“Iblis” In Iqbal’s Philosophy

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The figure of Satan or Iblis occupies a considerable portion of Iqbal’s religious philosophy. As A.M. Schimmel observes, there are tendencies towards the development of the Iblis-figure in the traditional way, and yet towards a completely original re-formulation of it. On the whole, in his treatment of Iblis, one can see many of Iqbal’s brilliant “flashes” of poetic and philosophical insight.

**IBLIS AS A PRINCIPLE OF ACTIVITY**

Mani had regarded Satan as a principle of activity, Iqbal refers to this fact in his thesis: “In darkness - the feminine principle in nature - were hidden the elements of evil which, in course of time, concentrated and resulted in the composition, so to speak, of the hideous-looking devil, the principle of activity.” Perhaps this is the germ of the idea which figured prominently in Iqbal’s later thought, namely, that the movement of the world and the evolution of humanity is possible only through the conquest of darkness and the powers of Chaos. In fact, in Iqbal’s opinion, Satan is not far from the truth when he asserts in “Taskhir-e-Fitrat”

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\text{تو بہ بدن جال دہی, شور بہل مین بہم}
\text{تو بہ سکون رہ زنی, مین بہ تیش رہرہم}
\text{آدم خاکی نہاد, دون نظر و کم سواود}
\text{زاد در آگوش تو پیپر شود در برم}^4
\]

The stars’ bodies were made by you;
I am their motive force.
I am the substance of the world;
I am life’s primal source.

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1. Schimmel, A. M. “The Figure of Satan in the Works of Muhammed Iqbal” (consulted in the manuscript by courtesy of the author).
The body draws its soul from You
But I arouse the soul.
While you waylay with blissful peace,
I lead with action’s call.
That low-born creature of earth, man,
Of mean intelligence,
Though born in your lap, will grow old
Under my vigilance

It is *Iblis* who leads human beings on from conquest to conquest, who shows them the way to knowledge and perfection.\(^5\) The words of *Iblis* when he tempts Adam could very well be the words of Iqbal himself, and that is hardly surprising because, in one sense, both *Iblis* and Iqbal are prophets of a new world. First *Iblis* praises a life of action, of perpetual excitement and challenge - a marked contrast to the effortless case of parasitical living.

زندگی سوز و ساز، یه ز سکون دوام
فاخته شابین شود، از تبش زیر دام
کوثر و تسنیم برد، از تو نشاط عمل
گیرز میناء تاک، باده آنین نام\(^6\)

A life of struggle, strain and stress
Is better than eternal rest.
When a dove strains hard at its nest
An eagle’s heart beats in its breast.
These streams of milk and honey have
Deprived you of the strength to act.
Come, take a hearty draught of wine
From the cup of the vine direct.
(Translation by Hussain, H., *A Message from the East*, p. 43)

Then he urges Adam to open his eyes and reach out for a new world - a world in which

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there are untold opportunities for his manifold potentialities to manifest themselves and acquire maturity. *Iblis* becomes Adam’s guide to a new world.

Arise, for I will show to you
The prospect of a whole new world
Unveil your eyes and look around;
Go forth and see it all unfurled.
You are tiny, worthless drop;
Becoming a shining, priceless pearl.
Descend from Eden’s halcyon heights
And plunge into the life-stream’s swirl.
You are a brightly shining sword;
Go dip into Creation’s heart,
To prove your mettle issue forth
And from your scabbard’s bosom part.
You have not learnt this lesson yet;
Fulfillment dooms desire to death.
You know what is eternal life?
To burn anew with each new breath

(Translation by Hussain, *H., A Message from the East*, pp. 44-45)

Adam does not leave Paradise with “wandering steps, and slow”8 I but joyfully. He sounds more like Columbus setting out on an expedition to discover wonderful lands than as exile who has

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fallen from grace. *Iblis* has indeed, been successful in arousing his enthusiasm.

