

AN EPIC NARRATIVE THAT RENDERS CHUGHTĀ'I AND IQBĀL IN CLOSE PROXIMITY

It is an acquired characteristic of Abd ur-Raḥmān Chughtā'i (1897-1975)¹ that he has the prowess to assimilate purist ideas to his pluralistic form - a feature that he imbues in the illustrations of his album, *Ḥal-i Chughtā'i* (rel. 1968)² - which illustrates the verses of Ḥallāma Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938), that are deeply anchored in Islamic Logos. One of the factors employed by the artist to achieve this end is by incorporating his work with an element of surprise, the theatrics of which unfold as the viewer interacts with his imagery insightfully. This paper is one of the series of papers that attempts to interpret Chughtā'i's imagery of the *Ḥal*, and concerns with rediscovering an old concept that the artist has innovatively conceived in his painting, *Man and Satan* from the *Ḥal*, so as to interpret the illustration and explore the idea.

The Persian verse of Iqbāl, which the painting, *Man and Satan* illustrates, along with its English translation from the *Ḥal* is as under:

gharq andar razm-i khair wa shar hanuwz

ḥal payambar dāda wa kafīr hanuwz

To the Lord of the Universe the Devil said:

A firebrand Adam grows, that pinch of dust

Meager-should, laum and flesh, in fire clothes trussed,

Drain ripe and subtle, Heart not far from dead.

Arguably, the above translation does not do justice to Iqbāl's verse and leaves much to be desired, something which is common to most of the English translations of the verses of Iqbāl given in the *Ḥal*. Keeping this in view I have attempted to

translate the verse of Iqbāl in a manner so as to retain its essence, vision and verbatim:

Though wrecked, still battling are the forces - to
differentiate between right and wrong;
Despite witnessing hundreds of Messengers - still they
are infidels (Iqbāl).

In this verse Iqbāl states, all along the history of mankind hundreds of Messengers were sent by God to elucidate to man the difference between right and wrong. Yet, he fails to comprehend this difference, and blatantly defies God by being perpetually engaged in bloody feuds over worldly matters. In the process he is destroying himself and the world, but the fight goes on with no end in sight. The history of mankind shows that the civilizations that defied God, ‘blatantly and persistently’, were annihilated from the face of this earth, but God saved His Messengers and those who followed them. Had man been wise, he would have identified this pattern, and realized that his interest would best be served by obeying Allāh’s Commandments.

Worth noting is that Iqbāl neither mentions ‘Adam’ nor ‘Satan’ in the verse, though implies both, because the story of ‘right and wrong’ commenced with the Biblical³ and Qur’ānic epic narrative of ‘Adam/man and Satan’, while it is an ongoing drama, the grand finale of which is yet to be played out. This narrative is spread out in many of the verses of the Qur’ān, presented from different perspectives in multi-dimensional approaches. The story starts when Allāh announces to the angels, His decision to create a Vicegerent on earth, “Said thy Lord to the Angels: “I will create a vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth”, They said: “Wilt Thy place therein one who will make Mischievous therein and shed blood? - Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy (name)”⁴.

To depict the battle between right and wrong, the grand narrative of Adam and Eve has been employed by the artist, and the role of the protagonist of the drama, ‘man’ is played by Adam. Wherever, Adam or man is referred, woman is included

per se, except where the imagery of the respective figures of Adam and Eve shown in the painting *Man and Satan* are analyzed. Whereas, to represent the collective narrative of the Messengers⁵, mentioned in Iqbāl's verse, Chughtā'i has selected the story of Moses. Though the artist has not shown Moses in his painting, yet the presence of 'the statue of Pharaoh' is a reference to Moses and his people - the Bani-Israel, and the fascinating drama that was enacted before the world, told in the Old Testament (*Torah*)⁶, and subsequently retold in the Qur'ān, designed to elucidate the difference between 'right and wrong'.

Ironically, despite the fact that the painting of Chughtā'i, *Man and Satan* depicts the figures of *Adam and Eve*, yet it is not titled so; particularly considering that *Adam and Eve* is a favourite subject with the traditional artists of the West. To mention a few works with the same title, is the painting of the Flemish painter, Jan Van Eyck's, *Adam and Eve* (1432); an engraving, *Adam and Eve* (1504) by the German artist, Albrecht Durer; the High Renaissance Venetian artist, Titian's, *Adam and Eve* (c. 1550); the Dutch artist, Rembrandt De Rijn's etching, *Adam and Eve* (1638), and the Italian artist Michelangelo Buonarroti's fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, *Adam and Eve* (1508-1512). The conventional visualization of the narrative of *Adam and Eve* in the West is that of 'a male and female figure in nude', alongside Satan, represented in the form of a 'serpent' coiled around the 'tree of life'. Worth noting is, while Chughtā'i takes inspiration from the artists of the West, in the choice of subject matter and imagery, he manages to establish his own individuality in many ways, one of which is, the modification of the title of the painting from '*Adam and Eve*' to '*Man and Satan*'. This is more in keeping with Iqbālian philosophy, originating from Jalāl ud-Din Rūmi's ideas, the source of which goes back to the Qur'ān. This may seem a subtle deviation but it is a radical departure, both in concept and form, as is clear from the argument of Iqbāl given in his work *The Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam*:

The Qur'an omits the serpent and the ribstory [rib story] altogether. The former omission is obviously meant to free the

story from its phallic setting and its original suggestion of a pessimistic view of life. The latter omission is meant to suggest that the purpose of the Quranic narration is not historical, as in the case of the Old Testament, which gives us an account of the origin of the first human pair by way of a prelude to the history of Israel. Indeed, in the verses which deal with the origin of man as a living being, the Qur'an uses the word 'Bashhar' or 'Insan,' not 'Adam,' which it reserves for man in his capacity of God's vicegerent on earth. The purpose of the Qur'an is further secured by the omission of proper names mentioned in the Biblical narrative – Adam and Eve. The word Adam is retained more as a concept than as the name of a concrete human individual. This use of the word is not without authority in the Qur'an itself⁷.

Iqbāl's wisdom of the Qur'ān is authenticated by an analogy drawn in the backdrop of the drama of Prophet-King David from the Bible and Qur'ān, who killed the giant figure, Goliath. David was blessed by the Grace of Allāh with power, wisdom and authority, befitting a Vicegerent of God. The Qur'ān narrates Allāh's communication with Prophet-King David, "O David! We indeed made thee a vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth: so judge thou between in truth (and justice): Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the path of God: for those who wander astray from the Path of God, is a Penalty Grievous. For that they forget the Day of Account"⁸. According to the Qur'ān "The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam"⁹. Though the association is related with the creation of Adam from 'dust' and that of Jesus from a 'Virgin', yet in all probability it holds within its folds other comparisons as well. One of these being, if Adam was a Vicegerent of God on earth, Jesus was also, of whose authority and wisdom the Qur'ān validates, "I strengthened thee with the holy spirit ...I taught thee the Book of Wisdom (*al-Kitāb al-Hikmat*), the Law (*tawrat*) and Gospel (*injeel*)"¹⁰. An important point to note is that Sūra Yūnus refers to the Qur'ān as the Book of Wisdom (*al-Kitāb al-ikmī*)¹¹, *ikmat* and *ikmī* mean wisdom. Chughtā'i is true to Iqbāl, who is the voice of One God and the people of the Book, from Adam to Moses and to the long line of Messengers of Bani-Israel, the descendants of Isaac, son of Abraham, the

father of Ismael, from whose progeny rose the last of the Prophets, Muḥammad (*saw*).

