

# IQBAL AND NATURE

*Shakoor Ahsan*

Nature is one of the most fascinating themes in Iqbal's poetry. It awakened his earliest inspirations and stirred him to a deep sense of wonder and delight in its sensuous manifestations. A considerable number of poems in "Bang-i-Dara" is devoted to hymns of nature and even though the poet's attitude towards nature changed radically in certain respects under the influence of his metaphysical thought, it continued to inspire him to great lyrical heights and serve as background to heighten the inner significance of his message.

Iqbal started with eloquent descriptions of the "beauteous forms" of the outdoor world. But it was hardly confined to mere description at any stage. He was at first animated by a desire to associate nature with the principles of harmony, kinship and benevolence, thus reinforcing the aesthetic pleasure

derived from the beautiful objects of nature with the notion that the order of the universe is harmonious, benevolent and purposive towards man. In this he seems to be at one with the European romantic poets who in their cult of nature had borrowed so much from the contemporary metaphysical and scientific thought.

In his earliest poems, Iqbal betrays great discomfort at the discord of life and seeks consolation in nature only to find a spirit of peace which lies at the heart of endless agitation. He is overwhelmed with a feeling of sickness in the company of men and yearns for the blissful quiet of the country to lose himself in the freedom of lonely places and whisper with what Coleridge called "Nature iii the grove". Here he finds a deep sense of unity and kinship with the objects of nature. In his poem Chand in

Bang-i Dora, for instance, he draws a lengthy comparison between himself and the moon. To quote:

آہ! میں جلتا ہوں سوز اشتیاق دید سے  
تو سراپا سوز داغ منت خورشید ہے  
زندگی کی راہ میں سرگرداں ہے تو، حیراں ہوں میں  
تو فروزاں محفل ہستی میں ہے، سوزاں ہوں میں  
میں رہ منزل میں ہوں، تو بھی رہ منزل میں ہے  
تیری محفل میں جو خاموشی ہے، میرے دل میں ہے  
انجمن ہے ایک میری بھی جہاں رہتا ہوں میں  
بزم میں اپنی اگر اپنی یکتا ہے تو، تنہا ہوں میں

Ek Arzu, one of Iqbal's earliest poems, is not only an exquisite piece of scenic description but also a typical example of his disgust with the heat and pressure of life which is expressed in the very first line of the poem:

دنیا کی محفلوں سے اکتا گیا ہوں یا رب  
کیا لطف انجمن کا جب دل ہی بجھ گیا ہو

The poet's later philosophy is yet to take root and instead of his passion for the conquest of the environment, which ultimately becomes an integral part of his thought, he aims in this poem at penetrating into the comforting warmth and mystery of nature and to lose himself in its blissful solitude.

It reminds of the passionate yearnings of Byron, who has little of the transcendentalism of the other romantic poets, to seek consolation in the solitary beauty of nature.

*There is pleasure in the pathless wood,*

*There it a rapture on the lonely shore*

*There is society, where none intrudes,*

*By the deep Sea, and music in its roar*

(Childe Herold).

Iqbal's early dislike of the humdrum of city life is discernible also in the last line of *Himala* where he makes a passionate plea for the revival of the dim past:

ہاں دکھا دے اے ہمالہ پھر وہ صبح و شام تو  
دوڑ پیچھے کی طرف اے گردش ایام تو

One wonders if this yearning is not caused by what Prof. Fairchild attributes in his *Noble Savage* to the general notion prevalent in the romantic period, and also manifest in early European literature, to associate the word nature with a state of life untouched by human arts and institutions. The concept of nature held by Wordsworth, Shelley and Southey, according to Beach, is coloured by this primitivism.

Iqbal's nature poetry bears strong marks of resemblance with that of Wordsworth and other romantic poets. And this is rather significant that all translations rendered by Iqbal from English poetry are those relating to the period of romantic revival in English literature. The theme of these poems almost invariably concerns nature. This romantic fervour is the source of many an exquisite original nature poem by Iqbal. Like Wordsworth, Iqbal looks upon nature as the symbol of purposiveness and benevolence. He also regards it as a great educative force in life:

گلی کی کلی چٹک کر پیغام دے کسی کا  
ساغر ذرا سا گویا مجھکو جہان نما ہو

Again:

علم کے حیرت کدے میں کہاں اس کی نمود  
گل کی پتی میں نظر آتا ہے راز ہست و بود

The ideal cherished by the poet in *Ek Arzu* also brings to words of Lessing, the German romanticist, that "the spirit of made gentler by studying nature".

