



ANIL BHATTI

**Iqbal and Goethe.
A Note**

Vorblatt

Publikation

Erstpublikation: Yearbook of the Goethe Society of India, 1999-2000, S. 184-201.

Neupublikation in überarbeiteter Fassung.

Vorlage: Datei des Autors.

URL: <http://www.goethezeitportal.de/db/wiss/goethe/bhatti_iqbal.pdf>

Eingestellt am 31.01.2005.

Autor

Prof. Dr. Anil Bhatti

Centre of German Studies

School of Language, Literature & Cultural Studies

Jawaharlal Nehru University

New Delhi 110 067

Indien

Emailadresse: <bhatti@mail.jnu.ac.in>

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Beim Zitieren empfehlen wir hinter den Titel das Datum der Einstellung oder des letzten Updates und nach der URL-Angabe das Datum Ihres letzten Besuchs dieser Online-Adresse anzugeben: Anil Bhatti: Iqbal and Goethe. A Note (31.01.2005).

In: Goethezeitportal. URL:

<http://www.goethezeitportal.de/db/wiss/goethe/bhatti_iqbal.pdf>

(Datum Ihres letzten Besuches).

ANIL BHATTI

Iqbal and Goethe. A Note

In one of his *Stray Reflections* Mohammad Iqbal (1873-1938) remarks that comparisons are "odious". But, there are some which are not so and these are instructive as in the comparison of Maulana Rumi and Nietzsche for, as Iqbal says, "in the history of literature and thought it is the points of contact and departure which constitute centres of special interest."¹ Iqbal touches upon a basic problem of comparative literature in which we do not necessarily concentrate on the justification of the comparison but rather pay attention to the plausibility of the comparison and the historical trace it leaves. It may help here to consider Benjamin's use of Baudelaire's term "correspondance"² and its possible productivity for comparative literature. Of course in a secularized version since we do not refer to the "correspondance" between a macro and a micro world or to alchemy but to a *situational* "correspondance" between Goethe and Iqbal. The term allows a flexible oscillation between the connotations of connection and transfer and *Entsprechung*. And, by extension, also between message and reply. If no empirical evidence is available to substantiate the "points of contact and departure" we usually resort to a typological approach. But it may help to consider another insight of Benjamin. Speaking of "constellations" Benjamin emphasizes that the historian must cease to think in terms of a nexus of causality between different moments of history. He should rather comprehend the constellation between his own epoch and an earlier one.³ By extension of this insight we can speak of the "constellation" between Goethe and Iqbal with the advantage that we can base ourselves on the numerous references to Goethe in Iqbal's work. It is important, however, to avoid the unproductive term 'influence'. Instead we could speak of effects (*Wirkungen*) as Benjamin quoting Goethe does: "Alles was eine große Wirkung getan hat, kann eigentlich nicht mehr beurteilt werden."⁴

¹ *Stray Reflections*. Allama Iqbal's Note-Book, Lahore 1992, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, p. 153. Subsequently quoted in the text as SR and page number.

² Walter Benjamin, *Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire*. In: *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften*, Frankfurt a.M. 1980 (Suhrkamp), p. 216. Walter Benjamin, *Anhang zu "Über den Begriff der Geschichte"*, *Illuminationen*, op. cit., p. 261.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

I

Iqbal's first published collection of poems *Bang-e-Dara* (1923) contains a tribute to Mirza Ghalib with the lines:

"Ah tu ujadi hui Dilli menh aramidah hai
Gulshan-e-Weimar menh tera humnavah khwahbida hai"⁵
(Alas, you lie buried in devastated Delhi,
while in the Garden of Weimar sleeps your compeer)⁶

These lines, written probably before Iqbal's visit to Europe in 1905 provide the key to the constellation between two of the greatest icons in Urdu and German literature. They contain the germ of Iqbal's poetic reflection on the situation of writing in a colonial context and his sense of having inherited a history of loss. The devastated condition of Delhi and the garden of Weimar symbolize the historic divide between Europe and India, which is a result of two different world historical contexts.