Paradoxically, there is another twist in the illustration, *Man and Satan*. Its title is not in sync with its imagery. Instead of showing 'Man and Satan', it bears the figure of 'Adam and Eve'. In doing so the artist has broken away from tradition. The paradigm shift is in the use of the 'statue of Pharaoh' to represent 'Satan', rather than a 'serpent'. Chughtā'i has done this to tow Iqbālian philosophy and to incorporate an element of surprise in his pictures, which is a technique he uses in some of his other paintings, including the *Slave Girl* from the *Ḥamal*, where the verse of Iqbāl that the *Slave Girl* illustrates, mentions the narrative of Maḥmūd and Ḥayz, both of whom were males, but oddly Chughtā'i has painted a woman to represent Ḥayz.

It is disappointing to see that the painting, *Man and Satan* is reproduced in black and white in the *Ḥamal*, though the commentary to this painting given in the *Ḥamal*, mentions the painting is rendered in colour. Akbar Naqvi's comment on the black and white works of Chughtā'i is, "the colour black did not bring out the best from his imagination"¹². This observation of Naqvi is not true, because some of the works of Chughtā'i that he originally conceived in black and white are his masterpieces, specially his etchings, which are his forte. The problem is with his colour paintings printed in black and white, whereby the various colours of similar saturation and value, even if these are from the opposite end of spectrum, reproduce as monotonous in dirty greys. Besides, loss of fine details occurs. In the case of Chughtā'i this is detrimental, because the beauty of his colour compositions generated by the contrasting and harmonizing colours is lost, as is the fine line work. It is understandable, why Naqvi feels that Chughtā'i lacks imagination in this area. Unfortunately, in order to cut down the cost incurred on the production of the *Ḥamal*, the painting *Man and Satan*, along with some other paintings of the *Ḥamal* had to be printed in black and white¹³.

Man and Satan is a unique painting in many respects, one of which is, with the exception of this painting, the figures of the other illustrations of the *mal* are fully clothed; primarily because of the theme of the *mal* which is based on Iqbālian concept, derived from Islamic precepts. It is only natural that Chughtā'i was tempted to paint the subject, because he was fond of painting nudes, especially women. The subject of *Man and Satan* provided him just that excuse and opportunity, which he availed enthusiastically. But there is more to the painting than the artist's personal preference and pleasure. It is the embodiment of a profound narrative, with its conceptual representation perceived by Iqbāl, following the Qur'ānic narrative, visualized by Chughtā'i. On first reading, the Qur'ānic narrative appears simple, but as and when the account is read with *tafakkur* (reflection), its latent *ikma* (wisdom) crystalizes, revealing the truth and displaying the wide range of tonal gradations of the words and message, to be read, understood and lived by.

Chughtā'i's painting *Man and Satan* is a figure composition. It has the image of Adam and Eve painted in nude, and the statue of the Pharaoh rendered in stone seated in between the couple. The left hand of the Pharaoh rests across on its opposite thigh that is the right thigh, with its index and the middle finger joined together. In its right hand, it holds a branch of a tree, the leaves of which cover Adam's private part. The statue of the Pharaoh is seated upright, its face in profile, its shoulders pulled back, its chin up, its features well defined, its nose sharp, and its stony eyes half open. It wears a two piece skirt, the lower part of which reaches its ankles, while the upper part covers the body like a loin cloth. In its right hand the Pharaoh holds the stem of the corn shoot, with eight pairs of corns shooting from it on both sides, and the seventeenth one projects on the top. The bottom of the stem is turned inwards like a scroll or a snail shell.

The location of the scene where the drama is staged is unclear. The omission of the tree of Eternity, or for that matter any greenery in the backdrop of the figures is conspicuous and

does not suggest the setting is Eden, though the nude figures of the male and female are undoubtedly that of Adam and Eve. The claustrophobic dark stony surrounding suggests it is the interior of a Pyramid in which the figures are entrapped. This stony interior is marked by parallel lines running in different directions forming geometric shapes. These lines help facilitate the movement of the eye, forming a subordinate but important element in the complex composition, used as an indicator of conflict and dissension referred to in the verse of Iqbāl. But the romantic oeuvre of Chughtā'i does not allow these lines to become harsh or unpleasant. Perhaps, Chughtā'i is trying to free man from the confines of time and space, so as to represent Iqbāl's universal and timeless approach, a concept held by Rūmi, who narrates Daqúqí, "I will not accustom my heart's nature to locality, (and I do this) in order that it may be pure in the (hour of) trial"¹⁴.

Contrastingly, the darkness that shrouds and engulfs the Pharaoh in this painting is illuminated by the glowing figure of Eve, occupying the foreground dominantly. Her bright form is complemented by a bright patch of a triangular space, formed behind and beyond the figure of Adam. Like the Chinese *Yin Yang* sign, contrasting oxymoron mark the composition and concept of Chughtā'i. The *Yin Yang* sign is a circular logo, divided in two equal halves, by a 'S' shaped division, one half of which is white and the other black. These two comma shaped droplets seamlessly fit alongside each other, yet remain independent of the other, while they swirl around, chasing each other in a perpetual circular motion, similar to the movement of the galaxy on a macro scale, and an atom on the micro. This sign and concept suited Iqbāl's ideology, which is influenced by Rūmi's paradoxes mentioned in his *Mathnawi* also quoted by Shāh in his research paper, "by their contrasts are things made clear"¹⁵. Chughtā'i uses this concept to his advantage. He considerably modulates his otherwise curvilinear forms by making the edges angular; thereby blending Egyptian Art with his personal oeuvre and the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt. This renders the composition of *Man and Satan* complex, reminiscent of the intricate compositions of the artist's earlier works,

especially his album, *Murraqqa* (1928), which bear marked influence of Japanese prints, whereas the compositions of the *mal* are much simpler. It must be pointed out here, the complex iconography and symbolism of Egyptian Art was conceived and developed by their high priests and skilled artists, designed to portray the lives of the Pharaohs, their religious beliefs and magical incantations. Chughtā'i uses this symbolism as the antithesis of Islamic thought, so as to contrast the dictum of Iqbāl and the idiom of his own logos.

