

GLOBAL APPRECIATION OF ALLAMA IQBAL

Nadeem Shafique

Abstract

Focusing on the global appreciation of Allama Iqbal, this paper relates a comprehensive account of the celebration of Iqbal Day during the year 1952 as reported in the English newspapers of Pakistan. It is hoped that this endeavour would reveal to some extent the global appreciation of the great seer and statesman.

The English newspapers of Pakistan relate a comprehensive account of the celebrations of the Iqbal Day which became an event of great national importance during the early days of Pakistan's existence. The views expressed by world dignitaries about Iqbal's contributions and the extent of indebtedness shown to him by the national leadership are also worth mentioning. In fact besides Pakistan, Iqbal Day used to be celebrated at all the major capitals of the world under the auspices of various socio-cultural associations in collaboration with the Pakistan's diplomatic missions. In this connection, the functions used to be held at Delhi, Colombo, Tehran, Ankara, Rangoon, London, Baghdad, Damascus, and Washington are worth mentioning. Among the foreign admirers of Allama Iqbal, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Thakin Nu, A. J Arberry, Malikul Shoora Bahar, A. M. A. Azeez, Syed Ziauddin Tabatabai, Dr. Kalilash Nath Katju, Freeland K. Abbot and Richard Nixon were the most prominent. In reality, the personality of Allama Iqbal provided an opportunity to introduce the newly established nation-state of Pakistan into the international academic circles. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to trace all such functions held throughout the world during 1952 as reported in the English newspapers of Pakistan. It is hoped that this endeavor would reveal to some extent the global appreciation of the great seer and statesman.

The English newspapers of 1952 published news about Iqbal Day celebrations observed throughout the world where Pakistan's national poet was eulogized for having freed eastern nations from the intellectual bondage of the West. In different reports, which appeared in *The Pakistan Times*, *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Karachi, *The Morning News* and *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, it was narrated that in Indonesia crowded meetings were held in all principal cities to commemorate 'Iqbal Day'. The meeting held in Jakarta under the auspices of Indonesia-Pakistan Cultural Association on April 20, was addressed by Cabinet Ministers, diplomats, representatives of various political parties, parliament members and other prominent men. A message from President Soekarno was also read on the occasion, which while

declaring Iqbal a hero of philosophy, literature, and religion, expressed the happiness that the people of Indonesia have grasped the greatness of Iqbal.¹

All speakers in the meeting, paying tributes to Iqbal as ‘one of the greatest thinkers of Islam and the East’ urged Indonesians to study the poet’s works and teachings. The Indonesian Education Minister Dr. Bader Doha in his speech declared Iqbal a great man who had left invaluable heirloom of philosophical and literary treasures. He observed that Iqbal’s vision and energy were directed towards a concrete life and towards human beings struggling for truth.²

Dr. Sjaudding, President of the Association, expounding Iqbal’s philosophy of humanism deprecated ‘lust of nationalism,’ in Indonesia. He said that Indonesia could overcome all difficulties “if we are ready to study thought and teachings of the great Muslim poet, Iqbal who interprets the code of life in accord with the true principles of Islam. From his works, it is clear that to live in the Islamic way is to participate in the maintenance of peace both for national boundaries and wider sphere of peace for humanity.” He remarked that in a period of international crisis and tension, study of Iqbal’s thought and message was of great value for humanity.³

Adam Bakhtiar, Chairman of the Planning Board, Ministry of Education said that Iqbal had left behind flower of *jasmine* in the form of literature and teachings, which continuously filled the air with its sweet scents. Dr. Prijone, Dean of the Indonesia University, said that the poet did not limit himself to the field of poetry. Like all great Muslim thinkers, Iqbal made the most valuable contributions in the fields of philosophy, art, religion, and politics. Other speakers included Haji Anyus Salim and Dr. Hamadani, Pakistan’s *charge d affaires*.⁴ Sjafrudding presented a purse of Rs.500/- (Indonesian) to the Indonesia-Pakistan Cultural Association with a view to popularizing Iqbal’s works in Indonesia. That was followed by other donations including Rs.3,000/-(Indonesian) by Pakistanis and Indonesians. Leading dailies carried special articles with the photographs of the poet as well as of his *mazar*.⁵

At Tehran, Pakistan Embassy celebrated the Iqbal Day in a meeting that was attended by over 300 guests, which included prominent scholars, poets, and members of the Cabinet and the Press. The Radio Tehran relayed the entire proceedings lasting an hour and a half.⁶ Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Pakistan Ambassador in Iran, in a short speech, giving a comprehensive review of Iqbal’s contribution to the world, stated that Iqbal had realized that the only way that guaranteed a respectable life for Muslims was their unconditional allegiance to the Quran. He pointed out that there were very few examples in the world history of a poet who played the role of an effective reformer and fighter for freedom. However, Iqbal eminently combined those qualities in his person as he struggled and fought against his surroundings to carve out a world based on social justice as interpreted by Islam.⁷