Goethe was writing in a period of Europe's intellectual appropriation of the East under colonial expansion. Ghalib was writing at the end of the Mughal Empire in India. At the time of Ghalib's death in 1869 the British were consolidating their colonial power after the Rebellion of 1857. Ghalib's grave becomes a sign of historical inequality and this also contains the germ of Iqbal's notion of cosmic injustice; his *shikwa* or complaint against God. The melancholy which is associated with loss of power is however only a passing moment in Iqbal's mood. It is replaced by a sense of mission. Iqbal inherits a sense of history in which memories of past Islamic glory are rudely confronted with what he considered as decadence and decline in the East and the rise and expansion of the West.

One may find his celebration of military glory difficult to take today. The literary historian Muhammad Sadiq wonders how Iqbal's lines from his poem *Shikwa* "Whenever we marched forth under our banner/ We dyed our cloaks in our foe's blood" would differ from "from the jingoism of the British War Office or Kipling's ecstasies over British Imperialism".⁷ True, this rhetoric is difficult to take but we must remember that Iqbal was primarily concerned with jolting Muslims out of their torpor.

⁵ Kulliyat-i-Iqbal, Delhi, n.d., p. 12. The text should be available in any standard collection of Iqbal's Urdu poetry. The transliteration from Urdu is meant as help for understanding only and is not scientific. I use the usual Indian conventions.

⁶ cf. Syed Nazir Niazi, Conversations with Iqbal, in: Mohammad Iqbal. Poet and Philosopher. A Collection of Translations, Essays and other Articles. Presented by the Pakistan-German Forum, Karachi, 1960, p. 112.

⁷ Muhammed Sadiq, A History of Urdu Literature, Delhi etc. 1984 (O.U.P.), p. 468.

For this reason he rejected art for art's sake as "a clever invention of decadence to cheat us out of life and power". The literature of Indian Muslims "has been chiefly the work of the period of their national decadence". They are "now in search of a new literary ideal." (SR 145)

For Iqbal the important factor was that Europe succeeded in world domination and the Islamic empires had to retreat from this position. Iqbal's attitude reflects in many ways the attitude of north Indian Muslims who, as Ravinder Kumar puts it, "sulked over the unkind fate which had deprived them of their status as a ruling class ...".⁸ There is little space in Iqbal's construct to reflect that Goethe and his generation had first to establish their creative efforts in an atmosphere of critical indifference. Goethe's essay on "Literarischer Sansculottismus" is concerned with this problem. Eighteenth century Germany was nowhere near having a public sphere comparable to England and France and it was only towards the nineteenth Century that it could incorporate and generate the ideology of being "das Land der Dichter und Denker", the country of poets and thinkers.

II

In spite of his mode of complaint Iqbal displays a remarkably international perspective while delineating the literary constellations to which he is indebted. He writes in a one of his *Stray Reflections*:

"I confess I owe a great deal to *Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil* and *Wordsworth*. The first two led me into the "inside" of things; the third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals of poetry, and the last saved me from atheism in my student days." (SR 61)

Iqbal refers frequently to Goethe in a manner suggesting the effect the German poet has exercised.

"Our soul discovers itself when we come into contact with a great mind. It is not until I had realized the infinitude of *Goethe's* imagination that I discovered the narrow breadth of my own." (SR 25)

With reference to "Faust", Iqbal remarks that Goethe "picked up an ordinary legend and filled it with the whole experience of the nineteenth century - nay, the entire

⁸ Ravinder Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India*, Delhi etc. 1983 (O.U.P.), p. 174.

experience of the human race." This "transformation of an ordinary legend into a systematic expression of man's ultimate ideal is nothing short of Divine workmanship. It is as good as the creation of a beautiful universe out of the chaos of formless matter." (SR 74)

