

Khatami Hails Role for Pakistan's National Poet

Pakistan's *Daily Times* editorialized on Dec. 28:

"Visiting Iranian president Seyed Muhammad Khatami has leaned on the legacy of Allama [Muhammad] Iqbal to express his 'unorthodox' views on Western civilization. He told an audience in Islamabad that 'Western culture is a conveyor of spiritual, artistic and philosophical creations; we, therefore, cannot and must not deprive ourselves of it, simply because of our dislike of the oppressive political and economic measures taken by the Westerners against the non-Western world—a fact which the fair and judicious political and economic thinkers and politicians of the West candidly confirm. Nor, of course, can we reject or discard our own cultural and spiritual heritage in the name of facilitating our scientific and cultural development.' President Khatami thought that the shallow-minded among us were those who neglected the intellectual tradition of the West and focused merely on Western politics; he was equally against those who embraced the superficialities of the West and rejected their own Islamic values.

"Allama Muhammad Iqbal was an Islamic genius whose writings readily lend themselves to the kind of

thoughts that President Khatami wanted to express. . . . After Ali Shariati, Khatami's view is the first really frank admission of the greatness of Iqbal as a thinker of Islam's modern age. He has wisely taken recourse to Iqbal's dialogue with the West to push forward his own policy of establishing communication with those centers of learning in the West that disagree with policies of Western 'discrimination' against the Islamic world."

After Khatami's departure from Pakistan, a seminar dedicated to the work of Iqbal was held on Dec. 28 in Islamabad, under the auspices of Allama Open University and the Cultural Consulate of Iran, featuring speakers from Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

One of Iqbal's admirers, Prof. Annemarie Schimmel, in her book *Islam—An Introduction*, describes his thought in these terms: "The philosophy of the Ego, of the continuous unfolding of the individual's creative powers, as preached by Iqbal, is not only the basis for his thoughts about the individual human being, but also for his political philosophy. The community too has to utilize and unfold all its inherent possibilities. Only by doing so can it be tolerant . . . for tolerance is the attitude of the strong who respect the other's personality."

But Iqbal—himself an Indian—also conceived of a separate state for India's Muslims, which was realized as Pakistan after his 1938 death.—*David Cherry*