Some insights into Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa of Allama Iqbal

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Ki Muhammed Se Wafa Tu Ne To Hum Tere HaiN
If you are faithful to Muhammed, We are yours (Jawab e Shikwa)

Mention Shikwa and Jawab-e-Shikwa and the ears of any Urdu speaking person perk up. Composed by Allama Iqbal between 1909-1913, the duo was like a bolt of lightning that shot across the literary canvas of the subcontinent and shook up its audience with its thunder. With its audacity, eloquence, penetrating vision, loftiness of reach, richness of similitudes, expanse of thematic embrace, depth of historical and spiritual insights, nuance, subtlety and power of its language it marked a new crest in Urdu poetry.

The message of Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa is as relevant today as it was more than a hundred years ago. Listen to its rendering by masterful Qawwals like the Sabri brothers, it brings tears to a believing heart. Shikwa literally means “a complaint” and Jawab e Shikwa means “answer to the complaint”. However, Shikwa is like the lament of a sensitive soul before the majestic audience of Divine compassion. As the lament ratchets back in the Divine mirror, it is modulated and becomes Jawab e Shikwa, which is an ode to the inner Self of the bard himself and a marching call (Bang e Dara) for the onward march of the caravan of his people. Shikwa was composed in 1909 and caused quite a stir in the Muslim circles of India. Understood, and misunderstood by lesser souls, it was denounced by many as the sulking of an irreverent soulwith many a mullah passing a fatwa of Kufr upon the poem. How can one “complain” to God Almighty for one’s own lapses? Isn’t He the All-Compassionate, Infinitely Merciful, Generous to the extreme, the Sustainer, the Cherisher of all that is in the heavens and the earth? How impudent!

Four years were to elapse before Iqbal published Jawab e Shikwa. It is not known if Iqbal had planned the two as a set from the outset or Jawab e Shikwa was composed as a response to the tumultuous reactions that the Shikwa evoked.

It was a turbulent time for the Muslims. Pax Brittania ruled the world. The British Raj was firmly entrenched in India. The Indian Muslims, constituting a third of all the Muslims in the world, were under the British thumb. The Iranians were exhausted from the constitutional revoluTIon of 1906. In Turkey, the Young Turks had staged a coup d ‘etat against sultan Abdul Hamid II. The Ottoman empire, in heavy debt, was facing a rebellion in the Balkans and was soon to be invaded by the combined armies of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, goaded and abetted by the entente powers Britain, France and Russia.

Iqbal received his advanced education in Germany and had seen firsthand how the nations of Europe had moved forward on the path of technological progress and prosperity while the Muslims remained mired in poverty, internal divisions and fatalistic inertia. The Islamic horizon was cloudy indeed. His sensitive soul could no longer contain the pain at the condtion of his community and it sang out as a complaint to Almighty God. It was a masterful note from a maestro to wake up his people
from their slumber. In this effort he was eminently successful. Once the Muslim civil society had

absorbed the body blow of Shikwa, Iqbal released the Jawab e Shikwa. It was a response to the Shikwa reflected from the heavens.

Shikwa and Jawabe e Shikwa were a dialogue of Iqbal with the voice of his own inner soul rather than a kalam with God as Iqbal was not an anointed saint but a consummate poet. He stands in the same exalted class of savants as Farid Uddin Attar (d 1219) who embarks on a journey to find the Simurgh in his classic work *Mantiq at Tayr* (Conference of the Birds) and finds its reflection staring at himself in a celestial pond.

Iqbal sums up the response to his own complaint in these words: Ki Muhammed Se Wafa Tu Ne To Hum Tere HaiN;/Yeh Jehan Cheez Hai Kya Luh Wa Kalem Tere HaiN (If you are faithful to Muhammed , We are yours, Why speak of this world, the exalted Tablet and the celestial Pen are yours).
This summaTIon is a reflection of the Ayah in the Qur'an wherein God commands the Prophet to say: *In kuntum tuhibbunallaha fattabiooni* (If you love Allah, then follow me). To love Allah one follows the Prophet. Conversely, to follow the Prophet is to love Allah. It is the power of divine love (Ishq e haqeeqi) that propels a human to the reaches of the exalted Tablet and the celestial Pen.

So, the question props up: Who is Muhammed (peace be upon him) following whom connotes love for God Almighty? And a follow-on question: What does fidelity to Muhammed (peace be upon him) mean?

The questions are profound and require a deep dive into the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. To answer these questions, we will draw upon not only the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah but also on the writings of intellectual giants like ibn al Arabi, Tirmidhi, al Gazzali, Rumi, Abu Haneefa and Ja'afar as Sadiq. We will also look at these questions from perspectives of shariah, tareeqa, history and science.

Who was Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him)? Or, more appropriately, who is Muhammed (pbuh)? Here is some guidance from the Qur'an on this question:
i. "Behold! There has come to you a Light from Allah and a perspicuous Book".
ii. "And indeed! You are truly of an exalted innate character".
iii. "And We sent you not except as a mercy for all the worlds".
iv. "Muhammed is not the father of any of you but is the Messenger of God and the Seal of Prophets".
v. "Indeed, Allah and the Angels send their salutations upon the Prophet".
Several attributes of the Prophet stand out from the selected Ayats. Muhammed (pbuh) was Light from Allah. He was of an exalted intrinsic nature and character. He was mercy to all creation. He was a Messenger and a Prophet. He is so noble that Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds, and his Angels continuously send their salutations upon him.
The Prophet was both Noor and Bashar (Light and human). Noor e Muhammadi and Bashariyet are deep oceans and a dive into them requires patient perseverance, insight and knowledge. But without such patience, how can we do justice to the legacy of Iqbal?

To scope this presentation and to bound it as a discourse on Iqbal's Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa, we will highlight certain aspects of Noor e Mohammadi and the exalted character of the Prophet. In addition, Iqbal's work raises profound questions of philosophy, history and culture.

What does Iqbal mean when he says: "*Tu Musalman Ho To Taqdeer Hai Tadbeer Teri"* (If you are a believer, your acTIon is your fate)? And his insight: "*Tujhe Aaba Se Apne Kuch Bhi Nisbat Ho NaheeN SakTI*" (There can be no comparison between you and your forefathers"? How was it that the believers who were once the architects of history were discarded by history? Astonishing!