Like all romantic poets, Iqbal is dissatisfied with the present of life, and he is animated by the desire as that "of the moth star: of the night for the morrow", to reach the infinite:

طلبم نہایت آن کہ نہایتی ندارد  
بہ نگاہ ناشکیبی بہ دل امیدواری

He seeks to express his own personality; the longings, hopes ideals of his own spirit that has a tendency towards the infinite. the painful feeling of incompleteness. Hence the vague yearnings cause he has himself forgotten. This reminds us of Wordsworth in spite of his tender devotion to nature is driven to wistful meland made to write the following:

*The rainbow comes and goes,*

*And lovely is the rose.*

*The moon cloth with delight,*

*Look round her when the heavens are bare ;*

*Waters on a starry night*

*Are beautiful and fair*

*The sunshine is a glorious birth*

*But yet I know, where'er I go,*

*That there hath pass'd a glory from the earth.*

## DESTINY OF MAN

In his poems *Mab-i Nau* and *Aftab-i Subh* in *Bang-i Dara*, feeling of incompleteness is expressed in lines of pensive beauty. feeling is heightened by the loneliness of the spirit and the driven to identify or contract himself with objects of nature. In process of identification or vice versa, his vague yearnings become pronounced but nonetheless the poet becomes deeply conscious of frenzied passion which distinguishes him from the rest of the creation and he proudly relishes this great truth. In his ode to the meon, triumphantly claims ;

پھر بھی اے ماہ جبیں میں اور ہوں تو اور ہے  
درد جس پہلو میں اٹھا ہو وہ پہلو اور ہے  
جو مری ہستی کا مقصد ہے مجھے معلوم ہے  
یہ چمک وہ ہے جبیں جس سے تیری محروم ہے

This note of triumph and cheerful hope is struck in many other poems, for example in *Aftab-i Subh* and *Gul-i Rangin* in *Bang-i Dara*. 'Addressing the rose, the poet gives a wistful expression to his own completeness, but is suddenly heartened at the realisation that he ;Possesses a rare gift which has been denied to the former:

اس چمن میں سراپا سوز و ساز آرزو  
اور تیری زندگانی بے گداز آرزو

Thus his nature poems begin to reflect. here and there, the

destiny man and sing his glorification ; a subject which occupies all his later and has dealt with passion and vigour in the treatment of the Philosophy of Ego.

A careful study of Iqbal's poems on nature reveals that the poet has associated with nature the principle of movement which fits in with the philosophy of constant action. For him stars and all the heavenly nets are on the move and symbolise the essential purpose of life. This explains his special leanings towards these object of nature.

He has great likeness for the stars on which he has expressed If with repeated enthusiasm. They also communicate to him the of harmony and unity, to wit, *Bazm-i Anjum*, a poem remarkable its gorgeous imagery ; but the myriad of stars essentially convey him the message of constant movement. These stars are very aptly suggestive of a 'caravan' on the move and the poet employs this metaphor rather frequently. *Sarood-e Anjum*, a poem in *Piyam-i Mashriq* marks the culmination of this group of poems.

The poet seems to be carried, away with the symphony of move-t as the stars sing to him the song of constant change in the Universe. The streams and breezes communicate to him the same massage of endeavour and ceaseless activity. He is so much enamoured these objects that he employs them in the pattern of his beautiful imagery with the consummate skill of a master. The objects of nature him become symbolic of certain values and principles, The first flower that blooms in the spring becomes the symbol of life and its Potentialities:

بخامهء که خط زندگی رقم زده است      نوشتۀ اند پیامی به برگ رنگینم  
دل به دوش و نگاهم به عبرت امروز      شهید جلوه فردا و ترازه آئینم

(گل نسختین)

The spring reveals to him the hidden mystery of the universe:

خاک چمن وا نمود، راز دل کائنات  
 بود و نبود  
 جلوه گریهائے ذات  
 آنچه تو دانی حیات  
 آنچه تو خوانی سمات  
 خاک چمن وا نمود، راز دل کائنات

(فصل بهار)

من عیش هم آغوشی دریا نه خریدم  
 ان باده که از خویش رباید نچشیدم  
 از خود نه رمیدم  
 ز آفاق بریدم  
 بر لاله چکیدم

(شبینم)

## THE TULIP AND THE FIREFLY

The poet is particularly allured of the tulip and the firefly w stand as symbols of frenzied passion. Firefly has inspired him to two very exquisite poems which strike for their colourful imagery splendid music. Tulip is one of the most frequently used word in Iqbal's poetical works and is employed in a multi-coloured riot of and metaphor. It is so prominent in the poet's mind that not a few lyrics of "*Zabur-i Ajam*" open with it. It inspires the poet who in his fascinating poem *Lala-i Sehra* in *Bal-i-Jibreel* identifies himself with the flow cr. This leaning towards the above mentioned

objects is apparently the result of the fundamental importance which the poet attaches to love and which they so aptly symbolise.