Interestingly, Chughtā'i has conceptualized the figure of Adam as a confused pubescent boy, sleek, rather weak, with mere traces of a fresh growth of beard that is hardly visible on first glance. The character of Adam as visualized by Chughtā'i, is a reminder of the Qur'ānic verse, "for man was created weak"¹⁶. The Qur'ānic reference refers to the weakness of character of 'man', because, like Adam, man is prone to temptation, "We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve"¹⁷. Chughtā'i has painted the figure of Adam placed in a rather difficult situation, entrapped in a claustrophobic setting. With his right hand Adam pushes the darkness that surrounds him and the Pharaoh, while he holds his forehead with his left hand, suggesting that he is perturbed and under stress. His straight hair is cut short and falls on his forehead and shoulder, in the marked style of Egyptian Pharaohs. Chughtā'i does not fail to astonish his viewer. He defies logic, because, when Adam was in Eden, he could not have possibly had any concept, or means, to indulge in personal glorification so as to fashion himself after the style of the Pharaohs. A possible explanation for this could be that Chughtā'i has made a reference to young Prophet Joseph. But this idea is ruled out because the physique of Adam in this painting is not befitting that of Joseph, who according to the Qur'ānic and Biblical narrative was a man of legendary beauty. On the contrary, Chughtā'i's Adam is not flattering, and is in contrast to the traditional concept of the figure of Adam as visualized in the West, where he is often shown as a well-built and handsome figure. It appears Chughtā'i's aim is to play-down the figure of Adam, in order to

highlight the radiant figure of Eve. Here, the artist follows his own ideal. It is an established fact that Chughtā'i celebrates the female figure and considers it to be God's work of art, and gives it preference over the male figure.

Chughtā'i has drawn the expression on Adam's face in accordance with the narrative, to display disgust, shame and repentance. It is a great accomplishment because Chughtā'i's formalized art offers little room for handling expressions of portraits effectively, primarily because the aesthetics of his personal style are designed on fixed codes and formula. This negates the oft held criticism about traditional art of the Muslims as is observed by Al-Faruqi, a scholar on Islamic Art, "most non-Muslim art historian deplore the emotional "deficiency" of Islamic painting"¹⁸.

The posture of Adam portrays his mental state and uncertain future. The figure of the boy is tilted backwards. His posture gives the impression that he is falling back, though his feet are well grounded. In the little finger of his right hand he wears a band; the significance of which could be that it is a sign of legitimate relationship between the couple. Did not Allāh say, "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife (*zawjuka*) in the Garden"¹⁹. Adam's private parts are covered with the leaves of a branch of a tree from Eden that is held in the hand of the Pharaoh to illustrate the verse, "So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies. And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you Satan (*shaytān*) was an avowed enemy unto you"²⁰?

Chughtā'i's Eve occupies the foreground imposingly. He has painted her young, elegant and tall. Her back turned to the viewer; just enough to keep her private part away from the eyes of the beholder, yet the slight side-wards twist of her body reveals one of her bare breasts and no attempt has been made to veil it. The rhythmic flow of her body runs to the very end of her dainty finger tips in an affected manner, which has a

mesmerizing effect and adds pictorial elegance to the painting. Her dainty feet rest unsurely on the ground, as though she were unstable, appropriately conceived in keeping with the consequential fall, yet paradoxically her body is stable. Her head is thrown down disdainfully and her eyes are lowered in a manner that her eye balls are barely visible. Her straight black hair is tied neatly in a bun at the back of her neck, in which a hairpin is studded. Most surprisingly, even though Chughtā'i's Eve is not dressed, yet she is wearing jewelry. A long string of beads that looks more like a rosary because of the *imam* with its seven beads strung separately, adorns her bare body, while a flower is pierced in her right earlobe. As is seen here, the artist loves paradoxes and takes liberty with his subject.

The credit goes to the artist for depicting Satan in the image of statue of Pharaoh in stone. Chughtā'i is captivated by Egyptian Art as is Iqbāl. He admits in his essay, *□zmat-i Fun* (Greatness of Art) that Iqbāl held the art of the Pharaohs of Egypt in high esteem²¹. Chughtā'i's preference in choosing Egyptian Art to illustrate this verse of Iqbāl has widened his canvas, both aesthetically and conceptually, because the 'Act' of 'Moses and Pharaoh' is part of the 'ongoing Drama' that has already been enacted. In which the fight between good and evil met its logical end; wherein, Moses and his followers, the Bani-Israel were the victors, while Pharaoh and his people were defeated. Does not Allāh remind the Bani-Israel in the Qur'ān, "We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh: they set you hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered your sons and let your women-folk live; therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord"²². The climax of the drama was enacted when deliverance came in the form of an unprecedented miracle that still challenges scientific laws, whereby Allāh says, "We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people within your very sight"²³. A story from the past, the outcome of which has been witnesses, serves to reason out and predict the future. It also helps to strengthen the argument on logical grounds, as well as, on the principles of Faith, designed to illustrate the difference between virtue and vice. While it lends new imagery to the artist, with its multi-fold meanings added to its context.

Foremost, it effectively addresses the fundamental principle of Islam that is Oneness of God (*tawhīd*), which is at the heart of Muslim Faith, “Nor would He instruct you to take angels and prophets for Lords and Patrons. What! would He bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will that is (become Muslims/*Musalman*)”²⁴? Egyptian civilization was one of the mightiest civilizations of the world. The ruler of the dynasty was the Pharaoh, who made his subjects believe he was the son of god. The monumental Pyramids were built to house the mummified body of the deceased Pharaoh. According to their belief, the spirit (*ka*) of the Pharaoh was thought to come back and reside in the Pyramid, after he passed the judgment and his spirit (*ka*) was thought to attain have attained eternal life and joined the gods of the underworld. Gigantic statues of the Pharaoh were erected to glorify him and boast of his power. But, history has proved otherwise, this belief was a lie and the Pharaoh and his gods were false, who could neither save himself nor his people from drowning in the Red Sea. It was Moses’ One and only God, Who saved those who worshipped Him and chose Him their protector, “And it shall be said to them, “Where are the (gods) ye worshipped, - Besides Allah? Can they help you or help themselves”²⁵? The artists of the West follow the Biblical narrative and concept in which Eve is blamed for enticing Adam, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it”²⁶. Whereas, Iqbāl and Chughtā'i follow the Qur'ānic narrative and concept, which holds both Adam and Eve responsible for the slip, having been instigated by Satan. “Oh ye children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as he got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame”²⁷.

