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## Satan in the Poetry of Dr. Iqbal: An Overview

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper will look into the Satan and the Myth associated with fall of man and fall of Satan from Islamic and Iqbalian point of view. This paper will focus on the differences in the concept of Fallen of man and Satan, in Islam and Iqbal's poems. The adoption of Satan by Iqbal would be studied from Comparative Mythological approach. How he adopted and innovated on the ideas that already prevailed in the religious book and other literary works. Satan holds great place in the works of Mohammed Iqbal. He is one of the major thematic and philosophical concerns in his poetry. He developed great interest in the Satan and provided him great place in his works. He being a critic as well as a poet made Satan his mouth piece to represent the modern civilization and modern politics. He was a great satirist, who satirised the trends of the modern human being and civilization. In satirising the modern civilization and human beings he exalted the status of Satan in comparison to Man. Yunus M Sayed writes: "This most fascinating living character appealed to the poetic sensibilities of Iqbal; a character as old as time itself, as defiant as nothing that the Universe has ever known or will ever know; a being given to fierce condemnation, cursed by God and man alike."(web)*

Iqbal while writing about Satan sticks to the conception of Satan in The Glorious Quran. The First poem where Satan appeared as a character was in the year 1923 a poem titled 'Taskhir-e-Fitrat' in *Payam-e-Mashriq*. The poem was written in Persian. He introduces Satan in a similar way in which Satan was introduced in The Glorious Quran. He banks wholly on the Quranic conception of Satan. He puts in his mouth the same words but in different language and in verse form. In a short speech in this poem Satan expresses all his wishes and desires. When asked to prostrate to Adam (P.B.U.H), Satan replies:

I am no creature of mere light  
That I should bow to man.  
He is a base-born thing of dust,  
And I am of fire born. (42)

Satan in these verses shows himself full of pride. He considers himself superior to man only because of him being created from fire and man being created from dust. Iqbal puts in Satan the same pride which has been revealed in The Glorious Quran. Iqbal also sticks to the conception that Satan was not an angel but Jin that is why in the very first verse he makes him claim that he is born from fire. In Islamic teaching Jinns are created from fire and Angels from light. Here Iqbal introduces Satan in his own words not as an Angel but as a Jin, as mentioned in The Glorious Quran, "Behold! We said to the Angels, 'Bow down to Adam': they bowed down except Iblis. He was One of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord." (18:50)

Satan says, "I am no creature of mere light" meaning I am not an Angel that I will prostrate to him i.e Adam (P.B.U.H). In this verse Satan not only shows his superiority over man but also over angels, as he says they are creatures of 'mere light.' He concludes that Adam has been created from Dust and he (Satan) is created from Fire. From here onwards Iqbal makes Satan as bold and confident as he can. He ignores the wrath and fiery lakes of Milton where Milton portrays Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Satan continues and says that the forces of the Universe are because of me. He praises himself throughout the passage and counts on different characteristics of his,

The blood in the veins of the world  
Is lit up by my flame.  
The tearing speed of wind is mine,  
And mine is thunder's boom. (Payam E Mashriq 42)

Satan refers to all the destructive and forceful activities that take place in the world are all because of him. He further continues and says it is he who arises the soul. Though God grants life but he imparts soul. He says that all the activities in the world takes place because of me. All the action that one sees in the world is because of me. It's me who initiate the man to perform actions.

The body draws its soul from you.  
But I arouse the soul.  
While You waylay with blissful peace,  
I lead with action's call. (Payam E Mashriq 42)

Iqbal makes apparent changes to the Story of Satan and his arguments in the Islamic studies. In the tradition Satan argued that he has been created from fire and man from mud, and fire always goes upwards and mud comes downwards, therefore he won't bow down to Adam. He imparts altogether different arguments to Satan besides the difference in creation. Satan boasts that he is more powerful than Adam. He refers to many activities which take place in this world because of him, like he says the blood in the veins of the world runs because of him. He is behind wind and lightning. All the matters and laws are governed by him. The movement of Stars and the waves is because of him. Compared to Satan man hardly can do anything so he refused to bow down.

