CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

...And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky; and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (Wordsworth, "Lines, Tintern Abbey")

The spring and these caravans of desert tulips
Youth, ecstasy, love and beauty;
These winkings of the stars in the darkness of the night;
This ocean, this boundlessness of the azure firmament;
The journey of the bride of moon in the litter of night;
The rise of the sun, the calm of the blue sky —
Given a seeing eye, all this is ours without a price
As nature does not sell its charm and beauty. (Iqbal, Zarb-i-Kalim)
The English Romantic movement of the nineteenth century is one of those literary traditions which exhibit a close interaction of spirit between the East and the West. Some of the English Romantic poets like Thomas Moore, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley were highly influenced by the thought and literature of the East but, after developing a complex Romantic tradition of their own, they also exercised an equally significant and far-reaching influence on Oriental thought and sensibility. While the Eastern influence on the English Romantic movement has been fairly well acknowledged, no comprehensive study has so far been undertaken relating to the corresponding influence of English Romanticism on the East. This thesis makes an attempt to study some aspects of the English Romantic tradition in relation to Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938), one of the most outstanding thinkers and poets of modern India.

Iqbal was one of those rare geniuses who combine with a native gift for literature and philosophy an extraordinary capacity to appropriate various influences and assimilate them to a growing native tradition. In him we find, inseparably mingled together different streams of influence — ancient Indian thought (he is never tired of referring to his brahminic origins), Oriental poetry and mystic thought (the subject of his doctoral research was The Development of Metaphysics in Persia), Western philosophy and literature,
and last but not least Islamic thought. English Romanticism is also one of the most potent influences that moulded the poetic genius of Iqbal. The poet himself expresses his indebtedness to some of the English Romantic poets both in his poetry and prose writings. But while detailed studies have been made of different aspects of Iqbal's thought and art, which are quite impressive for their vastness and variety, this valuable and interesting subject remains unexplored. The subject is explored here through a study of various aspects of a literary relationship that can be traced between Iqbal and English Romantic poets.

The poets chosen for study in the above context are Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and, to a very limited extent, Keats. This choice does not imply that Romanticism is confined to this cluster of poets or that Iqbal was not influenced by other poets with a Romantic strain in them. In fact, he has written a poem on Shakespeare and translated some poems of Cowper, Tennyson, Emerson and Longfellow. The Romantic poets referred to above were chosen firstly because the Romantic creed found the most cogent expression in their poetry and secondly because Iqbal shares more in common with them than with any other English poet or group of poets. The poets are not individually compared with Iqbal. Instead certain specific themes — nature,
man and society, the idea of revolution, religion and aesthetics — which cover nearly the whole spectrum of the tradition of English Romanticism are chosen for treatment with reference to the relationship between the Romantics and Iqbal.

Iqbal was essentially a Romantic both as a thinker and a poet. One can safely say about him what his great contemporary, Tagore, said about himself that he was a 'Janame romantik' (a born Romantic). The Romantic tendency was unmistakably present in him right from his early childhood. His biographers speak of his idealism, his restlessness and his dreamy nature. The poet was himself conscious of these traits of his character. In an early poem Zuhd aur Hindi (Asceticism and Licentiousness), which was written before 1905 he speaks of his self-contradictory and whimsical nature, his desire for freedom from taboos and rituals of abstinence and his flitting about, a bee-like, from flower to flower. The poem ends with the exclamation that "even Iqbal is not aware of Iqbal."
Three years later he again makes this confession:

Ask not of Iqbal's station, his condition is still the same; somewhere by the wayside, thou wilt find him standing and anxiously waiting.

This inborn Romanticism found a suitable atmosphere to thrive in the training that Iqbal received in the early stages of


All subsequent quotations from Iqbal's Urdu poetry are from this edition of his collected Urdu poems and the translations of these quotations, as well as those from his Persian poetry, are by the author.

