

IQBAL AND BROWNING

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In lines of rare beauty and great charm Iqbal makes Browning say about himself:

بے پشت بو بادہ سر جوش زندگی

آب از خضر بگیم و در ساغر افکنم

The exhilarating wine of life needed some stimulant,

So I take elixir from *Khidr* and add to the cup.

In legendary lore *Khidr* is the person who knows the way to the mysterious Fount of life, a drink from whose waters is supposed to confer immortality on mortal men. These lines show in clear terms the esteem and regard in which Iqbal held the Victorian poet Browning (1812-1889). The authors of *A Critical History of English Poetry* have remarked, "The second major prophet of the Victorians was Robert Browning. The Victorian prophets differed from those of Israel in as much as they came less to curse than to bless. to encourage rather than to warn, for they too shared, at least to begin with, the confident belief in progress as the solution for the ills which beset mankind." The common feature between Browning and Iqbal is their prophetic role. They gave to distraught man a message of hope and cheer, at a time when he needed it most. When man's mental and spiritual horizon was overcast with darkening clouds, their poetry came as a gleam

of light to brighten the prospect. They were both poets whose poetry was what Lawrence called "thought-ridden", and it is especially in their thought that Browning and Iqbal bear close affinity to each other. Perhaps it will be no exaggeration to say that the thought of Iqbal, so beautifully enshrined in his sublime poetry, bears closer resemblance to that of Browning than to that of any other Western poet except perhaps Goethe.

Both these poets have in their poems expressed certain definite convictions about God, Soul and Immortality which they held firmly. According to both, God is transcendent as well as immanent. It will be correct to say that in actual life they both walk with God, Browning views all nature as a thought of God. He says:

God is seen God

In the star, in the flesh, in the soul and the cloud,

And then, looking within and around me, I never renew,

(With the stoop of the soul, which in bending upraises it too),

The submission of man's nothing—perfect to God's all complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His feet.⁵

These lines would suggest that Browning was a pantheist, but actually he was not. Young, referring to Browning's conception of

⁵ H. J. C. Grierson & J. C. Smith, *A Critical History of English Poetry*, p. 410

God, says, "He never questions the existence of a supreme authority or God controlling the manifold energies of the world. He is not however of the pantheistic school of Wordsworth; for though we can see evidence of the hand and intention of God in the most unproving quarters, yet his individualising instinct, more keenly alive to the separations and divisions than to the continuities of existence, conceived of God as a distinct personality from the life of nature and man. Sympathetic communion is established between the Creator and the created by the attributes of power, knowledge and love."

Early in his career Iqbal wrote verses reminiscent of the above lines of Brownidg (B.D., p. 147):—

چمک تیری عیاں میں، آتش میں، شرارے میں

جھلک تیری حویدا چاندییں سورج میں تارے میں

بلندی آسمانوں میں زمینوں میں تری پستی

روانی بھر میں افتادگی تیری کنارے میں

Your glitter evidences itself in lightning, in fire and in spark,

Your reflection is visible in moon, sun and the stars.

In the loftiness of the skies and in the lowliness of the earth,

In the movement of the ocean and in the immobility of the bank.

When Iqbal wrote these lines he was essentially a pantheist although later on he became a theist. But it can be said that Browning's conception of God agrees in a remarkable degree with Iqbal's conception in the final stage. They both believe in theistic pluralism, according to both God is personal, omnipotent, and omniscient. According to both, it is Love which kindles and exalts both power and knowledge and it is by Love that man touches the infinite, the quality common to God and man. According to Browning as well as Iqbal Love is the most powerful force in the universe. Iqbal says (B. J., p. 13):

عشق کے مضراب سے نغمہ تار حیات

عشق سے اور هیات عشق سے نار حیات

The plectrum of Love produces a melody from the chords of life:

Love produces Light into life and Love brings Fire into life.

Both Browning and Iqbal are poets of Love, but here we are concerned mainly with Love as the attribute or essence of God.⁶

⁶ The Muslim mystic Mansur bin Hallaj held Love as God's essence but according to Ibn Arabi it is an attribute. Ibn Arabi says, "Before any form of modalisation, the One in His supreme isolation and simplicity, loved Himself far and in Himself, and loved to be known and to be manifested. This was the cause of creation. In loving Himself, the One loved all the Ayan of things latent in His Essence and hence they are impregnated with the love they now manifest in different ways." A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnnu' I Arabi*, Cambridge University Press, p.170.