Dehkuda, the greatest living scholar and encyclopaedist of Iran in his presidential speech paid tribute to poet's versatile genius. He said that Iqbal felt like a poet, thought like a philosopher and worked like a practical statesman to set up an Islamic state. He added that Iqbal had brought Iran and Pakistan close together by inspiring real pride in their great and common literary, cultural, and religious traditions. He wondered that how a single man could rise against the West and revive faith and confidence of the eastern people in their own moral and spiritual values.⁸

Dr. Tara Chand, Indian Ambassador in Iran, associating himself with the tributes paid to the poet said that Iqbal was not only the poet of India and Pakistan but he belonged to the entire world as the character of his message was essentially universal, although it was clothed in Islamic phraseology. Saeed Nafisi, the renowned Persian scholar, Mujtaba Meenvi, the author of '*Iqbal Lahori*', the first treatise written on Iqbal in Persian, Muhammad Moin and the wellknown poet Yegmai also paid tributes to Iqbal's genius and pleaded for closer and more vital cultural co-operation between Iran and Pakistan, in order to achieve the goal visualized by Iqbal. Khalifa Abdul Hakim, who happened to be in Tehran, gave his personal reminiscences of Iqbal.⁹

Muhammad Mossaddiq, Prime Minister of Iran, while regretting his personal attendance at the meeting owing to illness, sent a message, which was separately reproduced in *Dawn*, *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, *The Pakistan Times*, and *The Morning News*. In his statement while paying tributes to Allama Iqbal, Mossaddiq said that he was looking to the day when the East under the influence of the wide-spread movement, deriving its inspiration from Iqbal, would throw off the yoke of slavery and would uproot for ever the heavy shackles of imperialism, which was holding the East in bondage by giving it the vicious name of 'backward countries'. Every nation would then discover its rightful place and would rule in its own name and merit through the medium of collective justice.¹⁰

Iqbal Day was also celebrated at Pakistan Consulate, Zahidan with Assadi, Governor General of Baluchistan and Seestan in the chair. While paying tributes to Allama Iqbal, the Governor prayed for the unity of the Muslim world. The Director Education followed him who spoke at length on Iqbal's life. Muhammad Ayub, Pakistan's Vice Counsel, then explained that what Iqbal conceived, the Quaid-i-Azam translated into reality. Three Iranian poets recited their poems on the occasion. About 200 guests, including Brigade Commander and heads of various government departments participated in the function.¹¹

Iqbal Day was also observed in Turkey with great enthusiasm. *The Pakistan Times* and *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore reported that at Ankara, Iqbal Day was observed on April 21, at a crowded meeting under the auspices of Turco-Pakistan

Cultural Association at Ankara University and attended by Pakistan *Charge d' Affaires*, Iranian Ambassador, Syrian Minister and other diplomats and professors. After the opening speech of the Vice President Ali Vasfi Athan, messages of the Iranian Ambassador, the Finnish Minister and the Rector of the Ankara University were read. Some members of the Embassy staff sang Iqbal's poem. Speeches on the life, philosophy and services to Islam of Iqbal were delivered by Nurettin Artam, Danyal Bediz and Kemal Edip. Turkish poet Ali Ennjeli, who had translated Iqbal's *Piam-i-Mashriq* into Turkish verse, recited some pieces amid cheers.¹²

Iqbal Day was also observed at Marmara Club Istanbul, under the auspices of Turco-Pakistan Cultural Association (Istanbul Branch). After the opening speech by Ali Fuad Bashgil, speeches were delivered on Iqbal by Professor Ali Nihat Tarlan and Ismail Habib Seruk. Tarlan also broadcasted a talk in Turkish on Iqbal from Istanbul Radio.¹³

The Khyber Mail and *The Morning News* reported that Iqbal Day was most befittingly celebrated at Baghdad in the spacious hall of the Higher Teachers Training College which was most tastefully decorated with coloured lights, flowers and flags. The function was presided over by the Iraqi Minister for Education, Khalil Kanna, and attended by five hundred persons with women including Cabinet Ministers, Ex-Prime Ministers, Senators, politician, leaders, heads, and members of Muslim missions, high ranking government officials, litterateurs, journalist and a very large section of the Pakistani community in Baghdad and Albaniya.¹⁴

