

IQBAL, THE POET OF NATURE

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Nature. In the early period of his career as a poet, Iqbal was to some extent influenced by Wordsworth. The poems of this period depict objects of Nature as representations of the Divine Spirit; but his thorough knowledge of the Qur'an and understanding of the Islamic way of life made him realise the shortcomings inherent in Pantheism. Immanence of the creative spirit was no longer enough for him. Instead this realisation helped him to proceed from "What is" to "What ought to be". For Wordsworth the whole universe is animated by one spirit and the poet who succeeded in establishing contact with Nature could in his own way understand and appreciate the manifestations of this Divine Spirit in the rolling plain, the grassy meadow, the daffodils, the bleating lamb, the tree, the hill and the cloud. The poet's association with objects of Nature was not mere physical contact ; in-directly it became communion with God Whom the poet found immanent in all Nature. Poems of Nature written by Iqbal up to 1905 are steeped in Pantheism and are reminiscent of Words-worth.

The universe for Wordsworth is alive but static and immutable. His poetry of Nature can be classified into three periods. The early period is the period of blind worship and the poet remained satisfied by physical pleasure which objects of Nature provided as he came into contact with these. This period may be called the period of pure sensuous delights, but as Wordsworth's genius matured he began to develop a spiritualised interest in Nature. The third and final stage is one in which the poet became the philosopher of Nature. He became the high priest of Nature and for him each object of Nature became the pantheistic symbol of the living presence of God. We do not find any such stages in Iqbal's poems of Nature. Some of the early poems included in *Bāng-i-Darā* show some influence of Wordsworth and are to some extent inspired by the young, but fast maturing, pantheistic poet's belief that objects of Nature are symbols depicting their Creator. No reader of Iqbal must, however, forget that Iqbal is essentially the poet of life and man, and Nature and universe interest him only because they provide the environment in which life unfolds itself and man passes through evolutionary changes which lead him on to perfection. Iqbal believed that the

universe was not static; it was ever in a flux and ever passing through changes and moment by moment was becoming, vaster, more perfect and, of course, more complicated and more difficult to decipher and understand.

In his note on “Touch of Hegelianism in *Lisān al-‘Aṣr Akbar*” he says: “The life of the universe, then, is necessarily constituted by a perpetual conflict of opposing forces.”⁴⁶⁹ Man is juxtaposed against Nature and “Nature” is universe looked upon in a vaster perspective and completer conceptual identity and about this universe he expresses the opinion: “I believe there is a Divine tendency in the universe, but this tendency will eventually find its complete expression in a higher man.”⁴⁷⁰ He said this in 1917 and 1921 and by that time all traces of Wordsworth's influence and Pantheism had been left behind. The only point of similarity between the two poets is their love for Nature — for the beauty of its hills, dales, rolling plains, meadows and flowers as well as its awe-inspiring moods, e.g. the storm, the lightning and cataracts. Wordsworth touched on this point in his Prelude and said that for long Nature held an exclusive place in his affections. Later a feeling for suffering humanity was aroused, but man still was depicted as subordinate to Nature in this sense that he was always conceived in a larger setting and exhibited in close relations with a greater whole and played around by the emotions that he begot through his communion with Nature. Wordsworth himself does not appear to be fully convinced about pantheistic interpretation of Nature. God may be present in all objects of Nature, but He ever remained transcendent for man and Wordsworth never realised that Nature and universe are helpful in the projection of the ego and perfection of the human self. He never became involved with the problem of man's place in Nature *vis-a-vis* the universe. Iqbal goes beyond objective representations of Nature. Even the poems of the early period show the poet's involvement with problems of life and man's place in the universe.

محفلِ قدرت ہے، اک دریائے بے پایانِ حسن

⁴⁶⁹ Reproduced (from New Era, 18 August 1917) in S.A. Vabid, Ed., *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), p. 87.

⁴⁷⁰ Iqbal's "Letter to Dr. Nicholson" (Lahore : dated 24 January 1921), reproduced in Vabid, Ed., op. cit., p. 94.

آنکھ اگر دیکھے تو ہر قطرے میں ہے طوفانِ حسن⁴⁷¹

[The pageant of Nature is a fathomless ocean of beauty,
If eyes were to see every drop has in it tumultuous beauty.]

