not *Ishq*. So, what is the difference? Well, the word *Muhabbah* derives from *Habbah* which means seed. Just as a seed is planted and then begins to grow, similarly love is also planted in one's heart and then gradually it

grows. *Ishq* however, is not mentioned in the Qur'an and is never used for Allah. It primarily means to cling or attach to something. And in love, it means to love someone so much so, that you would cling to that person and never let go. It originates from the Ashaq plant, which like a vine grows around a tree eventually suffocating it until it begins to die. The person who is in this state of love is called the *Ashiq*. He attaches himself to the beloved in such an intense manner, that he totally loses himself in this bond. He is unconcerned about anything and instead is absorbed completely in the other. Essentially, the *Ashiq's* life becomes only about the beloved and he ceases to exist in his own right. Unlike *Muhabbah*, which can be governed and directed towards many things, *Ishq* is beyond control and cannot be rationalised. Its absolute opposite is *Aql*, which commands reason and justification. *Aql* places demands and constraints on a person to measure and regulate every action according to its desired purpose, whereas *Ishq* is unconfined and has no limits.

If we are not mistaken, one of your kind also worked with Waris Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ on his famous work, Heer. He distinctly began his book by pronouncing that Allah is undoubtedly the first *Ashiq*, and that RasulAllah ﷺ is the first *Mashuq* (beloved). And for sure Allah's love for His beloved is without any measure or parameters. Waris Shah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ quite rightly disclosed that this principle is indeed a divine attribute. All those that harbor this in their hearts, reflect and share in the love of the same beloved.

We find these features in some of the most noble and exemplary individuals within the exclusive group of people known as the *Sahaba*. Indeed, we are of those infinitely blessed with the grace of Allah Almighty as He chose us to be among these honourable companions. Not only of this generation but of all generations of Muslims, there is no soul that can match the superiority and standard of that friend and companion most beloved to the most beloved. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr as Sddiq رضی اللہ عنہ is without doubt the perfect example and role model of a true *Ashiq*. RasulAllah ﷺ said that if the *Iman* (faith) of Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was weighted against the *Iman* of all of his *Ummah* (nation), then Abu Bakr's رضی اللہ عنہ *Iman* would outweigh the other. And as you know, one cannot have *Iman* unless his love for RasulAllah ﷺ is greater than everything else. This in itself is testament to the degree of the love Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ has for RasulAllah ﷺ.

Allah Almighty affirms his nobility and character when he is told that his conduct with some family members was unsuitable for one with such dignity, though his decision to withhold support for these people was due to them causing displeasure to RasulAllah ﷺ. He is the only one Allah mentions in the Qur'an as 'the companion of RasulAllah' ﷺ. During the struggle of Bani Isra'il (Moses and his nation), Allah's reassurance came to Musa عليه السلام with the words that Allah is with him. In comparison, during the Hijra when RasulAllah ﷺ and Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ were taking refuge in the cave, Allah said that He is with them both. His dedication, love and commitment to RasulAllah ﷺ from childhood is truly unmatched.

It would be futile to even attempt to put into perspective the standard of his deeds and actions. RasulAllah ﷺ once said that Umar's ﷺ deeds were as many as the stars in the universe, and Umar ﷺ himself was just one of the deeds of Abu Bakr ﷺ. He, single-handedly, is responsible for bringing to Islam six of the ten who were promised paradise during their lifetime. His unremitting sacrifices, from being beaten unconscious for protecting RasulAllah ﷺ, to being exiled from Makkah, are but two examples of his extreme reverence. His unique ability to attain the pleasure of RasulAllah ﷺ through extraordinary means, demonstrates the sincerity of his love and service. It was Abu Bakr ﷺ who freed Bilal ﷺ from slavery and persecution. Bilal ﷺ was so dear to RasulAllah ﷺ that he became an integral part of the prophetic household. In fact, Bilal ﷺ is another great example of a sincere *Ashiq*. RasulAllah ﷺ told of how he heard the footsteps of Bilal ﷺ in paradise in front of him. He attained this rank solely due to the level of his *Ishq*.

