

VARIS ALAVI

Gabriel and Lucifer^{*}

IN all world literature, it is difficult to find an example that stands up to Iqbāl's poem "Jibrīl-o-Iblīs"¹ (Gabriel and Satan). Lucifer has been the subject of numerous poems and plays in European literature but none reaches the heights of Iqbāl's poem. It seems that Iqbāl has packed much more into his poem, and with greater profundity, than that which Goethe, Valéry, Bernard Shaw and others have sought to say about Satan through their plays. In its underlying meaning, this poem is a microcosm. Here, philosophical contemplation—on myths spread over ages, on the central beliefs of great religions, the mystery of the cosmos, and the enigma of existence—transforms itself into such a ray of creative reflection that it illuminates each word of the poem with a new insight.

The diction of the entire poem is characterized by the use of allusions (*talmīḥ*). For instance, "*ḥamdām-e dērīna*" (old companion), "*jabān-e raṅg-o-bū*" (the world of colors and scents), "*inkār*" (refusal), "*maqāmāt-e buland*" (exalted stations), "*ḥashm-e yazdān*" (eyes of the Almighty), "*farishtōn kī ābrū*" (honor of angels), "*aflāk*" (heavens), "*ālam-e bē-kākh-o-kū*" (world devoid of habitation), "*khair-o-shar*" (good and evil), "*dil-e yazdān*" (heart of the Almighty), "*qisṣa'-e Ādam*" (Adam's episode). The metaphors in the poem, too, maintain a system of clues referring back to a past event: "*kar gayā sarmast mujḥkō tūt kar merā subū*" (by shattering, my wineglass has left me in a state of sweet inebriation), "*mērē*

^{*} Vāriṣ 'Alavī, "Iblīs aur Gibrīl," in *Bādbān* 5 (July 97–Sept. 98), 164–78.

¹ Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl, Urdū* (Lahore: Shaikh Gulām 'Alī and Sons, 1975), 435–6. [The poem itself in Urdu script along with an English translation by V.G. Kiernan appear in the Appendix at the back of this article. They have been added by the Editor.] For a discussion of this poem, see *Tulip in the Desert: A Selection of the Poetry of Muḥammad Iqbāl*, tr. and ed. by Mustansir Mir (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 35–42.

*fitnē jāma*²-e ‘*aql-o-khirad kā tār-o-pū*’ (my shenanigans—a fabric spun from the warp and woof of pure intellect), “*qiṣṣa-e Ādam kō raṅgīn kar gayā kiskā labū*” (whose blood has made Adam’s episode so colorful?).

Words with a mythical charge and allusions to a past event combine to produce such beauty in the lines that it doesn’t vanish in barren ambiguity, but rather glows with meaningful understanding. After all, such allusions are part of our collective psyche. Even though the entire poem is suffused with philosophical speculation, it is not encumbered by even the slightest trace of abstract thought. Its entire wealth of reflection is located in the heart of key religious concepts that are an inalienable part of our cultural memory. Thus the poem’s reflective content reaches us in the form of felt experience. Metaphors, apart from being embellishments, also work towards expressing thought. And since thought is fixed in an event, and the event in a myth, the meaning does not suffer any confusion, abstruseness, or non-communication, even when it spreads out in labyrinthine fashion. Take this couplet, for instance: “*Āh, ay Jibrīl, tū wāqif nabīn is rāz sē*” (Oh, Gabriel, you are not privy to this secret)—Which secret?—“*kar gayā sarmast mujh kō tūt kar merā subū*” (by shattering, my wineglass has left me in a state of sweet inebriation). Here, even the secret has been explained by recourse to a metaphor which ends in a paradox. How can the cup intoxicate anyone by shattering into fragments? But this contradiction begins to take on meaning if we are familiar with the story of Lucifer’s refusal, and his subsequent eternal damnation. This familiarity, however, clarifies merely one element of the metaphor, namely, the breaking of the wineglass. The other element—that which refers to intoxication—does not relate so much to the myth as it does to the philosophical underpinnings of the Satanic episode—that is, his refusal and fall—which is entirely Iqbāl’s own. Although a part of Iqbāl’s own philosophy, this particular meaning has been expressed in the poem in words that demand a philosophical gloss. And those words are: “*Sōz-o-sāz-o-dard-o-dāg-o-justajū-o-ārzu*” (“[In] fire and rage and grief and pain and longing [drowned]”²). But since these words are borrowed from the fundamental enigma and experience of human existence, it is possible to surmise their meaning without any philosophical exposition. These words are a commentary on the phenomenal world, compared to which, the dreary landscape of the non-inhabited other world comes across as hopelessly silent and desolate. This intrinsic association elucidates the metaphor of intoxication through the shattering of the wineglass. It is as if the

²Kiernan’s translation, for which see the Appendix.

poetic metaphor is indebted equally to religious myths, the philosophical outlook of the poet, and the poetic diction for its expressive significance. Despite these intricacies, the style of the poem is lucid enough and transparent to the extent that it settles in the mind like a dramatic dialogue—a clear evidence of the miraculous simplicity of great art.

Right at the very beginning of the poem, Gabriel addresses Lucifer as “*hamdam-e dairīna*” (old friend). The entire fable of the mentor of angels, prostration to Adam, Lucifer’s refusal, and the divine wrath is here compressed within just these two words. Gabriel’s tone is full of the tenderness and warmth of a protracted fellowship. Both have gone their separate ways, they have parted company, but the fragrance of old friendship still lingers on. Gabriel’s tone also has gentle shades of the sympathy that one feels on the defeat and chastisement of a conceited and rebellious companion. To inquire after Lucifer’s welfare amounts to throwing salt on his wounds, exactly as if one were to inquire after the well-being of a friend returned from a failed foreign enterprise. Such occasions call for an impersonal inquiry. Something like, “So how did you like the new country?” would be more appropriate. The answer would inevitably reveal what went wrong. Consequently, Gabriel inquires about “*jahān-e raṅg-o-bū*” (the world of colors and scents)—a phrase that is not just beautiful but also quite meaningful for *this* earth. Here, however, as Gabriel expresses it, it takes on a faint shade of irony in the sense that, as compared to the abode of light and eternity that he inhabits, and from which Lucifer has been banished, earth is but a deceptive and transient abode of enchantment perceived through colors and scents.

