

13

UNIT

Ruba'iyat

Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938)

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- respond to texts through arguments and discussions.
- identify rhyme schemes and figurative language in poems.
- change tense in indirect/direct speech (present, past and perfect tenses, future, modals, time and questions, orders, requests, suggestions and advice) in narrative paragraphs.
- write a descriptive composition (giving physical description and characteristics/traits of a person/object/place moving from general to specific), using correct punctuation and spelling, by using the process approach _ brainstorming, mind mapping, and writing a first draft.

Pre-reading:

- What do you know about faith?
- What is a civilization? Do you know the difference between Islamic and European civilization?

Faith is like Abraham at the **stake**; to be
Self-honoring and **God-drunk**, is faith. Hear me,
You whom this age's way so **captivate**!
To have no faith is worse than slavery.

Music of strange lands with Islam's fire **blends**,
On which the nation's harmony depends;
Empty of **concord** is the soul of Europe,
Whose civilization to no Makkah bends.

Love's madness has **departed**: in
The Muslim's veins the blood runs thin;
Ranks broken, hearts **perplexed**, prayers **cold**,
No feeling deeper than the skin.

While-reading

What does comparing faith to Hazrat Abraham (عليه السلام) at the stake show about true faith?

While-reading

What do you think the phrase "Islam's fire blends" mean?

While-reading

What happens when Muslims lose "Love's madness"?

Poetic Devices and Techniques

- **Structure:** The poem follows the classical **rubai (quatrain) form**, a Persian poetic structure consisting of **three stanzas**, each with **four lines** (total 12 lines).
- **Rhyme Scheme:** The poem uses a modified AABA rhyme scheme, **typical of rubai'iyat**.
- **Metaphor & Symbolism:**
 - Allama Muhammad Iqbal opens with a powerful metaphor, comparing faith to Hazrat Abraham's (عليه السلام) willingness to endure fire for God [Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)]. This symbolizes unwavering devotion and the trial of belief.
 - A physiological metaphor for Muslims' weakened spiritual vitality, contrasting with the vigour of true faith.

Paradox & Oxymoron

"**God-drunk**" presents a striking paradox blending intoxication (typically negative) with divine ecstasy (positive), emphasizing total absorption in faith, while "**Love's madness**" Oxymoronic phrasing reframes "madness" as sacred passion, now lost in modern Muslims.

Juxtaposition & Contrast

- **Europe's "empty concord"** vs. **Islam's "harmony"** presents juxtaposition of the civilizations, while "**prayers cold**" contrasts the warmth of sincere worship with the chill of hollow rituals.

Personification & Apostrophe

- "**Hear me, / You whom this age's way so captivate!**"

Direct address (apostrophe) to the reader, while "age's way" is personified as a seductive force.

Sensory & Thermal Imagery

- **Tactile:** "*No feeling deeper than the skin*" – Superficiality rendered physically.
- **Thermal:** "*Fire*" (Islam's energy) vs. "*cold*" prayers – Temperature metaphors map spiritual states.

Allusion & Islamic Intertextuality

- **Hazrat Abraham's (عليه السلام) sacrifice** (Quran 37:97–113) grounds the poem in Islamic tradition.
- **Makkah** symbolizes submission to God [Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)], contrasting Europe's refusal to "bend."

Brief Background and Context of the Poem

Allama Muhammad Iqbal's *Rubai'iyat* (quatrains) reflects his deep concern about the spiritual and moral decline of Muslims during the early 20th century. Written in Persian and Urdu, these verses critique both Western materialism and the weakening faith of Muslim societies. The poem draws on Islamic history (like Allah's (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) Nabi Hazrat Abraham's (عليه السلام) unshakable faith) to contrast true devotion with the hollow pursuits of modernity. Allama Muhammad Iqbal also highlights the cultural and spiritual disconnect between Islam and Europe, lamenting the loss of passion ("*Love's madness*") among Muslims.

About the poet

"Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), the visionary philosopher-poet of Pakistan, crafted a revolutionary intellectual legacy through his Persian and Urdu works. Central to his philosophy was the concept of Khudi (selfhood) - a call for Muslims to awaken from colonial subjugation and materialist decay by re-discovering their Islamic identity. He presented scathing critiques of Western civilization, which he saw as spiritually hollow ('whose civilization to no Makkah bends'), contrasting it with Islam's transcendent unity. For Iqbal, true faith was neither passive nor ritualistic, but a dynamic, passionate force ('Love's madness') capable of transforming individuals and societies. His poetry thus became both a mirror exposing Muslim decline and a roadmap for revival through self-realization and spiritual vigour."