When Adam returns to the presence of God having conquered the forces of Nature, he is both triumphant and penitent. He is triumphant because he has fulfilled his mission on earth; he is penitent because he erred. He let himself be beguiled by Satan. But Iqbal’s Adam could not be wholly penitent knowing that “error which may be described as a kind of intellectual evil is an indispensable factor in the building up of experience.”

Adam speaks of God with a curious childlike innocence which yet has a kind of dignity and

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self-assurance:

I was deflected from the path
Of virtue by the Devil’s fraud.
Forgive my error and accept
My humble penitence, O God!
One cannot subjugate the world
Unless one yields to its allure;
For Beauty’s wild pride is not tamed
Until it falls into Love’s snare.
(From Hussain, M. H., A Message from the East, pp. 47-48)

True to some degree to the principle of Milton’s Satan: “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven,”12 Iblis tells the righteous (perhaps also a little self-righteous) Gabriel that it is he who has made possible the drama of human evolution, that - in a way - God is more aware of him than of the eternally-pious Gabriel.

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?
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!
(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., Poems from Iqbal, London, 1955 pp. 52-53)

It is worth mentioning that in regarding Iblis as the dynamic principle of life, it is very likely that Iqbal was also influenced by Goethe for whom, next to Rumi, he had the greatest admiration and affection. In his play Faust, Goethe shows the Devil as humankind’s companion, forming human beings, working on them lest they slumber.

**IBLIS AS A PRINCIPLE OF EVIL**

In Iqbal’s thought, Iblis is never wholly evil. He is the symbol of the eternal “la” (negation) but for Iqbal, “Id” implies “illa” (affirmation) and is “an absolutely necessary constituent of a perfect social order.” Iblis himself, says:

\[
\text{مُمَّنُ دِبَّلّي،} \text{،} \text{شُرْطًا} \text{اًّرَيَّنَهُ} \text{مُمَّنُ} \\
\text{لَفَّتَهُ مُمَّنُ خُشْطَرَ اَنَّا لَفَّتَهُ} \text{اًّم!} \\
\]

Under the veil of “No” I murmured “Yes”
What I have spoken is better than what I never said.

Milton’s Satan aims out of good still to find means of evil. As God’s representative, it must be Adam’s endeavour to “seek to bring forth good,” from his evil. In Javid Nama Shah-e-Hamadan says:

14. Schimmel, A. M., “Mohammad Iqbal and, German Thought” in Mohammad Iqbal, (The Pak-German Forum), Karachi, 1960, p 97
17. Milton, J., “Paradise Lost” (Book 1), p. 82.
18. Ibid.
The man who is fully aware of himself
Creates advantage out of loss.
To sup with the Devil brings disaster to a man,
to wrestle with the Devil brings him glory.
One must strike oneself against Ahriman;
You are a sword, he is the whetstone.
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 117)

True, however, to tradition, Iqbal identifies Iblis with whatever evil he sees in the world. Iblis is loveless and leads to the betrayal and destruction of humankind. One of the traditional symbols for Iblis is the serpent, and this symbol is suited to Iqbal’s identification of Iblis with (negative) reason, for when attacked, a serpent defends itself with its head.20

Iblis also comes to stand for what Iqbal perceived to be Western values and attitudes e.g., materialistic creeds and indifference to the individual’s higher self. In one poem, Iqbal says to God about Western politics:

You made just one Satan from the fire,
It has made two hundred thousand Satans from the dust