آسمانِ صبح کی آئینہ پوشی میں ہے یہ

شام کی ظلمت، شفق کی گل فروشی میں ہے یہ⁴⁷²

[It is ever present in the mirror like sheen of morning sky,
And the dusk of the evening and the flower spangled twilight.]

چشمہ کمسار میں، دریا کی آزادی میں حسن

شہر میں، صحرا میں، ویرانے میں، آبادی میں

حسن⁴⁷³

[Rivulets gushing down the hills and free-flowing rivers have it,
It is there in the city, the wilderness, the deserted places and in
man's abode.]

This beauty which is synonymous with truth exerted such a powerful attraction on the poet in Iqbal, but he ever felt that something was wanting — there was something beyond this beauty and truth and which could be attained provided man exerted for it,

⁴⁷¹ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 95.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

روح کو لیکن کسی گم گشتہ شے کی ہے ہوس

474 ورنہ اس صحرا میں کیوں نالان یہ مثلِ جرس

[The soul, however, yearns for something, missing,

Otherwise why should it toll the knell of sorrow in this desert?]

حسن کے اس عام جلوے میں بھی یہ بے تاب ہے

475 زندگی اس کی مثالِ ماہی بے آب ہے

[Even the open display of beauty keeps it restless,

It lives like a fish out of water.]

Descriptive Quality. Iqbal is master of the art of delineating a picture in words and his descriptions are not only detailed and accurate; they are also fresh and lifelike. Urdu and Persian poetry is replete with poems which describe Nature — spring, changes of seasons, clouds, morning and twilight are favourite subjects. Descriptions are given in fine language and the poet in-variably gives the scene an imaginative colouring. These descriptions are fine specimens of imaginative poetry but rarely does any Urdu or Persian poet, who was a contemporary of Iqbal or had preceded him, evince a real understanding of Nature. Descriptions of Nature given by these poets are, with the exception of those given by Nadhīr Akbarābādī and Hafīz Jullundhrī, conventional and bookish. These are often exaggerated representations of scenes of Nature and are almost always artificial because the descriptions do not have their roots in the personal observation of the poet. This conventionality and artificiality characterised poetry of Nature produced by classical poets in England. W.H. Hudson says about Pope and

474 Ibid.

475 Ibid.

his school of goetry: “Even to the uncritical reader the contrast is apparent between the firsthand knowledge of Wordsworth, Keats or Tennyson, each of whom wrote (in Wordsworth's phrase) with his eye steadily fixed on the object, and the bookishness, the vague generalised statements and neglect of detail which characterised Pope and his school.” The Romantics made descriptions flexible, vivid, lifelike and realistic. Iqbal has the English Romantics' love for Nature, pictorial art, accuracy of detail, vividness and beauty of diction.

صبح جب میری نگہ سودائی نظارہ تھی
 آسمان پر ایک شعاعِ آفتاب آوارہ تھی⁴⁷⁶

[It was dawn and yearningly I looked around searching for a beautiful sight,

I saw a single ray of the sun wandering in the heavens.]

سرمہ بن کر چشمِ انساں میں سما جائوں گی میں
 رات نے جو کچھ چھپا رکھا تھا دکھلا دوں گی میں
 تیرے مستوں میں کوئی جو یائے ہشیاری بھی ہے
 سونے والوں میں کسی کو ذوقِ بیداری بھی ہے؟⁴⁷⁷

[I will be collyrium and would integrate with the human eye,
 And make visible all that night had hidden from view.

Were the entranced at all keen to become conscious?

Were the asleep desirous of awakening?)

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. p 267.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

Iqbal has drawn an effective picture of the receding dusk of night and advancing light of day and described how the advent of morning light would lift the curtain spread out by the dark night. The sun would function and do its duty; its coming would spread light all over the land and whatever good or bad had remained secreted in the night would become visible in its true form and colour. Nature and atmosphere would become enlivened, but what about man? Would man continue in his trance or would he wake up and realise the purpose behind his creation? The sleeping and numb humanity would become active only if the desire for a dynamic life is resuscitated and revitalised in him. If man remained apathetic, the vitality and vigour instilled into Nature by the arrival of daylight will be of no avail. These descriptions of variegated scenes of Nature are as vivid, precise and detailed as those of Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson, but Iqbal goes beyond the objectivity of descriptions and becomes involved with human existence and the action and reaction of association between man and Nature. Wordsworth and Shelley too were interested in man's life on earth, but they wrote about the effect of Nature on man's mental and moral reaction. They were poets of Nature no doubt, but not poets of man. Even in the poems written before 1905 Iqbal showed deep interest in the association of man and Nature. He had deep and genuine love for Nature, but he was more concerned with the environmental effects which Nature had on the human self in its material as well as spiritual existence.