Although every companion had tremendous love for RasulAllah ﷺ, there is a huge difference between Abu Bakr's ﷺ relationship with him and the rest of the Sahaba, including us. You can recognise this from the fact that RasulAllah ﷺ once revealed to us something in confidence, but the struggle to keep it concealed was such an ordeal that we felt as if we were going to explode. You may ask Rumi ﷺ about the effect it had on us; he understands since he begins his Mathnavi with the tale of the reed. You can appreciate then, that if only one divine secret had such an effect on us then what can be said about the capacity and rank of Abu Bakr ﷺ. For RasulAllah ﷺ said that whatever he held in his chest, he had transferred into the chest of Abu Bakr ﷺ. Indeed, Abu Bakr ﷺ remained resolute and steadfast in the face of every test. It was always Abu Bakr ﷺ with the strength to reassure and correct others when their trust waivered, such as the incident at Hdaybiyah.

As only an *Ashiq* can truly know another *Ashiq*, undoubtedly, Iqbal ﷺ has this ability. He very eloquently describes some of Abu Bakr's ﷺ virtues and his relationship with RasulAllah ﷺ, saying that he is the companion from childhood, the companion of the cave and the companion of the grave. From beginning to end, his entire life was in servitude to his beloved. Iqbal ﷺ dedicates a poem in honour of Abu Bakr ﷺ, based on the incident where he surrendered everything he possessed to RasulAllah ﷺ. People like Iqbal ﷺ have been graced with the ability to say in a few words what others struggle to articulate in many volumes. Composition of the last couplet in particular, is truly adorable. It accurately captures Abu Bakr's ﷺ conviction and his reliance on nothing other than RasulAllah ﷺ.

*As a lamp to the moth, and flower to the nightingale is sufficient
For Siddiq only the Messenger of Allah is sufficient!*

Although no one can reach the height of his standard, Siddiq e Akbar ﷺ is the quintessential *Ashiq* that we all aspire to.

Yes Sir, welcome to you and thank you. We are very happy to see you. Don't worry, *Insha'Allah* the honour of what you have been tasked with will attract Divine support."

He then addressed my companion speaking in a language that I was unfamiliar with. I sat patiently until they concluded their conversation. I kissed Sayyiduna Ali's ﷺ hand and gave my salam as he bid us farewell.

As we strolled out of the forest, I could not help but think about the obvious; each companion was only praising the other's virtues and association with RasulAllah ﷺ. Most likely the master was aware of my contemplation and explained, "This, my friend is the highest level of *Ishq*, as we mentioned to you before, where one's self goes unrecognised, but the pleasure and wellbeing of the beloved is celebrated. The purpose of visiting these two individuals in particular was to realise something special. This is precisely why Iqbal ﷺ advises that one should pray and ask Allah to be granted even one atom of the *Ishq* of Abu Bakr ﷺ and Ali ﷺ .

The manifestation of love within a human being is the first sign of the presence of a heart. The perfection of this state is to feel love towards RasulAllah ﷺ since it is he who guides and leads all to Allah Almighty. Surely, you must now be able to decipher this Divine code. Didn't both reveal that Allah's pleasure and love for each one was on account of their love and connection with His Beloved? Allah's love is also attracted to those that love His Beloved. Of course, whilst it is true that the *Sahaba* had the great fortune of being in the time of RasulAllah ﷺ and had opportunities that no one else will ever have, you must recognise that this love for him is not bound by time. Even after he passed away, the *Sahaba's* love and reverence for him did not diminish, rather it increased in his physical absence. The same is true for those that followed in the proceeding ages. Indicative of the deep love for him, RasulAllah ﷺ said that from amongst those who love him will be a group of people who will come after him. They will sacrifice their property and their family in order to be able to see him.

There have always been and *Insha'Allah* there will always be in this *Ummah* those who carry *Ishq e Mustafa* in their hearts. Their connection with RasulAllah ﷺ is manifested in all aspects of their lives, in every age and every place. No matter what century these people are from, their devotion to follow their beloved in the same manner as the first generation and preserve that love and reverence will always be established. Iqbal ﷺ is constantly making reference to such personalities throughout his works, citing their faith, love, and passion for following the way of RasulAllah ﷺ.