In a counter move, Lucifer effectively neutralizes the sting of the taunt—after all, his thought is propelled forward by the tremendous reflective power of Iqbāl. He avoids entering into any theoretical debate with Gabriel for he feels that both of them now inhabit mutually exclusive worlds, and in all probability what he wants to communicate may be utterly beyond Gabriel’s comprehension. In the phrase “*Āh, ay Jibrīl, tū vāqif nahīn is rāz sē*” (Oh, Gabriel, you are not privy to this secret), the exclamation “Oh” accentuates the lamentably incommunicable situation between them. Lucifer, thus, expresses himself on an exclusively emotional plane by exclaiming: “*ab yabān mēri guzar mumkin nahīn, mumkin nahīn*” (“Impossible, oh! Impossible I should dwell here again.”)³

Why is it impossible? Because the loneliness, the existence bereft of desire which pervades paradise is not acceptable to him anymore. Be-

³*Ibid.*

cause (and Iqbal's thought takes over Lucifer's) "*khaṭar-pasand ṭabī‘at kō sāzgār nabīn*) / *vō gulistān ke na hō jiskī ghāt mēn ṣayyād*"⁴ (a garden that is not hounded by the fowler is unbecoming of a daring disposition); or, "*isī kashmakash mēn guzrīn mērī zindagī kī rātēn* / *kabhī sōz-o-sāz-e Rūmī, kabhī pēč-o-tāb-e Rāzī*"⁵ (Now anguished like Rūmī, now perplexed and restless like Rāzī—these are the dilemmas in which I've spent my nights).

But these are Iqbal's thoughts. Lucifer doesn't relate them to Gabriel. He even doubts whether Gabriel, who hasn't experienced his fate, can understand such matters. So, rather than resort to metaphysical thought, Lucifer merely lays bare his feelings:

*ab yabān mērī guzar mumkin nabīn, mumkin
nabīn
kis qadar khāmōsh hai ye ‘ālam-e bē-kākh-o-kū*
Impossible, oh! Impossible I should dwell here
again;
Silent, how silent all this realm—no palace, no
loud lane!⁶

Lucifer is terrified by the all-pervasive silence. What kind of silence? Of course one that is devoid of dynamic life, which reverberates throughout Iqbal's poetry, though it is uncharacteristically absent in this poem. It is as if a commanding familiarity with Iqbal's other verse is imperative for the understanding of this poem. The deeper meaning of "*‘ālam-e bē-kākh-o-kū*" does not lie so much in its allusion as it does in the implied suggestion that the world is not brought to life by the cherubim.

*Quṣūr-vār-e ġaribu'd-diyār hūn lēkin
Tirā kharāba farishtē na kar sakē ābād*⁷
Guilty of being a stranger though I am;
You couldn't get the angels to settle your
wasteland [and make it lively]

⁴Iqbal 1975, 300.

⁵*Ibid.*, 309.

⁶Kiernan's translation.

⁷Iqbal 1975, 300.

In other words, the angelic world carries the look of a deserted place and, in spite of their presence, is haunted by deathly silence because it is woefully empty of effervescent life, which results from the emotions of anguish and pain.

So the words employed by Iqbāl in this poem carry a literal meaning, a referential meaning, and also a meaning that the poet alone has imparted to them. In poetry, the active word is the one which, instead of reflecting a fossilized meaning, brings a series of associations into motion through which a tapestry of interwoven, intrinsic relationships begins to emerge. Take the word *inkār* (refusal) for instance: “*khō diyē inkār sē tū nē maqāmāt-e buland*” (you let go of lofty stations by your refusal). Here the meaning of the word *inkār*, as much as the meaning of the entire line, is quite explicit. However, for a person who is not familiar with Semitic or Islamic traditions, the line will make no great sense. Therefore the word “refusal” contains within it the entire episode of Adam’s creation, Lucifer’s refusal, and Adam’s fall. But among the semantic heterogeneities that emerge from this word, there is also the suggestion—afforded in both certain Qur’ānic commentaries (*tafāsīr*) and Iqbāl’s own poetry—that Lucifer’s refusal to bow to Adam is an affirmation of God’s unity, for all prostrations and bowings are made exclusively to Him. Such an explication invests Lucifer’s character with an endearing rakishness and a new dignity. While the reader is fully aware of this quality, Gabriel has no notion of it. The word “refusal” carries a linear meaning for him, which bespeaks his one-dimensional existence. In light of interpretation and exegesis, it transforms Gabriel’s vision into little more than the naïve concern of an older comrade.

Further, Iqbāl’s particular metaphysics invests the word *inkār* (refusal) with a color all its own. Semantically speaking, this metaphysics does not interpret Lucifer’s refusal, his decline, and Adam’s fall in quite the same way as Semitic and Islamic traditions do. In Iqbāl’s approach, the entire fable unfolds as a pleasant experience prompted by the creation of Adam, and of a world of colors and scents. If this metaphysical premise is not foregrounded in the reader’s consciousness and, if the reader is not aware of the poet’s intentions, then, like a rigid clergyman who only takes into account the literal and referential meanings of a text, he is likely to arrive at a totally flawed interpretation of the poem. In Lucifer’s discourse, he will see only refractoriness, hauteur, rebellion, depravity, and a conglomeration of evil intentions against the Divine Order. People have gone even so far as to comment, although in hushed tones, that Iqbāl has gone off the rails in this poem and allowed himself to

be led astray by Satan. No wonder that this poem has put quite a few religious zealots out of ease.