He says about "Sunset on the Banks of the River Ravi": "All the wonderful booklore in your library is not worth one glorious sunset on the banks of the Ravi."⁴⁷⁸

سکوتِ شام میں محوِ سرود ہے راوی
 نہ پوچھ مجھ سے جو ہے کیفیت مرے دل کی

شرابِ سرخ سے رنگیں ہوا ہے دامنِ شام

⁴⁷⁸ Javid Iqbal, Ed., [Iqbal] *Stray Reflections* (Lahore : Sh. Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1961), p. 131.

لیے ہے پیرِ فلکِ دستِ رعشہ دار میں جام

رواں ہے سینہ دریا پہ اک سفینہ تیز
ہوا ہے موج سے ملاح جس کا گرم ستیز⁴⁷⁹

[The Ravi bubbles onwards in the tranquil twilight,

Words fail to express its effect on my heart...

The expanse of evening is tinged with the colour of red wine,

The aged sky holds the wine-cup in its palsied hand...

A boat sails fast on the expanse of the river,

The mariner struggles against the waves.]

So far the verses give a good word-picture of the scene presented by the river in the twilight calm of the evening, but in the last verse quoted below Iqbal takes a turn — Nature and man, environment and the human are juxtaposed:

شکست سے یہ کبھی آشنا نہیں ہوتا

نظر سے چھپتا ہے لیکن فنا نہیں ہوتا⁴⁸⁰

[It never suffers defeat,

May become hidden from sight, but is never destroyed.]

The boat sailing on the expanse of water becomes a symbolic representation of the boat of life which in the expanse of time and space is

⁴⁷⁹ *Bāng-i Darā*,

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

always moving ahead. The journey's end may be death, but Iqbal's faith in the better life to come is firm; death may bring a change, but the human ego is indestructible.

Iqbal passed the first eighteen years of his life in Sialkot (1877 to 1895) Sialkot was then not the big and bloated city of today. It was a small town on the borders of Kashmir. Green fields rolled right up to the walls and doors of houses in the outskirts of the town. Nature encircled the city on all sides and there were many small gardens in the town and from his early childhood Iqbal got plenty of chances to absorb the beauties of Nature. In 1895 he came to Lahore which was then actually a city of gardens. It was a Lahore different from the Lahore of today. It was a quieter and a greener city. The walled city which is now called "Old City" was much more populous and was the centre of all social, political, cultural and religious activities. It was surrounded by a green belt with tall trees and plethora of rose and jasmine bushes. A canal flowed bubbling in this garden. There were many more gardens along the Mall and the Lower Mall. You paid a few annas, hired a tonga and in less than half an hour crossed the old bridge on the Ravi and found yourself in the midst of pure Nature and in front of you stretched the kaleidoscopic panorama of Nature which in beauty was second to none you found anywhere in the world. It was Nature *par excellence*. The Ravi meandered on and when not in spate its flow was so slow that the onward movement was scarcely perceptible. It carried for itself the often used title — the sleeping river — the story-teller which had enshrined in its bed the tales of past glory and distress, joys and sorrows, conquests and defeats. Orchards alternated with cultivated fields: grassy meadows at many places merged into deep thickets of tall trees and shrubs. The whole scene had about it a charm — it was picturesque as well as romantic. The poet's highly sensitive and deeply observant mind could not remain unaffected by this beautiful flora and fauna.

Iqbal stayed in Lahore for the rest of his life excepting the three years he passed in England and Europe where he studied for his Doctorate in Philosophy and a few other comparatively briefer periods of visits to Western countries for political reasons. He was endowed with wonderful powers of observation and fine sensibilities and whatever he observed he retained all its details in his retentive memory. In Europe he travelled throughout England,

Germany, France and Spain and came into contact with Nature in all its variegated aspects. These scenes and pictures remained stored in his memory and he could recall and reproduce them in his poems with the added shine of his subjective apprehension of what was beautiful. In his poems pictures of Nature come racing one after the other and the cumulative effect created is one not only of a detailed and faithful representation of the multifarious aspects of Nature, but also has about it a touch of objective reality. His pictures of Nature are true and lifelike and never smell of the lamp. Iqbal's world of Nature is not a world of phantasy; it is a world of factual realities and even the minutest detail is not left out.