This fact is illustrated by Chughtā'i in an innovative way, by instilling symbolic meaning to the jewelry of his figures, which he has used as props in a drama. The artist not only revered in painting jewelry, he also designed his wife's jewelry. The small snake-like hairpin which is no more than a snail, is pierced in the hair of Eve that is tied in a bun at the back of her neck, conceived to represent Eve's self (*nafs*), which is the

subtler presence of a personal Satan, ready to be led, by the greater Satanic evil from outside, similar to the way iron filings take to magnet. Ironically, Chughtā'i empathizes with Eve, suggested in the large beads of the necklace of Eve depicting her innocence. It appears the artist does not consider Eve to be Evil, because he understands Satan caused her to make the slip. "I will lie in wait for them on Thy Straight Way. Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left"²⁸. □bd Allāh Farooqi observes, "God is the author of evil but is untouched by it"²⁹, but man is prone to sin, though not necessary evil.

Chughtā'i has not shown the self (*nafs*) of Adam, which like Satan is invisible, but is implied in the gesture of Adam's hand that is raised and seemingly pushes at something close to his ear, perhaps the enticing whispers of Satan. At this stage the whispers no longer give sensual pleasure, on the contrary, it is the cause of shame, regret and repentance. Islamic philosophy holds that if the self (*nafs*) is left unchecked it generates evil desires and thoughts, particularly when it is stimulated by the powerful evil forces of Satan from outside. "Beruni's discovery of what we call reaction time and al-Kindi's discovery that sensation is proportional to the stimulus are instances of its application in psychology"³⁰.

The question arises, is it possible to ward off evil? Certainly, the answer is given in the Qur'an in many different ways. Regarding evil it says, "If they had kept their Faith and guarded themselves from evil how much better had been the reward from their Lord"³¹. Because, "feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan"³², which can be overcome by remembrance of God (*zikr*). And "If a suggestion from Satan assail thy (mind), seek refuge with God; for He heareth and knoweth all things. Those who observe fear (*taqwa*) God, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring God to remembrance. But their brethren (the evil ones) plunge them deeper into error"³³, because "whoever forsaking Allah, takes Satan for a friend"³⁴.

The Pharaoh's self (*nafs*) is represented in his collar (*aegis*), the coiled snake that is girt around his neck. Erroneously, the Egyptians thought the image of the coiled rearing snake was god Uraeus, symbol of sovereignty, royalty, deity, and protector of Pharaoh. Probably, Chughtā'i conceived this image with this verse in mind, "those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by sins - they are Companions of Fire: therein shall they abide"³⁵. Worth admiration is Chughtā'i acumen, in visualizing the image of Uraeus and Pharaoh, he is successful in implying that both these gods are false. The poet and artist rightly understand that images or idols do not have the power to promise anything, it is actually Satan who gives false ideas and promises. And the promise of Satan is futile. The end of the story of Moses and Pharaoh is known, hence Chughtā'i has used logic to prove that neither Pharaoh nor his false gods could protect Pharaoh or his men, whereas Moses' One True God saved Moses and his people, the Children of Israel.

In the painting, *Man and Satan*, the *cippus* (stone Stella) of god Horus, falcon god of the sky, is placed at the foot of Pharaoh, which is the sculpture of a child falcon perched on the Stella with the image of a coiled snake engraved on it. In Egyptian mythology, the *cippus* of Horus is sacred. It is inscribed with spells and was thought to have healing power. The practice was that water was poured over the *cippus*, which was either drunk or poured over the wound to heal it³⁶. Looking in retrospect at the narrative of Moses and Pharaoh, the fallacy of this belief is proved beyond doubt. According to the Biblical and Qur'ānic narrative the people of the Pharaoh and their first born were killed by pestilence and were not cured by the healing power of the *cippus*, whereas miraculously, the first born of Bani-Israel survived. One cannot help but admire Chughtā'i's virtuosity in employing and modulating pagan imagery to contrast and offset monotheistic logos.

The precision and economy of dialogue between 'God and Angels', and 'God and Adam', and 'God and Satan', as given in the Qur'ān speaks volumes about the nature of man and Satan, the understanding of which is necessary to identify virtue

from vice. According to this dialogue, the decision of God to create a Vicegerent on earth was questioned by the angels, to which Allāh answered “I know what you know not”³⁷. When Allāh had created man, he commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam, but Iblis/Satan, refused to bow with the others, “He was one of the Jinns”³⁸. The amazing aspect of this narrative is that Allāh did not punish Iblis/Satan without hearing him out. “O Iblis! What is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves”³⁹? Similarly, even on the Day of Judgment, each person would be handed his/her record and questioned before the final Judgment. An important wisdom, drawn from this dialogue is that no one is to be judged without being heard, and the acts of man must be directed with the final end in sight. It is paramount to understand that evil can present in the garb of good and good can exist in evil, hence, acts would be judged in the light of intention which is known to Allāh. Frithjof Schuon writes, “Moreover in the soul are to be found good and evil as such, and likewise evil masked by virtues and good spoiled by vices”⁴⁰.

An important perspective of this narrative is that even though Iblis/Satan is evil, still he spoke the truth with God, because he was fully aware that God knows what is in the heart as such he knew there was no point in lying to God. This fact is affirmed by the dialogue Allāh has with the angels, “Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal”⁴¹? On the other hand, Satan lied to Adam and Eve, because he was aware that man has no means of knowing the secrets of the heart, hence it is easy to deceive him. Satan and his progeny continue to mislead man, but with the permission of God, “Then, by Thy power, I will put them all in wrong. Except Thy servants among them, sincere and purified”⁴². Thus the matter was settled, between God and Satan, “Then it is just and fitting - and I [Allāh] say what is just and fitting”⁴³. Since that time, men and women are subjected to test, in which Satan and his progeny deceivably play their negative role. The world is the stage, and men and women are the players. The trio is formed by ‘man and Satan’ at the base of the triangle, with ‘God’ at the apex. Every person comes and plays his/her

respective part in this world and exits. Actors change but the saga continues, till an appointed time, when the curtain would drop and Real life of the Hereafter would begin, which would depend on the performance of the individual actor, as to how well the given role was played. Shakespeare's wise words seem to be echo the same words, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players"⁴⁴. Similarly, Mirza Ghālib said in a famous verse of Urdu that every day and night a drama/circus takes place before his eyes. In the painting, *Man and Satan*, the interior of the Pyramid is the stage, which as has been said earlier is the iconic symbol of Egyptian Architecture. But history has shown that this symbol built to boast the arrogance of the Pharaoh, actually display their folly and testify to the Glory of God, and the triumph of the righteous. Perhaps, this is the reason why Chughtā'i has chosen the interior of the Pyramid as the setting of the stage for his painting. The gesture of Adam/man's right hand indicates he is trying to break through from the dark and gloomy milieu of the interior of the Pyramid, into the bright space visible behind him, symbolic of the harbinger of hope, and the precursor of the uncertain future, into which Eve and Adam were plunged after their epic fall.