If we want to derive true pleasure from the poem, we need to acquaint ourselves with Iqbāl's philosophy; indeed we need to be in mental accord with many facets of that philosophy. It should not be too difficult to effect such mental accord because Iqbāl has grounded his speculation in the realities of life. Be they *sōz-o-sāz* (trials and tribulations), or *dard-o-dāğ* (pain and wounds), or *justajū-o-ārzū* (quest and desire), they all are experiences of life and elements of human nature on which Iqbāl constructs his philosophy of movement and action, evolution and change, creation and building, desire and fulfillment.

It is as if the poem's meaning progresses from the literal to the referential to the symbolic, thereby making its true understanding contingent on familiarity with the poet's personality, his thoughts, and intentions. In this context, we ought to remind ourselves that Milton's creation of Satan was a consequence of his rebellious anti-monarchical stance, and of his political sympathies with Cromwell. But Iqbāl was, in a sense, a monarchist, and his oeuvre contains a number of poems eulogizing kings and nobles. Milton's Satan is founded on the experiences of Milton's own life, whereas Iqbāl's Lucifer seems to rest solely on Iqbāl's philosophical vision. But could one say, just by looking at the poem, that it is a product merely of philosophical speculation? Is it not possible that a perusal of Milton's epic might have provided Iqbāl with the incentive for his own poem? No other poet except Milton has portrayed Lucifer as a rebel and a hero in a war against the unmitigated autocracy of God. Had Iqbāl studied Milton? Who influenced him more, Milton or Goethe? Where else but in the biography of the poet can we find answers to such questions. Before we swallow what all the standard-bearers of Structuralism have to say about a writer's intention and biography, it is best that we proceed with a pinch of cautious skepticism.

In general, all that has been written so far in connection with Lucifer evokes the feeling that it has been written by an adversary (*qalam dar dast-e dushman ast*). While in Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, Satan calls upon Ivan Karamazov in the guise of a courteous and intelligent gentleman. He also carries a dignified air in Goethe and Valéry's "Faust," his reputation in the skies is that of a "rebel" and on earth that of an evil-doer, one who evokes feelings of aversion more than of fear. For Satan is stuck to our being, and thus to be afraid of him amounts to being afraid of our own shadows. And it is easy to ward him off: just recite the holy verse

“*Lā Haul*.” Since Satan seduces us to sin, and sin is pleasurable, hatred towards him is no more intense than aversion to bad company.

Whether we fear and hate Lucifer, or feel disgust and foulness, we never see him as a figure of awe and commanding stature. In the European church dramas of the Middle Ages, he is portrayed merely as a jester who amuses spectators by his pranks and mischief. The dark splendor of evil and rebellion has not been born in him yet. We find this splendor for the first time in the awe-inspiring character of Lucifer in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Here, his character assumes all the glory of a rebel and all the tragic grandeur of a dauntless risk-taker vanquished by a superior force. In Milton, Lucifer’s rebellion against the Almighty is not the metaphysical rebellion of romantic literature whose shades are evident in Byron, Shelley, and de Sade. The mutiny of romantic poets against God is a product of Man’s existential helplessness in this world. Lucifer is, on the contrary, very much a vital part of the cosmic drama. His rebellion is not that of man constrained, but that of one subjugated. A rebellion against the absolute autocracy of God. The Almighty Himself has granted the angels the choice not to carry out His Divine Will. In fact, the very point behind Lucifer’s creation from fire is that he cannot but be rebellious, for insubordination is inherent in his nature. Thus, in response to Lucifer’s contention that God never intended him to prostrate before Adam, Iqbāl, in a poem “*Taqdīr*,” has God counter Lucifer’s contention in the following words:

Pastī-e-fītrat nē sikhḷāʾī hai ye ḥujjat isē
Kabtā hai tērī mashīyat mēñ na thā mērā sujūd
Dē rahā hai apnī āzādī kō majbūrī kā nām
Ẓālim apnē shōʿlaʾ-e-sōzāñ kō khud kabtā hai
dūd⁸

His base nature has taught him to contend thus:

“It was never Your Will for me to prostrate,” he
 says!

He flaunts his volition as a constraint.

Heartless, he calls his red-hot embers merely
 smoke!

With remarkable subtlety Iqbāl thus reveals the reason for the rebelliousness inherent in the Luciferean disposition. To prostrate before Adam who is fashioned from clay runs counter to Lucifer’s fiery nature, and,

⁸*Ibid.*, 509.

hence, he unfolds his majestic refusal. Instead of interpreting this “refusal” philosophically, Milton turns it into an overt rebellion against the absolute power of God. Milton, it is not incorrectly said, was allied to Lucifer’s legions in the dual between Lucifer and God. Milton was a devotee of freedom, a mortal enemy of absolute power, and a standard-bearer of progress and action. In Cromwell’s uprising against the king of England, which eventually resulted in the loss of the monarchy in 1642, Milton fought alongside of Cromwell’s army. Cromwell’s puritan regime lasted a mere eighteen years before meeting its end. So, in a manner of speaking, Milton had been through all the stages of rebellion and degradation of defeat. In *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer’s rebellion against the absolute power of God, the rebel angels’ subsequent rout by His superior force, and Lucifer’s total resolve not to loose heart in the face of defeat—in all these one can easily see the shades of Cromwell’s rebellion and defeat. Nevertheless, in Milton, for the first time, Lucifer does emerge wrapped in the dark beauty of diabolic power. His speech has the fiery turbulence of boiling, gushing lava, and his fiery being spews out words like embers. Progressively, he turns into a deceptive character, a tempter of Adam and Eve, spreading his web of seduction and conspiracy. None of that imposing dignity, arrogance, and lofty stature, so visible in the first two books of the poem, remains. It is as though, by representing Satan for what he is, Milton’s religious conscience sought atonement in the later, relatively diluted poem for his own alliance with him earlier.