نہر ہا گردنہ در گلزار ہا	لالہ ہا آسودہ در کہسار ہا
از دمِ قدوسیاں او را کشودا ⁴⁸¹	غنچہ ہائے سرخ و اسپید و کبود

[Hills abounded with full-blown tulips,
Canals meandered through flower-beds.
Red, white, blue flowers were in plenty,
The breath of angels made them bloom.]

پھول صحرا میں یا پریاں قطار اندر قطار
اودے اودے نلے نیلے پیلے پیلے پیرہن ⁴⁸²

[Flowers in the wilderness or fairies row after row,
Wearing violet, blue and yellow garments.]

برق اندر ظلمتش گم کردہ تاب	آن ہوائے تند و آن شبگون سحاب
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⁴⁸¹ *Jāvid Nāmāh*, p. 180.

⁴⁸² *Bāl-i Jibril*, p. 48.

چاک دامان و گھر کم ریختہ! ⁴⁸³

قلزمے اندر ہوا آویختہ

[A violent wind blew and clouds were black as night,
The pitch black of the cloud dimmed the shine of lighting.
It was an ocean hung up in the air,
Torn at places but few drops had fallen.]

The poet has to forge a contact between his inner self and the world around him. The deeper this contact is, the more effective the poet's expression of his ideas becomes. Iqbal is primarily the poet of life and man and for him the external world — Nature — is one of those agencies that provide incentives for the evolution of the ever-growing self. Proper understanding of the ego and evaluation of its qualities is not possible without a proper and thorough understanding of Nature, because Nature is an integral part of the environment in which the ego lives and evolves. The world of Nature and the human ego are undeniably interrelated and each exercises a potential influence on the other.

The impact of the ego on the world of Nature and environmental conditions and the corresponding impact of Nature and environmental conditions on the ego activates a chain of reactions which become the source of all creative activity — ethical, moral, rationalistic and social. If this action and reaction is perfect, it brings about a unity of purpose and the actual becomes one with the ideal. Thus a unity comes into being between the human self and Nature and this is the source of all good creative art. The inspired artist is attracted by the beauty of Nature, his keen senses enable him to observe all its details; but this is a purely objective activity. The procedure of expression, in words or colour, is a complex procedure, the subjective becomes fused with the objective and work of art created by him is a representation of the actual as well as the ideal. The world created by the artist is more beautiful and also more perfect. It is an integrated representation of the world of reality and the poet's ideal.

⁴⁸³ *Jāvid Nāmāh*, p. 100.

جهانِ رنگ و بو گلدسته ما	ز ما آزاد و بزم وابسته ما
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[The world of colours and odours is a bouquet in our hands,
It may be beyond us, but is inalienably bound to us.]

خودی او را به یک تارِ نگاه بست	زمین و آسمان مهر و ماه بست
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[The ego grasps and holds it by a single look,
The earth, the sky, the sun and moon all are bound to us.]

دلِ ما را به او پوشیده راه ست	که هر موجود ممنونِ نگاه ست
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[Our hearts have secret communion with them,
All actualities depend on our observing looks.]

گر او را کس نه بیند زار گردد	اگر بیندیم و کھسار گردد
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[If their charms remain unobserved they are distraught,
When observed these become oceans and green hills.]

جهان غیر از تجلیِ ہائے ما نیست	کہ بے ما جلوهٔ نور و صدا نیست
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[Deprived of the effulgence of our light this world would be naught,
In our absence there can be no display of light or sound.]

Iqbal's descriptions are always subjective because he had that higher faculty — a perception that was beyond mere sensuous observation. In his vision he could look into the life of things. The actual object became of

secondary importance and the poet's discerning eye penetrated to the core and found that reality which eluded the observation of the ordinary man. It was a kind of mystic experience which at its highest became ecstasy. Spiritual interpretations pervade his poems of Nature. The dawn for him re-mains not merely a pageant of colour; it becomes a movement of Divine consecration. As his genius matured vitalism, desire for reform became inseparably integrated with his Nature poetry. His descriptions of cloud, moon, nightingale, glowworm, tulip, all serve as media for his message exhorting the reader to adopt a life of action and higher ideals.