Iqbal regards most European politicians as devils in disguise. Furthermore, they are not creatures of fire but merely devils of the dust incapable of anything but scheming and base

maneuvering. The politician - Iblis of “Iblis ka farman apnay siyasi farzandon kay nam,”22 and “Iblis ki majlis-e-shura”23 has no element of the grandeur possessed by the proud worshipper of God. He is repulsive even as Milton’s Satan is repulsive when he is shown gloating over his triumph in Book X of Paradise Lost. For Iqbal, the devils of modern civilization are far more unsatisfactory than Iblis who had been in the company of God for so long. He says,

\[
\text{گنہے بھی شوکودہ بے لہذا و سرحد}
\text{اگر ابیلس تو خانکی نہاد است}
\text{میشو نخچی ابیلس ان س عصر}
\text{خسائ را غمزہ شاہ سازگار است}
\text{اصیلان را بہمان ابیلس خوشتین}
\text{کر یزدان دیده و کامل عیار است.}24
\]

Sin itself becomes cold and unsatisfactory
As soon as your Satan is formed only of dust.
Do not become game for the devils of this time
Since their glance is directed only towards the inferior ones.
For those who are noble that Satan is better
Who has seen God and has a perfect standards!

Iqbal also shows Iblis as an advocate of the life-stultifying art and mysticism to which he was so bitterly opposed. In the confrontation of Zoroaster and Ahriman in Javid Nama, Iblis “defends the pure spirituality of mysticism and self-isolated asceticism against the prophetic activity which manifests itself in the community.”25 Iblis urges his counsellors to preach that which weakens the life-urge in human beings and makes them strangers to the inner turmoil of life.

\[
\text{ہے وہی شعر و تصوف اس کے حق میں خوب تر}
\text{جو چھپا دے اس کی اندہون سے نماشانہ حیات}26
\]

That poetry and mysticism is best for it (humanity)
which obscures its vision of the theatre of life.

22. Ibid., p. 148.
But, as Schimmel has observed, “whether it is as a seducer to useless dreams, fruitless mystical seclusion and in social flight from the world, or as a protector and defender of a civilization which is devoid of divine love, Satan is, in all these aspects, always a necessary partner of the Perfect Man.”

That is why Iqbal says

Do not live in such an ill-devised world
where there is a God but no Satan.

CREATURE OF FIRE VERSUS CREATURE OF CLAY

*Iblis* is nothing if not proud. He does not doubt for an instant that he is superior to Adam. He is a creature of fire while Adam is made of dust. *Iblis* says to God justifying his disobedience

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.
(Translation by Husain, H., *A Message from the East*, p. 42)

Iqbal’s Adam is not one to let himself get the worst of an argument - not even when his adversary is the ingenious *Iblis*, and so, in his turn, he retorts

29. Ibid., p. 97.
When they brought forth the world from non-existence,
They saw that its heart was cold and lifeless.
Where was fire save in my heart?
They created you out of my fire!

Schimmel observes that the contrast between fire and clay “leads back to early Islamic
discussions about the preferability of earth (of which the Ka’ba is made) to fire (the element
brought into the discussion by admirers of Persian fire-worship): Satan becomes, thus, the
inventor of the misleading comparison of incomparable objects.”

**IBLIS AND PREDESTINATION**

In a poem called “Taqdir” which Iqbal acknowledges was inspired by Ibn ‘Arabi
we see another Iblis - not the proud lover and adversary of God for whom one can feel some
admiration but a moral coward who is trying to attribute his wilful act of disobedience to God’s
will. Mystics and theologians have sometimes differentiated between God’s Command and
God’s Will. According to Hallaj, “the command is eternal whereas the will and foreknowledge
of God concerning it, whether it shall be obeyed or disobeyed, is created, and therefore
subordinate. God wills both good and evil, but commands only good.”

**Iblis**, though he disobeyed the Word of God, nonetheless obeyed God’s inner Command which forbids
prostration before any but God.

The poem begins with Iblis seeking to justify his disobedience by the plea that he knew it to be predestined

اے خداانے کن فکاں مجلس کو نہ تھا آدم سے بیٹر
آے! وہ زندگانی نزدیک و دور و دیسر و زود
حرف اشکاب، تیرے سامنے ممکن نہ تھا
بال مگر تیری مشیت مبین نہ تھا میرا سجود!