God's Love for His creatures is mentioned by numerous poets and writers, but very rarely has a poet described in such glowing terms the mutual yearning and love between God and man as Iqbal has done. Describing the intensity of God's yearning for man he says:

ما از خدائے گم شده ایم اور بجستجو است

چوں ما نیازمند و گرفتار آرزوست

گاہے به ورق لاله نویسد پیام خویش

گاہے دون سینہ مرغان به هاء و هوست

در نرگس آرمید که بیند جمال ما

چندان کرمشه دان که نگاهش به گفتوست

آھے سحر گھے که زند در فراق ما

بیرون و اندرون زبر و زیر و چار سو ست

پنہاں به ذره ذره و نا آشنا ہنوز

پیدا چو ماہتاب و باغوش کاخ و کوست

We are gone astray from God;

He is searching upon the road,

For like us, He is need entire
And the prisoner of desire.
On the tulip's petal He writes
The message His heart indites;
Yea, and His voice is heard
In the passionate Song of the bird.
He lay in the iris field
Our loveliness to behold
Bright cup of the ardent gaze
Whose glance is a hymn of praise!
Parted from us forlorn
He sighs with the breath of morn,
Within and out He Both stand,
Around and on every hand.
Hidden in every grain
Not yet is He known to man,
Though bright as the full man's grace

In cottage and street is His Face ⁷

The most common theme in the poetry of Browning and Iqbal is Love, so much so that they may be classed as Poets of Love. But it must be made clear at the very outset that their conceptions of Love differ in important and significant details and yet they agree in many respects. Love for them both is the philosophic principle which harmonises and unifies all beings and which is the creative cause of the universe and also the sustaining and perfecting power. It also provides the moral ideal and the end towards which man strives to advance. While it is true that Browning does write of Love of God:

The very God think, Abib, does thou think ?

So the all-great, were the All-loving too.

So, through the thunder comes a human voice

Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!'

But the love he writes most is love between man and woman, the natural end of which is marriage. So it has been rightly remarked that Browning like Donne is the poet of wedded love. Most of the love poems of Browning are written in the form of dramatic monologues, but he has left some great lyrics also in which he has described love with exquisite tenderness. It has been remarked that no English poet of the nineteenth century has made love so wonderful. In Persian poetry Love is a common

⁷ *The Secrets of the Self*, p.xviii.

theme. One has only to mention Sanai, Rumi, Jami and Hafiz amongst a lot of others. Still in this language of Love Iqbal's poetry occupies a unique place. Not only does he write copiously about Love, but as explained by him, "This term is used in a very wide sense and means the desire to assimilate, to absorb. Its highest form is the creation of values and ideas and the endeavour to realise them. Love individualises the lover as well as the beloved. The effort to realise the most unique individuality individualises the seeker and implies the individuality of the sought, for nothing else could satisfy the nature of the seeker." ⁸

'Love is all' might have served as the text for the whole volume of Browning's love-poetry. In *Sordello*, Browning shows that Soul under the influence of Love can see its way in Time without either being dazzled by or losing its vision of eternity. In *Evelyn Hope* there is the lament of a man, no longer young, by the death-bed of a girl whom he has loved unknown to her. Like Beatrice she has died without knowing him or his love, but God creates love to reward love and there is another life to come :

So hush;--I will give you this leaf to keep—

See, I shout it inside the sweat cold hand.

There, that is our secret! go to sleep;

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

⁸ Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp.15-16

In *The Last Ride Together* the mistress will never awake and remember and understand, but the 'glory of failure' is with Browning an inexhaustible theme. The theme of unrequited love as treated by Browning brings to our mind the way Iqbal sings of separation. In accordance with the traditions of Persian poetry, Iqbal prefers the pangs of separation to the joys of union (P.M., p.99):

تو نه شناسی هنوز شوق بمیرد ز وصل

چیست حیات دوام؟ سوختن نا تمام

You do not realise that union kills love.

What is immortal life? Burning incessantly.

For Browning also it is the ascetic and spiritual triumph of an unrequited love that counts more than satisfied love.

The importance they attached to Love led both Browning and Iqbal to deal with Intellect as an opposing force and the theme naturally developed into the conflict between 'Head' and Heart. It has been remarked that Browning was Paracelsus as well as Aprile, and Love was for him never the foe of intellect or knowledge but a more gifted comrade who can help man more effectively. Knowledge means

Every renewed assurance by defeat

The victory is somehow still to react,

To love is victory, the prize itself.

A Pillar at Sebzevar

Iqbal says (B.D., pp. 28-29):

عقل نے ایک دن یہ دل سے کہا
بھولے بھٹکے کی رہنما ہوں میں
ہوں زمین پر گزر فکلک پہ مرا
دیکھ تو کس قدر رسا ہوں میں
کام دنیا میں رہبری ہے مرا
مثل خضر خجستہ پا ہوں میں
دل نے سن کر کہا یہ سب سچ ہے
پر مجھے بھو تو دیکھ کیا ہوں میں
راز ہستی کو تو سمجھتی ہے
اور انکھوں سے دیکھتا ہوں میں
تو زمان و مکان سے رشتہ پیا
طائر سدرہ آشنا ہوں میں

Intellect one day addressed the heart and said:

"I guide the benighted who lose the way,

Though I belong to earth, I soar to the skies,

Look to the heights I fly.