This is evident in Malik bin Anas ﷺ who continued teaching his *Hadith* lesson uninterrupted, whilst being repeatedly stung by a scorpion. He chose to suffer the pain but considered it

disrespectful to suspend the activity out of love for the words of his beloved. Then also in composing the Burdah, Busiri رحمته الله used it as a plea and means of attracting the beloved's attention and grace. The same devotion and affection is apparent in Junayd رحمته الله, Bastami رحمته الله, Rumi رحمته الله, Jami رحمته الله, Sa'di رحمته الله and countless others, who expressed their love and praised RasulAllah ﷺ in their own unique manner. Then we come to Iqbal رحمته الله who is following suit.

It is only natural that one falls in love with something that is beautiful and most desirable. Some time ago, you assembled at the khatam in honour of Isa Gilani رحمته الله which revolved around this theme; Allah is Beautiful and He loves beauty. So, you should know that there is nothing more beautiful than RasulAllah ﷺ. Allah Almighty adorned him with the most perfect qualities. It is he that they all aspire to follow, wishing to be granted drops from his endless ocean of beautiful characteristics. The sacred friends of Allah that you venerate in these gatherings and honour traits particular to them such as Ibrahim bin Adham رحمته الله and Chivalry, Muinuddin Chishti رحمته الله and generosity, Isa ibn Maryam عليه السلام and hope, Ibn Arabi رحمته الله and mercy, Hasan al Basri رحمته الله and fear, are but a few examples. In reality all the *khatams* and the lives of all the personalities that you celebrate take their significance from the source of all beauty. In one of his poems, Iqbal رحمته الله praises the prophetic virtues by saying that everything is a manifestation of RasulAllah's ﷺ beauty; he is the lifeblood of all that has come to be in the world of creation; he turned a speck into the illuminated sun, and transformed the people he touched like precious diamonds; the majesty of Sultan Sanjar رحمته الله and Sultan Selim رحمته الله is but a display of his awe; the poverty, kindness and generosity of Junayd Baghdadi رحمته الله and Bayazid Bastami رحمته الله are all exhibitions of his beauty.

We are witness to the lives of all the righteous who strive to uphold these magnificent characteristics in themselves. They understand the reality of Allah's announcement that Indeed He has sent to them the best example, the one who is best in character and conduct. Each has been elevated in the Divine presence on account of their love and connection with RasulAllah ﷺ. If their lives reflect only some of the noble characteristics, then what can be said about the one who is the embodiment and origin of all these qualities? So, what is the purpose of these *khatams*, if not to instil the love of RasulAllah ﷺ and become aware of his noble features and characteristics? Cast your mind back to the most recent gathering you arranged, dedicated to Adam Banori رحمته الله on the theme of seeing RasulAllah ﷺ in a wakeful state, what was the conclusion?"

I replied, "Forgive me Lord, but I found the message somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, I was fascinated with all the accounts of the dreams and visions of RasulAllah ﷺ that were mentioned. I suppose that alone was enough to stir emotions of love and affection."

He responded, "For sure, that is true. However, such dreams and visions are only granted by Allah Almighty as blessings. Iqbal رحمته الله once posed a similar question to a pious friend about the

consequence of seeing RasulAllah ﷺ in such a manner. The Shaykh explained to him that having such a connection with RasulAllah ﷺ out of love warrants the necessity to follow his *Sunnah*. Eventually by adopting his blessed attributes, one becomes like a mirrored reflection of those traits. When a person reaches this state, he himself becomes the one resembling RasulAllah ﷺ. That is of greater significance and the actual purpose of such blessings.