Khalil Kanna in his opening speech declared Iqbal as one of very few scholars who changed the shape of things to come. In an especially composed *qasida*, the famous poet, Hussain Ali, described Iqbal as a fountain of poetry round whom every one clung for inspiration. Shiekh Muhammad Mahmood Sawaf, Muhammad Fahim Darwish and Shiekh Jalal Hanafi, the three popular speakers of Iraq who spoke on the occasion, praised Iqbal for the richness of his imagination, for a new life he infused in the shattered frame of the East and for the revolution which he brought about in the entire Muslim world. Amira Nooruddin, the young poetess already known for her translation of Iqbal, recited some of her new masterpieces. The highlights of the day were the photograph of the poet and articles front-paged by the Iraqi press and a special programme broadcasted from Radio Baghdad.¹⁵

As per reports appeared in *The Pakistan Times*, *Dawn* and *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul celebrated Iqbal Day on April 21 with great enthusiasm. All Muslims missions and their nationals, Pakistani citizens and a few Afghan officials participated in the function, which was presided over by the Saudi Arabian Minister.¹⁶ Inaugurating the meeting, he said that Iqbal was a pride not only for Muslims of Pakistan but also for the entire Muslim world. Other speakers explained various aspects of his poetry and his contribution to the

establishment of Pakistan. In his concluding remarks, the *charge d' affaires* of the Pakistan Embassy stated that the chief mission of Iqbal was to bring about revival of Islam and unity among the Muslims.¹⁷

The Pakistan Times, Dawn and *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore reported that Iqbal Day celebrations in Colombo commenced with a broadcast speech over Radio Ceylon on the evening of April 19, by Maulvi Khaleelur Rahman of the Memon Mosque. In his broadcast, he said that Iqbal's poems made Muslims come out of their slumber and realize their position. No other poet of recent past wrought such magnificent transformation as Iqbal did in our own times. He made the degenerated Muslims raise themselves from the abyss, become true and sincere Muslims with enough creative impulse in them.¹⁸

On April 21, Iqbal Day was celebrated at Colombo in a public meeting held under the chairmanship of A. M. A. Azeez Principal, Zahira College. In his speech, Azeez said that a good Muslim according to Iqbal is one who develops his powers and strengthen his individuality through active contact with the material and cultural environments. This strong concentrated individuality sharpened and settled through the life of active experience is to be dictated to the service of the Lord in whose name he is out to conquer the world.¹⁹

Zulfiqar Ali, Pakistan Trade Commissioner addressing the gathering explained the difference between a dead and a living heart as explained by Iqbal. Making repeated references to the verses of Iqbal, he elaborated that the main attributes of a living heart are that it has cast out all fears except the fear of the Creator, has intense love for the Holy Prophet (SAW) which manifests itself by practicing the texts of the Quran, has the power to create, to invent, to explore and to discover, has an aim in life for the success of which it works, and that it continues to make progress spiritually.²⁰

There was half an hour relay of Iqbal's songs over Radio Ceylon on the morning of April 21. Later in the evening, Radio Ceylon broadcast half an hour special feature programme in Tamil conducted by the students of Zahira College and a fifteen minutes talk in English by A. M. A. Azeez. A pamphlet of eight pages giving a short account of the life, work and mission of Iqbal edited by the Press Adviser to the Pakistan Trade Commissioner was also issued free to the public. Earlier, *Quran Khawani* was held in the Memon Mosque.²¹

The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore informed that the Iqbal Day was celebrated at Stockholm by the Swedish Oriental Society at a reception held at the residence of the Minister of Pakistan in Sweden. Among the distinguished guests present were the Minister of India, M. J. Desai, the *Charge d' Affaires* of Turkey, Kocamen von Henderstorm, sometimes Sweden's Minister to Iran, Widengren, Professor of History of Religion at Uppsala University, Prof. Kalagren, expert in

Chinese language, Gustaf Munthe and Paul Mohn a well known publisher.²²

In a short speech, welcoming the guests, the Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Mir Khan emphasized Iqbal's role as the 'poet of the East' and the bringer of the message of the East. He underlined Iqbal's importance in the history of oriental culture and pointed out that Iqbal belonged not to one country but to the whole of the eastern world.²³ Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Nyborg, Professor of Semitic Languages of Uppsala University and a member of Swedish Academy observed that the Islamic world of today had not produced anything to compare with the depth and profundity of Iqbal's thought or the sweep of his understanding. He has served as the creator of the conscience of his people and stands as the unquestionable national poet of Pakistan. Nyborg also drew a parallel between Iqbal and the Russian Berdyaev as for both of them the independence and the creative strength of humanity was the main problem of the world and for both of them divine nature was the only reality and the key to the riddles of the universe and of history. Radio Stockholm gave full coverage to the function on their short wave programme for their South Asian regions.²⁴