My function is to lead the world,

I am like *Kbidar* the sacred guide."

Hearing this the Heart replied: "It may be so

But do try to find out what I am—

You try to understand the secret of life,

Which lies unravelled before my eyes.

You are entangled in the meshes of Time and Space

But defying these I soar aloft to Heaven."

As remarked already, Love was for Browning the sum of all morality and the root of all goodness, in which Intellect could help but could not play the leading role. Not saintly ascetic or the door of good works but the lover dominated his imagination and he imbued even God's love for the world with the joy of creation and the rapture of yearning. Iqbal is equally emphatic in the supreme role he allots to Love, but his lover is more of a creator who shares with God in creating new worlds and values, and who gains sway over the forces of nature through Love and not Knowledge or Intellect. There is certainly close resemblance

between the two in as much as instead of the humility and self-abnegation of Christain Love, they exhibit the joyous self-expansion of a true man. To understand Iqbal's appreciation of the relative importance of Love and Intellect we can say that while Iqbal's Love is Plato's Ruler who must hold sway, his Intellect corresponds to Plato's Auxiliary whose function is to guard and whose duty is to obey and help the Ruler.

Iqbal with his deep insight in the history of the fall of the ancient cultures and the drawbacks of the great cultures of today, points out the way to healthy self-preservation in terms of 'Head' and 'Heart.' He believes that the continuance and preservation of all that is rich and glorious in human life depends upon a synthesis of 'Head' and 'Heart' or Love and Intellect. A culture that is based on the synthesis of the twin elements, Head and Heart, Intellect and Love, *Jim* and *Ishq* can alone aspire to survive. Browning saw the importance of this synthesis in the spiritual life of man but he never appreciated its significance in the social and political spheres. Iqbal says' "In the interest of securing a complete vision of Reality sense-perception must be supplemented by the perception of what the Quran describes as *fund* or *qulb* i.e. heart. The heart is a kind of inner intuition or insight which, in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with aspects of Reality other than those open to sense-perception." ⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.114.

Thus by emphasizing the importance of a proper synthesis of Intellect and Love, Iqbal meets the challenge of materialism in the modern world. Ever since the rise of rationalism in Europe, Intellect (or Reason) has been the guiding principle of life and this has led to a complete annihilation of moral and religious values. It was Kant who pointed out utter futility of relying so much on reason, but it was left to Bergson to emphasise the importance of intuition or Love in rehabilitating human personality. What Kant and Bergson achieved in the West, Rumi and Iqbal achieved in the East. Browning in his own way showed the way to the path of glory, but, as mentioned above, perhaps, he did not realise the importance of his findings on the cultural and political plane as Iqbal did. Iqbal is never tired of writing on the roles of Intellect and Love but in view of the mainly materialistic out-look of the modern age he concentrates more and more on stressing the importance of Love:

تہی از ہا و ہو بیخانہ بودے

گل ما از شرر بیگانہ بودے

نبودے عشق و این ہنگامہ عشق

اگر دل چوں خرد فرزانه بودے

The tavern would be without any life and tumult,

And our clay would simply lack the spark;

There would be no love and the accompanying upheaval,
If heart would have been wise like the head.

But he says in clear terms that no culture which has failed to synthesise Love and Intellect can survive for very long (J.N.,p. 71):

عشق چوں با زیرکی ہمبدر شود

نقشبند عالم دیگر شود

When Love joins forces with Intellect

It ushers in the world a new order.

It is to this new world of peace, spiritual, moral and political, that Browning and Iqbal want to lead the modern man who is overborne by materialistic forces and nihilistic tendencies.

The other firmly grounded belief of Browning and Iqbal is the immortality of Soul. Boldly and clearly Browning speaks out on this point in the following lines:

Another world

And why this world, this common world to be

A make-shift, a mere foil how fair soever

To some fine life to come,

Iqbal says (Z.A., p.194).

ز مرگ ترسی اے زندہ جاوید

مرگ است صیدے تو در کمینی

جانے کہ بخشند دیگر نگیرند

آدم بمیرد از بے یقینی

Fearest thou death in thy deathless heart,

Death's but a prey that before thee lies.

Life once given thee, none can take;

'Tis for lack of faith men faint and die.

For a soul snfficiently fortified by action, death was only a point at which the "last ride together" might pass into an "eternal riding on":

With life far ever old, yet new

Changes not in kind, but in degree,

The instant made eternity,

And Heaven just prove that I and she

Ride, ride together, for ever ride.

Browning once said, "Without death there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. Never say of me that I am dead." In his poem *Prospice*, he says:

Fear death? to feel the frog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night. the press of the storm,
The part of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though the battle of fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.