In any case, the benefits of such gatherings are irrefutable, even though some attendees may not fully understand the message being given. Iqbal رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ attests the validity of this method when he asks his *Murshid* (spiritual guide) about what kind of association he should adopt. Rumi رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ answers him saying to be slave to the one whose heart has been illuminated. The association of the pious most definitely has an effect on the hearts and souls of the seeker. It is a sure approach to spiritual development and establishing this connection with RasulAllah ﷺ.

Iqbal رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ himself was in fact guided by two personalities in particular, Jalal ud Din Rumi رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ and Ahmad Faruqi رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ. Although his upbringing in a devotional environment laid the foundations of his development, his greatest influence and spiritual advancement has been through Rumi رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ and Imam e Rabbani رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ. Iqbal considers Rumi رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ as his *Murshid* and the Imam of all lovers, who guides and directs him on his mission in life. He prescribes the reading of Rumi's رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ Mathnavi for those desiring to attain *Ishq* in their hearts. He also adopts the teachings and practices of Imam e Rabbani رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, regarding them as the most appealing method of implementing the *Sunnah* of RasulAllah ﷺ.

Under the direction of his spiritual masters, Iqbal رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ continues his resolve to awaken the Muslims. He reminds them of their true inheritance and entuses the desire for them to come out of the darkness of slavery. Thus, he is also known as *Hakim al Ummah*, the physician for the nation of RasulAllah ﷺ. In this capacity, Iqbal رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ diagnoses and testifies to the state of present-day Muslims and offers the cure throughout his works. He reminds them of their historical triumphs and successes in attaining the pleasure of Allah, revealing that these were all by reason of the love and connection with RasulAllah ﷺ. This is what kept them above all nations and was the secret behind their accomplishments. Ever since they chose to abandon the principle of this love, they have been met only with disgrace and misfortune. He clarifies how Muslims wrongly assume the strength of their faith to be in their numbers and their worship. Did you know that when told that Muslims would be like the foam on the sea, RasulAllah's ﷺ companions assumed this meant they would be few in number? However, it was explained that though they would actually be plenty in number, like the foam on the sea they would be weak and powerless. Iqbal رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ stresses his pity for Muslims who do not understand that their worship is futile, if it is bereft of this love. They may well send blessings on RasulAllah ﷺ in every unit of *Salah* (prayer), but they do so out of routine and without presence of mind and heart. Ghazali رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ unveiled this secret in his inner dimensions

of worship centuries ago, describing how one should be mindful of whom he is offering these blessings to. Iqbal ﷺ strives to show this by way of comparison, so Muslims can deduce from seeing the effects of this misdirection and realise their delusion. Prayer offered with the true level of awareness is of a completely different calibre. This is precisely what he means when he says that if prayer is not led by *Ishq e Mustafa*, then the standing, sitting and prostrating, all carry absolutely no meaning. Muslims are deceived if they think that Allah will reward such useless worship.

My dear friend, *Iblis* is not wrong when he tells his devils that the method of weakening the Muslims is to remove their soul, their passion for RasulAllah ﷺ. He is also correct when he says that most Muslims have already lost the spirit of their faith and have been reduced to mere rituals and customs. So, it is easy to understand why although they have increased in number, their actual presence has diminished. It is not difficult to ascertain why they cannot excel and achieve like their ancestors. The only reason for their demise is their loss of love for RasulAllah ﷺ, the essence of their faith. In his *Jawab e Shikwa*, Iqbal ﷺ expresses Allah's reply to highlight this weakness and remind Muslims of the real Islam. He stirs their emotions by saying that the work initiated by the noble companions remains to be completed. In the last verses of this poem, Iqbal ﷺ reveals the ultimate truth in the most adorable manner and presents the absolute dominion of *Ishq e Mustafa*.