Further, it is from Goethe "alone" that we get a "real insight into human nature". (SR 120) In contrast to Shakespeare who as a "realist Englishman re-thinks the individual", Goethe as "the idealist German rethinks the universal". Indeed "Faust is a seeming individual only. In reality, he is humanity individualized." (SR 122)

Of course these remarks are in the nature of being stray reflections. Their significance lies primarily in the authorship of Iqbal and occasionally some of these remarks, as is not infrequent in situations of contact, could equally be applied to Iqbal himself. They are self-revelatory. As, for instance: "Nature was not decided what it should make of Plato and Goethe. Poet or philosopher."⁹ (SR 113) Iqbal too was both.

Some of the remarks contain startling insights concerning the manner in which German literary development can be perceived in terms of cultural comparison from outside: "No nation was so fortunate as the Germans. They gave birth to *Heine* at the time when *Goethe* was in full-throated ease. Two uninterrupted Springs!" (SR 126) Or, by extension: "Literary criticism does not necessarily follow the creation of literature. We find *Lessing* at the very threshold of German literature." (SR 126)

Iqbal's strategic use of Goethe in his texts is often surprising because the text could very easily proceed without the authority of a quotation. Consider for instance Iqbal's lecture on "The Revelations of Religious Experience." Iqbal speaks of the Creative Self to whom change cannot mean imperfection. Perfection "consists in the vaster basis of His creative activity and the infinite scope of His creative vision. God's life is self-revelation, not the pursuit of an ideal to be reached. The 'not yet' of God means unending realization of the infinite creative possibilities of His being which retains its wholeness throughout the entire process."

And then he quotes Goethe:

"In the endless self-repeating
For evermore flows the Same.
Myriad arches springing, meeting,
Hold at rest the mighty frame.
Streams from all things love of living,
Grandes star and humblest cold,

⁹ Occasionally one wonders whether his remark on Mazzini is not self-revelatory in this sense: "The true sphere of *Mazzini* was literature, not politics. The gain of Italy is not much compared to the loss which the world has suffered by his devotion to politics." (SR 64).

All the straining, all the striving
Is eternal peace in God." ¹⁰

Iqbal goes on to write:

"Thus a comprehensive philosophical criticism of all the facts of experience on its efficient as well as appreciative side brings us to the conclusion that the ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life. To interpret this life as an ego is not to fashion God after the image of man. It is only to accept the simple fact of experience that life is not a formless fluid, but an organizing principle of unity, a synthetic activity which holds together and focalizes the dispersing dispositions of the living organism for a constructive purpose."¹¹

The image of the stream in the quote corresponds to mystical usage. And the appellation "Zindarud", the living stream, which Iqbal adopts in his *Jawid Nama* (1932) is a reference to this mystical metaphor. Such a "correspondance" derives its authority paradoxically from its fortuitous placement in the logic of an argument. Other quotes from other traditions would no doubt also have been available. The illustrative choice of Goethe is in itself a statement.

But, we must hasten to add, the constellation Iqbal-Goethe does not imply a permanent symmetry of expression and attitude. In many ways Iqbal's positions on various matters differ greatly from Goethe. For instance many of Iqbal's Indian middle class puritan views, for instance on arts and amusements or women, would hardly be compatible with Goethe's writings and portrayal of women figures.¹² And Iqbal is not a poet one would immediately associate with contemporaneity in the way Goethe as the author of *Faust*, *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, *Wilhelm Meister* can in purely formal terms be. And, if exactitude and precision are signs of modernity, Iqbal

¹⁰ Goethe's original text was written in 1827. This poem written five years before his death reads in the original:

"Wenn im Unendlichen dasselbe
Sich wiederholend ewig fließt,
Das tausendfältige Gewölbe
Sich kräftig ineinander schließt,
Strömt Lebenslust aus allen Dingen,
Dem kleinsten wie dem größten Stern,
Und alles Drängen, alles Ringen
Ist ewige Ruh in Gott dem Herrn."