Stressing the insignificance of death, Iqbal says (B.D., p.259):

زندگی محبوب ایسی دیدہ قدرت میں ہے

ذوق خفّظ زندگی پر چیز کی فطرت میں

موت کے ہاتھوں سے مت سکتا اگر نقش حیات

عام یوں اس کو نہ کر دیتا نظام کائنات

جس طرح سونے سے جینے میں خلل کچھ بھی نہیں

In Nature's eyes Life is so dear

That every object is striving to preserve life.

If Death could efface the impression of life,

The universal order would not have made it so common.

Being so widespread Death has no significance,

Like slumber it causes no loss to existence.

The view of immortality which Iqbal and Browning adopt is not of a static type, but is dynamic. The human soul continues to grow even after death, and there shall be no end to its growth. Browning finds a justification for the immortality of the human soul in the fact that man is imperfect here and so he needs a future life to enable it to grow to perfection. He says:

It is our trust

That there is yet another world to mend

All error and mischance.

In the light of this conception death become not the herald of extinction but

.....a groom

That brings a taper to the outward room

where the soul may pursue its course of growth and development

unhampered; this is the faith which inspires the *Epilogue to Asolan-*

du and *Prospice*.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave;

The black minute's at end,

And the elements rage, the final voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,

Shall charge, shall become first a peace out of pain,

Then a light, then thy breast.

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,

And with God be the rest,

Iqbal says:

جو ہر انسان عدم سے آشنا ہوتا نہیں

آنکھ سے غائب تو ہوتا ہے فنا ہوتا نہیں

Man's spirit never knows extinction,

It is lost to sight but does not fade away.

But unlike Browning, Iqbal seeks a justification for immortality in the fact that death is so common and Nature loves life so passionately that if death meant extinction of his Nature would not have permitted it to carry on its devastating work. When death means only a change of environment it loses all terror. After death "the ego must continue to struggle until he is able to gather himself up and win his resurrection. The resurrection therefore is not an external event. It is the consummation of a life-process within the ego. Whether individual or universal it is nothing more than a kind of stock-taking of the ego's past achievement and his future possibilities."

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The interesting fact is that both Iqbal and Browning not only believe in personal immortality but also believe in conditional immortality. In this connection Iqbal says, "Personal immortality, then, is not ours as of right; it is to be achieved by personal effort. Man is only a candidate for it." ¹¹

The doctrine of conditional immortality was held by prominent thinkers in the past like Spinoza, Fichte, Goethe and Lotze, but the criteria proposed by them for immortality were vague and indefinite. On the other hand, the criterion proposed by Browning and Iqbal is well-defined, significant and clear; for both it consists of fruitful activity.

Iqbal says:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.113.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.77

دوام حق جزائے کار او نیست

کہ اورا این دوام از جستجو نیست

دوام آن بہ کہ جان مستعارے

شود از عشق و مستی پائدارے

The eternity of God is not a compense for his actions,

For Him the eternity is elemental and needs no seeking;

But that eternity is better which a borrowed soul

Wins for itself through love and frenzy !

Browning is not so explicit on this point but a study of his poetry and letters establishes his firm belief in conditional immortality. For instance in *A Grammarian's Funeral* he says:

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That how man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next,

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find him.

Both Browning and Iqbal preach a life of ceaseless activity and constant striving. They both believe in the evolution of man through strife and struggle. According to them life is a probation in which struggle, moral courage and constant striving form the best equipment. The struggle never ceases, obstacles are always there and evil is never submerged. But the presence of evil and obstacles only urge man to struggle and to overcome them. Instead of feeling thwarted and frustrated by obstacles, man must actually welcome them as providing a chance for his evolution.

Browning says:—

Then welcome each rebuff

That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain !

Strive, and hold cheap the strain :

Learn nor account the pang; dare never graudge the throe.

(Rabbi Ben Ezra)

Referring to the obstacles and opposition one has to face in life'

Iqbal says (A. K. p. 59) :

راست ميگويم عدو هم يار تست

هستي او رونق ازار تست

پر که داناءے مقامات خودی است

فضل حق داندا گر دشمن قوی است

کشت انساان رو عدو باشد سحاب

ممکناتش را برانگيرد ز خواب

I will declare the truth : thine enemy is thy friend:

His existence crowns thee with glory;

Whosoever knows the states of the Self

Considers a powerful enemy to be blessing from God.

To the seed of Man the enemy is as a rain-cloud:

For he awakens its potentialities.

In *Sordello* Browning expresses similar sentiments:—

For mankind springs salvation by each hinderance interposed.

One of the reasons why Browning and Iqbal want man to work incessantly is that they want him to develop. As it is, he is imperfect at present but by dint of hard work and discipline he can become Perfect Man here and then continue development in the next life:

Progress is man's distinctive work alone

Not God's and not the beast's. *God is they are,*

Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

Man has been and is so great that there is prospect of his stopping in his development. But to attain perfection man must keep himself constantly busy in creative activities. Thus Browning says:

And so I live, you see

Go through the world, try, prove, reject,

Prefer, still struggling to effect

My warfare; happy that I can

Be crossed and thwarted as a man,

Not left in God's contempt apart,

With ghostly smooth lie, dead at head,

Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.