It is important to note that Satan in the poems of Iqbal is a positive character, with all powerful characters, a reason of activity, one who after his downfall has not been discouraged at all, but has succeeded in the mission that he took up. It should be remembered this positivity that Iqbal imparts in the character of Satan is not because of his highness but because of the failure of Human beings who succumbed to him. Satan says that Adam (P.B.U.H) was born in your lap but will grow in my embrace: "That low-born creature of earth, man, Of mean intelligence, / Though born in Your lap, will grow old Under my vigilance" (Payam E Mashriq 43) In another poem of 1935 from Bal-e-Jibril "Jibreel O Iblis," Satan says: "Ask God, if thou hast the time to ask: / Whose blood gave colour to Adam's inglorious tale? (Gabriel and Satan)

Iqbal's Satan is calm and not at all worried about the loss of the heavenly delight. He is not in a mood to rage a war against almighty to take over the fields. He has forgotten all the bliss that he once enjoyed in the heaven. He is no more concerned with the status that he once enjoyed when he used to be in the company of Angels and was considered as the most pious among the Jinns and was made the leader of the Jinns. Yunus M Sayed remarks: "Iqbal's Satan has almost forgotten the celestial light. He is intoxicated by his own dissipation. He derives pride from the fact that he has none else but God as his enemy. He most certainly prefers to stay in this world of ours than to go back to Heaven". ()

On the other hand he is content with whatever he has, and whatever he has achieved so far. Satan does not feel ashamed at his current position; neither does he regret of the loss that he suffered because of his disobedience. The loss of honour and high position does not haunt his pride. He approaches the things in a very positive manner. He feels proud that his enemy is none other God Almighty: "In the heart of the Almighty like a pricking thorn I lie; / You only cry for ever God, oh God, oh God most high!" (Gabriel and Satan) In a poem titled 'Gabriel and Satan,' Gabriel puts a straight question to Satan and asks him, Is there any chance of his repentance? But Satan replies in negative:

Gabriel:

Thou never talkest of anything but the heavens.

Is there no cure for thy constant pain?

Satan:

Thou knowest not, alas, the secret of my pain!

The loss I have suffered, has increased my passion more-,

How silent is this world; desolate and wild!

I cannot ever live here; I cannot!

For one whose despair throbs in the heart of the universe,

What is better-despair, or hope? (Gabriel and Satan)

Here Satan refuses of having any chance of his return to the celestial fields. He considers that world as without color and hue, where there is no activity, its silent and in his words its "desolate" and "Wilde" and hardly has anything interesting left. Satan by his nature cannot live in a world that is without any activity. Iqbal's Satan is proud, unrepentant, deprived of the pain of defeat; an enemy of the Almighty; the giver of knowledge and wisdom, the knower of the secrets of creation and annihilation. When Gabriel asks Satan in the poem 'Gabriel and Satan,' that his refusal to prostrate in front of God left whole company of Angels ashamed and due to his refusal he lost many high places that were offered to him or would have been offered to him. "Gabriel: By thy refusal thou hast lost thy place in heaven— / And disgraced the angels in the eyes of the Lord." (Gabriel and Satan) But Satan no more cares about those high places or rewards which could have been awarded to him rather starts explaining to the Gabriel his achievement and says how this worlds runs because of him and how the prophets and the wise men have been the myths and the stories of old times.

Satan:

My courage gave a speck of dust the impulse to grow;

My cunning is the fabric of man's intellect.

Thou watchest the war of good and evil, safely ashore,

And who is battered by the storm-thou or I?

Ask God, if thou hast the time to ask:

Whose blood gave colour to Adam's inglorious tale? (Gabriel and Satan)

Iqbal's Satan is confirmed in evil and reeking with the proud spirit of seeking vengeance for the indignities and insults that he had to suffer because of the birth of Adam. In Iqbal there is no direct condemnation of Satan as such. In one of his Persian Ghazals addressing God, he says, "Our sin lies in eating the grain, whereas his (Satan's) fault lies in refusing to prostrate before man. You are neither on good, terms with him, nor with us." In the initial poems of Iqbalian Satan was proud to be the enemy of man and lead him astray. He boasted highly that he would raise man the Ambassador of God in his lap and would lead him astray: "That low-born creature of earth, man, Of mean intelligence, / Though born in Your lap, will grow old Under my vigilance" (Payam E Mashriq p42) But soon Satan feels very disappointed at the weakness of Man. He feels it a shame and not proud to be an enemy of a creature like Man, who is so weak that he cannot withstand the assaults of the Satan. In the poem 'Satan's Lamet' from the collection *Javed Nama*,

Satan complains to God that the company of Man has devastated him and not the vice versa: "God of the righteous and the unrighteous, / Man's company has devastated me." (Satan's Lament)