Iqbāl, by contrast, does not seek such atonement anywhere in his poetry. The philosophical reason for this is all too evident: by nature Iqbāl worshipped power, even if it resulted from evil, as is manifest in his poem on Mussolini, and due to which he had been accused of fascist sympathies. But it also has an artistic reason to it. All the poems of Iqbāl that deal with Satan are compact and in the form of dramatic dialogue. If he had attempted a long epic, or a narrative poem like Milton, on the myth of Adam, Eve and Lucifer, seeking thereby to explain the enigma of Divine Will to mortals, the demands of religious belief would most likely have left him little room for diabolical musings through philosophical speculation.

In the poem at hand, the dialogue takes place between two equals. Dramatic dialogue demands a constant maintenance of tension and balance, and both Gabriel and Lucifer converse as befits their station and stature. In this mutual back-and-forth, neither seeks to demean the other, but rather together they reflect their mutual difficulty with this entirely unprecedented situation: beyond comprehension for one, incommunica-

ble for the other. As spectators of this drama, we empathize with the concerns of both, even as we feel that both are speaking from two irreconcilable sources of experience.

Gabriel is an angel, one who is especially close to and favored by God. And even though Lucifer, too, was once the mentor of angels, he has now been disgraced. In spite of that, he too enjoys divine closeness in the sense that he forever throbs in the Divine Heart like a thorn. Lucifer is neither remorseful over his sin, nor sorrowful over his damnation, because his refusal and, subsequently, its recompense, has earned him a new world, far more fascinating and full of possibilities than his former abode in the highest heaven. Lucifer, therefore, doesn't envy Gabriel's exalted station. It is a station which resounds with only the interminable litany of *Allāh-hū*, *Allāh-hū*, where there is only obedience and worship, and a quiescence utterly innocent of the kind of dynamic action capable of producing "a new Sinai, a new epiphany" in "each moment."

Lucifer is a force, granted an evil force, and for this very reason capable of perpetual motion, now rising like a tidal wave, now falling; now at rest, now in agitation; alternating continually, between hope and despair, anxiety and the breaking of desire, attainment of purpose and failure. By contrast, how would the world of angels afford such twists and turns, such restlessness and sweet inebriation, such tumults and storms, such a flurry of activity?!

Iqbāl loves power. He is a champion of action and a bard singing melodies of *élan vital*, symbolized for him by the mountain stream, which gushes down in a twisting, swirling, playful manner—and if it rests, it cracks open the very hearts of rocks and mountains. Iqbāl does not seek secure corners; rather, he delights in the thrills of danger. The world, to him, is a field in which lofty aspirations train freely, a battleground where good and evil clash swords. He is not among the nimble residents of the shores who take in the sight of raging storms from a safe distance; rather, he is among those who launch their arks fearlessly into the eye of the storm, without the benefit of a captain, buffeted by punishing winds and harassed by menacing crocodiles. As chastisement, he wouldn't even accept a hell fire that has gone cold.

A passion which is born from a consciousness of life's sorrows—one that teaches the heart to be tender and full of grace so that it may bloom like a rose bud in all situations—is among the assets worth aspiring to in life for Iqbāl. Hence Lucifer's "refusal" turns out to be an unexpected boon: the unveiling of firmly guarded cosmic mysteries before him. His very chastisement becomes his reward, his defeat his completion. He has

no regrets over losing his elevated position in the angelic realm because the fiery substance from which he is forged sees completion not in obedience and submission, but rather in headstrong defiance—the source of perpetual restlessness. This restlessness wrenches the heart away from a quiescent state of being which devotion and sanctity inevitably create, and introduces it to pain, to seeing spring blossoms in what are otherwise festering wounds. Neither Iqbāl nor Lucifer have much use for an obedience and sanctity that lacks a thirst for desire, exhaustion from quest, and a perplexed amazement in the face of knowledge. How incredibly different this Lucifer is, flushed in the face from the heady draught of Iqbāl's philosophy, from the haggard and jaundiced Satan of fables. Iqbāl can make bold before the Almighty: "Lucifer—base and vile—granted, You created him; but it was my embrace which nurtured him to blossoming youth."

In Milton as well as in Iqbāl, Satan appears with the hallmark of a commanding personality which strikes awe in the heart by its sheer dignity and stature. However, this stature begins to shrink as *Paradise Lost* progresses. Not so in Iqbāl's poems. Here, it remains consistently the same. The reason for this, as pointed out above, lies in the difference between the form of an epic and that of a dramatic poem which makes liberal use of dialogue. Milton did make Lucifer a rebel, but the reasons for Lucifer's rebellion were not clear to him. One could say that Milton failed to satisfy certain internal, artistic considerations made necessary by the narrative thrust of his poem. For instance, it is in the nature of an epic narrative to articulate the causes of rebellion and war with clarity and precision so that the intentions of the rival powers can be gauged unequivocally. Only within this framework can a rebel's character hope to lay claim to our sympathies. Because he employs the dramatic and dialogic form in his poems on Satan, Iqbāl has managed to escape the inherent necessity of the narrative poem to articulate the aims and intentions of the warring forces. Nevertheless, these intentions are actually more explicit in Iqbāl than they are in Milton. Iqbāl's mind was absolutely free of any confusion in this regard, because Iqbāl, rising above the plane of religious traditions and lore, viewed the strife between God and Lucifer from a higher philosophical plane as a clash between two cosmic powers. The mystery of Milton's poetic power lies in the majestic and challenging tone of his epic narrative, while that of Iqbāl's lies in the aggressively reflective and dramatic exchanges that occur in his poems. For the success of these exchanges it was imperative that the confrontation between diabolical and divine powers be on an equal footing. Here, too, Iqbāl, rises above relig-

ious beliefs to fulfill the demands of art as well as philosophical reflection—something Milton was not able to do. Though Milton's rebellion is against the unabated absoluteness of God, both he and his Lucifer were so convinced of God's omnipotence that they could not have remained ignorant of the consequences of their hostile gallantry against His all-encompassing power. This is what deprives Satan's rebellion of essential wisdom and foresight. Since the motives for rebellion are clear enough, the cause of rebellion cannot be anything other than the desire to share in the Divine Power and authority. Now, if God is omnipotent, what possible sympathy can we extend to such lust for power and domination?