Iqbal Day was also celebrated in Canada, which was reported by *The Morning News*. According to report, Iqbal Day was observed at Ottawa on April 22, 1952, in a meeting held at the National Museum of Canada under the presidentship of High Commissioner for Pakistan. The meeting was very well attended and among those present were members of Diplomatic Corps and Parliament, officials of Canadian government, representatives of the press, educational circles, and social elite of the city.²⁵

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Director Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, presented a lucid exposition of Iqbal's thinking and his contributions towards the awakening of the Muslim world. He paid a tribute to the remarkable genius who expressed himself with poetic excellence in Urdu and Persian and presented a basis for the reconstruction of religions thought in Islam, in English. It was Dr. Smith's contention that Iqbal was the greatest poet of his national language and certainly the greatest poet of his age. He described Iqbal as the real inspirer of the idea of Pakistan for he was responsible for creating the consciousness of a glorious destiny that belonged to the Muslims of India and indeed the world of Islam.²⁶

Speaking of Iqbal's works, Smith held '*Shikwah*' as the most monumental work of Iqbal and suggested that the entire succeeding works of Iqbal were in the nature of an answer to the original complaint contained in '*Shikwah*'. He felt that the reaction of the impact created by *Shikwah* was a continuing one. Establishment of Pakistan was one of the most important answers to the *Shikwah* provided by his own people. He further suggested that the final answer was yet to come and would be when the Pakistanis would give the final shape to their aspirations and Pakistan

would achieve the fulfillment of her ideal.²⁷

Begum Shaista Ikramullah who spoke next, observed that Iqbal tried to resolve the conflict of a nation and found the answer to the torment of a whole people and this he did not in a cold, philosophically analytical manner, but with the ardour of a love poet. She went on to describe the condition of apathy, disillusionment and lethargy, the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent had sunk into when Iqbal began writing, how he revolutionized the accepted concepts of life and how his dynamic philosophy imbued them with a new vigour. Recitation of Allama Iqbal's poems and their English translations was also presented at the function.²⁸

The Pakistan Times, The Civil and Military Gazette, Karachi and Dawn, reported that Iqbal Day was observed in India with great enthusiasm. A meeting was arranged at Delhi by Muhammad Ismail, Pakistan High Commissioner in India and presided over by India's Home Minister Dr. K. N. Katju and attended by about twelve hundred diplomats, government officials and prominent citizens of Delhi. The chief speaker was K. G. Saiyidain, Educational Advisor to Government of India, who paid liberal tributes to the contributions of the poet to literature and modern thought and while quoting liberally from Iqbal's poems, declared him a great creative poet of the country. Paying his tribute of 'affections, reverence and love' to the poet, Dr. Katju referred to his celebrated poem 'New Temple' and said it was like a 'beacon star' for him in his younger days when he was a student in Lahore.²⁹

Later in the evening a *mushaira* organized by the Press Attaché to the Pakistan High Commissioner in which over thirty Hindu, Muslim and Sikh poets participated. Over 600 persons including high officials of the Government of India and prominent citizens of Delhi attended the 'mushaira', which was presided over by Shankar Prasad, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi. Poets who recited verses on Allama Iqbal during the three hour function included Pandit Tribhavan Nath Zar, Arsh Malsiani, Jagan Nath Azad, Bekhud Dehlvi, Kanwar Mahendra Singh Bedi, Harichand Akhtar, Tilok Chand Mahroom, Anand Mohn Zutshi Gulzar, Dharmpal Gupta Vafa, Makhmoor Dehlvi, Munshi Gopinath Amn, Ram Prahasham and Sabir Hoshiarpuri.³⁰

Dawn and *The Morning News* reported that Iqbal Day was also observed at Calcutta in the Pakistan High Commission with Dr. H. C. Mookerjee, Governor West Bengal in chair. Seyda Bazgha, a research scholar, Prof. P. R. Sen a well known educationist, Dr. Z. A. Siddiqi, head of the Department of Arabic and Persian, Calcutta University and H. L. Chopra, an old student of Iqbal, spoke at the meeting dealing with different aspects of Iqbal's life and philosophy. The Governor giving a brief sketch of the life and works of Iqbal said that the poet had a message for all time and appealed for a serious study of his works.³¹