One can write volumes on Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa. Our brief Comment is measured and focused. Our attempt is to throw some more light on Iqbal's message so that generations to come may continue to enjoy the lyre of Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa and derive inspiration from it. We hope it will help answer the question: How did Muslims violate Meethaq e Risalat, the covenant that all the Arwah made with the Ruh of the Prophet (sas) to obey him and follow him. It is this violation of *Meethaq e Risalat* that is at the core of Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa.

"*Thay Tho Aaba Woh Tumhare He Magar Tum Kya Ho"*
Your forefathers, indeed, they were! But what are you? – Jawab e Shikwa

The Shariah

The seed for a civilization based on Tawhid was sown by Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). Asked to describe the Prophet, Aisha (r) said, "He was an embodiment of the Qur'an". As long he was alive, the Prophet was the singular pole around which the nascent Islamic community revolved. He was the Nabi, the Rasool and the seal of the Prophets. He was the teacher, the role model, the guide, the law giver and the arbitrator. His Seerah laid out the path for the community, his Sunnah became the behavioral model for the believers, and his Hadith provided an exposition of the Qur'an.

When the Prophet passed away, the mantle of leadership passed on to the Companions who Continued to build the edifice of Islam upon the foundation laid out by the Prophet. The names of Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and Ali (may God be pleased with them) stand out amongst the galaxy of luminaries trained by the Messenger of God. After the Companions passed away, the Tabeyeen (those who followed the Companions) took up the task and after the Tabeyeen came the Tabe-Tabeyeen (those who followed the Tabeyeen). The sagacity, wisdom and zeal with which these stalwarts took up the call of Tawhid made the civilization the guiding light for their age.

The triumphant advance of Muslim armies across the inter-connected landmass of Asia, Europe and Africa brought into the Islamic Empire large masses of people who were previously Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist or Hindu. Conversion to the new faith was slow. The conquering Muslims left the people of the territories alone as long as they paid the protective tax, jizya, and did not interfere with freedom of choice in religion. Mass conversions to Islam took place during the reign of Omar bin Abdul Aziz (717-719) who abolished unfair taxation, tolerated dissent and treated Muslim and non-Muslim alike with the dignity due to fellow man. Impressed with his initiatives, people in the former territories of the Sassanids and the Byzantines (Persia and Egypt) embraced Islam in droves.
The new Muslims brought with them not only their ancient heritage and culture, but methods of looking at the sublime questions of life in ways fundamentally different from that of the Arabs. Historical Islam had to face the rationalism of the Greeks, the stratification of the Zoroastrians, the dharma of the Hindus, the abnegation of the Buddhists and the secular but

highly refined ethical codes of the Taoist and Confucian Chinese.

Fiqh was the doctrinal response of the Islamic civilization to these challenges. The codification of Fiqh solidified the foundation of Islamic civilization and was the cement for its stability through the turmoil of centuries. As long as the process of Fiqh was dynamic, creativity and ideas flowed from Islam to other civilizations. When this process became static and stagnant, historical Islam increasingly turned inwards and became marginalized in the global struggle of humankind.

A definition of the terms Shariah and Fiqh is in order at the outset. Shariah is the constant, unchanging, basic dimension of Islam. It has its basis in the Qur'an, and it derives its legiϴmacy from Divine sovereignty. Shariah defines not just the relationship of man to man, but also the relationship of man to God and of man to the cosmos. As such, it is all embracing and its dimensions are infinite.

Fiqh is the historical dimension of the Shariah and represents the continuous and unceasing struggle of Muslims to live up to divine commandments in space-time. It is the rigorous and detailed application of the Shariah to issues that confront humankind as it parϴcipates in the unfolding drama of history. As such it embraces the approach, the process, the methodology as well as the practical application of the Shariah. It defines the interface of an individual with himself, his family, his community, his society, as well as the civilizational interface between Islam and other faiths and ideologies.

The foundation of Fiqh was laid in the early days of Islam when the Qur'an was revealed as the spoken Word of God. Many of the Prophet's Companions memorized the Qur'an, becoming known as the Hafizun (memorizers) and Qura'a (reciters). Concerns about preserving the Qur'an arose after the Battle of Yamama, in which many Hafizun perished. To prevent the loss of the Qur'an, Caliph Abu Bakr ordered its compilation into a written text. This compilation was later standardized under Caliph Uthman to ensure uniform pronunciation and interpretation as Islam spread to regions with different linguistic backgrounds.

As the first generation of Muslims passed away, the need for a structured approach to Islamic jurisprudence became evident. The Companions had witnessed the revelation of the Qur'an and understood its context firsthand, often drawing on the Prophet's living example to address legal and ethical matters. They applied the Qur'an and Sunnah directly when guidance was explicit, but when faced with new or ambiguous situations, they relied on Ijma (consensus) and reasoning. This process of consultation and reasoned judgment set the stage for the development of Usul al Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence).

The gradual codification of Fiqh led to the establishment of several major schools of thought, each offering a distinct methodology for interpreting and applying Islamic law. These schools emerged as Islam expanded and interacted with various cultures, each contributing to the rich tapestry of Islamic jurisprudence. Principal among them were the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I, Hanbali and Jafariya schools.

Science

The Golden Age of Islamic Science, spanning from the 8th to the 13th centuries, represents a

remarkable era in human history where the Islamic world became the global center of knowledge, innovation, and scientific progress. During this period, Muslim scholars not only preserved ancient knowledge from Greek, Persian, Indian, and other civilizations but also expanded it, laying the groundwork for many fields of modern science and technology.
A key factor in the success of this era was the establishment of renowned centers of learning, with Baghdad's House of Wisdom (Bait al-Hikma) being the most notable. Founded during the Abbasid Caliphate under Caliph Harun al-Rashid and further developed by his son Al-Mamun, the House of Wisdom became a hub for the translation and study of scientific texts. Scholars from diverse backgrounds—Greek, Persian, Indian, and Chinese—converged in Baghdad to collaborate, debate, and innovate. The translaton movement involved converting classical texts into Arabic, which made the works of Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, and Euclid accessible to the broader Islamic world.

Other significant centers of learning emerged across the Muslim world, including Cordoba in Spain, Cairo in Egypt, and Samarkand and Bukhara in Central Asia. These centers establihed extensive libraries, such as the library of Cordoba, which contained hundreds of thousands of manuscripts, far exceeding the collections in contemporary European libraries.