God didn't want for angels to worship Him. But he did lack someone to love Him and adore His beauty—someone who would be born as Adam. Obviously, Adam could not become *human* without Satan. Adam's creation could not have, all by itself, led to his fall. It is as though Lucifer was, in effect, an instrument to bring the divine plan to fruition. Lucifer's greatest shortcoming was that, in spite of possessing free will, he couldn't place himself outside the orbit of Divine Will—precisely the factor that imparts the lofty stature of a tragic hero to his character. His freedom to choose (*ikhtiyār*) is, in fact, simply to act out the fate predetermined for him (*jabr*). The only reason behind his creation is to perform a specific preassigned role in the drama of creation. He is thus shackled to his role, to his character, to his nature. However, this captivity does not dampen his rebellious vigor: for his battle with God is no longer directly with Him, but is rather fought in the heart of Man. Thus he can continue his work in the hope of inflicting setbacks on God by subduing Man. This would explain his contemptuous disregard alike of angels, prophets and other humans. In his conversation with Gabriel, his entire attitude proclaims his individuality. It is this individuality that sets him apart from the multitude of his fellow angels. He is aware of it, and so are the rest of the angels. This individuality alone can explain his refusal. By affirming, he would have been like any other angel, but by refusing he decisively sets himself apart from the rest of the angels. Now we have God with His individuality on the one hand, and Lucifer with his on the other, and the two are locked in a deathly struggle. With full knowledge that his confrontation is with a vastly superior power and that he has absolutely no chance of gaining the upper hand, Lucifer nonetheless chooses defeat over surrender. Why? Because winning or losing means nothing to a rebel; what does have meaning is challenge, protest, and combat. Rebellion is an affirmation of an individual's personality and ego—the

very same ego and hauteur that drives a tragic character to his inevitable tragic end.

It is for this reason that God enjoins obedience for His worshippers, for the awareness of selfhood always carries within it an element of haughtiness. To affirm that one *is*, is to declare one's selfhood, ego, individuality, and, ultimately, to arrogate all centrality to oneself. Angels do not have such self-awareness. But then, in the absence of such awareness, one can scarcely hope to develop the eye capable of discerning and appreciating beauty—the eye that makes the one engrossed in the contemplation of his own image in a mirror realize that someone else is also an admirer of his boundless beauty. And God knew that such an other was on his way to being born, one who would have not only an eye capable of discerning and admiring beauty, but also pride in his ability to do so. It is as if ego and self-awareness are also parts of God's creative order, and their first expression is made evident in Lucifer's refusal. Through his refusal Lucifer affirms his egoism and is punished for it by God, Who, ironically enough, prefers it for Man because it and it alone endows Man with that *other* self capable of beholding and admiring God's absolute beauty.

In Milton's epic, the battle is conceived on a formal, conventional plane. Lucifer had no conception of God's hidden powers. Little did he know that God carried in his sleeve such tempests of thunder and lightning that would reduce a whole army of satans to utter rout and unmitigated torment. In Iqbāl, Lucifer's battle against God is not physical and military, rather it is fought at the level of element and essence. In Milton, the battleground comprises the expanse of unfolding skies; in Iqbāl, it is the heart of Man—a venue where neither God nor Satan had any strategic advantage. No matter how vast and limitless Divine Power may be, its weapons suited especially for heavens can have little use in a battle with Satan carried out in the heart of Man. In other words, forces of good and evil can now engage on a level field, something which is to Lucifer's advantage. But such battle inevitably transforms Lucifer's character from that of rebel to conspirator. His satanic evil is now expressed in the form of sweet seduction and bad influence. The battle between good and evil is so observant of ethics that what is offered is not a grand contest between cosmic forces but an insipid moral drama of sin and incitement to sin, reward and punishment. Christian literature of the Middle Ages marshals allegory to present this drama, but Iqbāl's vision does not accept such allegories in which forces of good and evil appear poised to auction off the human soul. For this very reason, Iqbāl did not view Satan's sleazy antics through the restricted lens of an ecclesiastic schoolman or a moral

educator. He did not wish to confine the power of evil to the basest incitements of lust and desire. Even in Iqbāl's poem "Iblīs kī Majlis-e Shūrā" (Lucifer's Advisory Council), Lucifer emerges as a formidable power determined to throw the entire world into utter confusion, and not as a depraved companion.

Sins nurtured by lust and incitements to tempt the appetitive soul have never engaged Iqbāl's interest. A Satan that can be made to flee merely by uttering *Lā Haul* falls far below the level of a jester and becomes such a detestable and foul being that one cannot associate even minimal terror, awe or grandeur with him. If it is true that every man has his Satan whom he cannot get away from, this then is that special Satan which mullahs and priests have manufactured for him. The relationship of mullahs and priests with Satan has remained a favorite topic of humor and satirical literature. Rājā Mehdi 'Alī Khān [1915–66] has even reduced the entire celestial order of sin and reward, punishment and recompense to little more than a ridiculous enterprise by presenting Satan as their witty though mischievous companion. Such are the results of limiting the power of evil merely to carnal passions and desires.

