

Indian Freedom Movement and Urdu Poetry, with Special Reference to Faiz Ahmad Faiz

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Abstract – Being a research scholar pursuing work under the title “Trends in Contemporary Poetry with Special Reference to Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the present topic drew my attention. I found that this topic is an important and vast chapter in the history and literature of the Indian Sub-continent, and is difficult to put light with in a few pages. A long list of Urdu poets can be represented who participated actively in the struggle for freedom. Everyone needs a separate long chapter. But, unfortunately, the topic still remained untouched in English, with some exceptions. It is perhaps because of our ignorance of Urdu and unavailability or paucity of its English translations. Therefore, I have made an attempt to put light on the topic briefly with special reference to Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Because he was one of the leading poets of the 20th century, who spent the first half of his life as a Muslim of Indian national and the second half as a Pakistani, therefore he played a prominent role in the Indian struggle for freedom.

Keywords – Urdu Poets, Faiz, Movement, Revolution, Freedom and Independence.

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During all periods of history we have poets who have sung praises of their country to which they belong, or join a crusade for social change, or herald revolution for the good of a particular people or country. (Narang, 58)

Prior to 1947, our country— India was one of the colonies of the British Government. The Indians suffered much for a long time and compelled to breathe in the shadows of the crime committed by the rulers. Therefore, our ancestors belonging to various castes, cultures, creeds, religions and languages, stood up united with their cudgel in their own capacity, fought and even got thousands martyrdoms. Many movements were launched time to time, which irrigated by the blood of several Indian patriots to accomplish the dream of independence. Not only this, but did a lot, and ultimately, the dream fulfilled on August 15, 1947.

“Normally it is seen that whenever a nation is in a turmoil or passing through a period of historical crisis or rising against an alien domination or subjugation, or fighting for its survival”, observes Narang that “there is a lot of activity on the literary front, and heaps of poetry are produced which pass under the general label of patriotic poetry”, (59). India was no exception. As Indian patriot politicians led the movement by manipulating suitable policies against the British, fighters fought with their arms and ammunition, others did for which they were competent, similarly the writers and poets of almost all languages in the country, participated in the movement and played a dynamic

role with their pens in the struggle; some of them even lost their lives for the cause of freedom. No doubt, literature of any language can play a vital role in such circumstances as in liberating any subjugated country from its slavery. Like other languages, it was also with Urdu, which was the language of the masses before independence in India. As Urdu poetry is concerned, its themes confined wholly to the expression of individual sentiment, almost to the early half of the eighteenth century. It was approximately, after the battle of Plassey, in 1757, that the historical event of the tragic death of the heroic Nawab Sirajud Daula at the hands of the British was mourned by one of the contemporary poets Raja Ram Narain Mauzun, who is said to compose the following verses:

Ghazalan tum to waqif ho kaho Majnoon ke marne ki.

Diwana mar gaya aakhir ko virane pe kya guzri.

O gazellen, you are a witness to the death of Majnoon,

The mad (Patriot) is no more, what now will be the fate

of the dessert (country ruined by the alien rule) .
(Narang 60)

This tradition was carried forward by the poets like Mir,¹ Hatim,² Mushafi,³ and Jurat⁴ until the historical event happened of the great rebellion of 1857, which by many is termed the First War of Indian Independence. These poets were followed by the poets like Sahbai,⁵ Ghalib,⁶ Zafar,⁷ Tafazzul Husain,⁸ and Muhammad Husain Azad,⁹ who were witness of the rebellion and some of them composed many poems during the mutiny of 1857. For instance Ghalib, in a letter to one of his friend wrote the celebrated *qat'ah*, "in which he describes the ruin of Delhi, and in particular, the plight of Muslims":

Surely to day every English tommy considers himself God,

Every one going from his house to the bazaar is struck with panic.

The markete-place (Chandni Ckawk) looks like a slaughterhouse,

And the houses look like prisons.

