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JĀVID-NĀMA
Article by **David Matthews**

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JĀVID-NĀMA (Pers. *Jāved-nāma*), title of a Persian *maṯnawi* by Muhammad Iqbal (q.v.); it is often rendered into English as "The Song of Eternity." The work was first published in 1932, only six years before Iqbal's death. Being the longest and most carefully planned of all his poems, it is usually considered to be his greatest work. Early reviewers greeted it with a host of superlatives, proclaiming that it would rank with Rumi's *Maṯnawi* or even the *Divān* of Hafez (q.v.). Iqbal himself was confident of its future success and went so far as to predict that its translator would gain fame in Europe. Such eulogies, of course, contain a high degree of exaggeration, but it is fair to say that even with the declining popularity of Persian in the Subcontinent, the poem has stood the test of time, and no study of Iqbal would be possible without reference to its remarkable style and content. Iqbal dedicated the work to his young son, Javed, but the title surely implies that the poet had no doubts about its everlasting worth and importance.

When Iqbal began to compose the *Jāvid-nāma*, he had already formulated the philosophy and doctrines that are commonly associated with him. The wide canvas he chose for this work gave him, as it were, a final opportunity to repeat and reinforce the ideas that were first put forward in his early Persian *maṯnawi*s, such as *Asrār-e ḵodi* "The Secrets of the Self" (1915), and *Romuz-e biḵodi* "The Mysteries of selflessness" (1918).

The idea of tackling such a work had occurred to him in his early student days, when he somewhat ambitiously stated that he would like to write a book in the style of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This initial project was, perhaps fortunately,

abandoned, and eventually it was Jalāl-al-Din Rumi who became one of his most profound influences. He was also greatly impressed by his reading of Dante. Much later, when writing to a friend about future possibilities, he remarked that he intended to produce "a kind of Divine Comedy in the style of Rumi's *Maṭnawi*" (*Maktūbāt-i Iqbāl*, ed. Sayyid Nazir Niazi, Karachi, 1956, p. 300), and this is exactly what the *Jāvid-nāma* turned out to be. In its form, at least, the lengthy *maṭnawi*, which contains almost 4,000 verses, owes much to these two medieval poets, by whose works Iqbal was greatly inspired. The full text of the work can be found in *Kolliyāt-e Eqbāl, Fārsi* (pp. 589-706).

The *Jāvid-nāma* is the story of the poet's journey through the spheres and the far reaches of the heavens in his unending quest to discover the very secrets of life and salvation. In the Prologue (pp. 601-16), which bears some resemblance to that of Goethe's *Faust*, he describes how Zarvān, the old Iranian god of Time and Space, exhorts him to rid himself of earthly limitations. Only then will he be able to embark upon his celestial journey and hear the song of the stars. This leads him to the place where he meets his mentor, Rumi, who agrees to act as his guide, in the same way that Virgil had accepted Dante's request to lead him through Hell and Purgatory to the confines of Heaven. He is now given the name *Zenda Rud* "Living Stream." In this name Iqbal chose for himself there is perhaps another reminiscence of Goethe. The German poet, in "Mahomets Gesang" (which, incidentally, Iqbal freely translated into Persian in *Payām-e mašreq*; q.v. at *iranica.com*), likens the message of the Prophet to a river. Here one is also reminded of the first stanza of Iqbal's Urdu *Sāqi-nāma*, one of his most popular and most optimistic poems, published in the Urdu collection *Bāl-e Jibrīl* and written about the same time as the *Jāvid-nāma*. In this, a small stream, starting its descent from the summit of a mountain breaks through every rock and barrier in the way of its progress and finally emerges as a gushing torrent.

The first stop is the Moon (pp. 619-44), where Zenda Rud and Rumi discourse with the Hindu sage, Jahān-Dust "Friend of the World" on the respective merits of Western and Eastern culture. In answer to Rumi's comment that the only hope of salvation lies in a synthesis of the two, the ascetic proclaims that for all its shortcomings the East will soon overtake the materialistic West. This optimistic message, which runs through much of Iqbal's later verse, is repeated by the angel Saruš, whose song is one of the most lyrical and enchanting parts of the work. In a valley with the strange name of Yarḡmid, the poet finds the tablets of Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Moḥammad, and

this gives Iqbal the opportunity to discuss and comment upon their respective teachings.

On Mercury (pp. 647-71), conversations with Jamāl-al-Din Afḡāni (q.v.) and Saʿd-al-Din Pāšā cover a wide range of near-contemporary political topics from the downfall of the Turks to the merits and deficiencies of Bolshevism. Much of the blame for the ills that beset the present-day Islamic world are, in a manner typical of Iqbal, ascribed to the ravings of the fanatical mullah—*din-e mollā fi sabil Allāh fasād*!

On Venus (pp. 675-86), the two companions encounter, among many others, the arrogant Lord Kitchener, whose clipped Persian well portrays the character of the archetypal British imperialist. On Mars (pp. 689-700), where the inhabitants have completely forsaken materialism, and are thus in every way superior to the inhabitants of the "West," Zenda Rud is confronted by a sorceress, who had been brought there from Earth by Farz Marz, the Martian equivalent of Satan. She shrieks out her doctrine of what in modern terms would be described as "women's liberation," predicting a time when women will be able to conceive by a method of artificial insemination. Naturally, Rumi and Zenda Rud thoroughly disapprove of these modern notions, which were being mooted at the time.

Perhaps one of the most moving episodes of the poems takes place on Saturn (pp. 729-35), where India, portrayed as a beautiful houri, "her eyes intoxicated with divine love," appears before the travelers in the chains of slavery. She is followed by two abject traitors from Mysore and Bengal. Even Hell had rejected them.

Having traversed the outer regions of the heavens, the poet at last hears the Divine Voice, which discloses the secrets he desired to know. These are revealed in a final poem (pp. 787-96) written for his son, Javed, to whom the whole work is dedicated:

Life's only purpose is to soar and fly.

The nest is not the place to rest and lie.

Although it might be argued that the ideas expressed in *Jāvid-nāma* had all been set out in Iqbal's earlier Urdu and Persian works, from which most of them were merely repeated, the sheer scale of the poem and the originality of the work's conception make it one of his best and most enduring.

See also IQBAL, MUHAMMAD.

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