The translation movement was a defining feature of this era. It was not merely about preserving ancient knowledge but also about critically examining and building upon it. Muslim scholars approached Greek philosophy and science with both reverence and a spirit of inquiry, leading to advancements that far surpassed the original works. For example, while Greek mathematicians like Euclid laid the foundations of geometry, Muslim scholars like Al-Khwarizmi introduced algebra, transforming mathematics into a more sophisticated and practical discipline.
In mathematics, Al-Khwarizmi (780–850), often called the "father of algebra," wrote Kitab al-Mukhtasar fi Hisab al-Jabr wal-Muqabala (The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing), which systematically introduced algebraic methods. His work laid the foundations for solving linear and quadratic equations, and the term "algorithm" is derived from his name. Another mathematician, Omar Khayyam (1048–1131), developed methods for solving cubic equations and contributed to the development of a more accurate calendar.
Astronomy was another field where Muslim scholars made significant advancements. Al-Battani (850–929) refined Ptolemy’s measurements and calculated the solar year’s length more accurately. His astronomical tables influenced European astronomers like Copernicus. Similarly, the astronomer Ulugh Beg (1394–1449) built one of the largest observatories in Samarkand, where he compiled a star catalog that provided precise measurements of celestial bodies. His work was highly respected and remained accurate for centuries.

Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen, 965–1040), known as the "father of modern optics," made groundbreaking contributions to the study of light and vision. His Book of Optics corrected many of the misconceptions held by earlier scholars and laid the foundation for modern physics. He was the first to correctly explain that vision occurs when light reflects off an object and enters the eye, contrary to the Greek theory that the eye emits light rays. Ibn al-Haytham’s work on the scientific method, emphasizing experimentation and empirical evidence, was ahead of its time and influenced later Western scientists like Roger Bacon and Johannes Kepler.
Medicine was another area where Islamic scholars excelled. Al-Razi (Rhazes, 854–925) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037) were among the most celebrated physicians. Al-Razi wrote comprehensive texts on clinical medicine, including Kitab al-Hawi (The Comprehensive Book on Medicine), which was used as a medical reference in Europe for centuries. He was the first to

differentiate between smallpox and measles and advocated for evidence-based medical practice. Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine became the standard medical text in both the Islamic world and Europe until the 17th century. His work covered various topics, from anatomy and pharmacology to psychology, and emphasized the importance of hygiene and diet in disease prevention.

In the field of chemistry, Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber, 721–815) is often hailed as the "father of chemistry." He introduced methods of experimentation, crystallizatoon, distillation, and evaporation, which laid the groundwork for modern chemistry. Jabir's classification of substances and his emphasis on laboratory practices were revolutionary for his time. Significant, indeed revolutionary strides were made by Muslim engineers and inventors. Al-Jazari (1136–1206), a polymath and mechanical engineer, wrote The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices, which described over a hundred mechanical inventions, including water clocks, automated machines, and even a rudimentary robot. His work laid the foundation for modern engineering and robotics. He was the inventor of the cam shaft which made possible the conversion of linear motion into rotary motion. Without this invention, we would have no automobiles or trains.

The field of civil engineering saw innovations like the construction of water wheels, dams, and irrigation systems. Master architects like Sinan in the Ottoman Empire designed magnificent structures that blended aesthetics with functionality, influencing architectural styles worldwide. The introduction of paper, a technology borrowed from the Chinese, played a crucial role in the dissemination of knowledge. Paper mills were established across the Islamic world, making books more accessible and facilitating the spread of scientific ideas. This development allowed scholars to share their findings widely, contributing to a vibrant culture of learning and scholarly exchange.

Islamic philosophy during the Golden Age was characterized by attempts to reconcile reason and faith. Philosophers like Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd explored the relationship between science, metaphysics, and religion. Al-Farabi (872–950) developed a classification of knowledge and sought to harmonize the teachings of Plato and Aristotle with Islamic theology. Ibn Sina's Metaphysics influenced not only Islamic but also Western Christian thought, while Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle laid the groundwork for the European Renaissance. These philosophers believed that the study of nature was a way to understand God's creation, an idea that was supported by Qur'anic teachings encouraging the exploration of the natural world.

In summary, the Golden Age of Islamic Science was a period marked by extraordinary contributions across multiple disciplines. The era's scholars laid the groundwork for many fields that would later flourish in Europe, highlighting the Islamic world's critical role in the history of science and human progress. However, the decline that followed was shaped by a complex interplay of external invasions, internal strife, and philosophical schisms, setting the stage for a scientific stagnation that persisted for centuries.

"Jin Ko Aata NaheeN Dunya MaiN Koyi Fun, Tum Ho"
If there any in the world who are bereft of technology, it is you– Jawab e Shikwa

The initial success of the Islamic Golden Age was partly due to the synthesis of Greek philosophy with Islamic thought, most notably during the Mu'tazalite movement in the eighth to ninth centuries.

The Mu'tazalites embraced rationalism and believed in harmonizing reason with religious beliefs. However, they did not understand the limits of their philosophical methods. Philosophy is deductive; it depends on assumptions, theses, notions of before and after, subject and object. It assumes a linear flow of time. If the assumptions are incorrect, then the deductions are also incorrect. For instance, we know now that time is not necessarily linear; it can "bend" by gravity. There is clock time, relative time, perceived time, "timeless time" when "time" as we know it did not even exist. Indeed, time may not even be "real". As opposed to the philosophical, deductive. "top-down" approach, the scientific approach is inductive, evidence based, "bottoms up". In the inductive, evidence-based approach, philosophy, reason and logic become useful tools in the continuous search for truth to be used, as appropriate, within their limits. The approach of the Qur'an is inductive, evidence based. The Qur'an repeatedly draws attention to the enchanting panorama of nature, the sublime mysteries of the heart, soul and the spirit as well as the majesty of human struggle in history as irrefutable signs for belief in God and an unceasing struggle to find the truth.

The Mu'tazalites fell flat on their face when they applied reason to revelation. Revelation is not time-bound. It is not space-time that "contains" the spirit, it is the spirit that surrounds space-time inside and out. The Mu'tazalite ideas faced severe opposition, particularly when they proposed that the Qur'an was "created" and "not co-eternal with God", sparking religious controversies. The backlash culminated in the decline of the Mu'tazalite influence and the rise of orthodox scholars like Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, who emphasized strict adherence to traditional interpretations of Islamic doctrines.