In his poem "Morning Breeze," he says:

یہ سبزہ غلظم و بر شاخِ لاله می پیچم
 کہ رنگ و بوز مساماتِ او بر انگیزم
 خمیده تا نشود شاخِ او ز گردشِ من
 به برگِ لاله و گل نرم نرمک آویزم
 چو شاعر می ز غمِ عشق در خروش آید
 نفسِ نفس به نوا بانی او در آمیزم!⁴⁸⁴

[I roll on the verdure and revolve on the tulip branch,
 Thus I stimulate these to give forth their colours and smells.
 Delicately I touch the petals of the rose and the tulip,
 Thus my movements do not twist the delicate branches.
 When the poet becomes frenzied with the sorrow of love,
 Breath by breath I become one with his songs.]

Imagery in *Iqbal's Nature Poetry and His Use of Similes and Metaphors*. Iqbal draws his similes and metaphors from life and Nature and his pictorial imagery makes his poems effective in description as well as lends them an

⁴⁸⁴ *Payām-i Mashriq*, p. 116.

additional charm and grace. His poetic similitudes are not only highly suggestive in comparison; these are expressed in language which makes all the points of similarity more pronounced. These are, in fact, an expression of the poet's yearning to visualise life and Nature in a more evolved and more perfected form. The poet's soul is ever eager, restless and aspiring for more perfect and more beautiful. For Iqbal perfection is beauty and we may call it the scientific note in his poetry. He is entranced by the beauty of the twinkling star, but he knows that it is not the only star. It is one out of myriads of galaxies scattered in the firmament. His craving is for the infinite and nothing would satisfy him less than the whole of "the heaven's embroidered cloth". He aspires for the limitless. Notice the images evoked here:

دریائے پُر خروش! ز بند و شکن گذشت
 از رنگ نائے وادی و کوه و دمن گذشت
 یکساں چو سیل کرده نشیب و فراز را
 از کاخ شاه و باره و کشت و چمن گذشت
 بے تاب و تند و تیز و جگر سوز و بیقرار
 در پر زمان به تازه رسید از کهن گذشت
 زی بحرِ بیکرانہ چہ مسـتانه میـرود
 در خود یگانہ از ہمہ بے گانہ می رود⁴⁸⁵

[The tumultuous river crossed obstacles and ridges,
 Passed through the narrow vale and over hills and dales.
 Flooded the high and low places alike,
 Passed by the field, the garden, the castle and palace of king.
 Restless, fluxed, swift, violent as if in pain it went,

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 152.

Every moment leaving the old to new it went.

The voluminous water flowed like mad,

Complete in itself and regardless of all else.]

These verses are a beautiful description of the passage of a river from its source to the sea. The lines, however, are equally well applicable to human life: the temporal sojourn on earth and pass-age through variegated scenes of life. The soul journeys through life and meets joys and sorrows, successes and failures, disease and good health, good and evil, sin and virtue, love and hatred and finally attains union with the ultimate and the absolute. The entire period of its journey through life is a period of flux, storm and stress. Like the tumultuous river life is never static because dynamic vitalism is the very secret of its being.

Descriptive verses lie scattered in profusion in every poem written by Iqbal — you can choose at will:

مہر روشن چھپ گیا اٹھی نقابِ روئے شام

شانہ ہستی پہ بکھرا ہوا گیسوئے شام⁴⁸⁶

[The bright sun has set and the veil is lifted from the face of evening,

All over the world black tresses of evening are spread.]

طشتِ گردوں میں ٹپکتا ہے شفق کا خونِ ناب

نشرِ قدرت نے کیا کھولی ہے فصدِ آفتاب؟⁴⁸⁷

[The blood of twilight falls drop by drop into the plate of sky,

It appears as if Nature has let the blood of the sun with a lancet!]