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33. Ibid.
34. Schimmel, A. M., *Gabriel’s Wing*, p. 211.
Oh God, Creator! I did not hate your Adam,  
That captive of Far-and-Near and Swift-and-Slow;  
And what presumption could refuse to You  
Obedience? If I would not kneel to him,  
The cause was Your own fore-ordaining will.  
(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., Poems from Iqbal, p. 64)

God asks Iblis

When did that mystery dawn on you? before,  
Or after your sedition?  
(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., Poems from Iqbal, p. 64)

and Iblis answers

After, oh brightness  
Whence all the glory of all being flows  
(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., Poems from Iqbal, p. 64)

By saying that it was after his act of disobedience that he felt it was predestined, Iblis betrays himself for he is admitting indirectly that when he refused the prostration he felt free to choose. God then turns to the angels and says

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37. Ibid., p 43.
38. Ibid., p. 43.
39. Ibid., p. 43.

35
See what a groveling nature taught him this
Fine theorem! His not kneeling, he pretends,
Belonged to My fore-ordinance; gives his freedom
Necessity’s base title; - wretch; his own
Consuming fire he calls a wreath of smoke.
(Translation by Kiernan, V. G., *Poems from Iqbal*, p. 64)

“It is Satanic short-sightedness,” observes Schimmel, “which ascribes any decision which leads to disaster to divine predestination and unchangeable laws.”40 This poem also indicates that the *Iblis* whom Iqbal admires is not the one who denies the freedom of his will. Iqbal’s interpretation of *Iblis* as a lover of God is based on the assumption that *Iblis* was not predestined to disobey but that his disobedience was a wilful act.

Iqbal also mentions *Iblis* in another context of predestination and freewill. It was through Satan’s seduction of Adam that human beings acquired free-will. To Adam, Satan said

\[
\text{بیچ نیاھندَد ز تو غیر سجود نیاَز}
\text{خیز چو سرَو بلندَد، اَو بعمل نرم گَام}
\text{زشَت و نکو زادَد وپم خداوند نَسَت}
\text{لذت کردار گیَر، گَام بنَہ چونَے کَام} \]

O you are fit for nothing but
Abject obeisance like a slave,
Like a tall cypress stand erect,
O you which do not act but crave.
Good and evil, virtue and sin,
Are myths created by your Lord.
Come, taste the joy of action and
Go forth to seek your due reward.
(Translation by Hussain, H., *A Message from the East*, p. 44)

In *Javid Nama*, *Iblis* shown as a sad old man, speaks to the sons of Adam in words touched with pathos:

40. Schimmel, A. M., “The Figure of Satan in the Works of Muhammad Iqbal”.
Flames sprang forth from my sown field;
Man out of predestination achieved free-will.
I displayed my own hideousness
and have given you the joy of learning or choosing,
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 104)

**IBLIS AS A UNITARIAN**

According to Hallaj, “Iblis is God’s lover and one of the two true Unitarians in the world, the other one being Muhammad.” As a strict believer in God’s Unity, he refused to prostrate himself before Adam saying, ‘Has somebody else taken away the honour of the prostration from my heart so that I should prostrate before Adam ?’ IQBAL seems to be sympathetic towards this view and the words of Hallaj in *Javid Nama* seem to speak also for him:

**وَخَتَنَّ النَّارَ أَوْ وَاسْوَخَتْنَ
سَوَخَتْنَ بِي نَارُ أَوْ نَساَسْوَخَتْنَ!
زَانَكَ أَوْ ذَرْ عَشْقَ وَخَدُمَتْ إِقْدَمَ اسْتَءْتُ
أَدَمَ ازْ اسْوَخَتْنَ أَوْ نَساَسْوَخَتْنَ!
قَمَاكُ كَذَٰلِكَ بِيْبُرَابِينَ تَفَنَّى رَأَيْسُنَّ
تَأْشَبَّ بِيْبُرَابِينَ مَحَوَّزْيَ اَزْ وَتَوْحِيْدَ رَأَيْسُنَّ**