One of the most significant figures in this intellectual struggle was Al-Gazzali, who argued in *Tahafut al-Falasafa* ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers") that reason was insufficient to comprehend the divine will. He posited that natural events occur not through cause and effect but as manifestations of God's will. Although Al-Gazzali's intent was not to oppose philosophy and science per se, his critique of philosophers like Ibn Sina had a chilling effect on scientific inquiry. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) attempted to revive rationalist philosophy, asserting that reason and faith were compatible. However, his ideas failed to gain widespread acceptance in the Muslim world, although they greatly influenced European thinkers like Thomas Aquinas.

Political and military events also had a profound impact on the development of science and technology in the Muslim world. The Mongol invasions of the 13th century were catastrophic for the Muslims. Cities like Baghdad, Nishapur, and Samarkand—once centers of learning and culture—were destroyed. The invaders demolished libraries, killed scholars, and decimated the intellectual infrastructure that had supported scientific inquiry. Simultaneously, the Crusader onslaughts resulted in the loss of Muslim Spain where cities like Córdoba had been major centers of knowledge. The collapse of these cultural and intellectual hubs marked the end of the Islamic Golden Age.

The emergence of spiritual and mystical Islam, especially Sufism, helped the Muslim world cope with the trauma of these invasions. However, this shift led to a decline in the emphasis on empirical sciences. The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires, which rose in the aftermath of the Mongol devastation, invested heavily in art, architecture, and military technology but largely neglected scientific inquiry. Artisanship and engineering thrived, with advancements in

architecture and metallurgy but these innovations were not based on systematic scientific research. For example, the Mysore rockets used by Tippu Sultan against the British were technologically advanced but lacked a theoretical understanding based on Newtonian physics.

The delay in adopting critical technologies like the printing press significantly contributed to the scientific stagnation in the Muslim world. While the printing press revolutionized knowledge dissemination in Europe, leading to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, it faced resistance in the Muslim world. Religious leaders feared that the press would desecrate the Qur'an, and it was not until the 18th century that the Ottomans adopted this technology. This resistance hindered the widespread distribution of knowledge and limited intellectual progress. By contrast, the printing press had become ubiquitous in Europe by the 16th century, driving an explosion of scientific and philosophical inquiry.

Another area of neglect was naval technology. After the Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, Muslim naval power declined steadily. While Europe invested heavily in maritime exploration, discovering new trade routes and expanding its global influence, the Muslim empires failed to keep up. The Ottoman Empire's neglect of naval science and the Mughal Empire's focus on land-based power left the Islamic world vulnerable to European colonization and economic decline.

Sectarianism and extremism played a significant role in weakening the Muslim world. The Sunni-Shia divide, exemplified by the Safavid-Ottoman rivalry, created persistent political and military conflicts. The rise of Salafism and Wahhabism in the 18th and 19th centuries further polarized the Islamic world.

The internal weakness of the Muslim body politic and the technological backwardness invited external intervention and colonialism. The colonizers dismantled traditional educational systems, replacing them with schools designed to train administrators rather than scientists. The British colonization of India, for example, disrupted centuries of intellectual traditions and imposed an education system focused on producing clerks and bureaucrats. The Ottoman Empire's attempts to modernize through the Tanzeemat reforms were too little, too late, and the empire eventually disintegrated after World War I.

By the 19th century, the gap between Europe and the Muslim world in science and technology had become insurmountable. While Europe produced scientific luminaries like Newton, Galileo, and Darwin, the Muslim world struggled to modernize. Efforts to establish Western-style educational institutions, such as Syed Ahmed Khan’s Aligarh Muslim University in India, marked the beginning of a gradual shift but the damage had been done.

Taa Sar e Arsh Bhi InsaaN Ki Tag o Taaz Hai Kya?
Aa Gyi Khak Ki Chutki Ko Bhi Parwaaz Hai Kya? (Jawab e Shikwa)

Has the wayward reach of the human reached even the gates of the Exalted Throne?
Astonishing! Has a speck of dust acquired such a capacity to soar?

So close yet so far. God is so close to the human and yet He is so far. The Qur’an affirms that God is closer to the human than his own jugular vein. But it also affirms: “O humankind! You are toiling, painfully toiling, and you shall meet Him”. Man was in the heavenly presence but was ejected, in accordance with God’s plan, and was ordained to seek Him in the matrix of human history. The Sufi Shaikhs have said in their esoteric language that there are seventy veils

between man and God and Tasawwuf is the Kashaf (unveiling) of these veils to witness His Jalal and Jamal (majesty and beauty).

Iqbal's flight to the gates of the heavenly throne was astonishing. Very few in Islamic history dared to tread the domain where angels fear to tread. Fewer yet had the audacity to address God in the first person with a lyre and a complain. As a well-known poet, Shakeel Badaywani wrote: "*Allah To Sab Ki Sunta Hai, Jur'at Hai Shakeel Apni Apni; Hali Ne ZubaN Se Kuch Na Kaha, Iqbal Shikayat Kar Baithay"* (God hears every petitioner, it is all up to the individual's courage; Haali (a well known Urdu poet) kept his silence, but Iqbal went ahead and lodged his complaint).

There are innumerable ladders of ascent to the heavenly presence. The paths are diverse but the destination is the same. To appreciate Iqbal's audacity and his poetic temerity, we present here a summary description of one such ladder, outlined by the ninth century sage, Imam Tirmidhi (d 892 CE). Tirmidhi's approach is disciplined, methodical and consistent with the methodology of Usuli ulema who were also consummate masters of Tasawwuf. We have modified the Tirmidhi approach and have added the last step of Shuhood (witness). This addition is consistent with the teachings of later Shuyukh such as Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi (d 1624) of the Punjab. The modified ladder consists of ten steps, which repeat, making it an infinite helix, rising from the mundane earthly existence of the human to the Exalted Throne.

Step 1. Shariah (Observance of Divine Law)

The first step of the ladder is trust in Allah and obedience to his commandments. Shariah is the immutable Law of God which governs all creation. It embraces not just the world of man but all creation in the cosmos. Galaxies are born and die. That is Shariah. The stars traverse the heavens in prescribed paths and ultimately die. That is Shariah. The sun rises from the East. That is Shariah. As applied to the human, it embraces the commandments and guidance from God Almighty so that the human can discharge his responsibilities as his Khalifa or deputy on earth. It includes prayer, charity, fasting, and service to fellow man. It clarifies what Allah loves and what He does not love. For instance, Allah loves those who trust Him, adore Him, worship Him, who purify their souls, who are righteous and perform beautiful deeds, who are grateful and merciful, who honor their contracts and stand up for justice. Similarly, Allah does not love those who are ungrateful, who are unjust, who spread *fasad* (division and tumult) in their communities, who violate their contracts, and are extreme in their conduct.