2 Ibid., p. 142.
his life. In accordance with the traditional system of education, quite in vogue then, he was first introduced to the Persian poets, Sadi, Hafiz and Attar (Rumi was a later discovery). Later he read the Urdu poets, Mir, Ghalib, Dagh and others. All these poets have a strong Romantic strain in them which left an indelible impression on Iqbal's mind. In his last years at school and during his college days Iqbal was extensively exposed to English poetry. Those were the closing years of the nineteenth century when English Romantic poetry was regarded as the purest and most authentic poetry and school and college anthologies consisted mostly of the nineteenth century English Romantic lyrics. It was not only because this poetry still held the ground in Europe but also because it had, and continues to have, a special appeal to Oriental sensibility which finds in it an echo of its own subjectivism, idealism, and belief in the free working of imagination.

Iqbal took his master's degree in philosophy in 1899 and from 1901 to 1902 taught English literature along with philosophy and economics in Oriental College and Islamia College, Lahore. From 1902 to 1904 he worked as an Assistant Professor of English at the Government College, Lahore, and taught Romantic poetry with a rare zest and passion which reflected his own affinity with the English Romantic poets.
The poems that he wrote during this period bear a clear imprint of Romanticism on them. Notable among these are *Himala* (The Himalayas), *Abr-i-Kohsar* (The Cloud on the Mountain), *Ek Arzoo* (An Aspiration), *Insan aur Bazmi-Judrat* (Man in the company of Nature) and *Chand* (The Moon). During this period he also translated some English Romantic lyrics like *Hamdari* (Sympathy) from William Cowper, *Dayam-i-Subh* (the Message of the Dawn) from Longfellow, *Ishq aur Haat* (Love and Death) from Tennyson and two poems, *Ek pahad aur Qalehri* (The Mountain and the Squirrel) and *Bukheat Ay Bazm-i-Jahan* (Farewell Of World) from Emerson. 3

3 Iqbal has only named the poets from whom he is translating without mentioning the actual titles of the poems that he has translated. Besides this he has subjected the content of these poems to some modification. It is, in fact, a free rendering of the poems rather than a strict translation. In most cases even the titles of the poems are changed. A comparison of the original poems with his translations is, therefore, highly illuminating. The original poems are:

- The Nightingale and the Glow-worm (Cowper)
- *Daybreak* (Longfellow), *Love and Death* (Tennyson,) and *The Mountain and the Squirrel* and *Waldeinsamkeit* (German word for world-loneliness) by Emerson.
In 1905 Iqbal went to Europe for higher studies at Cambridge and Munich. During his stay in Germany he studied some of the German Romantic poets, notably Goethe (with whose work he was acquainted even before going to Europe), Herder, Schiller, von Hammer, Heine and the poets who belonged to what is known as the Oriental Movement in German literature of which Iqbal speaks very appreciatively in his preface to Payam-i-Mashriq. During this period Iqbal wrote some poems in imitation of the German Romantics some of which lie in manuscript form in the Iqbal Museum, Lahore.  

After his return from Europe in 1908, Iqbal appears in the messianic role singing of the unlimited possibilities of human evolution through the rejuvenation of the Muslim

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This work is henceforward referred to as Zindah Rud, II (it is the second volume of Dr. Javid Iqbal's biography of his father).
In tune with this prophetic fervour was his acceptance of an important social role in the turbulent days of the early years of this century. The Romantic strain, however, continues unabated in him. In actual life he could never consistently and dogmatically stick to one particular stance or position and in his poetry he continued to give vent to his state of tension and sense of loneliness. This sense of isolation is a recurrent feature of his poetry and finds its most poignant expression in his poems Lala-i-Sahra (in Urdu) and Tanhai (in Persian).

Lala-i-Sahra⁵ (The Tulip of the Desert), at one level of meaning, is an expression of a deeply complex human situation. The feeling of being lost in wilderness without any sense of direction or a definite destination in view,⁶ the realization of the boundlessness and

⁵ Kulliyat, pp. 413-14.