Iqbāl looks at the seductive workings of evil and diabolical power from the perspectives of both eternity and history. In the former, evil, akin to Divine Power (*yazdānī quvvat*), is made manifest as a Luciferean power (*abrimanī quvvat*). Though the influences of Zoroastrian dualism are not particularly strong in Iqbāl's poetry, wherever he has written about Satan, he has presented him with such majesty and grandeur as befits a cosmic power. Such awesome glory attributed to the principle of evil is scarcely seen, outside of Zoroastrianism, in any Semitic religion. In fact, as he shapes his Lucifer, Iqbāl finds little of interest about his protagonist in Islamic, Christian and Judaic religious legend and lore. While Iqbāl writes avidly and repeatedly about such subjects as the creation, decline, and fall of Adam, he always slinks away from discussing Adam's sin. Satan stealing into the Garden of Eden disguised as a serpent, his seduction of Adam and Eve, his leading them to the forbidden tree, the couple tasting the fruit and, soon thereafter, becoming exposed to the full fury of the Divine Wrath—such details of the drama appear to hold no interest for Iqbāl. Milton has described this episode with great beauty, but Satan's transformation into a serpent changes the awesome severity of a rebel into merely the deception of a conjurer. By contrast, Bernard Shaw does give this episode considerable philosophical depth in the first two acts of *Methuselah*. However, Shaw's description altogether lacks even the lyrical beauty that makes Milton's so enchanting for the reader. Shaw's

serpent has wit and vision, the credit for which goes to Shaw rather than to the serpent.

However one looks at it, when evil manifests itself as a personality, it is always at the expense of the grandeur of its elemental power. And Iqbāl was not favorably disposed to such a bargain at any price. In fact, he is so deferential to Lucifer's character that he would scarcely use even a single word that might take away a modicum of Luciferean grandeur and eminence. In the perspective of creation, he desired to see Lucifer only as a majestic force. Does this attitude toward the principle of evil and darkness betray a Zoroastrian tendency in Iqbāl's psyche? Or, if that is too far-fetched, could it be that Iqbāl's entire attitude toward Satan is not religious but purely romantic? Nowhere in Iqbāl does Lucifer appear morally culpable in the least. Whether the verbal exchange is between Lucifer and God or between Lucifer and Gabriel, Iqbāl, like Milton, unwittingly comes across as Lucifer's ally. It is Satan that offers the most compelling discourse, artistically distinguished by its extreme regard for the essential greatness of God, which is left entirely intact. It is eloquent without being rash or impudent. Rather than the rudeness of an atheist, it is suffused with grace—a grace born out of the refractory flame of a nature that has burned in its own fire. Informality—of the type that is produced by violent love, best characterized by the line, "*yā apnā girēbān čāk, yā dāmān-e-yazdān čāk*"⁹ (either it is my collar that will be torn to shreds, or God's hem that will be shredded)—too is absent here, because Satan is not just above love and hate, he is also free of crazed love and violent passion. He may lack wisdom and insight, but certainly not intellect: "*mērē fitnē jāma'-e 'aql-o-khirad kā tār-o-pū*" (my shenanigans—a fabric spun from the warp and woof of pure intellect).

Lucifer's attitude towards emotions, rapture, and spiritual revelations—instruments whereby man seeks intimacy with God—is one of total scorn. Thus he scoffs at the spiritual conquests of angels, prophets and humans. He declares blatantly: "*Khizr bhī bē-dast-o-pā, Ilyās bhī bē-dast-o-pā*" (Khizr, too, is powerless, Ilyās, too is helpless). And his entire tone regarding Gabriel's constant litany of "*Allāh-hū Allāh-hū*" is scathingly derisive. However, Lucifer as a metaphor of fables stands generally for the dark forces of the human psyche and, hence, equating him with the symbol of pure intellect would appear to be strangely paradoxical. But then, it isn't quite that easy to divorce the dark forces of the psyche from the creative powers of man. Take, for instance, sexual power, which is

⁹*Ibid.*, 334.

both creative and dark at the same time. If the restive horses of this blind force can be restrained, they could be put to creative use, but if they are allowed to run amok, they can only wreak havoc. For this reason intellect has been appointed to stand watch over instincts and emotions. Dark though they may be, they do give life its color and rhythm. Astonishingly, not even a trace of these dark forces is found in Lucifer. Perhaps his fiery nature is not suited alike to tender feelings and headstrong and refractory instincts. There is merely the raw iron of intellect that keeps on melting and becoming steel. Therefore, Lucifer has no feelings of love, mercy, grace, sympathy, compassion, selflessness, or humility of spirit, let alone any conception of beauty. Nothing seduces him or robs his heart. It's unthinkable to associate any notion of happiness, delight, or pleasure with him. Do we ever see him drunk, clanking wineglasses, disrupting a soirée of fun and pleasure, or swept off his feet before the enticing charms of a ravishing beauty? Man indulges in all such things. And if Satan is ever there, he is there as a silent spectator. It is as if Lucifer's sole commission is to seduce man and—in as much as he is a sophisticated and rational entity—to keep his garment clean of the pollution of the fun and games humans have so indulgently spread all around.

If God is light, Lucifer is darkness; if He is goodness, Lucifer is wickedness; if He is beauty, Lucifer is ugliness—everything is known by its opposite. Without darkness, one can hardly know what light is. If only goodness pervaded the sanctified realm, how lonely and deathly silent it would be. Lucifer actually affirms rather than negates God's magnificence, eminence, and majestic beauty. The way he knows God, angels *cannot* hope to know Him, because they do not have it in them to rise above the sphere of devotion. Devotion creates assent, which can produce only a drab and monochromatic existence given to interminable obedience and ascetic piety. Even God cannot suffer this boredom. In order to know properly what God is all about, what His absoluteness and uniqueness actually mean, a Gnostic must know first and foremost what it means to be incomplete, down and out and ordinary in this world. This Lucifer well knows, thanks to his insubordination. Only after disobeying God does he come to appreciate His overwhelming greatness. The situation is unprecedented for God. Never before has His might been challenged; He unleashes all his power to meet this challenge and holds back nothing. Rather than being smugly satisfied with the torrential praise mouthed by his countless angels, he moves to subdue the secessionist and to break his refractory pride. Darkness, light's nemesis, and evil, the opponent of good, have been born—the stage of the cosmos is set for the eternal

drama that will throw time and space into commotion and reverberate through their length and breadth.