Theme

The poem explores three interwoven themes: First, it examines the nature of true faith as exemplified by Allah's (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) Nabi Hazrat Abraham's (عليه السلام) unwavering devotion amidst the flames, contrasting sharply with the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern age, where lack of faith represents a form of slavery worse than physical bondage. Second, it reveals the fundamental clash between civilizations: European society, despite its material progress, remains spiritually hollow and disconnected ("empty of concord"), while Islamic civilization draws its strength and harmony from divine inspiration ("Islam's fire"). Third, it laments the tragic decline of Muslim societies that have lost their spiritual passion and unity, now reduced to superficial existence with "no feeling deeper than the skin."

Glossary:

Words	Meanings
bends	submits or bows (here, Europe's civilization refuses to submit to any spiritual authority)
captivate	to charm or dominate someone's attention
concord	harmony or agreement; unity of hearts and purpose
God-drunk	intoxicated with divine love; completely absorbed in devotion to God [Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)]
madness	intense passion or zeal (in this context, religious fervour)
perplexed	confused or deeply troubled
ranks	ordered lines or unity (metaphor for Muslim solidarity)
Ruba'iyat	a poetic form consisting of quatrains (4-line stanzas), originating from Persian literature
self-honouring	maintaining one's dignity and self-respect through noble principles
stake	a post for execution; refers to the fire prepared for Allah's (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) Nabi Hazrat Abraham (عليه السلام)

Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. What does Allama Muhammad Iqbal mean by describing faith as being "God-drunk"?
2. Why does the poet claim that having no faith is "worse than slavery"?
3. How does Allama Muhammad Iqbal contrast "music of strange lands" with "Islam's fire"?
4. What phrases show Allama Muhammad Iqbal's view of European civilization as spiritually empty?
5. How does the poet portray the spiritual condition of contemporary Muslims?

6. Identify and explain two metaphors used to describe Muslim decline.
7. How does the concept of "Love's madness" relate to Allama Muhammad Iqbal's idea of Khudi (selfhood)?
8. Do you agree with Allama Muhammad Iqbal's diagnosis of modern spiritual problems? Why?

B. Choose the correct option for each question.

1. What does the metaphor "Abraham at the stake" primarily represent in the poem?
 - a. physical suffering
 - b. political resistance
 - c. unwavering faith in God [Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)]
 - d. historical events
2. The phrase "God-drunk" in the poem suggests:
 - a. religious intoxication
 - b. literal drunkenness
 - c. criticism of faith
 - d. medical condition
3. What does "music of strange lands" contrast with in the poem?
 - a. European art
 - b. Islamic civilization
 - c. Islam's fire
 - d. Eastern philosophy
4. The phrase "to no Makkah bends" implies that European civilization:
 - a. respects Islamic values
 - b. rejects divine guidance
 - c. admires Muslim architecture
 - d. studies Arabic language
5. What does "blood runs thin" metaphorically represent?
 - a. physical weakness
 - b. loss of spiritual vitality
 - c. medical problems
 - d. social weaknesses

C. Complete the table below by identifying the literary devices used in the given lines of the poem.

Line from the Poem	Literary Device(s)	Explanation
"Faith is like Abraham at the stake"		
"Self-honouring and God-drunk, is faith"		
"Music of strange lands with Islam's fire blends"		
"Empty of concord is the soul of Europe"		
"The Muslim's veins the blood runs thin"		
"No feeling deeper than the skin"		
"Whose civilization to no Makkah bends"		

Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Use a dictionary to find the following information for each word.

Word	Dictionary meaning	Pronunciation	Part of Speech	Etymology
Ruba'iyat				
God-drunk				
captivate				
concord				

B. Use a thesaurus (digital or print) to list two synonyms for each word.

C. Write a sentence for each word using it in the context of the poem.

Oral Communication

A. Discuss the poet's perspective on faith and its role in shaping cultural identity and unity. Use examples from the poem to support your response.

Writing Skills

A. Analyze and write in your own words, "How the poet uses symbolism and contrast to convey the spiritual decline of the Muslim world compared to its past?".

Descriptive Writing – "Portrait of a Divine Visionary"

Describe a historical or contemporary Islamic figure who embodies Allama Muhammad Iqbal's ideal of "God-drunk" faith (e.g., Hazrat Ibrahim (عليه السلام) defying tyranny, Hazrat Imam Hussain (رضي الله تعالى عنه) at Karbala).

1. Brainstorming

- **Who?**
- Hazrat Ibrahim (عليه السلام): smashing idols, standing alone against Nimrod's fire.
- Hazrat Imam Hussain (رضي الله تعالى عنه): Sacrificing everything for justice, his blood becoming Islam's revival.
- **Achievements?**
- Unmatched *tawakkul* (trust in Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)), revolutions sparked by their conviction.
- Proof that true power lies in submission, not swords or thrones.
- **Traits?**
- **Fearless** (like Hazrat Ibrahim (عليه السلام) facing the fire), **humble** (like Hazrat Bilal (رضي الله تعالى عنه) rising from slavery to the Rasoolullah's (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) muezzin),

B. Write the first draft. Revise and check spellings and punctuation.
Employ figurative language if needed.