Quoted from: Goethe. *Gedichte*, hg. und kommentiert v. Erich Trunz, München 1974, p. 367.

¹¹ Muhammed Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, New Delhi 1998 (Kitab Bhavan), p. 60f.

¹² Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing. A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Mohammad Iqbal*, Leiden 1963 (E.J. Brill), p.64; SR p. 78, p. 68

places himself on the outside with his remark "I like however an element of obscurity and vagueness in poetry; since the vague and the obscure appear profound to the emotions." (SR 99) Again, as far as religion is concerned, the devout Iqbal would hardly have concurred with Goethe's *Spruch*:

"Wer Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt,
Hat auch Religion;
Wer jene beiden nicht besitzt,
Der habe Religion."¹³

Important though the remarks and quotations, which link the two writers, may be, it is in Iqbal's poetry that the significance of Goethe becomes evident. Consider Iqbal's early lyrical poem "*Ek Shaam*" (An Evening) which is one of the creative products of his stay in Germany. Here the echo of Goethe's *Wanderers Nachtlied* is clear. Annemarie Schimmel's German translation emphasizes this aesthetic similarity in the disposition of the two poems in the evocation of stillness, rest and peace:

Ein Abend

(In Heidelberg, am Ufer des Neckars)

Stille ist des Mondlichts Traum,
Still ein jeder Zweig am Baum,
Stumm des Tales Sanger nun,
Stumm die grunen Hugel ruhn.
Die Natur, ganz unbewut
Schlummert an des Abends Brust.
Schweigens Zauber wandelt nun
Neckars Rauschen selbst in Ruhn.
Zieht der stumme Zug der Sterne
Ohne Glockenklang zur Ferne,
Berg und Strom und Feld in Stille,
In sich ruht der ew'ge Wille.
mein Herz, sei still – auch du...
La den Gram – schlaf nun in Ruh.

Mumtaz Hasan's English translation reads:

¹³ Trunz op. cit, p. 367. Trunz points out that Religion is both religion and religiosity. Just as Frommigkeit is also Kirchlichkeit. Trunz, op. cit., p. 681

An Evening

(On the banks of the river Neckar/Heidelberg.)

Silent is the moonlight,
Silent the boughs of trees
Silent are the music makers of the valley,
And silent the green robed ones of the hills.
Creation is in a swoon
And asleep in the arms of the night.
The stillness has cast such a spell
That even the flow of the Neckar seems still.
The caravan of the stars moves on
In silence, without bells.
Silent are hill and forest and river;
Nature seems lost in contemplation.
Thou too, o heart, be still!
Hold thy grief to thy bosom, and sleep.¹⁴

Compare this with Goethe well known lines:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest Du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte Nur, balde
Ruhest Du auch.¹⁵

III

Hermann Hesse noted that Iqbal's entire work is an East-West Divan.¹⁶ Written under colonialism, it bears a universal message clothed as a Message of the East, the *Payam-i-Mashriq* (1923). And it is to the foreword to this work that we should now

¹⁴ Muhammed Iqbal, *Botschaft des Ostens. Ausgewählte Werke*, hg.v. Annemarie Schimmel, Tübingen und Basel (Horst Erdmann), p. 68.
Mohammad Iqbal, *Poet and Philosopher, A Collection of Translations, Essays and other Articles*, Presented by The Pakistan-German Forum, Karachi, n.d., p 122.