*Love is to burn in his fire;*
*Without his fire, burning is not burning*
*Because he is more ardent in love and service,*
*Adam is not privy to his secrets.*
*Tear off the skirt of blind conformity*
*That you may learn God’s Unity from him.*
*(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 101)*

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42. *Javid Namah*, p. 159.
44. Baqli, R. quoted in *Ibid*.
SATAN IN THE POETRY OF MILTON AND IQBAL

Both Milton and Iqbal had a fiery, restless spirit and an intense religious consciousness. With all their individual differences the works of the two poets convey an impression of power. It is hardly possible to read their poetry without realizing the temperamental affinity between them. It is interesting to know that Iqbal had deep admiration for Milton, and in his youth wanted to write an epic similar to *Paradise Lost*.46

A number of writers have pointed out the similarity between Satan and *Iblis*. This statement needs a qualification (or a clarification) at the very outset. Milton’s Satan is not a uniform character. The Satan of the first two books of *Paradise Lost* is quite different from the Satan of the rest of the poem.47 The reason most commonly given for this is that Milton was a man divided against himself, “a Promethean, a renaissance humanist in the toils of a myth of quite contrary import.” 48 His explicit purpose was “to justify the ways of God to man” but the Satan he created, the Satan of Books I and II, the leader of the fallen angels, became such a formidable obstacle for him, that he had to “transform” him from indomitable rebel who could say in the face of eternal damnation:

What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will:
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That Glory never shall His wrath or might
Extort from me49

to a wailing creature who could gaze tearfully at the sun, and say:

O then at least relent: is there no place
Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left.50

Iqbal’s *Iblis* is also not a uniform character in the sense that the *Iblis* portrayed in various poems is not the same figure. Since Iqbal did not undertake to write a long poem in which *Iblis* appears as one of the chief characters, he was not obliged to be consistent in his treatment of *Iblis*. So we see different aspects of *Iblis*, sometimes a totally new *Iblis*, emerging in different

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47. This opinion is not universally accepted, but it finds support in a number of writers and seems to me to be valid.
49. Milton, J. “Paradise Lost” (Book I) p. 81.
50. Ibid., (Book IV) p. 147.
poems. Therefore, when it is said that Satan resembles Iblis, it must be made clear that the Satan of the first two books of Paradise Lost resembles, in the main, the Iblis of “Taskhir-e-Fitrat”, “Jibril-o-Iblis” and Javid Nama, and that there is some resemblance between the degenerate Satan of the later books of Paradise Lost and the politics-afflicted Iblis shown in “Iblis ka farman apnay siyasi farzandon kay nam” and “Iblis ki majlis-e-shura.”

The first point of similarity between the “heroic” Satan and Iblis is the splendour of their reckless courage. They are “sinners” but one cannot help admiring their unbroken spirit, their tenacity of purpose in the face of insuperable odds. Such qualities as they have would make a hero out of a rebel. A second point of similarity between them is that they are completely unrepentant. Even if they could, they would not retrace their steps.

There are differences too, between them, and these are not often remarked upon. Satan is an adversary of God and hates God, Iblis is not an enemy of God and loves God. Both Satan and Iblis are painted in brilliant colours but while those of the former glitter, those of the latter glow. We admire Satan but our heart does not go out to him as it does to Iblis. Satan is proud and belligerent, Iblis is proud and heart-broken. In the last analysis, despite all their similarities Satan and Iblis are very different - as different from each other as hate is from love. It is possible to build up a case for Satan as a tragic hero, but there is no doubt at all, Iqbal’s Iblis - the Iblis of Bal-e-Jibril and Javid Nama - is a tragic hero.