Iqbal's treatment of nature, at one stage, almost synonymous with his stay in Europe shows unmistakable signs of pantheism. One of Prof. McTaggart's letters written to Iqbal after his return from England also reveals that Iqbal at that time was greatly influenced by pantheistic thought.

The element of pantheism in his nature poetry creates another point of resemblance between Iqbal and some of the European romanticists like Wordsworth, Goethe and Shelley. Two poems of *Bang-i Dara* namely, *Jugnu* and *Chand* are the typical examples of the trend of thought. In another poem *Salima* not directly concerned with nature but fully representative of pantheistic the entire imagery is borrowed from nature, as is the case with many of his other poems.

## NATURE'S INNER SIGNIFICANCE

Iqbal's treatment of nature is free from rigid uniformity, much as the concept of nature is subject to change. The poet passes from idyllic descriptions and appreciation of the purely aesthetic charm of nature to thoughts and associations inspired by scenic beauty. Thus the poet is led to contemplate over the principle underlying the glorious phenomena of nature. He does not express nature, like Keats, through his senses alone, but he intellectualises it. His music is set to transcendental language; and his treatment of nature begins to show strong resemblance with the methods adopted by Wordsworth and Shelley. He is not merely struck by the beauty of nature, but he also exults at its inner significance. Description leads to interpretation. He moves from the external fact to the idea; from the concrete to the abstract. In most of the later poems the idea occupies the dominant position. A casual



glance at two poems on the same subject, namely, the rose, in Bang-i Dara and Mashriq will explain the whole difference. But it must be noted that even while the abstract note is dominant, Iqbal is never forgetful of the aesthetic aspect of the poem and the romantic fervour breaks through very often. Some of the later poems in Piyam-i Mashriq give us Iqbal in his highest moments and exhibit his power of fusing metaphysical thought with lyrical feeling. In "*Shabnam*" we come across, what may, perhaps be considered as the best example of this kind.

In his mission of the interpretative imagination the poet fondly takes recourse to dialogues between objects of nature. There is a considerable number of poems in Piyam-i Mashriq and Zarh-i-Kaleem where this method has been used with great effect. The spirit of the message is thus brought home with remarkable clarity and force, for instance in '*Naseem-o- Shabnam*,, '*Phool*', '*Shabnam* our *Subh*'.

## NATURE AS BACKGROUND TO HIS MESSAGE

One of the most prominent aspects of Iqbal's art is the extraordinary skill with which he employs nature as background to heighten the appeal of his message. He takes inspiration from nature ; and also an argument from its book. As early as "*Khizr-i Rab*" Iqbal adopted this favourite scheme of creating the right psychological moment for appeal through lovely descriptions of scenic beauty, of course adding to it the felicity of rhythm and the stately beauty of diction. A tempestuous mountain torrent, as for instance in *Saqi Nama* in Bal-i Jibreel strikes the music of life as it gushes through hill and rock, and consequently inspires the poet with a new vigour to deliver his characteristic message. Or a desert landscape washed after a vernal shower and brightened with the morning glory of sunlit clouds as in "*Zowq-o-Showq*" in the

same book, gives a powerful release to the pent up emotion of the poet. It may be pointed out that the poems prolonged with nature are usually rich in musical appeal and have a very deep emotional effect.

Iqbal's philosophy of *Khudi* in which force plays a fundamental role, seems to have radically influenced his conception of beauty as well as his attitude towards nature. Although he could still sing of nature's benevolence in the following strain:

بہار و قافلہ لالہ ہائے صحرائی  
شباب و مستی و ذوق و سرور و رعنائی

اندھیری رات م میں یہ چشمکیں ستاروں کی  
یہ بحر! یہ فلک نیلگوں کی پہنائی  
سفر عروس قمر کا عماری شب میں  
طلوع مہز و سکوت سپہر مینائی

Yet he had developed unmistakable leanings towards the austere might of nature at the cost of its soft and tender beauty. The nightingale and the peacock have no fun for him for they represent merely sound and colour which symbolise only the tender side of life:

کر بلبل و طاؤس کی تقلید سے توبہ  
بلبل فقط آواز ہے طاؤس فقط رنگ

The poet is now impressed by the rugged grandeur of nature. Only the wild desert and mountain are the home of ideal humanity:

فطرت کے مقاصد کی کرتا ہے نگہبانی  
یا بندۂ صحرائی یا مرد کہستانی

All conceptions of grandeur and force become associated with the wild in nature:

یہ حسن لطافت کیوں، وہ قوت و شوکت کیوں  
بلبل چمنستانی، شہباز بیابانی!