¹⁵ Trunz, op cit., p.142

¹⁶ Geleitwort; Muhammad Iqbal, *Botschaft des Ostens. Ausgewählte Werke*, hrsg. v. Annemarie Schimmel, Tübingen und Basel, 1977 (Horst Erdmann), p. 7.

turn.¹⁷

Iqbal's foreword occasionally disappoints because it is sketchy and it covers familiar territory. But we must remember that Iqbal's strength did not lie in discursive literary criticism and his foreword is based on his general "memory" of what he calls the "oriental movement" in nineteenth century Germany. In his foreword to *Payam-i-Mashriq* Iqbal simply states that his work "owes its inspiration" to Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*. Goethe is the German "Philosopher of Life" who in the words of Heine, the "Israelite" poet of Germany says:

"This is a bouquet presented by the West to the East as a token of high regard. The Diwan bears testimony to the fact that the West, being dissatisfied with its own spiritual life, is turning to the bosom of the East in spiritual warmth."¹⁸

Iqbal clearly stylizes himself as the representative of the East who talks on equal terms to Goethe as the representative of West. The term "Philosopher of Life", "Lebensphilosoph" would apply to both. Iqbal refers to Herder's interest in the Orient and his interest in Sadi as against Hafiz. Given Iqbal's own reservations concerning the undesirable influences of Hafiz and Sufism on Islamic thought, this reference is not without its significance although Iqbal's own preference is towards Rumi. Nevertheless Iqbal emphasises that Goethe's imagination was stirred by Hammer-Purgstall's translation of Hafiz' *Divan* (1812). Iqbal draws a connection between what he calls the "political decadence of the German people" which at that time had "reached its lowest limit in every way", and Goethe's age (around sixty five years) and temperamental unsuitability for political activity and the search of this "lofty and restless soul" for an imaginative "refuge in the peaceful atmosphere of the East". In

¹⁷ Iqbal wrote the *Payam-i-Mashriq* in Persian. The problem Urdu / Persian is complex. Iqbal's early Urdu poetry was criticised by 'traditionalists' because he did not hesitate to introduce popular Punjabi idiom into his verse. Arguably this increased the innovative discourse in his poetry which otherwise did not really attempt formal innovativeness. Would Urdu have been strengthened if he had remained with it exclusively? He of course continued to write in Urdu also. But his major works are in Persian. Apparently he required Persian for two reasons. Firstly, according to him, it enabled him to express complex ideas, which Urdu did not. Urdu apparently did not lend itself readily to philosophical discourse. There is a partial plausibility in this. A heavily persianised and jargonised Urdu (similar to a heavily sanskritised Hindi) is a cumbersome tool. Secondly, Persian also made communication beyond the Indian North-West possible. It served as a Pan-Islamic lingua franca with readily available traditions. Persian was, of course, still an "elite language" in Northern India during Iqbal's times. c.f. Iqbal Singh, *The Ardent Pilgrim. An Introduction to the Life and Work of Mohammed Iqbal*, Delhi etc. (O.U.P.), p 66.

¹⁸ The English translation is quoted from Mohammad Iqbal, *Poet and Philosopher...* op. cit, p. 6.

addition to the motive of 'flight' (Flucht), Iqbal explicitly draws the reader's attention to the productive function of Hafiz' poetry on Goethe's creativity.

Iqbal draws our attention to Goethe's debt to Persian imagery, metaphors and as proof perhaps of "his indebtedness to his Persian models he does not hesitate to refer even to homosexual love." But Iqbal is quick to reject a superficial notion of influence, or imitation and emphasizes the independence of Goethe's poetic genius, which "owes allegiance to none". Goethe does not surrender his Western identity. His interest lies in the lyricism of Hafiz' poetry and not in its mystical interpretations. In the language of the period Iqbal writes that "Goethe with his *Western Divan* tried to instill the Persian spirit into German literature." Iqbal goes on to refer to Platen and Rückert and Bodenstedt. Though, as Schimmel points out, he perhaps overrates Bodenstedt, it may well have been historically correct to do so since, as Iqbal claims, Bodenstedt's *Mirza Schaffy* was a popular success and went through 140 editions.