IBLIS AS A TRAGIC HERO

According to Aristotle a tragic hero is an outstanding character whose fortunes suffer a sudden reverse and who is, in some measure, responsible for his downfall. Were he not responsible, were his calamity just the working out of an unrelenting Fate, his situation though it would call for pity would bring about no catharsis. It would not, in fact, be tragic, at all, but simply unfortunate. To say of Iblis that “he is fulfilling his allotted role in the scheme of things” and that “the tragedy of Satan’s life is that he cannot change his destiny, his inner helplessness and sheer inability to be other than he is,” is surely to misunderstand the Iblis nearest to Iqbal’s heart. Although in most tragedies one is aware of a sense of predestination, of ominous agencies working against a character seeking to destroy him, yet - as has been said already - there is always something in the tragic characters themselves which brings about their

56. Ibid.
tragedy. *Iblis* is a free agent otherwise he would not have refused to obey God. The role he is fulfilling in the scheme of things is not an “allotted” one - it is a role he chose for himself and therein lies his tragedy - not in that he hates God and must serve God’s ends, but that he loves God and has chosen forever to displease God.

*Iblis* denies the charge of being an infidel. His words,

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از وجود حق مرا نمی‌گیر
دیده بار باطن کشا ظابر مگیر
گر به‌گویم نیست، ایس از ابلپی است
زانگه بدع از دید نتوان گفت نیست!
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Do not take me for one who denies God’s existence;
Open your eyes on my inner self, overlook my exterior.
If I say, “He is not,” that would be foolishness,
for when one has seen, one cannot say “He is not.”
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., *Javid Namah*, p. 104)

wrung from the agony of his soul, are reminiscent of the tortured Mephistopheles who, when asked by Faustus if he was out of hell, answered sorrowfully\(^5\)

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Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.
Thinkst thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?\(^5\)
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It was the “tragic flaw” in the character of *Iblis* which brought about the eternal separation between him and his beloved. The traditional motive for the disobedience of *Iblis* is pride, but due to the influence of Hallaj, Iqbal also gave to his *Iblis* the passion and tenderness of a lover. Milton’s Satan would not return to Heaven because

Farthest from Him is best

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57. *Javid Namah*, p. 158.
59. Milton, J., “Paradise Lost” (Book 1), p. 84.
Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
Above His equals.

*Iblis* when asked by Gabriel about the possibility of his return

Is it not possible that the rent in your robe be mended?

answers:

Ah! Gabriel; you do not know this mystery –
by breaking, my glass made me intoxicated!
Now it is impossible that I should dwell here again -
how silent is this realm without palaces or lanes!
Whose despair is the inner fire of creation?
Is not for him, “Despair” better than “Don’t despair”
(of God’s Grace)? (Reference to Surah *Al-Zumar* : 39:53)

Thus, so far from setting out as Satan does to pervert God’s purpose, *Iblis* is actually conscious of being God’s instrument. He does not seek for God’s Grace because if he were to do so, the world which God made - the world of human beings - would come to a standstill. Schimmel observes that in presenting this viewpoint Iqbal has made “one of the most original contributions to the problem of Satan’s destiny.”

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61. Ibid., pp. 193-194.
The Iblis portrayed in Javid Nama is sad and old - like the Satan of Nietzsche. His heart is heavy with the burden of his sins - sins not against God who “sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven,” 63 but against his Beloved. He begs human beings before whom he would not bow, not to sin any more, not to make his scroll any blacker.

Deliver me now from my fire;  
Resolve, O man, the knot of my toil,  
You who have fallen into my noose  
And given to Satan the leave to disobey,  
Live in the world with true manly zeal,  
as you pity me, live a stranger to me  
Proudly disregarding my sting and my honey,  
So that my scroll may not become blacker still.  
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 104)

Although he suffers endlessly, yet Iblis does not wish to return to the presence of God. It is a part of the character of a tragic hero that having brought about his end he accepts it without flinching. When the poet asks Iblis to give up “this cult of separation,” 65 the latter answers:

He said, “The fire of separation is the stuff of life;  
How sweet the intoxication of the day of separation.