⁴⁸⁶ *Bāng-i Darā*, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Every single verse of the poem “Glowworm”⁴⁸⁸ given below has a simile or metaphor and these heighten the effect of images evoked:

جگنو کی روشنی ہے کاشانہ چمن میں
یا شمع جل رہی ہے پھولوں کی انجمن میں؟
آیا ہے آسمان سے اڑ کر کوئی ستارہ
یا جان پڑ گئی ہے مہتاب کی کرن میں؟
یا شب کی سلطنت میں دن کا سفر آیا؟
غربت میں آگے چمکا گمنام تھا وطن میں
تکمہ کوئی گرا ہے مہتاب کی قبا کا؟
ذرہ ہے یا نمایاں سورج کے پیرہن میں؟

[Is it the light shed by the glowworm in the garden,

Or is it a candle lighted in the midst of flowers?

Some star has flown down from the sky,

Or has some bright sunbeam come to life?

Perhaps in the dominion of night he is an ambassador of the day,

Has remained unnoticed at home and came into limelight in a foreign land.

Is it a strap fallen from the cloak of the moon,

Or has an atom become incandescent in the garment of the sun?]

Imagery in Iqbal's poems is expressed through similes which are drawn from real life and have a direct bearing on the subject. The real and the metaphorical, the actual and the imagined are epitomised and his knowledge of Nature and the world around him being deep as well as real, these

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 83.

comparisons and images evoked are real and lifelike. His similes and metaphors do not sprout and one comparison does not lead to another and thus bring into being a chain of comparisons in which the actual and the real be-comes obscured in the labyrinths of the imagined and the unreal. Iqbal always bases his comparisons on objective similarities and for this reason succeeds in effectively illustrating the basic qualities and attributes of objects, actions and events, which form the subject of such comparisons. Most Nature poetry is objective and suggests an acceptance of what he sees or hears or feels in Nature and the world around him. The peace and quiet of Nature, its violence and even the fear inspired by it, the cottages, the orchards, the hedgerows, the sounding cataract; the turbulent stream, the tall rocks, the gloomy and dark woods are described in words. Most poets remain content with giving word-pictures and do not in any way humanise it or try to get any kind of assurance from it. Iqbal's descriptions of Nature, on the other hand, however objective these may be, are visualised in a broader perspective ; objectivity is blended with a highly subjective understanding of man's association with his environment and for depicting this fusion of the objective and the real with the subjective and the visualised similes and metaphors are perhaps the best media of expression. Below is a rare example of symbolic representation of transitoriness of human life and man's helplessness in the face of elemental forces of Nature. The morning star is taken as the symbol, but there is no abstractness or obscurity about what Iqbal has said. It is good descriptive poetry and its symbolism is an additional attribute:

ستاره صبح کا روتا تھا اور یہ کہتا تھا
 ملی نگاہ مگر فرصتِ نظر نہ ملی
 ہوئی بے زندہ دم آفتاب سے ہر شے
 اماں مجھی کو تہِ دامنِ سحر نہ ملی

بساط کیا ہے بھلا صبح کے ستارے کی
نفسِ حبابِ کاء، تابندگی شرارے کی⁴⁸⁹

[The morning star wept and said,

Alas! I was blessed with vision but had not time enough to observe and see.

The breath of the rising sun will enliven all things,

I alone am unsafe after dawn.

The morning star is not of much consequence,

It is the whif' of the air in a bubble and glow of a flame.]

جس طرح ڈوبتی ہے کشتی سمینِ قمر
نورِ خورشید کے طوفان میں ہنگامِ سحر⁴⁹⁰

[Watch the silver boat of moon sinking at dawn,

In the flux of light of the morning sun.]

بنگر کہ جوئے آبِ چہ مستانہ می رود
مانندِ کہکشاں بر گیہانِ مرغزار
در خوابِ ناز بود بہ گہوارہٗ سحاب
وا کرد چشمِ شوق بہ آغوشِ کوہسار
از سنگِ ریزہٗ نغمہ کشاید خرام او
سیمائے او چو آئینہ بے رنگ و بے غبار⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

⁴⁹¹ *Payām-i Mashriq*, p. 151.

[Look how beautifully and like the milky way
The stream meanders through the meadow.
It was fast asleep in the cradle of the cloud,
When it awakened — it was in the lap of the mountain.
Its motion brings forth music from the pebbles and,
Its crystal clear water is like a clean mirror.]

صد نالۂ شبگیرے، صد صبح بلا خیزے
صد آہ شرر ریزے، یک شعرِ دل آویزے⁴⁹²

[A hundred cries which break the silence of night,
a hundred dawns with all their commotion,
A hundred sighs which belch forth sparks, are all taken together equal to
one inspired verse.]