Iqbal emphasizes that his brief sketch may "evoke some enthusiasm in a younger man for further research." Then Iqbal comes to his own work, written as he notes a hundred years after the *Western Divan*. Its "main object is to bring out those social, moral and religious truths which have a bearing on the spiritual development of individuals and communities."

Though there is a similarity in the situation between the contemporary East and early 19th century Germany, Iqbal, unlike Goethe, cannot seek refuge in the "sprit" of the 'Other'. It was not just a question of Iqbal's rejection of the West, which was undoubtedly fundamental. The problem lay in the globality of the crisis and therefore the kind of cultural mimesis practiced by Goethe in his appropriation of Hafiz and the Orient was historically not possible for Iqbal. Iqbal's route lay through revival and not through extension of contacts. For him the "inner turmoil which the nations of the world are going through today, and which we are unable to regard objectively inasmuch as we ourselves are affected by it, is the fore-runner of a social and spiritual revolution of very great magnitude."

"Nature" is the agency, which is responsible for the construction of a new humanity and a new world order out of the universal catastrophe of the First World War. The catastrophe was a consequence of the "scientific, moral and economic pursuits" of Europe. Glimpses of this new world are seen in the works of Einstein and Bergson, but in general European statesmen do not see it. "From the purely literary point of view, the weakening of the life potentialities of Europe after the painful happenings of the World War is detrimental to the development of a sound and mature literary ideal."

As against the decadence of the West, America, "unfettered by the traditions

of the past" can adjust to the New more easily. But the main point is that the East, and more particularly, the Muslim East has woken up after centuries of slumber. This is Iqbal's construction. This involves a revolution, but one, which starts for Iqbal with the primacy of, change in the inner self.

"The Eastern people have, however, realized that life cannot effect a revolution in its environment before it has had, in the first instance, a revolution in the inner depths of its being, nor can a new world assume external form until its existence takes shape in the hearts of men. That immutable law of the Universe, which the Quran has enunciated in the simple but comprehensive verse:
'God does not change the destiny of people unless they change themselves',
holds good for the individual as well as the collective aspects of life."

Iqbal looks upon this as a transnational outlook fostering a "sound and strong sense of humanity", deserving respect. Goethe's "flight" to the Orient of Hafiz was possible because the Orient of the European Imagination was a dormant discoverable Other. A similar attitude towards the West is historically not possible for Iqbal. Though Goethe and Iqbal were both witnessing a situation of historical crisis, their options had to be different. Anything else for Iqbal would have been cultural epigonality. Iqbal could not have a symmetrical form of appropriation of the West comparable to Goethe's appropriation of the Orient because the colonial situation prevents this. Iqbal is the "Spätgeborene" and he consciously writes as such.

But, Iqbal could not answer Goethe's Orientalism by generating a reverse-Orientalism or Occidentalism. In other words, Iqbal could not repeat Goethe's unique mimetic act because this would have become mere imitation. And imitation is not mimesis.¹⁹ He, thus, writes a reply of the discovered to whom colonial discovery itself is closed by history. While doing so he also articulates a sense of crisis, which is countered by a transnational perspective.

Iqbal explicitly states on the cover page of his Poem that the *Payam-i-Mashriq* is written in response to Goethe's Divan. And Iqbal retains the Qur'an verse "to God belongs East and West" which was Goethe's source for the corresponding verse in the West- Östlicher Divan.²⁰

"Gottes ist der Orient!

¹⁹ I would agree with Prof. Vahiduddin that as far as poetry is concerned "there is more of Hafiz in Goethe than there is of Goethe in Iqbal." (S. Vahiddudin, Goethe, Hafiz and Iqbal. In: Indo-Iranian Studies, ed. Fathullal Mujtabi, New Delhi 1977 (Indo-Iran Society), pp. 175-186; p. 185.

²⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Sämtliche Werke, Bd.3. Zürich, München, 1977 (Artemis, dtv), p. 290.

Gottes ist der Okzident!
Nord- und südliches Gelände
Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände.”