Referring to the scope for unlimited development, Iqbal says:

رہ یک ام بے ہمت کے لیے عرش بریں

For courage the passage to Heaven is but one pace.

Browning says :

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp.

Or what's Heaven for?

(Andrea del Sarto)

During the course of man's development and evolution he has to undergo a good deal of pain and suffering. Pain and suffering are caused by evil and it is not easy to explain the presence of so much evil in the world. Both Browning and Iqbal absorb evil into a theory of life of which love is the first principle. Browning never under-estimated the evil element in human nature. He felt that evil was somehow necessary to good, and evil and good were not so much antithetical as complementary. According to him evil is there merely to play its part in the fulfilment of God's plan. According to Iqbal, evil is a condition of man's moral progress. There is, according to him, in life discord and disharmony, evil and vice, pain and misery, but they are all meant to be overcome. Good and evil, therefore, though opposites, must fall within the same whole. In *Payam-i-Mashriq* Iqbal says:-

چہ گویم نکتہ ذشت و نکو چيست

زبان لرزد که معنی پیچدار است

برون از شاخ بینی خار و گل را

درون او نه گل پیدا نه خار است

What can I say about good and evil?

I tremble to express opinion as the problem is knotty;

You see the flower and thorn outside the twig,

While within it, there is nothing of the two.

Thus by overcoming obstacles, living a life of ceaseless activity and resisting evil man develops and rises to unknown heights, In fact he carries out *Takballaqu-bi-akhlaq Allah*—"Create in yourselves the attributes of God." The moral purpose behind all this struggle and strife is evolution of man and creation of Perfect Man. There is no doubt that Browning sees the appearance of Perfect Man as a direct result of the evolution, but it is also true that he is never as definite or precise in his conception of Perfect Man as Iqbal. He sees the distinct goal and his buoyant optimism points to the bright future which awaits the present man. The character of Parcelsus, the man who would be the Perfect Man, quickens Browning's thought to a point of eloquence, and he says:—

I go to prove my soul!

I see my way as birds their rackless way—

I shalt arrive! what time what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless god send his hail
Or blending fire-balls, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time his good time—I shall arrive
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

The man who arrives will be our Perfect Man although he is definitely imperfect at present. In this process of evolution there will be failures but these failures are man's glory, they only lead to future bliss. The evolution of man will not be thwarted by death, which, according to both Browning and Iqbal, is only an aspect of life. On the earth there are broken curves, in the heaven nothing but a perfect round.

Thus it will be seen that there is a remarkable and significant resemblance between the thought of Browning and Iqbal regarding the destiny of human soul. While Iqbal starting from his conception of ego points to the distant and glorious goal of man's evolution in this world and the next, Browning gives an indication of the same goal by meeting the challenge of his age and by counteracting dejection, depression and frustration which faced man. Browning is certainly not clear about the Self or ego, neither does he prescribe, like Iqbal, the discipline necessary for its evolution on individual and social planes but he was not less definite in his message. While Iqbal builds the edifice of his thought on the corner-stone of Ego or Self, Browning talks of soul, and his poetry is nothing but a narrative of the human soul's

destiny. He is made conscious of the spiritual world by the enthusiasm, longings and aspirations in the soul, where they exist like imprisoned splendours, resembling in a remarkable degree the vast potentiality of the human ego as envisaged by Iqbal. Both show greatest respect for human personality, and it is the special distinction of both that when they are most universal they are most individual. Every man is to them an epitome of the universe, a centre of creation, and life provides for him an opportunity to evolve, to develop. In life man is faced with obstacles, with evil, with doubt; he is subject to the influence of fellow beings and to the conflicting powers of his soul and he succeeds or fails according as he is true or false to his better nature, which in the language of Iqbal means how much he has developed his ego.

With so much agreement between them it is surprising to read the following remarks of Iqbal :

"To the optimist Browning all is well with the world, to the pessimist Schopenhauer the world is one perpetual winter wherein a blind will expresses itself in an infinite variety of living things which bemoan their emergence for a moment, and then disappear for ever. The issue thus raised between optimism and pessimism cannot be finally decided at the present stage of our knowledge of the universe. Our intellectual constitution is such that we can take only a piece-meal view of things. We cannot understand the full import of the great cosmic forces which work havoc and at the same time sustain and amplify life. The teaching of the Quran, which believes in the possibility of improvement in the behaviour

of man and his control over natural forces, is neither optimism nor pessimism. It is meliorism, which recognises a growing universe and is animated by the hope of Man's actual victory over evil."¹² It is true that Browning does not lament with Shakespeare that "Life is but at walking shadow—a tale to be told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifyijng nothing." He does not complain with Dryden that "Life is all a cheat", nor does he ask planitively with Gray "Oh what is life with ills encompassed round?" On the other hand he exclaims:

My own hope is, a sun will pierce,
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched.