This is a strange case put forward by Iqbal from Satan's side. Here he is critical about the progress of the man, and his moral degradation. Satan is awe struck at the fact that this man whom God had made his ambassador on the earth turned so weak that he never disobeyed the command of him. He wants a tough opponent who can withstand his efforts and he will have to make efforts to lead him astray. But Satan does not find man capable of refusing his command. He exclaims: "Not once has he rebelled against my rule / He has closed his eyes to himself and has not found himself." (Javed Nama) Satan in his lament almost begs to God to save him from this obedient servant, and to set him free, at least for all the good that he did before his refusal. Satan exclaims that he had very high aspiration before but the weakness of man has destroyed them all, and now he feels ashamed of himself. He asks God to provide a stronger enemy, who is more defiant and strong in his resolution. He questions if this was his enemy a man who is nothing but straw, why God endowed him with so much fire: "If nothing but straw existed in this world, / What profited it to endow me with so much fire?" (Javed Nama)

Satan feels sad at his triumph, and now came back to God for recompense; he asks God to guide him to a Man who dares to deny him, a righteous man, who can twist his neck. He feels there is not one man left in this world who is strong in faith. He asks God to guide him to such a man if he exists in the world, one who will not abide by Satan's call and will reject him, even if he lose this will make him feel happy even at his loss : "Grant me, O God, One living man of faith, / Haply I shall know delight at last in defeat." (Javed Nama). Even In this poem we find Iqbal dealing Satan from altogether different perspective, which is in no way closer to the religious traditions. Satan has not been quoted in The Glorious Quran or Hadith making a Lament. This innovation by Iqbal is only to satirize Human beings.

Iqbal through the exaltation of Satan, satirises the modern man. He was highly critical of the modern civilization and modern man. Throughout his poem, he showed disgust at the moral degradation of man. Though he was not a pessimist in his approach, but there are some stances wherein he showed pessimism. In this poem 'Satan's Lament,' he uses highly, satirical style and shows a pessimistic view for man. This pessimism almost crushes the image of man as an ambassador of God, or the Best of the creation. The disappointment of Satan at the being of Man, mars the whole existence of Man. He through Satan's Lament criticises the modern man and civilization. In a ghazal in *Bang-E-Dara*, he expresses his opinion on the modern civilization:

Throw them out in the alley

The new civilizations eggs are rotten

Election, membership, council, presidency

The nooses of independence are very strange (Bang E Dara)

Iqbal does not only make Satan as a source of activity but also mouth piece of his for the criticism of the modernity. He continues the same theme and criticism of man in another poem 'Satan's Pition' from *Bal-e-Jibreel*, where he, besides criticising common man also criticises the politicians and calls them Satan, for they have taken the place of the Satan. He also makes Satan exclaim that even the hoors of the heaven are disappointed at the Modern Mans conduct. Satan in this poem is again harsh at the weakness of the man. Satan says that his place has been taken by the politicians and he is no more required now:

'Man, that handful of' dust,

Is a firebrand, indeed?

Lean in soul, and fat in body,

Dressed in fancy clothes;

With a heart ebbing away;

Ripe and cunning in reason.

Thou knowest not,

The houris of heaven

Are sad at the thought

Of heaven's desolation.

The men of politics

Have usurped my place forever;

And I am not needed

On the earth anymore' (Satan's Petition)

Satan feels that not a single man on the earth is left, who could enter Jannah (Paradise) Since in Islamic tradition, there is a concept of beautiful companion that righteous Men and Women would get in the hereafter, but for Satan those beautiful ones (Hoors) are sad and disappointed for there is none worth who can accompany them. Satan concludes by saying that his place has been taken by the politicians he is now no more required on the earth.

Iqbal besides writing on the general themes of the modernity was very much concerned with Muslims of his age. Though his poetry covers wide range of topics and themes, but majority of his poems are dedicated to the Muslims, infact he once wrote:

"I have never considered myself a poet. Therefore, I am not a rival of anyone, and I do not consider anybody my rival. I have no interest in poetic artistry. But, yes, I have a special goal in mind for whose expression I use the medium of poetry considering the condition and the customs of this country." (Maktoobat, p195)

His special goal was to uplift the spirit of Islam among Muslims. He wrote many poems where he tried to awake the long sleeping soul of the Muslim Youth. He was highly critical of the western approach towards Muslim, and considered them a threat to the

Muslim civilization and Vice Versa. When he talks about Islam and West he considers Satan as the comrade of the west who is at war with Islam, In one his poems he says:

If his freedom hangs on the faith's bargain,  
In such a bargain he stands not to gain.  
The soul and body yet face a clash,  
This culture has made her wild beasts rash.  
Allah has faith in Momin's might and will,  
On Europe's hardware Satan makes his skill.

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