The *Payam* also contains a translation of Goethe's *Mahomets Gesang*, and a reply to the Goethe's Divan poem *Einlass* with its treatment of the theme of the Huri and the Poet.

But the two poems in which Goethe, the Poet, is explicitly addressed or referred to are perhaps the most revealing. The *Payam-i-Mashriq* is dedicated to His Majesty Amanullah Khan, ruler of Afghanistan. The poem of dedication contains a tribute to Goethe and a self-justification. In these poetic lines Iqbal refers to Goethe the thinker, the cultural icon and in some sense also the European Other. Iqbal continues a tradition of looking upon Goethe in the context of 'wisdom'. He simultaneously reinforces a dichotomisation between West and East in order to create a situation where his poem becomes a reply, a message returned to a salutation offered. Goethe is the "sage of the West", the German poet

“Who lost his heart to the winning ways of Iran
Who painted a picture full of the beauty of sweethearts young and saucy
And sent salutations of the West to the East:
The message of the East is my response to his greeting.”²¹

The rhetoric of response demands that the actors in this cross-cultural encounter should be identified and situated with corresponding attributes:

“He was one of Europe's youthful ones, with the quality of lightning;
While my love-flame is born of the breath of the wise men of the East.
He was born and nurtured in a garden,
While I sprang from barren soil.
His melody was a paradise to the ear, as the song of the nightingale in the garden,
While I am like caravan bells ringing tumultuously in the desert.
The mysteries of the Universe have been revealed to both,
Both are messengers of life in death.
Both are like daggers, bright as the mirror and smiling as the dawn.
He is unsheathed, but I am yet in the scabbard.
Both are pearls of great price and lustre,
Born of the shoreless sea.
His insistent urge made him restless in the depths of the ocean
Till he burst forth from his shell;
While I am still striving in my shell's confines,

²¹ Translation by Mumtaz Hasan. In: Mohammed Iqbal, Poet and Philosopher... op. cit, p. 21f.

Undiscovered yet in the ocean's abyss.”

The sense of possessing an accomplishment yet to be realized - the image of the dagger which is yet in its scabbard -as a riposte to the salutation of the Western poet allows Iqbal to stage his Eastern Divan as both a reply and a corrective to the Western Divan of Goethe. But, in order that the reply should measure up to the challenge of the salutation Iqbal has to develop a different rhetoric of poetry. One, which will not be understood by his contemporaries:

“He who was my friend knew me not and went away
With an empty goblet from my wine cellar.
I offer him the grandeur of the Chosroes
And would place the throne of Cyrus under his feet.
But he asks of me love stories
And the glitter of poetic phrases.
The undiscerning one knew not the restlessness that fills my soul.
He saw my outer being but not the inner one.”

It is part of Iqbal's construction to view his ambitious endeavor as a creative act, which will not be understood in the context of the traditional expectations, which the reader has from poetry. His poem, after all, is going to traverse a wide historical and cultural range in the field between West and East. Therefore it will also not be understood, at least not immediately.

“My soul took love to its bosom
And accomplished a union of straw and fire.
God revealed to me the secrets of the faith and of worldly power,
And effaced all trace of godlessness from my view.
My thought fills the rose petal with colour.
Every line I write is a drop of my own blood.
Lest thou hold poetry to be madness,
Know that the perfection of madness is the fullness of wisdom.
I am made rich with talent,
But in the land of Ind I am disgraced.
The luckless rose and tulip hear not my song;
I, a song-bird, am a stranger in my own rose-garden.
Since fate must favour the ignoble and the base,
Woe to the man who is a man of merit!”