*You may only be a wave's murmur
but with the love for My messenger, turn yourself into a raging ocean.
With this power of ishq and the name of Muhammad ﷺ
go forth into the world and transform all darkness into light.*

*If you remain faithful to Muhammad ﷺ
I shall always be with you,
What is this miserable world?
The pen and the tablet of destiny will be in your hands.*

The plight of the Muslim *Ummah* caused Iqbal ﷺ much pain and agony; he was anxious to unravel the Divine mystery for this suffering. Once, he mustered the courage to pose this question to a *Darwish* who resided at the shrine of Ali Hujwari ﷺ. However, due to his relaxed and unrushed manner, the day almost reached sunset still in his preparations. It so happened that the *Darwish* himself arrived at Iqbal's ﷺ residence asking him about his concern. When he presented his enquiry, the *Darwish* explained that in order to build something new, the old construction needs to be demolished.

Iqbal's ﷺ use of poetry as the medium to dispense this remedy has been very effective. Within two decades of his passing away, half a dozen countries attained their freedom and independence, including India.

Despite the transparency of Iqbal's ﷺ life; his connection with RasulAllah ﷺ; his devotion to the pious Awliya; his concern for the welfare of the Muslims through his works, it is unfortunate that some Muslims have a defective opinion about him. His academic excellence and achievement within the Western fold has been a contentious concern for them, as they criticise his lifestyle. They take great offence from his critique, since he reveals flaws in the Mullahs as well as the Sufis indiscriminately. They also strongly oppose his audacious manner of complaining to Allah Almighty. Given that he does not fit into their stereotypical view of an Islamic scholar, they object to his outlook and even his physical appearance. Thus, they disapprove of his work and resort to slander. Instead of taking heed and being thankful to Allah Almighty for sending such support, these foolish people and their ridiculous reasoning attracts Divine anger. This is a prime example of reliance on *Aql*. It is no wonder then, that deservingly their state remains unaltered.

However, the truth is that the message in Iqbal's ﷺ poetry is proof of his deeper understanding of Islam, whilst his devotion substantiates his practice of faith as it ought to be. The West did not detract Iqbal ﷺ from his true love and passion. Even during his studies in Europe, he remained steadfast in his litanies and prayers. He appeared so much a part of the modern world; speaking the languages, donning the attire and walking the social circles. Yet, he remained firmly connected to RasulAllah ﷺ with *Ishq e Mustafa* running through every fibre of his being. His veneration is immeasurable, with the mere mention of the name Muhammad ﷺ reducing him to tears. It is but this love and devotion which keeps his soul completely attached to Allah and His beloved.

His humility is also reminiscent of his reverence and love for RasulAllah ﷺ. By way of supplication, Iqbal ﷺ beseeches Allah that if it be absolutely necessary that he give reckoning for his actions on the Day of Judgement, then it be done in the absence of RasulAllah ﷺ. He implores his Lord that he be secretly taken for punishment, and not to be shamed in front of His beloved, because he cannot bear the thought of causing RasulAllah ﷺ even the slightest displeasure.

Well my friend it seems that we have reached our destination. We thank you for your company, and sincerely hope that you found some joy in this journey and maybe, the odd experience, somewhat useful.”

I kissed his blessed feet and offered my gratitude saying, “My Lord, your generosity knows no bounds to a wretched being like me. Initially, I was ashamed for my erring but now take pleasure in it, only because it allowed me to be in your blessed company for some moments; moments which are an eternity in themselves. I suppose the magnanimity of all those dear to Allah Almighty is

indeed a great support for the sinful. Of course, this blessed encounter has given me much to contemplate for the task. I am thinking of adopting a metafiction style for the article, so that I may include much of what I experienced here.”

Once again, I was able to compel a smile from him as he replied, “My dear Kashf, in reality it is *Ishq e Mustafa* that brought us together as that is the effect of this principle. Our happiness always lies in the pleasure of the beloved and we are pleased to be of service. We now look forward to your article about Muhammad Iqbal رحمۃ اللہ علیہ. Really enjoying how the previous article began with our brother Ridwan رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and the angels in paradise, we are very eager to see how you start this one.”

نہ کہیں جہاں میں اماں ملی جو اماں ملی تو کہاں ملی
مرے جرم خانہ خراب کو ترے عفو بندہ نواز میں

*My dark misdeeds found no sanctuary in this wide world,
The only refuge they found was in your gracious forgiveness.*

الفاتحة