Thus it is through effective comparisons that the poet gives expression
to his thoughts. The same pattern is followed in de-scribing the appearance
the spirit of India in *Javid Nāmah*:

آسمان شق گشت و حورے پاک زاد
پرده را از چہرہ خود بر کشاد⁴⁹³

[The sky split asunder, a beautiful hourie appeared,
And removed the veil from her face.]

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁹³ *Javid Nāmah*, p. 168.

Comparisons give the poetic expression a wider and broader effect because the emotional effect of the scene is juxtaposed against its objective and realistic description.

Similes and metaphors used by Iqbal are single as well as dual. خود آب ز is an example of single comparison. The milky way in the sky and the transparent water of the stream have many points of similarity برف نے سر سر دستارِ فضیلت تیرے سر باندھی ہے is a dual comparison, The peaks of the Himalayas are compared to heads and the mark of distinction of its great height is provided by the turban like white snow that covers it.

مرنے والوں کی جبین روشن ہے اس ظلمات میں
جس طرح تارے چمکتے ہیں اندھیری رات میں⁴⁹⁴

The darkness after death is compared to pitch dark night and the bright foreheads of the dead to the bright stars in the firmament. Here again we have dual comparison. The dark night is compared to the darkness of death and the bright incandescent stars are compared to the luminous memories of the dead. The cumulative effect is one of amalgamation of Nature with life. Nature in Iqbal is not the background against which is depicted the drama of life. Nature is an active participant in human life. Compared with the darkness of night the darkness of the world of the dead appears darker and compared with the shining stars the luminosity of the remembrance of the dead becomes enhanced:

زندگی کی آگ کا انجام خاکستر نہیں!
ٹوٹا جس کا مقدر ہو، یہ وہ گوہر نہیں!

زندگی محبوب ایسی دیدہ قدرت میں ہے
ذوقِ حفظِ زندگی ہر چیز کی فطرت میں ہے⁴⁹⁵

[If the fire of life were to end in cinders and ashes,

Then life would not have been a pure unbreakable pearl.

In the eyes of Nature life is so precious and so dear,

That it has made desire for survival a part of the nature of all things created.]

In the above two verses the outstanding simile is the comparison made between life and a perfect pearl, Life is incandescent and burns at white heat and so is the pearl bright and radiates light. Life would not burn itself to ashes and a perfect pearl will never be cut or broken. The more perfect a pearl is, the more its value and the longer its life. Perfectibility of the pearl was a sure defence from destruction and decay. Human life attains immortality through stress and exertion which make it more perfect. It is through perfectibility that human self becomes immortal and the pearl immune from decay and destruction and the comparison is complete because the similitude is quite pronounced. Iqbal's comparisons are neither far-fetched nor artificial, because they are almost always taken either from life or from Nature.

Iqbal is always after total and effective comparisons and for this reason he tries to bring in dual similes which produce a cumulative effect realistic similitude, e.g.:

پتیاں پھولوں کی گرتی ہیں خزاں میں اس طرح
دستِ طفلِ خفته سے رنگیں کھلونے جس طرح⁴⁹⁶

[Flower petals fall in autumn,

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 165.

As do coloured toys from the hand of a child asleep.]

To the casual reader the comparisons appear single but actually these are dual. Falling petals of flowers are compared to toys and this is a single simile; the autumn is compared to the hand of a sleeping child. "Flower petals fall in autumn as do coloured toys from the hands of a child asleep." This again is apparently a single comparison; the effect is cumulative. Flower petals are coloured and toys are also coloured. The sleeping child has no idea that toys are falling from his hand. On the other hand, petals fall in autumn but autumn is not conscious of being the agency that makes the petals fall. The two points of similarity weld into one component simile and produce that total effect wherein lies the success of the comparison.

From among the Romantics Shelley is considered to be the best in the art of using similes and metaphors and he does make an ingenious use of comparisons in some of his poems. I quote below four verses from his famous poem "Ode to the West Wind":

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;

What if my leaves are falling like its own,

The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone.