63. Milton, J., “Paradise Lost” (Book I) p. 81.  
64. Javid Namah, p. 159.  
66. Ibid., p. 159.
The very name of union comes not to my lips;  
If I seek union, neither He remains nor I.”
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 104)

These lines also bear the implication that Love does not mean union or the annihilation of identity. Thus in upholding the belief in separation, Iblis becomes a preserver of the principle of individuality.

“The Lament of Iblis” in Javid Nama is part of the most profound poetry Iqbal ever wrote. He shows a strange spectacle Iblis praying to God - not for relief from pain or remission of his sins, but for a worthy opponent! In lieu of all his past worships of God, Iblis asks for a man who dares to resist him. He says:

صَيْدَيْنِ صَيْدِيْنِ رَاَوْتُكَ بُقْبُقُ
اَمَسْاَنِ اَنَبَنِّى فِرْمَانَ يَدْعُيُ
ازِ جَنْنِ صَيْدَيْنِ لَيْ مَرَاءَ اَنَادَ كَن
طَاعَتُ دَيْنَوْرَةَ مِنْ يَادَ كَن
قَطْرَتُ اوُ خَمَمِ وَعَزْمِ اوُ ضَعِيفُ
تَابِ يَكَ ضَرِيْمَ نَبَارِد اَنَّ حَرِيف
بَنِّيَدَهُ صَاحِبُ نَظَرُ بَاَيْدِ مَرَا
يَكَ حَرِيفُ يَخْتَهُ تَرْ باَيْدِ مَرَاااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااااa

The prey says to the huntsman, “seize me”:  
save me from the all-too obedient servant!  
Set me free from such quarry:  
remember my obedience of yesterday.  
His nature is raw, his resolution weak,  
this opponent cannot withstand one blow from me.  
I need a servant of God possessed of vision,  
I need a riper adversary!  
(Translation by Arberry, A, J., Javid Namah, p. 105)

Iblis is weary of all his easy triumphs. Tormented as he is, by his separation from God, he has not even the satisfaction of measuring his strength against a person of God. Iblis would rather meet his death at the hands of a man of valour than live for a millennium surrounded by

67. Ibid., pp. 160-161.
I have become saddened by all my triumphs
that now I come to you for recompense;
I seek from You one who dares to deny me –
Guide me to such a man of God.
I need a man who will twist my neck,
whose glance will set my body quivering.
Grant me, O God, one living man of faith;
haply I shall know delight at last in defeat.
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 105)

In this cry of despair one can see the world of tragedy, the world which lies beyond good
and evil. F.A Bijlefeld writes, “I must admit that the passages about Iblis above all others Satan’s
lament that he can hardly find a genuine opponent in the world, appealed to me more than a lot
of enlightened quasi-Christian statements about the devil, and that these words will live in my
spirit for a long, long time.”

In seeing Iblis as a complex character, a character torn between his pride and his love, a
character who possessed all the lineaments of a tragic figure, Iqbal revealed one of his deepest
poetic insights. This Iblis - for whom the poet confessed his heartfelt sympathy:

68. Ibid., p. 161.
69. Bijlefeld, W, A. quoted by Schimmel. A. M., “The Figure of Satan in the Works of Muhammad Iqbal.”
My soul in my body quivered for his agony.
(Translation by Arberry, A. J., Javid Namah, p. 103)

is one of the greatest achievements of Iqbal’s philosophic vision. This Iblis whose suffering brings catharsis is a much more profound and satisfying figure than the traditional Devil who leaves unexplained the greater part of the mystery of evil. It is true that Iqbal’s presentation of the tragic Iblis is only very fragmentary, but even though it does not answer all the questions pertaining to good and evil, God and Satan, it does point to the close and complex relationship between concepts commonly held to be mutually exclusive.

70. Javid Namah, p. 158.