All this is true but as we have seen, according to him, man is imperfect, he has to encounter obstacles at every stage, and has to face evil and suffer pain in life. Man has to encounter resistance and only by over-coming this resistance he can evolve. Thus, according to Browning, man's life is one of constant struggle, and his optimism is at the most a "tarnished and spurious" optimism'. There is no doubt that a good deal of his poetry glows with vital happiness and hope, and there is in him the sense of the immeasurable worth in life and passion for being and he certainly believes that things as they are now are not too bad. But such optimism is found in Iqbal also, for example when he says (P. M., p. 85):

مگو کار جهان نا استوار است

¹² *Amphibian* by Griffin, p.241

پر آن ما ابد را پرده دار است

بگیر امروز را محکم که فردا

هنوز اندر ضمیر روزگار است

Say not, the world's affairs unstable be

Our every moment veils eternity,

Hold firmly to Today, for yet remains

Tomorrow in the mind of Destiny.

They are both emphatic in condemning all ascetism which aims at spurning the world. Iqbal says, "There is no such thing as a profane world. All this immensity of matter constitutes a scope for the self-realisation of the spirit. As the Prophet so beautifully puts it: 'The whole of the earth is a mosque.' It is true that in Browning there is the joyous acceptance of life as it is in spite of all the evil and imperfections. Against this it must be pointed out that in some of his poems Browning has expressed masquerading pessimism, for example in *Reverie* and in *Cleon*, and above all in *Pacchiorotto and How He Worked in Distemper*, wherein he expresses two serious ideas—that we are not to expect our work in this life to succeed, and that the Earth is but the induction to Heaven. We have the following lines from *The Ring and The Book* in which Browning definitely admits the existence of unhappiness in life:

Learning anew the use of soldiership,

Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end ! Ruminare,
Deserve the initiatory spasm—once more
Work, be unhappy, but bear life, my son.

Still it cannot be denied that there are certain poems of Browning in which the optimistic philosophy seems distinct and clear, for example when Pippa sings:

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled:
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world.

But it must be remembered that in such poems Browning only wants to emphasise his firm belief that the only way for man is to weather the storms and to evolve according to God's plan and this he can do only by following the light, even if at times it leads into darkness.

Iqbal expresses the same idea by saying that man must overcome all obstacles and always persist in creating new objectives and purposes in order to strengthen his ego. Thus it will be seen that both Iqbal and Browning share the firm belief that things are getting better and better and this can be described only as meliorism. It must be admitted that the vein of buoyant optimism in the body of Browning's poetry is more prominent than in Iqbal's but that has only meant to nerve man to face life at a time when conditions were particularly depressing. Iqbal and Browning had to adopt a tone which would appeal more to their times. Perhaps Iqbal, when declaring Browning a confirmed optimist, was only following the vast majority of English critics who have written on Browning's poetry.

When we come to poetic art we find that both Iqbal and Browning have dealt with poets and poetry in their poems, and have left explicit notes which give us a clear picture of their ideas on the subject. Browning deals with the subject in three poems in *Men and Women* and again in *Sordello*. In *Pachiorotto* volume he deals with his critics. In *How it Strikes a Contemporary* Browning gives a brilliant sketch of a man and his doings and that man is a poet:

I only know one poet in my life

And this, or something like it, was his way.

In *Popularity* he says:

Stand still, true that you are!

I know you, let me try and draw you.

In *Transcendentalism* a poem in twelve books Browning describes a nameless poet and defines the purpose of poetry as 'pouring heaven into the shut house of life.'

In *Sordello* Browning expresses his views on poetry. According to him all poets worship beauty, but one kind of poet feels he belongs to what he worships while the other sees beauty only as a reflection of his soul, so that actually homage turns inwards. A distinction is also drawn between Sordello's kind of poetry and that of Eglamour, the troubador whom he defeated in a contest of song. For Eglamour composing verses was a temple-worship, a mysterious ritual for which he serves as a priest and his rhymes are the divine response to be used in the shrine of man, but for Sordello it was a process leading from fancy to fancy until it touches inspiration. Dealing with poetry Iqbal says that a poet is a successor to a prophet:

شعر را مقصود اگر آدم گری است

شاعری ہم وارث پیغمبری است

If the object of poetry is to make man,

The poet is in direct lineage with the prophets!

Iqbal has described the role of a poet and the function of poetry in several poems but it is in *Asrar-i-Khudi* that dealing with healthy literary trends he explicitly says:

سینه شاعر تجلی زار حسن

خیزد از سینائے او انوار حسن

از نگاہش گردد خوب تر

فطرت از افسون او محبوب تر

"Tis in the poet's breast that Beauty unveils,

"Tis from his Sinai that Beauty's beams arise,

By his look the fair is made fairer,

Through his enchantments Nature becomes more beloved.