This is a complete comparison- the spirit of the poet and tumultuous West wind have points of similarity which any student of Shelley knows and is familiar with; but Shelley is not always so successful. In him the visionary becomes predominant to the exclusion of all his other attributes as poet. His similes sprout and the poem loses that realistic apprehension of facts which is the basic criterion of all good poetry. This bifurcation of one simile into two and of two into more is the real cause of that ethereal thinness of ideas of some of Shelley's poems. The poet is carried away by his imaginal and the reals become unreal, the concrete abstract and the reader feels lost in a maze of unknown and unfamiliar representations which obscure the theme of the poem. It was this over-liberal use of similes and metaphors which earned for Shelley the appellation of an "ineffectual angel beating his wings in the void in vain". Shelley's grasp of the world of realities was never firm or secure. His imagination soared so fast and so high that it became impossible for the average reader to keep pace with. The reader is in most cases left far behind,

mystified and guessing. Comparisons, instead of elucidating the theme, made it more obscure and unintelligible.

Iqbal, on the other hand, holds the world of matter in as much reverence as the world of imagination and vision. The transcendental and the world of basic facts are for him equally important because one complements the other. The ego and the environment in which he lives are both essential perquisites to generate the evolutionary process by which both attain perfection. For this reason he is always fastidiously careful in the choice of his comparisons. He does not split hairs and is never vague or ambiguous. He knows that Nature is allergic to repetitions, no two things in the world are identically similar, so broad points of similarity are enough to provide a good comparison.

Iqbal had full command over the Arabic language and his poetry of Nature shows unmistakable signs that he had learnt a lot from the great Arabic poets. This impact of Arabic poetry is often evident in his use of similes and metaphors.

تیری بنا پائیدار، تیرے ستون بے شمار
شام کے صحرا میں ہو جیسے ہجومِ تخیل⁴⁹⁷

[Your foundation is solid and your pillars numerous,
Pillars look like a grove of palms in the Syrian Sahara.]

English and German literature as well as philosophy were subjects in which Iqbal developed an interest from his college days. He had read English poetry as well as German poetry and its goods features are often emulated by him. The comparisons introduced in the verses quoted below have about them a touch of Western thought:

آدمی کے ریشے ریشے میں سما جاتا ہے عشق

⁴⁹⁷ *Bāl-i Jibril*, p. 130.

شاخ گل میں جس طرح بادِ سحر گاہی کا غم⁴⁹⁸

[Love permeates into the blood-stream of man,
Just as the moisture of the zypher enters the flower twig.]

Comparisons in these verses have nothing oriental about them and are inspired by Iqbal's intimate association with Western art, literature and philosophy. This was an addition to Urdu poetry and proved an attractive orientation of thought. Later poets have all made use of this occidentalisation of similes and it had found popularity with readers of Urdu literature.

There is one more category of similes and metaphors in which comparisons are introduced with birds or animals symbolising some particular attributes or characteristics of behaviour. Urdu, Persian and Arabic poets are very fond of making comparisons with pigeons, doves, peacocks, nightingales, pheasants, deer, ante-lopes and stags, but Iqbal departed from these conventional comparisons. He brought in a new set of birds and animals which are just the opposite in characteristics and habits from the birds and animals which had found place in conventional Eastern poetry. The birds and animals which attract him most are the eagle, falcon, tiger and the lion. This evoked sharp reaction among a particular group of critics, who said that the philosopher-poet was setting the clock back. He was taking the people back to prehistoric times by eulogising and making popular the savagery and brutishness of tigers and eagles. These critics failed to grasp the real significance of the comparisons because they detached the simile from its context and background. Iqbal is not enamoured of the blood-thirsty and destructive propensities of these birds and animals. He admires them rather for their love of freedom, will power, determination and their love for action and dynamic attitude towards life. It is not the eagle's ferocity or love for destruction which Iqbal likes in this bird. It is the bird's love for action, self-reliance, love for liberty and fearlessness which attract him.

گزر اوقات کر لیتا ہے یہ کوہ و بیابان میں

⁴⁹⁸Ibid., p. 51.

کہ شاہیں کے لیے ذلت ہے کارِ آشیاں بندی⁴⁹⁹

[It manages to past time in the mountains and barren places,
It is degrading for the eagle to stoop to nest building.]

Dr Yūsuf Ḥusain Khān is of the view that the eagle is the favourite bird of Iqbal because this bird is a symbol of power and action and it is round power, action and self-reliance that Iqbal's philosophy of self and the evolutionary processes leading to the perfection of the ego revolve.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 21.