Step 2. Iman (Certainty of Faith)

Iman is the second step of the ladder. It is not just belief; it is certainty of faith. Anyone can believe but only a Momin has certainty of faith. As a seeker observes the commandments of Allah, his heart softens to His presence and the certainty of faith increases in his heart.

Step 3. Ehsan

Ehsan comes from the root word h-s-n and has its origin in Asma ul Husna, the most beautiful names of Allah. As a Hadees e Qudsi explains, it means to worship and serve Allah as if you see Him and if you don't see Him, to be aware that He sees you. In other words, Ehsan puts a lens of godliness on one's vision. Ehsan also means benevolence, beauty and excellence. A Mohsin serves for the love of Allah without the expectation of a favor in return. His imprint is felt not just in human affairs but in works of art, architecture, literature, poetry, music and public affairs.

Step 4. Irfan (Knowledge and Comprehension)

Irfan comes the root word *ain, ray, fey* (a',r,f). The first letter stands of I'lm (knowledge). The second letter stands for ru'ya (to see). The third letter connotes Fahima (comprehension). An Arif is one who acquires knowledge of his inner Self, comprehends it and sees the presence of God's jamal and jalal (beauty and grandeur) in his heart. Irfan is a gift from Allah. He gives it to whom He pleases. It is the first station of the Awliya, those who are seekers of Allah's pleasure and are close to His presence.

Step 5. Muhibba (Love)

Love is a jewel from the treasure house of Divine compassion. It is gift of the heavens to all creation. It is what keeps the cosmos afloat. As the seeker advances on the path of Irfan, the love of He who is the source of Irfan penetrates the heart. Love of Allah is a heavy burden. It was this love that goaded the human to accept the divine Trust. It is the elixir whose intoxication propels the soul to keep moving forward towards the heavenly Throne.

Step 6. Haiba (Awe and Wonder)

As the pilgrim moves on, driven by his love of Allah, he is awed by the majesty of His creation and the beauty of His works. He learns to say, *Subhanallah*, and keeps moving.

Step 7. Khushu (Devout Concentration)

Closeness to Allah brings on Khushwa, which means to be completely focused on Divine presence. It is an attribute of the state of prayer.

Step 8. Faqr (Humility)

As the seeker approaches the Divine throne, he becomes conscious of his utter dependence on Allah. The existence, knowledge, power and essence of the seeker are all a gift from Divine compassion. By himself, he owns nothing. He is a Faqir or a mendicant in the Divine court.

Step 9. Fana (Annihilation)

So overwhelmed is the seeker by proximity to heavenly power, that his wujud (existence) becomes extinct. This is the stage when the seeker attains the state of annihilation. The contingent existence of the mendicant is destroyed in the Reality of Divine Essence.

Step 10. Shuhood (Witness)

When he reawakens, the pilgrims is in a state of Shuhood. He becomes a witness to God's love, mercy, compassion, creation, beauty, power and omnipresence. In other words, the pilgrim himself has become a vehicle for God's work on earth. Whichever direction he looks, he sees the presence of Allah. It is from such a state that Abu Bakr Siddique (r) said: I see nothing unless I first see Allah. The meaning is that the human has now been annointed with the robe of taqwa and muraqaba. He has put on a heavenly lens and is in complete sync with the wavelengths of Allah.

This is not the end of the journey but the beginning of the next helix which starts anew with observance of the Shariah. At this second helix, the seeker is gifted with a reinforced faith and is endowed with deeper insights into the subtleties of heavenly works.

This was the ladder of the Usuli ulema. Allama Iqbal takes a different route, that of the illumination.

Ishq Tha Fitna Gar o Sarkash o Chalaak Mera
AasmaN Cheer Gaya Nala e Bey-baak Mera (Jawab e Shikwa)

My love was disruptive, wayward and ingenious,
It cleft open the heavens for my audacious lyre.

In this path, the driver is not the mind-body and the Shariah but it is the heart and *Ishq e haqeeqi* (love of God). It is the path followed by the likes of Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardy (d 1235) of Baghdad, Mevlana Rumi (d 1273) of Konya and Bulle Shah (d 1757) of Lahore. Rumi said: "Your heart knows the way; run in that direction". Bulle Shah said: "Who is this Bulle shah; Bulle! I know not who I am". Iqbal was an avowed admirer of Rumi. It was on the wings of love that he penetrated the heavens and made his wayward presence felt near the Exalted Throne so much so that the moon, the stars and the galaxies were in wonderment:

Ki Muhammed Se Wafa Tu Ne To Hum Terey HaiN
Ye JehaN Cheez Hai Kya Luh wa Qalam Tere HaiN (Jawab e Shikwa)

If you are faithful to Muhammed, We are yours,
Meager is this world, the Preserved Tablet and the Exalted Pen are yours.

Iqbal's Shikwa and Jawab e Shikwa are a clarion call to Muslims to strive for human perfection through the love of God (*Ishq e haqeeqi*) and fidelity to Muhammed (*Meethaq e Risalat*).

How does fidelity to Muhammed (pbuh) lead to the love of Allah? How does it reach the Preserved Tablet and the Exalted Pen? The answers are in the Qur'an ("If you love Allah, follow me"). The Sufis have elaborated on these answers and have constructed a cosmology that is at once aesthetically pleasing and emotionally satisfying.

Allah has called the Prophet "Noor" (Light) and also "*Bashar*" (human). For a Muslim, it is essential to accept both aspects, *Noori* as well as *Bashari*. The Prophet is Noor (heavenly Light) with all the particulars of Noor and he is human with all the requirements of being human. One aspect of the Prophet is "*Nooriat*" (the attribute of heavenly Light) and the other aspect is *Bashriat* (humanness). Both are true. There is concomitance but no contradiction between these two. To accept the one and reject the other is to reject the injunctions of the Qur'an. Here is what the Qur'an says with clarity about "Nooriat":

Behold! There has come down a Light from Allah and a perspicuous Book (Al Ma'eda, 5:15).

And here is the clarity in the Qur'an about "Bashriat" (humanness of the Prophet):
Indeed, I am but a human like you (Al Kahf, 18:110).