In *Zabur-i-Ajam* he has dealt with fine arts in a series of poems and describing an artist he says:

آن هنر مندے کہ بر فطرت فزود

راز خود را بر نگاه ما کشود

آفریند کائنات دیگرے

قلب را بخشد حیات دیگرے

That artist who adds to the beauty of Nature,

Unveileth his secrets before our eyes,

Creates a new world

And confers on the heart a new life.

The sentiments expressed by Iqbal in the above lines find an echo in Browning's *Fr a Lippo Lippi*:

For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps hundred times nor cared to see;

And so they are better, painted—better to us

Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—

God uses us to help each other so,

Landing our minds out.

Both Browning and Iqbal think loftily of the poetic art, In a way they both believe in the Dantesque conception of poetry being vast and deep as humanity wherein every soul will stand forth revealed in its naked truth. They had nothing but contempt for the conception of Art for Art's sake. They believed that poetry is the destined vehicle for all eternal truths. The object of a poet according to them is to enshrine in imperishable words the highest truths known to man and some truths that had escaped man's notice. In *Pachiorotto and How He Worked in Distemper*, Browning says:

All's well that end well—through Art's magic

Some end, whether comic or tragic

The Artist has purposed, be certain!

Explained at the fall of curtain—

In showing thy wisdom at odds with

No problem for weak wits to solve meant.

But one worth such Author's evolvment.

Regarding Art for Art's sake Iqbal says, "There should be no opium eating in Art. The dogma of Art for the sake of Art is a clever invention of decadence to cheat us out of life and power"¹³

Thus it will be seen that so far as the basic conception of art is object was merely to provide intellectual toys for man. In his letter to W.H. Kingsford, Browning writes, "I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be substituted for a cigar, or a game of domonos to an idle man." Iqbal always disclaimed being a mere poet, whose object is nothing more than to entertain people.

نغمه کجا و من کجا ساز سخن بهانه ایست

سوئی قطار می کشم ناقه بے زمام را

I and a song! Verse making is but a device

To attract the unbridled camel into line.

¹³ Quoted by W. C. De Vane in *A Browning Handbook*, p.51

In another poem he says:

نه پنداری که من بے باده مستم

مثال شاعران افسانه بستم

نه بینی خیر ازان مرد فرو دست

که بر من تهمت شعر و سخن بست

Don't you think that I am inebriate without wine,

And indulge in weaving yarns like poets of yore;

You will find no good in that low person

Who accuses me of being a poet!

With so much in common between them regarding the conception of fine arts and the office of a poet one would naturally expect a close resemblance in their poetic art yet one notices some prominent differences.

Browning's reputation as a poet has undergone great fluctuations at different times. He published *Pauline* anonymously in 1833 and *Paracelsus* under his own name in 1835. Both these poems failed to attract any great attention, and the merits of these poems were not recognised. Then followed *Sordello*, which at once attracted some attention mainly as a terribly obscure poem, so that it became a fashion to boast of not understanding it. But his reputation increased after the publication of *The Ring and the Book*

as will be seen from the following remarks which appeared in the *Athenaeum*, a leading literary journal, "We must record at once our conviction not merely that *The Ring and the Book* is beyond all parallel the supermost poetical achievement of our time, but that it is the most precious and profound spiritual treasure that England has produced since the days of Shakespeare." After this Browning suddenly penetrated to the heart of the British and the American people, but critics were still not wanting who only emphasised his obscurity. For instance, Alfred Austin (1835-1913) wrote in the *The poetry of the Period*, "Mr. Browning is not a poet at all—save in the sense that all cultivated men and women of sensitive feelings are poets—but a deep thinker, a profound philosopher, a keen analyser and a biting wit." ¹⁴As regards Browning's style Austin wrote, "In fact his style may fairly be described as the very incarnation of discordant obscurity." ¹⁵ It can be said that there was consensus of opinion amongst critics regarding the obscurity of Browning. ¹⁶ It has been remarked that the cause of obscurity in Browning was mainly intellectual and not due to style. It is not proposed to explore the causes of obscurity in Browning's poetry; all that we are concerned about here is to compare it with the radiant clarity of Iqbal's style. Iqbal is a difficult poet to read but he is never obscure.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.64

¹⁵ As regards obscurity the following remarks by H.C. Duffin will be read with interest: "Almost half of Browning's work has to be read with some attention, but seventy-five per cent of it is as clear as Milton or Wordsworth." *Amphibian*, p. 285.

¹⁶ G. K. Chesterton, *Browning*, p.110.