It is this refusal that transforms absolute time into serial time; and in the phenomenal world Man, as the sum of the diabolic and divine attributes imbedded in his nature, becomes the central figure in the ongoing deathly engagement between good and evil. Angels gawk at this figure in astonishment, and both God and Satan can hardly allow their interest in him to sag. If it were not for Lucifer's refusal, Adam would never have risen above the status of an image fashioned from clay. It is only Lucifer's refusal that has made Man a high-striding figure on the battlefield of good and evil. And because Satan is such a dynamic force created by God, Man can ill afford to ignore him. It is well within God's power to annihilate this Satanic power in an instant. But then, this would make Man a mere angel, of which He already has too many. This would also mean the irrevocable end of the play which He finds so entertaining—so entertaining, in fact, that, like a true artist, He does not wish to interfere in its unfolding. He does not, moreover, want to give Lucifer the opportunity to accuse Him of using His omnipotent power to subvert the outcome of the battle. Wasn't it understood, after all, that the battle inside Man would be fought on the principle of, namely, that no deadly arms—or nuclear weapons, in our contemporary jargon—would be used?

The agreement reached between a conspiring Lucifer and an expedient God turns the former into a thorn in the heart of the latter. Evil has always come out ahead in its role as the insistent prick of a thorn. It is a victory which God's beloved messengers simply gaze at wide-eyed with amazement. It is easy for prophets to overcome Satan, but not quite so easy to remove this thorn from the Almighty's heart. Only God can decree its removal, and if He does not decree it, it can only be due to expediency, not because of some inherent inability to do so. In other words, while prophets, with their God-given power, can overcome Lucifer, they simply cannot eradicate him. God has kept that power Himself. And if He chooses not to exercise it, a plausible reason may be that He wants to allow Lucifer equal opportunities to wage his war. Perhaps God, thereby, wants the world to continue serving as a battleground for good and evil, because if this strife were to end, the human world would come to resemble the angelic realm of pristine purity which God already has. The human world added a new and delightful dimension to the universe. God is pleased with this new dimension, whether it is good or bad, and He is loath to end this game. Lucifer knows this all too well, so he fearlessly raises his wicked storms everywhere. He knows that the war shall con-

tinue, even if some battles may be lost. His aim is not to inflict defeat on God; he well knows God's absolute mastery of the universe, His omnipotence. But he does have it within his power to foil God's plans by seducing Adam's progeny. God does not wish to divest Lucifer of his power, for in that event both the cosmic battle and the human drama would cease. In other words, diabolical power is an all too important element in the human drama played out in this world. Were it not for this power, Adam's episode would not have progressed farther than his creation. It is the refusal of Lucifer that animates this episode and inaugurates the drama which brings God happiness and delight. Lucifer knows that it is his selfsame blood that has given the episode its color, otherwise what possible interest could this solitary couple (Adam and Eve) planted blissfully amidst the beauty of Paradise hold for God. Hadn't He, after all, already created worlds more beautiful, grander, and more amazing than this? Hadn't He already witnessed unbounded power in the motion of planets? Didn't the universe as a whole mirror His beauty and majesty? Apparently none of this had left Him satiated or satisfied. He longed for the birth of an admiring connoisseur of His beauty. He created Adam, but Adam, too, remained just another creation in the infinite array of His creations. Innocent of emotion and gnosis, lost in the splendors of Paradise, his was an existence utterly incognizant of God's beauty, because knowledge requires that the knower must have awareness of self apart from the object of knowledge. Recognition of beauty is not possible without self-awareness. It is Lucifer who gave Adam the gift of knowledge. When Adam became aware of his self, his existence, and his nudity, he was also enabled to behold the *other self*. The chasm between self and the *other* condemned Adam to eternal separation and made him forever desirous of union.

In *Javēdnāmah*, Iqbāl refers to Lucifer as the "lord of those afflicted with separation" (*khvāja'-e abl-e firāq*). No wonder that he has no desire for union; union extinguishes the flame that defines his very essence, which is restlessness and quest:

fiṭratash bēgāna'-e zāuq-e viṣāl
zūhd-e ū tark-e jamāl-e la-yazāl

His nature is unfamiliar with the desire for union
 his asceticism—but shunning the eternal beauty

Lucifer thus transforms his separation from eternal beauty into a creative force. He had Man taste the fruit of knowledge, kindled the flame of self-

hood in him and, by wrenching him away from God, exposed him to the grief of separation and the desire for union, which, in turn, became the cause of movement, action, and self-realization. Lucifer and Man, in their own ways, propel this process of creation forward. If Lucifer spells destruction, then no construction can ever proceed without it.

Thanks to Lucifer's refusal, the world was introduced, for the first time ever, to the anguish of a soul on fire, its heat and ardor—the denier's destiny, the cause of his primordial loneliness. Dynamic action springs from it. There was no dearth of stars, planets, the earth and skies, and angels, after all, who all existed in a stupor of devotion and solitude. Lucifer's burning passion warmed them to stir: "*mī-tapīd az sōz-e man khūn-e rag-e kā'ēnāt*"¹⁰ (the blood in the veins of the universe is fired up from the heat of my burning).

So, in a way, Lucifer's refusal in fact is the catalyst that creates waves of movement in what is otherwise a quiescent, indeed frozen cosmos. All ardor and energy resides in movement, which inspires the earthbound Adam to seek out and reach, to grow, to know himself. In the poem "Taskhīr-e Fiṭrat,"¹¹ Lucifer says to the Almighty: "You breathed soul into the body, I created tumult in the soul; You unfold pathways of peace and tranquility, I, of unrest and disquietude. This ungainly Man, created in your lap, shall thrive in mine!"¹²

Gabriel represents establishment, whereas Lucifer is the paragon of nonconformity. Gabriel even speaks in the language of establishment:

*Khō diyē inkār se tū nē maqāmāt-e-buland
Āshm-e yazdān mēn farishtōn kī rabī kyā ābrū*

You let go of the exalted stations by your refusal;
what honor do angels now have before the
Almighty?