But this is not to be mistaken for the Existentialist concept "of *angst* - the feeling of being condemned and exiled in this world"⁴⁵. Because God did not abandon man, instead he is in the sight of God, Who guides him through His Messengers and the revealed Books. Evidence of this is that when Adam and Eve were ousted from Eden, Allāh did not forsake them, but explicitly told them that there was a condition attached to the 'forgiveness', "O ye children of Adam! Whenever there come to you apostles from amongst you, rehearsing My signs unto you, those who are right and mend, on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve"⁴⁶. Following the Qur'ānic command, Iqbāl emphasizes that the teachings of the Messengers should be followed to differentiate right from wrong. In it lies triumph (*falāh*) and existential (*baqa*) practices, which is the path to Paradise and ultimate bliss. Besides, God says, "I am indeed close: I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on

Me: Let them also, with a will, Listen to My call, and believe in Me, That they may walk in the right way"⁴⁷.

Man and Satan is molded to contain oxymoron forces simultaneously, existing side by side, competing for supremacy, conceived to depict right and wrong, dismay and hope, and contain the past and future. The choices that are made by the individual and the group (*jamāt*) between right and wrong determine the *falāh* (ultimate success) and *baqa* (existence) of both respectively. Chughtā'i has not lost sight of hope, because it is against the spirit of Islam, "never give up hope of God's [Allāh] Soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of God's Soothing Mercy, except those who have no Faith"⁴⁸. According to Iqbāl, the key to the problem of good and evil is to be found in the idea of Personality: "The idea of personality gives us a standard value: it settles the problem of good and evil. That which fortifies personality is good, that which weakens it is bad. Art, religion and ethics must be judged from the standpoint of personality"⁴⁹.

Following the dialogue between 'God and Iblis/Satan', the reason Iblis gave to God for not prostrating before Adam is, "I am better than he: Thou createdst me from fire, and him Thou createdst from clay"⁵⁰. It follows, superiority complex and defiance of God's commandments is highly condemnable and liable to punishment, similar to the fate meted to Iblis. In the eyes of God, those who suffer from superiority complex are evil, as is clear from God's query, when He asked Iblis, the reason for not prostrating before Adam, "Art thou haughty? Or art thou of those who think of themselves as high"⁵¹? According to the Qur'ān such people are among those who follow the footsteps of Satan, and Hell shall be their abode.

The narrative of *Man and Satan* is important from the perspective of Faith. Unlike empirical facts, which are observable, and under any given situation, if all variables are the same, the same result is produced. But, neither faith nor all knowledge is observable. And the knowledge of *Ghayb* (unseen) is with God alone. One of the most fascinating verses of the

Qur'ān is a verse that draws analogy between 'scientific law *vis-ā-vis*, the power of prayer', it states, "For Him (alone) is prayer in Truth: any others that they call upon besides Him hear them no more than if they were to stretch forth their hands for water to reach their mouths but it reaches them not: for the prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile) wandering"⁵². Experience shows, neither can the power of prayer be dismissed as a figment of imagination, nor can it be understood by scientific means. The Qur'ān being self-explanatory has drawn an analogy in this verse, to explain how faith works, according to which, the underlying law that determines the 'power of prayers is faith', as such prayer without faith is futile.

In the account of the creation of Adam, God took the angels in confidence and foretold them that he was about to create a Vicegerent on earth, before whom they would have to bow/submit. At this point there is no mention that the Jinns were among the company of angels. When God had created Adam, He taught him the names/nature of all things, then Allāh asked Adam to display his knowledge. Adam complied dutifully. The angels were convinced that their knowledge is limited, except for what is revealed to them. And Allāh answered to the angels that He has the knowledge of *Ghayb* (unseen). Al-Kindi terms this knowledge 'Primary Knowledge', "This knowledge is in part possessed by man from the outset without him being aware of it and without perceiving how he acquired it or where he comes from"⁵³.

In the same vein it is observed all knowledge emanates from God. Inspirational knowledge is part of the greater knowledge, which God reveals to whoever He wills, through intuition, dreams and visions. Besides, another point becomes clear that the share of knowledge given to Adam/man is far greater than that given to the angels or the Jinns. Iqbāl writes, "The point of interest is McTaggart's philosophy, however, is that in his system, mystical intuition, as a source of knowledge, is much more marked than in the system of Bradley. The need of such a direct revelation is the natural outcome of the failure of a purely speculative method [...]. Some of the greatest minds of

the world have felt the need of a direct contact with the Ultimate Reality”⁵⁴.

Skeptics, who like to believe only in what they see, forget that sense perceptions which is a gift of God to man bestowed on him at the time of his creation when God blew His Spirit into man, is the means to empirical knowledge. Besides, even empirical or observable knowledge is imparted to man by and from God. An important narrative from the Qur’ān shows how Allāh’s guidance works behind the scene. Allāh taught the son of Adam, how to bury his brother’s body, after he had killed him out of jealousy, “Then God (Allāh) sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother”⁵⁵.

Going back to the story of Adam as given in the Qur’ān, not much detail is revealed of the creation and/or evolution of man. The Qur’ān merely gives one word bullet points suggesting the various stages of evolution/creation. God states, He “created him before out of nothing”⁵⁶. This issue has been under much debate in the Study of Origins, because it is beyond comprehension, as to how can anyone create something from nothing, “Nonexistence, ‘adam, is the ineffable divine essence, which has been seen in this way by some of the mystics, and particularly by Rūmī, because it is beyond every possible mode of expression or imagination - it is like the *neti neti* of the Upanishads”⁵⁷. Yet, Rūmī puts forth a logical and empathizing argument, “Behind every nothingness, the possibility of existence is concealed; in the midst of Wrath Mercy is hidden like the priceless cornelian in the midst of dirt”⁵⁸. Some religious scholars consider that man was not created through the process of evolution, but was created especially by God with his Own hands. There is a verse in the Qur’ān to this effect, “one [man] whom I have created with My hands”⁵⁹.