Apart from obscurity the two features of Browning's style which have effected his popularity are grotesqueness and ruggedness. There is no doubt that some of his verse is smooth and melodious but he is certainly harsh and grotesque when harshness and grotesqueness are out of place. He flings his multifarious vocabulary recklessly. Iqbal is neither grotesque nor rugged; he too has a multifarious vocabulary but he uses it with discrimination. Writing about Browning's ruggedness, Chesterton says, "The whole issue depends upon whether we realise the simple and essential fact that ruggedness is a mode of art like gloominess or extravagance. Now to say that Browning's poems, artistically considered, are fine although they are rugged, is quite as absurd as to say that a rock, artistically considered, is fine although it is rugged. Ruggedness being an essential quality in the universe there is that in man which responds to it as to striking of any other chord of the eternal harmonies."¹⁷ It must be mentioned here that some students of Browning have even found his grotesqueness and ruggedness fascinating. We are not concerned with the fact whether grotesqueness and ruggedness can contribute to the artistic value of a poet's art. Our object here is to notice differences between Browning and Iqbal and it can be said that obscurity, grotesqueness and ruggedness, which most critics have noticed in Browning, are prominently lacking in Iqbal. Perhaps it will be right to say that whereas Browning is careless of the form Iqbal is a master of the form.

¹⁷ H. C. Duffin *Amphibian. Bowes & Bowes*, London, (1965) p.274

But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense.

Browning had a very good ear for metre and stanza-form but none whatever where diction was concerned. He is constantly using such words as *beautosest* and *irreliousest* and many others. Iqbal also uses some unfamiliar words but very rarely. A writer has remarked about Browning, "No one ever loved him for the sake of the beauty of his language."¹⁸

Poetry of both Browning and Iqbal is very rich in metaphor and simile, perhaps it is not so rich in simile. The extended simile so characteristic of Browning is not found in Iqbal. Whereas Iqbal is rich in onomatopoeia, Browning hardly ever attempts this effect. They both use a prodigious number of metres and a very large variety of stanzas.

Another point of affinity between them is that they are both interested in Nature, especially in her relation with man. Browning was mainly interested in those phenomena of Nature which exhibit sudden outbursts of energy. The description of the thunder storm in the first scene of *Pippa Passes* is not to be matched in English poetry. What impresses Iqbal most, as we have already seen, are scenes exhibiting power and strength—mighty mountains, gushing torrents and scenes of grandeur. In both, vividness of pictorial realism is very striking.

Another striking feature of their poetry is that they both display a profound regard for flowers. And they both show

¹⁸ *Iqbal's Letters to Atiya Begum*, p.74

remarkable resemblance in the way they use flowers to express symbolically the traits and nature of their human fellow-creatures. There is a poem in *Garden Fancies* which has its counterpart in Iqbal:

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stopped over, in doubt as setting its claim,
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name,
What a name! was it love or praise?
Speech half asleep, or song half awake?
I must learn Spanish, one o f these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

When a young Austrain lady Miss Gottesman, a friend of Princess Dalip Singh, presented a flower to Iqbal in the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore, he wrote (B.D., p.171):¹⁹

وہ مست ناز جو گلشن میں جا نکلتی ہے
کلی کلی کی زبان سے دعا نکلتی ہے
انہی پھولوں میں وہ انتخاب مجھ کو کرے

¹⁹ But Iqbal has also critics whose criticism was directed mostly against his diction.

کلی سے رشک گل آفتاب مجھ کو رکے

تجھے وہ شاخ سے توڑیں زہے نصیب ترے

تڑپتے رہ گئے گلزار میں رقیب تیرے

When that proud beauty comes to the garden,

Every bud in the garden joins in a chorus of prayers:

"Almighty! may she choose me from amongst the flowers,

From a bud she will make me the envy of the sun."

What a good luck to be plucked by her!

Thy rivals in the garden are burning with jealousy.

Thus it will be seen that although Iqbal and Browning agree in their basic conception of art and the role which a poet must play coming to the rescue of mankind, in technique they are widely asunder. As pointed above Browning's reputation as a poet has known great fluctuations and while he had some great admirers, notably poets Landon and Meredith, he had some equally great detractors. He wrote a great deal and wrote in a hurry so his work naturally shows unevenness. Iqbal's work is singularly free from some of the main defects found in Browning's poetry. At times Iqbal also wrote in a hurry; it is said that when inspiration came he would at times compose three hundred couplets in one night, which means six hundred verses. But he wrote poetry only when he experienced inspired throes of artistic creation and it can be

said that the spontaneous flower of his impulse was always as remarkable for its delicacy as for its exuberance. It took him two years to write his first long poem *Asrar-e-Khudi*. The result is that his popularity as artist has always stood high, and has known no great fluctuations. Perhaps in the case of Browning the reason for fluctuations in his reputation is that "he wrote too much. Most of his longer poems, whether early or late, and many of his dramas, are already dead and there is danger that even the magnificent thing *The Ring and the Book* will be buried under its debris."²⁰ This charge cannot be laid against Iqbal. It cannot be said of him that he wrote too much. He no doubt rejected some of his early poems but students find these also so fascinating that every attempt is being made to discover them and to preserve them.

²⁰ Grierson & Smith, op. cit., p.422.