⁶ Like thou I too am a lost and blundering wayfarer, whither lies thy destination, O, tulip of the desert?
mysteriousness of the universe,\(^7\) and the sense of amazement at the co-existence of the existential anguish\(^8\) and miraculous heroism\(^9\) in man, are the elements that compose this situation.

In *Tanhai* (loneliness), the poet, in consternation, goes from one object to the other (from the ocean to the

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May God protect the diver of love;
Each drop of the ocean has the depth of the ocean.

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Why didst thou sprout from thy branch and I fall off from mine?
A desire for creative expression; a relish and zest for isolation.

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The tumult of the world is due to the passion of man,
The sun is only a looker-on, the stars are mere spectators.
mountain and from the mountain to the moon) in search of a companion but fails to elicit any sympathetic response from any one of them; in fact each of them is speechless in the face of his searching and relentless questioning, and ultimately he reaches God himself:

Surpassing the sun and the moon I reached God's own presence:

"In Thy wide world not a single atom understands my situation. The world is devoid of heart and this handful of dust is all heart. All is well with Thy garden but it does not deserve my song."

A smile appeared on His lips but He did not say a word.


All subsequent quotations from Iqbal's Persian poetry are from this edition of his collected Persian poems and their translations are by the author.
The poet's spiritual loneliness intensified as his age advanced and his last and posthumously published work, *Arzoo-e-Hilaj*, is, from one point of view, a testament of this loneliness. Here are a few excerpts:

I offer my heart on my palm but there is no heart-ravishing beloved;

I offer my merchandise but there is none to take it away,

Make thou thy resting place in my bosom,

As no Muslim is more lonely than me.


partook of the pain and passion of the tulip
And unmasked the inmost heart of Life.
I do not know to whom was addressed my subtle
message of love

As I lived alone and sang my song alone.

O tulip, look not for sympathy outside of thee;
Like me seek out a friend in thine own self.
Expose thy breast to every wind that blows
And safeguard the old scar thou bearest on thy heart.

It was this inherent Romanticism which drew Iqbal
to the highly ecstatic and imaginative poetry of Rumi,
The egotistical philosophy of Nietzsche and the poetry
of the German and the English Romantic poets.

From Iqbal's writings it appears that he had
studied in depth all the English Romantic poets excepting
Blake. With Blake, however, he will be seen to have much in common. Like Blake he extols human self and assigns an all-important role to imagination. This matter of the projective view of human self is analysed in this thesis in different contexts. There are, however, some significant differences between Blake and Iqbal. In Blake one has to draw the important distinction between his lyrical poetry, like The Songs of Innocence and Experience, and his prophetic works, like Milton and Jerusalem. Whereas he appears as a responsible artist in his poetry, in his prophetic books he frees himself, like an orator, from the bondage of art. Iqbal, on the other hand, combines in himself, almost inseparably, the roles of the prophet and the poet but does not free himself from the bondage of a practising artist. Besides this, Iqbal's belief in the creativity of the human self does not lead him to deny, as Blake does, the reality of the outside world. Iqbal's Romanticism is tinged with realism.

From the point of view of this fusion of the realistic and the Romantic Iqbal is closer to Wordsworth who, by Iqbal's own confession, ¹⁴ exercised a tremendous

¹⁴ See Mohammed Iqbal, Stray Reflections, ed. Javid Iqbal (Lahore, 1961), Entry 36. For details see Chapter V below.
influence upon him during the formative days of his career. Both the poets reacted in a similar way to the horrors of a mechanical and industrial civilization and the poetry of both of them is ultimately a product of the harmonization of thought with feeling and reason with imagination.