IV

Iqbal's poem "Jalal-o-Goethe" from the *Payam-i-Mashriq* is, however, perhaps the greatest tribute written by Iqbal to Goethe. Jalal-ud-din Rumi represented the quintessence of Islamic mysticism for Iqbal who generally did not refrain from criticising Hafiz for the latter's alleged waywardness. Rumi and not Hafiz should have been Goethe's guide to the Orient, so one imagines, Iqbal felt. In the Urdu footnote to this Persian poem Iqbal writes: "In this drama (i.e. Faust) the poet (i.e. Goethe) speaks of the progressive potentialities of human development and, for this purpose has used the old legend of the Philosophers covenant with the Devil with such consummate art that it is impossible to imagine anything more perfect."

Iqbal makes Rumi say as much in the poem after Goethe has read out *Faust* to the great Eastern Mystic:

"Portrayer of the inmost soul
Of poetry, whose efforts goal
Is capturing the seraphim
And God himself, yes even Him,
Your thought, consorting with your heart,
Remade the world by means of art.
O you have seen the spirit's frame
Ablaze in its corporeal frame,
And you from observation know
How in their shells pearls form and grow
All this you know, but there is more.
Not all can learn love's secret lore,
Not all can enter its high shrine
One only knows by grace divine
That wisdom is the Devil's own,
While Love belongs to man alone."²²

Iqbal's stray remarks on Goethe and the echoes of Goethe in his poetry are characteristic of his cosmopolitan relationship to European and Indo-Persian writing. This was his constellation. He derived himself consciously from the Indo-Persian Islamic heritage and contextualised it in terms of lines of alignment with the European literature available to him through colonialism. What is remarkable is that this takes

²² Translation by M. Hadi Hussain; From: Goethe and Iqbal; A tribute to Johann Wolfgang Goethe on his 250th Birth Anniversary. Pakistan-German Friendship Society, Lahore n.d.

place without dichotomizing between the two heritages available to him. Instead, as we have mentioned above, he develops a mode of complaint, a sense of loss and melancholy attributable to the loss of that political power which historically had characterized the past of Islamic history. It is by returning to the original purity of Islam that Iqbal, as it were, tries to reestablishes a kind of world historical parity between the European and Islamic traditions. This leads to rhetoric of recovery of the original purity of Islam.²³ But the Islam, which becomes an origin for him is distinct from syncretic forms of religious expression on the Indian Sub-continent such as Sufism. Iqbal's poetry written in reflection on Goethe and other European writers articulates this consciousness.

Select Bibliography

- Schimmel, Annemarie, *Gabriel's Wing. A study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammed Iqbal*, Leiden 1963 (E. J. Brill).
- Schimmel, Annemarie, *Iqbal and Goethe*. In: *Iqbal. Essays and Studies*, ed. Asloob Ahmed Ansari, New Delhi 1978 (Ghalib Academy), pp.271-284.
- Vahid, Syed Abdul, *Iqbal. His Art and Thought*, London 1959 (John Murray).
- Vahiduddin, *Iqbal aur Maghribi Fikr*, Iqbal Institute, University of Srinagar, 1981.
- Iqbal, *Javid-Nama*, trsl. by A.J. Arberry, London 1966 (George Allen & Unwin).
- Vahid, Syed Abdul, *Glimpses of Iqbal*, Karachi 1974 (Iqbal Academy Pakistan).
- Malik, G.R., *Goethe's Faust and Iqbal*. In: *Iqbaliyat*, 6, Srinagar 1991 (Iqbal Institute, University of Kashmir)
- Iqbal aur Maghrib*, ed. by A.A. Suroor, Srinagar 1981 (Iqbal Institute, University of Srinagar).
- Singh, Iqbal, *The Ardent Pilgrim. An Introduction to the Life and Work of Mohammed Iqbal*, Delhi 1997 (O.U.P.).
- Iqbal. *A Selection of the Urdu Verse. Text and Translation*. D.J. Matthews, New Delhi 1993 (Heritage Publishers).
- Rastogi, Tara Charan, *Western Influence in Iqbal*, New Delhi 1987 (Ashish Publishing House).