From the dialogue that took place between ‘God and Iblis’, it is revealed that man was created from dust (*turāb*)⁶⁰, then made into, ‘sticky clay’ (□ *ēnin lāzibin*)⁶¹, and/by a sperm-drop (*nu□fatin*)⁶², this ‘mud was molded into shape’, which was

then made into 'sounding clay'. It is important to point out here that the process of baking clay partially melts and contracts it, filling the gaps so that the 'form molded in clay' shrinks, rendering it, its 'sounding' quality. A well-tempered pot is tested by its sounding quality which resonates through it when tapped. Thus, the basic substance and composition of the human body is determined. God fashioned man from clay, with his Own hands, like a potter molds a pot. To this matter/form God breathed of His spirit. Regarding this God told the angels, "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him"⁶³. God summarizes the whole process that must have occurred in 'time and space' in one word or command, "Be (*kun*) and he was"⁶⁴, paradoxically freeing it from, yet binding it to spatial time. To this matter God gave it its nature, "Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, and further gave it "free will"⁶⁵. And to ensure that free will is not misused, He gave man "guidance"⁶⁶. "Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice; and that is why, according to the Quranic narrative, Adam's first transgression was forgiven"⁶⁷. He further observes, "That man is the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril"⁶⁸. Thus free will and guidance will be the bases on which man would be judged on the Day of Resurrection. The other factor would be the "Primordial Covenant, *mithāq*, in which God asked his creatures: 'Am I not your Lord?' (Sura 7:172). Everyone from the future generations whom God drew from the loins of the children of Adam in pre-eternity had to testify that God is the Lord, lest they deny this when asked on Doomsday"⁶⁹. It follows free will is subject to faith in God and conformity to His Laws, and is relatively independent from reason.

The dilemma of pure reason is that it is limited in its scope. The horizon of knowledge is advancing perpetually, what was unknown and unseen yesterday, becomes known and seen today. Iblis did not obey God because of his limited knowledge and arrogance. On the superficial level, the reasoning of Iblis/Satan seems logical, because he thought he was better than man, because God made him from fire, an element more powerful than dust. But, when God the Creator and All-knowing

presented Adam to the angels, He proved that His creation, 'man' is superior in knowledge and in some cases character as well, as compared to Satan. That is the reason God said, "Iblis/Satan: he was haughty, and became one of those who reject Faith (*kafir*)"⁷⁰. Because Iblis, "broke the Command of his Lord"⁷¹, he was made an outcast. "(God) said: "Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed. And My Curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment"⁷². Iblis did not repent, instead asked Allāh for respite, "Give me respite till the day they are raised up"⁷³, and sought permission to mislead man till that Day. "Then, by Thy Power, I will put them all in the wrong. Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified"⁷⁴. God granted the request, but forewarned man of the Satanic designs, "and do no evil nor mischief (*mufsideena*) on the earth"⁷⁵; "Say to My servants that they should say those things that are best: for Satan doth sow dissension among them: For Satan is to man an avowed enemy"⁷⁶.

Incredible as it may appear, both word and image of *Man and Satan* illustrate the all-important Qur'ānic concept which refers to the people of Book as 'Muslims'. A reality reiterated by the companions of Jesus, as can be seen from the Qur'ānic verse, "We believe in God [Allāh], and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims"⁷⁷. Moses too explicitly stated the same fact, "Oh my people! If you do believe in God [Allāh], then in Him put your trust if ye submit [your will to Him/Muslims/*Muslimena*]"⁷⁸. The word used here is *muslimeena*/ Muslims, thus the religion propagated by all the Prophets, from Adam to Muḥammad (*saw*) was Islam. And the followers of Islam are Muslims, who are supposed to believe in One God.

The Qur'ān which is the Book of Wisdom (*kītāb al-ikma*)⁷⁹ states, "Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him, for He is Oft-returning and Most Merciful"⁸⁰. According to the Qur'ān, repentance (*taubah*) is the key to worship, "those that turn (to God) in repentance: that serve Him, and praise Him (*At-taubun al-abideen*)"⁸¹, are purified and Baptized by God (Allāh), "and

who can Baptize better than God (Allāh)⁸². “This is because repentance is the beginning and *abdiyāt* (servanthood) is the goal of the Sufi path⁸³. The fundamental difference between Adam and Satan is that, even though both of them defied God, yet Adam was forgiven because he repented, “There-upon Adam received words [of guidance] from his Sustainer, and He accepted his repentance: for, verily, He alone is the Acceptor of repentance, the Dispenser of Grace⁸⁴. Whereas, Satan was made an outcast because he did not repent. In fact, Satan blamed God for his own wrongdoing, saying, “O my Lord! Because Thou hast put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will put them all in wrong⁸⁵. Since God created man and gave him his nature, He understands, man is prone to err. As such, “He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy⁸⁶. One of the most beautiful attributes of Allāh is, He is the Most Merciful. This attribute is reiterated in the Qur’ān before every Sūra, with the exception of *Sūra Tauba*, and is repeated in *Sūra Fātiha*, the first Sūra of the Qur’ān.

The temptation that Iblis/Satan offered to Adam was that if Adam and Eve ate from the tree of Eternity, they would become immortal and would not be “wasted away”. It appears the love of life and the desire to remain in a young state is inherent in the nature of man. Adam risked disobeying God’s Command when Iblis/Satan tempted him with the idea of attaining Eternal life. There must be some reason and wisdom why God made man mortal, and furthered life through his offsprings. Perhaps, this is what Chughtā’i seems to be implying, when he conceptualizes the figure of Eve, with the lower part of her body slightly bulging out, as though she were expectant. Or perhaps the artist is suggesting that Adam and Eve have already consummated? Considering the animal instinct of man, one would expect such a thing as quite natural.

Augmenting this idea is another image painted on the right side of the throne of the Pharaoh and figure of Eve, is a pair of herons, with their long necks intertwined, while a single heron is painted on the same side of the throne, to the left of Eve. In Egyptian Art the heron is the symbol of the mythical god,

Benu, the predecessor of the Greek Phoenix, which is thought to rise from its ashes, and is considered the symbol of rebirth. Though Chughtā'i has modulated this image by intertwining the necks of a pair of herons, perhaps suggesting love and physical union, connoting the instinctive attraction to the opposite sex, and/or man's inherent nature to be beguiled. The Qur'ān neither speaks of any union having taken place between Adam and Eve, in Eden, nor denies it. But refers to the mystical tree of Eternity from which the couple ate, despite having been forbidden by God, "Then did Satan made them slip from the [Eden], and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been"⁸⁷, "In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the garden"⁸⁸. The Qur'ān advises man not to let Satan seduce him, "O children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness,- that is the best"⁸⁹.

As has been mentioned earlier, seated on his throne, between Adam and Eve is the statue of Pharaoh. The image is a reminder of the Qur'ānic verse which says, Satan does "sow discord between husband and wife"⁹⁰. Hence, Chughtā'i has shown the couple standing apart from each other, neither engaged in conversation nor activity, both appear lonely as they would on the Day of Resurrection, "indeed, you have come unto Us, in a lonely state, even as we created you in the first instance"⁹¹. The concept of separation between Adam and Eve that resulted after their fall is also seen to be represented in the single heron painted on the side of the throne of Pharaoh, before the couple could finally unite after years of separation. The Old Testament talks of the fallibility of prophets and the punishment awarded to them in this world. Of their heart felt repentance, and of God's magnanimity in granting them forgiveness, "so that He might purify you"⁹², "Allāh does purify whom He pleases"⁹³. Observing the ways of the Sūfis, Maroof Shāh writes in his research paper, "If one takes the belief in God of Mercy and Love seriously, in a God who certainly accomplishes His ends

and whom nothing can defeat, there is no scope of any complaint, any anger against the heavens”⁹⁴.