Iqbal's indebtedness to Coleridge has apparently neither been acknowledged by the poet himself nor has it been pointed out by any of his critics; yet so crucial is this indebtedness in some ways that the matter needs to be paid close critical attention. Apart from the fact that Iqbal's aesthetic thought, as reflected in his prose and verse, bears close affinity with Coleridge's ideas on imagination, there exists in Iqbal's early poetry a poem, *Tifl-i-Shir Khw* (A sucking Infant) which is a rendering of an early poem by Coleridge entitled 'To An Infant.' Iqbal does not, surprisingly, mention the source nor has the fact struck any of his critics. My discovery of it was in a small way a confirmation of my belief that there were aspects of Iqbal's indebtedness to the West still unexplored. Except for minor differences the two poems referred to above are identical. The modifications made by Iqbal in his poem are immaterial in comparison with those which he has introduced in his translations of other English poems where the sources are clearly indicated. Coleridge's
The poem begins with the following verse:

Ah! Cease thy tears and sobs, my little Life!  
I did but snatch away the unclasped knife.  

And Iqbal’s poem opens thus:

Ye'na ne saheja le sanya ne saheja le saheja le saheja le

I snatched away thy knife and thou dost weep.
My kindness is unkindness in thy view.

The main thrust of Coleridge’s poem is his comparison of his lot with that of a child:

"Man’s breathing miniature! Thou mak’st me sigh—  
A Babe art thou —— and such a Thing am I!  
To anger rapid and as soon appeased,


16 Kuliyats, p. 66.
Break Friendship's mirror with a tetchy blow,
Yet snatch what coals of fire on pleasure's altar glow!\textsuperscript{17}

And this is also the main point of Iqbal's poem which concludes as follows:

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\begin{minipage}{0.95\textwidth}
Ah! in this habit of thine I am in harmony with you;
Like thee I too am wedded to caprice and change;
I love ephemeral pleasure and pine for it;
I too am to anger rapid and as soon appeased;
The apparent beauty does my eyes delight;
My ignorance is in no wise less than thine, \textsuperscript{1} yours;
Like thee I sometimes cry and sometimes laugh;
Though an adult in appearance, I am an infant like thee.
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\textsuperscript{17} The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{kulliyat}, p. 67.
Both poems belong to the early careers of the two poets and are a clear index of their inherent Romanticism which has always exploited the possibilities of the allegory of childhood.

Among the Romantic poets, Iqbal seems to have felt closest to Byron and Shelley. Byron's influence upon him is evident from Iqbal's adulatory references to him in his poetry. When Iqbal was in Europe, Byron's fame was at its peak. His name had become a legend not only in England but in the whole continent especially in Italy, Germany and Greece. The Greeks particularly adored him for his valiant championing of the cause of their freedom. Iqbal was not only swayed by the force of this legend but he also lionized Byron for his passion for individual liberty and his active participation in various revolutionary movements. In Bayam-i-Qaḥri, under the title of the deceased in the heaven), he places Byron among the greatest men of human history like Jalal-ud-din Rumi, Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Marx, Tolstoy and Einstein and pays a glowing tribute to him in the following words:

19Kuliyat, p. 263.
Like roses and tulips flames would spring up from the earth
If a drop or two be poured on it from out his cup.
The chilly climate of England was out of tune with his temperament;
Love's messenger burnt and writhed with the passion of his message,
what a fairyland of beauty has his imagination fashioned forth!
Youth falls into rapture at a glimpse of it.
The phoenix of meaning voluntarily relinquished its nest
As it found the noose of his snare more suitable.

Later in the same work Byron is again mentioned with the poets, Rumi, Ghalib and Browning. This time Iqbal gives a representative verse to each of the poets. Byron is introduced reciting the following verse:

I will not scar my breast with the obligation of Khizr.\(^{21}\)  
I, therefore, pour my own heart's blood into the cup.

\(^{20}\) Kulliyat, p. 268.

\(^{21}\) The legendary figure of Oriental literature known to possess the knowledge of ab-i-hayat (the water of eternal life) and himself enjoying an immortal life.
In one single verse Iqbal has distilled the essence of Byron, the man and the poet.

Iqbal has close affinity of spirit with Shelley with whom he shares in common his preoccupation with the idea of revolution and the destiny of man, his earnestness as a responsible poet poet and his prophetic and impassioned tone. No wonder his poetry reminded his first English translator, R. T. Nicholson, of the poetry of Shelley.