In his summation of Jawab e Shikwa, Iqbal draws upon Sufi constructs on Noor e Muhammadi (the Light of Muhammed), which is the Light of Existence. Here is his eloquent affirmation:

Ho Na Yeh Phool To Bulbul Ka Tarannum Bhi Na Ho
Chamane Dhr MaiN KalyoN ka Tabassum Bhi Na Ho
Yeh Na Saqi Ho Phir Mai Bhi Na Ho, Khum Bhi Na Ho
Bazm e Tawheed Bhi Duniya MaiN Na Ho Tum Bhi Na Ho

Kheema Aflaq Ka Ustada Isee Nam Se Hai
Nabz e Hastee Tapash Amada Isee Nam Se Hai

Our Translation:

If it were not for this flower, the melody of the nightingale would not be,
In the garden of eternity, the smile of buds would not be.
If there is no bearer of the cup, no wine would there be, and not the ecstasy,
In this world, the assembly of Tawhid would not be, neither would you be.
The canopy of the heavens is held aloft by this very name,
The pulse of existence accepts its energy from this very name. (Iqbal)

To understand Iqbal, one needs to take a dive into Tasawwuf. The oceans of Tasawwuf are deep and the possibility of misunderstanding always lurks in the background. Hazrath Ali (r) said: "Speak to people at their level of understanding; else you may foster unbelief".

A good place to start is a Hadith e Qudsi often cited in select Sufi circles: "*Kuntu Kunzan Maghfiya. Fa Ahbabtu An A'rafa*. *Fa Khalakhtu Khalqa*" (I was a hidden treasure. I loved that I be known. Therefore, I created a creation (that would know Me). That creation was *al Insan ul Kamil* (the perfect human), a reference to Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). All of creation is subject to the perfect human ("*Wa saqqara lakum ma fis samawati wal ard* – The Qur'an) (Translation: And I have made subject to you all that is in the heavens and the earth). The *haqeeqat* or Reality of the Perfect Human is Noor e Muhammadi (the Light of Muhammad). The term Noor e Muhammadi is *Ilmiya*, meaning, it is used for the transmission of *Irfan* or inner spiritual knowledge; it has no connotation of materiality.

What is the *martaba* (rank) or *maqam* (station) of Noor e Muhammadi in the schema of Allah's creation? We present here a cosmology developed by Shaik ul Azam ibn al Arabi (d 1240). It helps us explain the station of Noor e Muhammadi in the schema of God's creation and throws some light on Iqbal's vision as articulated in Jawab e Shikwa. Central to the narrative is the idea of Allah's Grace and Love, its descent and its connection with human existence.

The First Descent: The Pristine Reality (Martab e Oola):

When there was no space-time, no creation, there existed one supreme Reality, known as Huwiyet or Essence. This Reality existed in a state beyond comprehension, without any physical or conceptual attributes, and was entirely self-contained.

The Essence was devoid of names, attributes, or relational existence. It was beyond the dualities of existence and non-existence, hidden or manifest. Sufi scholars describe this stage as a pure, undifferentiated state where language fails to capture the Divine Essence.

At this level, the cosmos did not exist in any form. The Essence was singular and independent, and even the notion of the Creator and the created was absent.

The Second Descent: Wahdat (Unicity):

In this stage, the Essence begins to take on attributes and is referred to as Wahdat or Unicity. The Divine Essence becomes aware of itself, and through this self-awareness, the Names and Attributes of God are manifest.

At this descent, Existence (Wujud), Knowledge(Ilm), Light (Noor), and Witness (Shuhood), emerge as manifestations of the Essence. The Divine Names like As-Samee (All-Hearing) and Al-Qadir (All-Powerful) are introduced, emphasizing the interconnectedness of God's attributes.

This stage also explains how the Essence and its attributes coexist without separation. Despite the apparent multiplicity of divine Names and Attributes, they remain unified in their origin. Sufi teachings stress that the differentiation between divine attributes exists only conceptually, as the underlying Reality is always one.

This is also the *martaba* (rank) of the Reality of Noor e Muhammadi. It means, at this station, all creation from eternity to eternity, independent of space-time and qualifications, came into the omniscient *Mansha* (vision) of Allah.

The Third Descent: The World of Angels (A'lam e Arwah):

The third descent introduces the world of angels, known as A'lam e Arwah or the World of the Spirit. Ibn al Arabi describes that the Universal Intellect (Aql e Kul) and the Universal Soul (Nafs e Kul) are created at this stage.

The Universal Intellect is symbolized by the Exalted Pen, and the Universal Soul is represented by the Preserved Tablet, both of which play vital roles in recording divine decrees.

The Fourth Descent: A'lam e Mithal (The Domain of Prototypes):

A'lam e Mithal, or the World of Prototypes, is a subtle realm that serves as a bridge between the spiritual and material worlds. This domain is where abstract forms and archetypes exist, influencing the physical realm.

The Fifth Descent: A'lam e Ajsam (The World of Physical Entities):

The physical world, known as A'lam e Ajsam, encompasses both celestial and terrestrial entities. The universe is sustained by Divine Grace, which permeates all existence, manifesting in both mercy and judgment. Even divine wrath, when experienced, has an underlying element of mercy, akin to the pain of a healing wound or the purification of gold.

The Sixth Descent: Insan (The Human Being):

The human being, or Insan, represents the final and most significant descent of Divine Grace. Humans are unique creations, embodying both divine and earthly attributes. They serve as khalifa or regents on earth, tasked with reflecting God's Names and Attributes and maintaining justice and balance. In their pristine prototypes, humans have superiority over angels as demonstrated by Adam's knowledge of divine Names. The prostration of angels before Adam signifies humanity's unique spiritual rank, while Iblis's refusal and subsequent fall highlight the consequences of pride and rebellion.

Humans have the capacity to become "Insan e Kamil" (Perfect Humans) when they embody divine unity and resist the influence of evil . The struggle between the angelic and satanic influences within each person defines his spiritual journey, whose ultimate goal is the achievement of divine guidance and forgiveness.

Muhammed (pbuh) was Insan e Kamil (Perfect Human). He was Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. As Bashar, he embodied heavenly perfections.