An interesting image in the painting is that of a small figure squeezed into the negative space between the back of Adam and the seated statue of Pharaoh. It is the mere shadow of a nude figure coiled inwards, representing the whirling movement of the universe, in a *sama* (hearing) like condition, on which the swirling dance is based. It may also refer to the creation of Eve, who according to the Bible was created from the body of Adam, “O Mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it its mate, and out of the two spread aboard a multitude of men and women”⁹⁵. Or perhaps the image of the swirling or coiling figure depicts what Chughtā'i states he has illustrated in the commentary of the *Man and Satan*, “Because of which the being of man is still swirling around its centre. This is the point and expression that is depicted in this picture, which is the unique topic of the discourse and criticism”⁹⁶. The question is what is this debate? The answer is found in the same commentary, the concept and discourse is based on the philosophy of Iqbāl, “If the responsibility of man and the self-confidence of Satan were to be tested then, man’s pursuit is to be seen as a constant struggle towards this end. It is because of this that Satan has been projecting his nature and symbiotic design, so that the discipline and order of mayhem of the statues of stone, has become human beings second nature”. It is interesting to note how the artist has woven the philosophy of Iqbāl, with the waft and weft of the imagery of the Pharaohs of Egypt and his own oeuvre to represent Iqbāl’s thought expressed in his verses such as:

His inside is void of Up and Down,
But His outside is accepting space (ZA GR 216)⁹⁷

A. Schimmel sums up Iqbāl’s concept of man’s perpetual quest in her book, *Gabriel’s Wing*, “He saw life as a never ending quest, a journey into infinity, not resting into the beautiful rosegardens of Iran or in the tempting glittering avenues of the Western world, not even in the gardens of Paradise. It is a journey through deserts and mountains towards the symbol of

Divine Presence, the Kaaba⁹⁸. Point to note, Schimmel understands the Kāba is a symbol. More important from the point of view of Islam is that the Kāba which is, the mark of authority of the unity of the Muslims, was built before Muhammad's (*saw*) advent. It was the first structure raised for worship by the angels for Adam. Later it was reconstructed by Abrāham and his son Ismāel, and finally it was rebuilt by Muḥammad (*saw*). Perhaps, what most non-Muslim thinkers overlook is that the Kāba is not a destination in itself. There is no idol worship of any form or kind in Islam. Allāh is beyond time and space. There is a ḥadīth according to which, "Allāh said "The son of Adam hurts Me by abusing Time, for I am Time"⁹⁹. After this Prophetic proclamation, the argument logically moves to the next point that Allāh was present even before the Kāba was constructed, and would remain so, even after it would pass away with the end time. Hence, 'the quest' is more than a journey to the Kāba, it is a journey that leads to the finding of Allāh, and He is everywhere, inside and outside the Kāba - "We are nearer to him than his jugular vein"¹⁰⁰, yet independent of all other things - "And your Allah is One Allah. There is no god but He"¹⁰¹. Allāh is omnipresent; He is at once immanent and transcendent.

The path that leads to Allāh is through His Messengers and their teachings - from Adam to Abrāham, from Moses to Jesus, and from Ismael to Muḥammad (*saw*). All the Messengers were like river-lets that culminate in the main river of Muḥammad (*saw*), who brought the Divine word - the Qur'ān - which is a living-spring that shows the straight path that was tread by Muḥammad (*saw*). This idea is put forth in Iqbāl's verse which the painting *Man and Satan* illustrates. Therefore, what is meant by 'the quest' is, to stay away from vice and walk the path of virtue, as distinguished by all the Messengers, particularly by the last Prophet Muḥammad (*saw*), who lived by the Divine Commandments. The first and last part of this quest is the worship of 'One and Only God', all in-between concerns noble and just acts for the well-being of all, man and mankind. At a higher level, like Iqbāl's falcon, the Sūfīs and Muslim saints followed this quest in letter and spirit. Maulāna Jalāl ud-Dīn

Rūmi, was born in Balak (Afghanistan), he travelled to distant places and settled in Konia (Turkey) where he is buried; while li Hajvari was born in Ghazni, he travelled to many places including Iran, Iraq, and Syria and made Lahore his home, where he is buried; Bāha ud-Din Zakarīa was born in Layyah, he travelled for fifteen years preaching Islam and finally settled in Multan, where he is buried. The Muslim saints travelled in search of the truth, trying to find answers to probing questions, and preached Islam and humanize man, by teaching the difference between right and wrong. Ironically, the Qur'ān says, man still does not learn, except for "A number of people from those of old, and a few from those of later times"¹⁰².

Returning to the dialogue that took place between God and Iblis/Satan reveals that *Jinns* too have been gifted free will, which was used negatively by Iblis/Satan, who defied God, by not prostrating before Adam. "I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom Thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape"¹⁰³. The arrogance of Satan could not have been better manifested than in the image of Pharaoh. Chughtā'i followed Iqbāl's clear perception that is obvious from one of his papers, "The absolute equality of all the members of the community. There is no aristocracy in Islam. "The noblest among you", says the Prophet, are those who fear God the most". There is no privileged class, no priesthood, no cast system"¹⁰⁴. Iqbāl is wise, he understands the fine nuances of the percept presented by Muammad (*saw*), and has the ability to apply it in his times and in the future, making him relevant for all times. An excerpt from this paper:

I condemn this accursed religious and sectarianism; I condemn it in the name of God, in the name of humanity, in the name of Moses, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the name of him - who brought the final message of freedom and equality to mankind. Islam is one and indivisible, it brooks no distinctions in it. There are no Wahabias, Sh'ias, Mirzais or Sunnies in Islam. Fight not for the interpretations of the truth, when the truth itself is in danger. It is foolish to complain of stumbling when you walk in the darkness of night. Let all come forward and

contribute their respective shares in the great toll of nations. Let the idols of class distinctions and sectarianism be smashed forever; let the Mussalmans of the country be once more united into a great vital whole. How can we, in the presence of violent internal dispute, expect to succeed in persuading others to our way of thinking? The work of freeing humanity from superstition - the ultimate ideal of Islam as a community, for the realization of which we have done so little in this great land of myth and superstition - will ever remain undone if the emancipators themselves are becoming gradually enchained in the very fetter from which it is their mission to set others free¹⁰⁵. Following the Qur'ānic percept, Iqbāl like most of the Muslim philosophers believes in action, bridging the gap between philosophy and religion. Marcotte observes, with Al-Farabi (c. 870-950) "philosophy becomes knowledge and action in the service of human power and happiness"¹⁰⁶. But action is subject to intention and intention is only known to God as is illustrated beautifully in the Qur'ān, in the narrative of Habil and Qabil (Abel and Cain), the sons of Adam, "when each offered a sacrifice (to Allāh), it was accepted from the one but not from the other. The latter said to the former: "I will surely kill you." The former said: "Verily, Allāh accepts only from those who are *Al-Muttaqūn* (the pious). And so the *Nafs* (self) of the other (latter one) encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him the murder of his brother; he murdered him and became one of the losers"¹⁰⁷. But he repented, and Allāh turned to him in mercy. Because, Al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111) calls the end *as-Sa'ada* (blessedness)¹⁰⁸, a state promised to those who worship One God, abide His Commands, shun off evil, so that "the end is for those the righteous"¹⁰⁹, "the □*izbalsatan*/partisans of Satan, who would be the loser"¹¹⁰, whereas "the □*izbAllāh*/partisans of Allāh, would be victorious, and attain to a happy state"¹¹¹, a state of peaceful bliss, an end in itself.