Iqbal, one of those students whom Iqbal taught English literature in Government College, Lahore, has pointed out that Iqbal's poetry is reminiscent of those of Shelley.

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reports that Iqbal taught Shelley’s poetry with an uncommon passion and enthusiasm. While teaching Alonais he would devote his whole teaching period to a single stanza of the poem, analysing it minutely and illustrating its ideas and poetic subtleties with examples from his own poetry and that of other poets. Mian Ita-ur-Rehman writes:

An exposition of Shelley’s ideas by such a profound scholar as Iqbal and his quotation of his own verses and those of the other Urdu poets by way of comparison or contrast was nothing but sheer good fortune of the audience. It was a stream aflow. Iqbal’s lips shed flowers. How earnestly did we wish that he should go on speaking and let us listen to him for the whole day. The ringing of the bell which generally comes as a sign of relief to the student would deal a blow to our hearts on the conclusion of this period and we would reluctantly leave the lecture-room. 24

Iqbal's poetry reveals how deeply he had imbibed the influence of Shelley. His well known Urdu poem 'Chand' (The Moon) seems partly to have been inspired by Shelley's lyric 'To the Moon'. Although Iqbal's poem is a longer piece and more complex yet the two poems share something very substantial in common. The moon is to both the poets a symbol of constant striving and ceaseless movement and change. Shelley writes:

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless. 23

And Iqbal's apostrophe to the moon opens thus:

Your homeland is a thousand times away from
my waste land
Yet thy pull causes turbulence in the wave of my heart.
Which is the company wherefrom thou art gone
and whither dost thou go?
Perchance thou art pale for the weariness caused
by thy tortuous voyage.

23 Thomas Hutchinson ed., Shelley's Poetical Works

26 Kaliyut, p. 70.
Yet for Shelley the moon is a symbolic projection of his self, mirroring his loneliness, whereas Iqbal makes it a spring-board as it were, to extol man who has the source of power within him and chooses his own destiny, unlike the moon which borrows its light from the sun and is bound in chains of servility.

Some of the revolutionary poems of Iqbal like Farman-i-khuda; Farishtoon ke Han (God's Commandment to the Angels) Khaja-e-Hazdeo (The capitalist and the labourer) and the Saquinamah (Persian) echo the revolutionary ideas expressed by Shelley in his poems 'Song to the Men of England' and the fragment 'To the people of England', although it again needs to be pointed out that Iqbal's emotions, unlike those of Shelley, are subjected to a rigorous intellectual discipline.

There is very little of Keats in this thesis for the reason that Iqbal did not share much in common with him. In his central emphasis on negative capability Keats strikes a different note from that of Iqbal. He asserts that a poet has no self and pleads for self-effacement and passive acceptance of all experience. In Keats's valuation Iqbal would not be a "camelion poet" but would rather belong to the category of poets described as possessing the characteristic of the Wordsworthian
"egotistical sublime"; and in the famous typology drawn up by him Iqbal would be a 'man of power' rather than a 'man of genius.' There is, however, a group of early poems of Iqbal which, reflects a tone of negative capability. This quality is absent from the later Iqbal except for certain passages in his dramatic poems. The poets of the Hyperion, who deals with the dialectics of evolution and wants to make the misery of mankind his misery, however, calls for some comparison with Iqbal.

More deeply significant than these broad aspects of a poetic relationship which Iqbal has with different Romantic poets are the issues concerning the essentially Romantic character of his views on nature and man, his ideas of reform and revolution, his attitude to religion, his theory and practice of art, and above all his

The poems are: Ahm (The Cloud), Ashiq-i-Hariria (The Capricious Lover), Koshysh-i-Natamam (unaccomplished effort), Nawa-i-Shan (The Sad Note), Ishrat-i-Impoz (The present pleasure); Insa (Man), Jalwa-i-Husn (The vision of Beauty), Ek Shan (An Evening) and Tanhai (Loneliness).
fundamental affinity of spirit with the Romantic poets in their belief in what Coleridge calls the "one life" of the universe. These issues are investigated in the present thesis in the following chapters.