(ص ۱۸۲)

## SUPERIORITY OF MAN OVER NATURE

The poet who in his early days found himself hopelessly isolated in his environment and would seek consolation in the warmth of nature is now inspired with no less an ideal than its very conquest. He has gradually realised that man stands far higher in stature in relation to because he is in possession of a creative mind which nature lacks. By possession of this virtue not only is the superiority of man established over nature, but it is also given to the creative mind to subdue and overpower it. Man, in other words, is ordained with the Mission of establishing supremacy over nature. The birth of Adam was in fact a phenomenon of supreme import, a vital indication in that direction:

نعرہ زد عشق کہ خونیں جگر پیدا شد  
حسن لرزید کہ صاحب نظرے پیدا شد  
فطرت آشفت کہ از خاک جہاں مجبور  
خود گری، خود شکنی، خود نگری پیدا شد

In a poem of rare charm in Bal-i Jibreel where the poet

describes being sung a song of welcome by the spirit of the universe, the it still more explicitly brought home:

ہیں تیرے تصرف میں یہ بادل، یہ گھٹائیں  
یہ گنبد افلاک، یہ خاموش فضاں  
یہ کوہ، یہ صحرا، یہ سمندر، یہ ہوائیں  
تھیں پیش نظر کل تک تو فرشتوں کی ادائیں  
آئینہ ایام میں آج اپنی ادا دیکھ  
سمجھے گا زمانہ تیری آنکھوں کے اشارے  
دیکھیں گے تجھے دور سے گردوں کے اشارے  
ناپید تیرے بحر تخیل کے کنارے  
پہنچیں گے گلک تک تیری آہوں کے شرارے  
تعمیر خود کر، اثر آہ رسا دیکھ

In the conquest of nature lies man's destiny. According to Iqbal, nature creates countless barriers in the path of human development. Therefore, it becomes imperative that in order to develop the ego these barriers must be shaken and overcome. Every obstacle put by nature is an incentive to greater development of the ego, for it thrives on obstacles created by nature. Thus nature becomes man's great rival and must be overpowered for the fortification of his *kehudi* or self. The purposiveness of nature in this manner, assumes an entirely different significance from that one conceived by him in his early days on as it was interpreted by some romantic poets especially Wordsworth. At this stage nature does not so much enchant the poet as offer him field for conquest. The poet in a humorous vein describes it as God's master piece, which it is given to man to

improve and beautify according to his own taste and intuition. The savage and uncouth it receives refinement and artistic glory at the hands of man. dialogue the poet retorts to God's claims of creation.

سفال آفریدی ایباغ آفریدم	تو شب آفریدی چراغ آفریدم
خیابان و گلزار و باغ آفریدم	بیابان و کھسار و راغ آفریدی
من انم کہ از ہر نوشینہ سازم	من انم کہ از سنگ آئینہ سازم

The conquest of nature by man is only made possible by *Ishq* or love which word Iqbal uses in a very comprehensive sense. By this term he means the creative passion, the mad frenzy, the spirit of regeneration, the intuitive insight, which enables man to see life and nature in their true perspective and make the highest achievement possible.

#### QUESTS OF WORLDS ANEW

A general survey of Iqbal's treatment and concept of nature will leave the impression that Iqbal started writing nature poems under the influence of the European romanticists, though the creative in him gave his poetry at every step a positively individual stamp. He looked upon nature not as mere outdoor forms, but (used the word in a very wide sense, perceiving it) as a great force with certain basic principles underlying its working. He borrowed his symbols and imagery mainly from the domain of nature; used it as the background to sustain significance of his message; derived certain values and principles from it, and as time progressed he came to enlarge the original scope of purposiveness associated with nature as bequeathed to him by romanticists. Under the impact of his philosophy of the ego, his concept of beauty and especially of nature changed radically and he came to regard the latter as a means towards the fulfilment of man's

destiny, the fortification and perfection of his ego. And finally the poet who had started with romantic descriptions of scenic beauty in terms of wistful melancholy found nature bereft of feeling as well as active mind and too small and frail to contain the impact of his creative madness:

سما سکتا نہیں پنہائے فطرت م میں مرا سودا  
غلط تھا اے جنون شائد تیرا اندازہ صحرا

And feeling ungratified even with the conquest of nature he consoled his heart with the persistent quest of worlds anew:

ستاروں سے آگے جہاں اور بھی ہیں  
ابھی عشق کی امتحان اور بھی ہیں