The guests included the elite of the city, headed by Nawab Bahadur of

Murshidbad, Mahraja of Natore, B.C. Roy, Chief Minister West Bengal, members of Consular Corps, prominent litterateurs, and journalists. Several Calcutta dailies including *Statesman*, *Satyayug*, *Azad Hind*, *Asre Jadid*, published articles on Iqbal.³² According to a report, which appeared in *Dawn*, an Iqbal Day meeting was also planned at Bombay on April 26 under the auspices of Iqbal Committee, in which speeches were planned to be made on life and works of the great poet.³³

The Middle East Institute of Washington also planned to hold a special programme on May 1 at United Nation's Club to be attended by representatives of major nations as per report appeared in *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore. According to schedule, the speeches were to be delivered dealing with the various aspects of Iqbal's life, the significance of his work, the meaning to be found in his poetry and his contributions to the creation of Pakistan.³⁴ *Dawn* informed that the VOA also relayed special Iqbal Day programme including recitations from Iqbal's poems and a commentary entitled 'Iqbal among the world's great thinkers'.³⁵

The Pakistan Times in its issue of June 4, 1952 informed that eminent French scholars spoke on Iqbal at a reception given by the Embassy of Pakistan on 'Iqbal Day'. About 250 educationists, writers, and journalists were present on the occasion. Prof. Massignon, Director of the *College de France* and an eminent authority on Islamic philosophy, in his speech recalled his personal association with Iqbal and paid warm tributes to the poet's contributions to literature. He was pleased that attempts were being made to translate Iqbal's works into Arabic. Prof. Delacur, Secretary of the Men of Letters Society of France stressed the need for the exchange of literary ideas and cultural relations between France and Pakistan.³⁶

End Notes

¹ "Iqbal freed East from Intellectual bondage: World wide homage to Pakistan's national poet," *The Pakistan Times*, April 20, 1952. Also see "Soekarno & Mossaddiq pay homage to Iqbal: World wide tributes," *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Karachi, April 23, 1952; "Indonesia pays homage to Iqbal," *The Morning News*, April 24, 1952; "Iqbal Day observed all over Indonesia: Glowing tributes paid," *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 25, 1952.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰ “World-wide tributes to the poet of East: He was beacon light, says Dr. Mossaddiq,” *Dawn*, April 23, 1952; Also see, “Iqbal: noblest examples of leaders of foresight: Mossaddiq’s message at poet’s death anniversary,” *The Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 24, 1952; “Iqbal was poet of entire Islamic world,” *The Pakistan Times*, April 24, 1952; “Iqbal Day in Tehran: Dr. Mussadaq’s inspiring message,” *The Morning News*, April 25, 1952.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Iqbal Day in Turkey,” *The Morning News*, April 27, 1952; “Iqbal freed East from intellectual bondage: World wide homage to Pakistan’s national poet”, *The Pakistan Times*, April 28, 1952; “Foreign tributes to Iqbal,” *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 29, 1952.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ “Iqbal Day in Iraq,” *The Khyber Mail*, April 20, 1952; “Iqbal Day in Baghdad,” *The Morning News*, April 27, 1952.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Iqbal freed East from Intellectual bondage: World wide homage to Pakistan’s national poet”, *The Pakistan Times*, April 28, 1952; Also see “Iqbal Day observed: In Kabul,” *Dawn*, April 22, 1952; “Iqbal Day in Kabul,” *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 23, 1952.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² “Stockholm observes Iqbal Day,” *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 25, 1952,

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Iqbal Day in Canada: Dr. Cantwell Smith’s speech,” *The Morning News*, April 29, 1952.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “Iqbal Day observed in Delhi,” *The Pakistan Times*, April 23, 1952; “Iqbal Day *mushaira* in Delhi,” *Dawn*, April 23, 1952; “Iqbal Day *mushaira* in New Delhi,” *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Karachi, April 23, 1952; “Iqbal Day celebrated in New Delhi,” *The Civil & Military Gazette*, Karachi, April 23, 1952.

³⁰ “Iqbal Day in Delhi”, *The Pakistan Times*, April 23, 1952; “Iqbal Day *mushaira* in Delhi,” *Dawn*, April 23, 1952; “Iqbal Day *mushaira* in New Delhi,” *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Karachi, April 23, 1952.

³¹ “World wide tributes to the poet of East: He was a beacon light, says Dr. Mossaddiq,” *Dawn*, April 23, 1952; “Indonesia pays homage to Iqbal,” *The Morning News*, April 24, 1952.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “In Bombay,” *Dawn*, April 24, 1952.

³⁴ “Washington to pay homage to Iqbal”, *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April 27, 1952.

³⁵ “Voice of America’s (VOA) special Iqbal programme today,” *Dawn*, April 24, 1952.

³⁶ “‘Iqbal Day’ in Paris,” *The Pakistan Times*, June 4, 1952.