Iqbāl and Chughtā'i have refreshed and encapsulated the story of *Man and Satan*, to reenact the drama of Moses and Pharaoh by highlighting their relationship with God, aimed to differentiate between virtue and vice. In the painting, *Man and Satan* Chughtā'i captures and contains serial time within the

confines of a two-dimensional surface, which is a marked characteristic of Egyptians Art. The artist has juxtaposed the scenes from the narrative of Adam and Eve, with images that suggest the enticing whispers of Iblis/Satan, the subsequent slip of the couple and their expulsion. The artist has placed in the arena, the figure of Adam and Eve - with their descendants from much down the timeline - Moses, the Children of Israel and Pharaoh. The imagination and visualization of the figure composition of *Man and Satan* is a 'fetter of serial time and space', of promises fulfilled and deceit witnessed.

Iqbāl wrote the foreword of the *Muraqqa* appreciating Chughtā'i's work who was a young artist at that time. But to satisfy Iqbāl and successfully illustrate his verses was an uphill task for Chughtā'i, primarily because Chughtā'i Art is romantic in style and it is difficult, if not impossible, to convey in its oeuvre the dynamics of Iqbālian thought. The artist was still struggling with his imagery regarding Iqbālian thought when the poet passed away. In his painting, *Man and Satan*, not only is the aesthetics of Chughtā'i in close proximity with the concepts of Iqbāl, the artist's imagery also resonates the word of Qur'ān, something which is a great achievement in itself.

Chughtā'i has adopted an inclusive approach in the choice of subject matter of his painting *Man and Satan*, because Moses belongs to the peoples of the Books. Chughtā'i's imagery is no longer exclusive to the Muslims, it transmigrates borders and has become Universal, presenting the word of God, in the garb of aesthetics, a stroke of genius. It is observed, word and image seldom synchronize; either artist or poet, dominate or deviate; but *Man and Satan* is an exception, here the artist and poet are in close proximity, something Iqbāl sought desperately.

The painting *Man and Satan* is built on several contrasts of aesthetics and ideas, including the play of light and dark. *Jalāl* (power) depicted in the unseen power of God as opposed to the false power of Pharaoh, whereas *Jamāl* (beauty) is seen in the figure of Eve. The drama is highlighted in the chiaroscuro created by the figure of Eve, and to some extent the humble

figure of Adam, set against the bright space in the background, with the dark interior of the Pyramid. The contrast rendered by the sensual figure of Eve, against the plastic form of the Pharaoh in stone, intertwined with implied time and space, enacted and rendered in ages and worlds poles apart, represented in the epic narrative of Adam and Eve in Eden, with the grand narrative of Moses, played out inside the pyramid of Egypt.

Egyptian Art and Eastern Art are based on aesthetics conceived on set formulas, but differ significantly in style. Egyptian Art is angular, with defined edges, whereas traditional Eastern Art is linear and rhythmic. The artist has synthesized these style by fusing these in his own oeuvre, with its emphasize on the two dimensional faultless line and form. He has blended this with the illusionistic third dimension, rendered in the image of the Egyptian statues of stone. Borrowing elements and symbolism from the aesthetics of Egyptian Art, he instills these with the ideology of Islam and aesthetics of the East. Thus he imbues the purest ideas of Iqbālian and Qur'ānic percepts with the imagery and ideas drawn from pagan and pluralistic forms - to convey an epic idea; but neither Iqbāl nor Chughtā'i cross the limit in literature and art, paradoxically designed to pursue Islam.

Notes and References

- 1 The correct transliteration of the artist's name is □bd al-Ra□mān Chaghātā'i, considering the artist spelled his name as Chughtā'i, the same has been retained.
- 2 Though the correct transliteration of the album is □mal-i Chaghātā'i, yet the transliteration □mal-i Chughtā'i has been retained, because the artist used to write it like this.
- 3 Bible. Rev. Stand. Version. London: The British and Foreign Bible Society, 1971. OT. Gen. 3.
- 4 Qur'ān. Trans., and Com., □bd Allāh Yūsuf □li. Islamabad: Da'wah Acad., 2: 30.
- 5 The Messengers and the nations that were destroyed include, Moses, who was sent to the people of Pharaoh; Noah and those who followed him on the ark, along with two sets of

pairs of animals and birds, were saved, whereas his wife and son and all others were drowned (26: 119-120). And “So We delivered him (Lūt) and his family - all. Except an old woman who lingered behind. Then the rest We destroyed utterly” (26: 170-172). And “to the Thamud people We sent □ālih, one of their own brethren, He said: “O my people! worship Allah, ye have no other god but Him” (7: 73). And “To the Madyan people we sent Shu‘aib” (7: 85 □li), “But the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning” (7: 91 Y □li).

- 6 Bible. OT. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- 7 Iqbāl, Mu□ammad. *The Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam (RRTI)*. (Lectures, 1930, used in the ed. 1958) Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2004, p. 77.
- 8 Qur’ān, 38: 26, Y □li.
- 9 Ibid., 3: 59, Y □li.
- 10 Ibid., 5: 110, Y □li.
- 11 Ibid., 10: 1, Y □li.
- 12 Naqvi, Akbar. *Image and Identity*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 95.
- 13 I contacted the Chughtā'i Art Home, to find out whether they had the original painting, *Man and Satan*, or a colour reproduction of it, but unfortunately I did not get a response.
- 14 *M* bk 3: 1929 (trans. Nicholson).
- 15 Shāh, M. Maroof. “Existence of Evil, Theodicy and Sufism.” *Iqbāl Review*. (2009): 85, n.p.
- 16 Qur’ān, 4: 28, Y □li.
- 17 Ibid., 20: 115, Y □li.
- 18 Al-Faruqi, Lois Lamya’. *Islam and Art*. Islamabad: National Hijra Council, 1985, p. 111.
- 19 Qur’ān, 2: 35, Y □li.
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