Noor e Muhammadi is the light of existence. Allah created the heavens and the earth for Insan e Kamil and He created Insan e Kamil for Himself. The Insan e Kamil, as His *a'bd* (servant) and khalifa (deputy) on earth, serves God's purpose to sort out the good from the evil and manifest al Haq, the Truth,

To follow Muhammed (pbuh) is to strive for human perfection until one becomes a mirror for heavenly attributes and worthy of Divine love. This is the message of *Shikwa, Jawab e Shikwa* and of *BaNg e Dara*. *Perfection of character, in the prototype of the innate character of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), is the clarion call of Iqbal to Muslims.*

DeeN AzaanaiN Kabhi Europe Ke KaleesaaoN MeiN
Kabhi Africa Ke Tapte Huwe Sehraaon Mein (Shikwa)

Adhan we gave, sometimes in the cathedrals of Europe,
At other times, in the sizzling deserts of Africa.

Iqbal celebrates the call to prayer in the cathedrals of Europe. In this essay, we accentuate Iqbal's celebration, highlighting the conquest of Istanbul (Constantinople) by the Turkish sultan Mehmet II and the conversion of the Roman cathedral Aya Sophia into a mosque (1453 CE). One must add here that the Christians similarly converted thousands of mosques in Spain into churches after the fall of Cardoba (1236 CE). The essay is a summary of our detailed presentations in historyofislam.com.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 marked a significant turning point in both European and Asian history. The Byzantine Empire, once the heart of the Christian world, was conquered by the Ottomans, and the city was transformed into the capital of the expanding Ottoman Empire, now known as Istanbul and the Aya Sophia, the cathedral of the Romans, was converted into a mosque.

The Ottoman Empire's early history was fraught with difficulties. After Bayazid I's capture by Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, the empire was left vulnerable and fragmented. Bayazid's death marked a significant loss, but the resilience of the Ottoman state allowed it to recover over time. One of the key reasons for this resilience was the strong central administration that Bayazid had established. His military structure, including the elite Janissaries and the loyal slave corps of ich oghlans (young boys captured from the Balkans), provided the foundation for the reconstruction of the Ottoman state. These soldiers and administrators, loyal to the Ottoman cause, were pivotal in the recovery of the empire's territories.

After the defeat of Bayazid I, the Ottoman Empire was divided among his sons. Sulaiman ruled in Europe, Mehmet in Anatolia, and Isa in Bursa. Despite internal struggles, Mehmet I was able to rally the Ottoman chiefs around him and successfully reassert Ottoman control over both European and Anatolian territories. His son Murad II (1421-1451) played a critical role in further consolidating the Ottoman Empire, engaging in several military campaigns that expanded Ottoman territories and stabilized their frontiers.

Murad II stabilized the Ottoman frontiers and concluded peace treaties with his enemies. He felt his work was done. It was now time for him to retire and he stepped aside in favor of his son Mehmet II. The European powers misunderstood this as a sign of Ottoman weakness. Pope Nicholas V called for a Crusade, and a combined Hungarian-Walachian land force advanced towards Erdirne while the Venetians blockaded the sea.

At the counsel of his senior advisors, Mehmet II called on his father Murad to come back from retirement and re-assume the command of the army. A reluctant Murad replied that Mehmet was now the Sultan and it was his responsibility to rule. ”If you are the Sultan”, wrote Mehmet II to his father, “it is your obligation to lead the armies. If I am the Sultan, I am ordering you to return and assume the leadership.” Murad returned, and under his command, the Turks inflicted a crushing defeat on the Latins at the Battle of Varna. This was a major milestone in history. The Battle of Varna in 1444 sealed the fate of Constantinople because all approaches to the capital were now blocked. The Hungarians again attempted to penetrate the Ottoman dominions in 1448 but that incursion was easily beaten back. Having accomplished his mission, Murad went back into retirement.

Mehmet II was a mighty conqueror in the tradition of the earliest Companions of the Prophet. While his vision embraced strategic goals, he had also an inborn instinct for tactical moves. Trained from childhood in the battlefield under his father Sultan Murad, he was also imbued with a deep spirituality under the tutelage of Shaykh Aq Shamsuddin. The great Sufi sage accompanied Mehmet II on his campaigns and provided him with the spiritual inspiration that alone enables men to perform superhuman deeds.

The Ottoman Empire went through a rapid expansion under Mehmet II. Constantinople was a constant source of irritation to the Ottomans. Although it had lost all of its territories, the city still commanded great respect as the seat of the Byzantine Empire. On occasions, the Byzantine capital had given shelter to fleeing Ottoman princes while they were embroiled in wars of succession. It was also a beacon for Crusader armies hurling themselves at the Turks. Lastly, the Ottomans were concerned that the Byzantines might surrender the city to the Latins as they had done with the city of Solonika, and that would make the task of capturing the city immensely more difficult.

The Turks were restless, impelled by the spirit of *ghazza* (struggle in the way of God). Nonetheless, there were differences within the Turkish camp about the advisability of attacking Constantinople. Some of the generals were concerned that an attack on the city would bring a strong reaction from the western powers. Others held that the West would never agree upon a common course of action. The Byzantine Emperor had already sent out appeals for help to Venice and to the Vatican. The Venetian navy was on the move. To the north, the Hungarians and the Wallachians were ready to join an anti-Turkish coalition. Time was of the essence.

Mehmet II made careful preparations. He ordered the construction of a strong castle overlooking the citadel of Constantinople. This imposing fort, which stands to this day, was erected in a record time of three months, and served both defensive and offensive purposes. It provided a staging area for the Turks and a platform for hurling projectiles. Mehmet enlisted the services of Byzantine craftsmen to cast brass cannon that could hurl large cannon balls across the Straits.

Mehmet II surrounded the city in the spring of 1453 and sent terms of surrender to the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI who rejected them. The great chain that blocked the entrance to the Straits frustrated repeated Turkish attempts at a naval assault. Mehmet II ordered the Turkish galleys to be hauled by land from the southern entrance of the Straits to the northern entrance, so that the fort could be attacked from the rear. After accomplishing this monumental task in utmost secrecy, Mehmet II ordered a general assault on the city by land and by sea. The Byzantine defense was desperate just as the Turkish assault was determined and relentless. After repeated forays, Constantinople fell on the 29th of May 1453.