Obviously this style of speech is hopelessly bereft of any sense of individuality or uniqueness, but this is a price Gabriel must pay in order to maintain his position as an especially close and exalted angel of God. Lucifer, by contrast, modulates his tone with a variable register of ebb and flow. His discourse radiates with elements ranging from philosophical

¹⁰Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Kulliyāt-e Iqbāl, Fārsī* (Lahore: Shaikh Ḡulām 'Alī and Sons, 1973), 255.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 255–8.

¹²*Ibid.*, 255–6.

gravity and tragic dignity to sarcasm, irony and paradox. Lucifer epitomizes grand refusal, total negation and open rebellion. As chastisement, he is banished from heaven, routed and forsaken eternally. He is a challenge to meekness, drabness, and complacent tranquility; a cry in the dreary silence of an uninhabited world; an echo in the stillness of eternity. In the final lines of the poem, there is an amazing tidal agitation. Each couplet, akin to a stormridden wave, rises in its audible fury above the other, and the dominant imagery of these couplets too is drawn from shores, stormy waves, and oceans.

A more beautiful instance of dramatic poetry could perhaps be found, if one tried very hard, in Western literature, but in the Eastern, it is well nigh impossible.

bai mērī jur'at sē musbt-e-khāq mēñ zauq-e-
numū
mērē fīṭnē jāma'-e 'aql-o-kbirad kā tār-o-pū
dēkhtā bai tū faqat sāhil sē razm-e khair-o-shar
kaun tūfāñ kē tamāñcē khā rabā bai mēñ ke tū
Khizr bhī bē-dast-o-pā, Ilyās bhī bē-dast-o-pā
mērē tūfāñ yam-ba-yam, daryā-ba-daryā, jū-
ba-jū
gar kabhī khilvat muyassar hō tō pūcḥ Allāh sē
qisṣa'-e Ādam kō rangīñ kar gayā kiskā labū
mēñ khaṭaktā hūñ dil-e yazdāñ mēñ kāntē kī
ṭarāḥ
tū faqat Allāb-hū, Allāb-hū, Allāb-hū

Due to my audacity, this fistful of clay has
 acquired a taste for growth
 My shenanigans—a fabric spun from the warp
 and woof of pure intellect
 Merely from shores, you watch the battle of good
 and evil
 Who endures the blows of the storm, you or me?
 Khizr, too, is powerless, Ilyās, too, is helpless
 I breathe storms, from ocean to ocean, river to
 river, stream to stream
 If you are granted a moment alone, ask the
 Almighty
 Whose blood has made Adam's episode so
 colorful?

It is I who rankles like a thorn in the Almighty's
heart
And you, merely Allah-hoo, Allah-hoo, Allah-
hoo! □

*Translated by Riyaz Latif and
Muhammad Umar Memon*

Appendix

محمد اقبال

جبریل و ابلیس

جبریل

ہمدم دیرینہ! کیسا ہے جہانِ رنگ و بو؟

ابلیس

سوز و ساز و درد و داغ و جستجو و آرزو

جبریل

ہر گھڑی افلاک پر رہتی ہے تیری گفتگو
کیا نہیں ممکن کہ تیرا چاکِ دامن ہو رفو؟

ابلیس

آہ اے جبریل تو واقف نہیں اس راز سے
کر گیا سرمست مجھ کو ٹوٹ کر میرا سُبُو!
اب یہاں میری گذر ممکن نہیں، ممکن نہیں
کس قدر خاموش ہے یہ عالمِ بے کاخ و کو!
جس کی نومیدی سے ہو سوزِ درونِ کائنات
اس کے حق میں تَقْنَطُوا چھا ہے یا لا تَقْنَطُوا؟

جبریل

کھو دئیے انکار سے تو نے مقاماتِ بلند
چشمِ یزداں میں فرشتوں کی رہی کیا آبرو!

ابلیس

ہے مری جرأت سے مشیتِ خاک میں ذوقِ نمو
میرے فتنے جامۂ عقل و خرد کا تار و پو!
دیکھتا ہے تو فقط ساحل سے رزمِ خیر و شر
کون طوفان کے طمانچے کھا رہا ہے؟ میں کہ تو؟
خضر بھی بے دست و پا، الیاس بھی بے دست و پا
میرے طوفانِ یم بہ یم، دریا بہ دریا، جُو بہ جُو!
گر کبھی خلوت میسر ہو تو پوچھ اللہ سے
قصۂ آدم کو رنگیں کر گیا کس کا لہو؟
میں کھٹکتا ہوں دلِ یزداں میں کانٹے کی طرح،
تو فقط اللہ ہو، اللہ ہو، اللہ ہو!

Gabriel and Satan

GABRIEL

Comrade of ancient days! How fares the world of sight and sound!

SATAN

In fire and rage and grief and pain and hope and longing drowned.

GABRIEL

No hour goes by in Paradise but your name is spoken there;
Is it not possible that rent robe be mended that you wear?

SATAN

Ah, Gabriel! You have never guessed my mystery! alas—
Maddened for ever I left upon Heaven's floor my broken glass.
Impossible, oh! Impossible I should dwell here again;
Silent, how silent all this realm—no palace, no loud lane!
I whose despair is the fire by which the universe is stirred,
What should I do—all hope renounce, or hope yet in God's word?

GABRIEL

Your mutiny has put our high estate in Heaven to shame;
In the Creator's eye what credit now can angels claim?

SATAN

But in Man's pinch of dust my daring spirit has breathed ambition,
The warp and woof of mind and reason are woven of my sedition.
The deeps of good and ill you only see from land's far verge:
Which of us is it, you or I, that dares the tempest's scourge?
Your ministers and your prophets are pale shades: the storms I teem
Roll down ocean by ocean, river by river, stream by stream!
Ask this of God, when next you stand alone within His sight—
Whose blood is it has painted Man's long history so bright?
In the heart of the Almighty like a pricking thorn I lie;
You only cry for ever God, oh God, oh God most high!*

* *Poems from Iqbal*, translated by V.G. Kiernan (London: John Murray, 1955),