

Allama Iqbal – Is The Sky Yours or Mine?

Muhammad Iqbal, 1877-1938, was a poet of Urdu and Farsi, philosopher, sufi, and revolutionary, who combined in his works the traditions of Al-Ghazzali, Rumi, Ibn-e-Khaldun, Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Walilullah. While he understood the power of the West, had read the Western philosophers, and was familiar with the advances in physics, unlike Syed Ahmad Khan, he remained firmly rooted in Islamic tradition, and refused to re-examine the Islam through Orientalist texts. He was critical of the West's excessive emphasis on reason, its materialism, and the depredations of capitalism. Many decades before Frantz Fanon and Aime Cezaire, he was the deep thinker and stirring poet of self-discovery, urging peoples of color to regain their dignity, to dig deep into their own traditions in order to overcome, and transcend, the materialism, racism, excessive rationalism, and the West's abuse of power and its own principles.

This ghazal is a translation from *Wings of Gabriel*, the best collection of Iqbal's Urdu poetry. From time to time, I will be presenting translations from this collection.

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translation by **M. Shahid Alam**

If the stars are topsy-turvy: is the sky yours or mine?
Should this fret me? Is the world yours or mine?

If Heaven lacks the tug, the heat of love's adventure,
Dear Lord, this cosmic enigma is yours: not mine.

On that first dawn of creation, how dared he to defy
Your decree. Was *he* your emissary: or was he mine?

Muhammad is yours, Gabriel and the Qur'an too.
But these melodic words: are they yours or mine?

It's this star, scintillating, that lights your creation.
Whose loss is it - the fall of Man? Is it yours or mine?

- M. Shahid Alam is professor of economics at Northeastern University, Boston. He is author of [Poverty from the Wealth of Nations](#) (Macmillan: 2000), [Challenging the New Orientalism](#) (IPI: 2007), and [Israeli Exceptionalism](#) (Palgrave: 2009). You may reach him at alqalam02760@yahoo.com.