There was joy in the Islamic world while Europe mourned this loss. The year 1453 became a landmark in the histories of Europe and Asia alike. The Ottomans renamed the city Istanbul (Islambol), and made it the capital of their expanding empire. Mehmet's vision was to revive the city as the seat of a successor state to the Roman Empire, and to make it the focus of a universal Islamic state. To fulfill this vision, Mehmet took several concrete steps. First, he allowed those Greeks who had not resisted the Turkish advance to return and repossess their properties. Second, to further his goal of making Istanbul a universal, cosmopolitan city, Mehmet II invited the Greek Patriarch as well as the chief Jewish rabbi to stay in the capital. Third, the administration of the state was centralized and the Ottoman dominions in Europe were brought under the central rule of Istanbul. Fourth, he converted the Aya Sophia into a grand mosque and the Adhan was called from its ramparts.

Boo e Gul Lay Gayi Bairun e Chaman Raaz e Chaman
Kya Qayamat Hai Ke Khud Phool HaiN Ghammaz e Chaman ! (Shikwa)

The fragrance of the flower has itself given away the garden's secret to orchards strange,
What a disaster it is, the flowers themselves became traitors for the garden!

The perfidy of Mir Ja'afar at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 CE changed the course of world history. It marked the beginning of the end of Muslim rule in India and set the stage for British imperialism around the globe. Allama Iqbal decries this perfidy and expresses it in his lofty language as the betrayal of flowers of the garden in whose womb they bloom.

The last of the powerful Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had held the empire together through his iron grip, but after his death in 1707, the empire fragmented due to internal and external pressures. The central Mughal authority in Delhi began to weaken, as provincial rulers (Nawabs) gained increasing autonomy and gradually became de facto independent. Although these regions still recognized the Mughal Emperor as their nominal sovereign, their control over local affairs had diminished significantly.

By the early 18th century, the Marathas, Sikhs, and other regional powers like the Afghans were making significant territorial gains, further undermining the Mughal Empire's authority. The Marathas, in particular, had expanded their reach into the Deccan and even moved towards the Mughal heartland in northern India. At the same time, the Mughals had to deal with multiple insurgencies, including the revolt in Punjab led by Banda Singh Bahadur and later the invasion of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah, who looted Delhi (1739) and devastated the region of the Punjab.

The empire's internal instability became more apparent when court intrigues and assassinations led to further weakening of central authority. The Mughal Emperor at the time, Muhammad Shah, was a weak and indecisive ruler. His reign was marked by ineffective leadership, and the Mughal army had to contend with the growing influence of regional powers, such as the Marathas in central India and the Nizam-ul-Mulk in Hyderabad.

By the mid-18th century, the British East India Company, which had initially been established for trade, began to grow its influence in India. As India imploded, the East India Company's ambitions extended to political control over the territories it had commercial interests in, particularly Bengal. Under the rule of Nawab Aliwardi Khan (1722-1756), Bengal had become one of the wealthiest and most prosperous regions in Asia. Bengal's economic output, including its fine muslin cloth, steel, rice, and jute, was world-renowned. The province was home to 25 million people, four times the population of England at the time.

However, the fragile political landscape in Bengal, characterized by court intrigues and family rivalries, presented an opportunity for the British to inject themselves into the region's governance. The Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud-Dawlah, came to power in 1756 after the death of his grandfather Aliwardi Khan. Siraj's ascension to the throne was not universally accepted, as his cousin, Mir Ja'far, had hoped to take the position of Nawab. This internal discord, combined with Siraj's authoritarian rule, created the conditions for British intervention.

The British East India Company, under the leadership of Robert Clive, exploited the ongoing internal strife in Bengal. Clive forged an alliance with Mir Ja'far, promising him the Nawabship in exchange for his support against Siraj ud-Dawlah. This arrangement played out dramatically during the Battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757. Despite having a much smaller army—only about 3,000 soldiers—Clive's forces emerged victorious, thanks to Mir Ja'far's betrayal of Siraj. Ja'far defected to the British side even before the first shot was fired and the Bengal forces were thrown into disarray. Siraj ud-Dawlah was pursued and killed and the British gained control of Bengal.

Following the victory, Clive installed Mir Ja'far as the new Nawab of Bengal. In return, Ja'far showered the British with enormous wealth, which further strengthened their hold over the region.

The British exploitation of Bengal was ruthless. The Company imposed heavy taxes on Indian industries, while flooding the market with cheap British-manufactured goods. This decimated Bengal's local industries, including textiles, which had once been the pride of the region. As the local economy collapsed, Bengal's wealth was siphoned off to Britain, leaving the province destitute.

The economic exploitation of Bengal took its toll on the region's population. Famine struck Bengal in 1765, and the streets of Calcutta were littered with corpses. The once-prosperous province, which had been the economic powerhouse of Asia, was now destitute.

The wealth extracted from Bengal had a profound impact on Europe, particularly Britain. The infusion of wealth from Bengal directly contributed to the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Capital, which had been accumulated through the plundering of India, fueled technological innovation in Britain. We can date the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to 1758, one year after the Battle of Plassey, when the massive flow of wealth from Bengal reached England.

This infusion of capital accelerated innovation, leading to inventions such as the flying shuttle (1760), the spinning jenny (1764), and the steam engine (1768). These advancements transformed British industry and positioned Europe, particularly Britain, as the global leader in manufacturing and technology. Prior to the Battle of Plassey, the iron and steel industry in Britain was no more advanced than that in Bengal, but by the end of the 18th century, Europe had far outstripped Asia in technological development.

The Battle of Plassey shifted global power from Asia to Europe. The wealth extracted from Bengal not only financed the Industrial Revolution in Britain but also played a crucial role in the expansion of European colonialism. With Bengal's wealth at its disposal, Britain was able to subdue other Indian rulers, such as Tippu Sultan of Mysore, and expand its empire in Asia.

By the early 19th century, Europe's technological superiority over Asia was firmly established. It must be noted that the turning point in the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world came long before Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1799. It was the Battle of Plassey in 1757 that

marked the true beginning of European domination, as it provided the capital and resources necessary for the rise of European industrial and colonial power.

In essence, the Battle of Plassey set in motion the economic and technological transformation of Europe. The long-term consequences of this battle were felt not only in India but across the world, as it laid the groundwork for the capitalist societies that would emerge in the West and the eventual colonization of Asia and Africa.

The perfidy of Mir Jaffar changed the world. The garden was betrayed. The secret of garden was transported to alien meadows by the aroma of the very flowers that were nurtured by the garden!

Boo e Gul Lay Gayi Bairun e Chaman Raaz e Chaman
Kya Qayamat Hai Ke Khud Phool HaiN Ghammaz e Chaman !