As if every particle of dust in Delhi

Thirsts for the blood of the Muslims. (qtd. in Narang 65)

This period is considered to be prolific for the production of nationalistic verses representing socio-political condition, in the history of Urdu literature. Narang, in his article "The Indian Freedom Struggle and Urdu Poetry" observes:

The tragedy of 1857 was so close and deep to the bone of the Delhi poets that many of them composed elegies and *Shahr Ashobs* on the fall of the capital, and about the deportation of Bahadur Shah Zafar to Rangoon. Twenty seven of such poems were compiled in a book, *Fughan-e-Delhi*, The Lamentation of Delhi, by a disciple of Ghalib, Tafazzul Husain Khan

Kaukab. One of the important poems of the period is a chronogrammatic poem commemorating the beginning of the uprising composed by Muhammad Husain Azad, which appeared in the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*. This news paper was owned by Azad's father, Maulvi Muhammad Baqar, who was later killed by the English, and his press confiscated. The young Azad had to flee for his life. This poem appeared in the 24 May 1857 issue of the *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, a copy of which is still preserved in the National Archives of India. Bahadur Shah Zafar himself was a poet of merit and the poetry composed by him during his last years in exile, bears proof of his misery and deprivation. (Narang 65-66)

According to the conventional trend of Urdu poetry, shedding tears over the greatness of the Indian Sub-continent was considered national sympathy. It was approximately, around and onward the great rebellion of 1857, that Mohammad Husain Azad (1830-1910) and Maulana Altaf Huasin Hali (1837- 1914), in their own ways took to the field of literature to represent a new concept of nation and nationhood in the light of the recent material development of the West. And then Allam Shibli Nomani (1857-1914), "the first modern nationalist poet of Urdu" and "one of the band of devoted *Ulama*, religious scholars, who not only championed the cause of freedom, but also urged upon their fellow-Muslims to join the main stream of national struggle" states Narang and adds that "Shibli, by his poems and articles denounced the separatist politics of some of the Muslim leaders and pleaded for the independence of the country as soon as possible" (66). Their literary endeavours created a political consciousness and clarified the concept of nation and nationalism and called for unity among Indians. Uniting the people to a common front, they announced the first goal of the nation was to get rid of the British slavery, which created political commotion against the British Government.

Thus, Urdu's scope began to increase and its themes to expand to include socio-political, nationalistic and patriotic issues more obviously. Now the poets began to be enmeshed overtly in the struggle for freedom. Beside the publications, organisation of *Mushairas* also played an important role as a vehicle of communication. Mir and Mir rightly observes that:

The period of 1850s onwards, sometimes referred to as the *Nishat-e Saania* (Renaissance) in Urdu literature exhibited a new sensibility that was spurred by an attitude of resentment and rebellion against the yoke of colonialism. Around the turn of the century, the call by Altaf Husain Hali and Mohammad Husain Azad to poets asking for *mushairas* to be organized on the basis of themes such as the love of the nation also provided an impetus to *qaumi shaa'iri*, or the poetry of nationalism. (54)

Simultaneously, the late of the nineteenth and the early of the twentieth century saw the rise of two

¹ Mir Muhammad Taqi, known as Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810) was an Urdu poet of the 18th century Mughal India, born in Agra and died in Lucknow.

² Shaikh Zahuruddin Hatim (1699-1783), was an Urdu poet of the 18th century Mughal India, born and lived in Delhi.

³ Ghulam Hamdani known as Mushafi (pen name), (1751-1844), was an Indian Urdu Ghazal poet, born in Amroha, and died in Lucknow.

⁴ Qalandar Bakhs Jurat, (1748-1809), was an Urdu poet, born in Delhi and died in Lucknow, India.

⁵ Maulvi Imam Bakhsh Sahbai (1802-1857), was an Indian Urdu Poet, born in Delhi.

⁶ Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan known by his pen name Ghalib, (1797-181869), was an Indian great Urdu poet, born in Agra, lived and died in Delhi.

⁷ Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862), was a famous Urdu poet and the last Mughal Emperor of India. Following his involvement in the Indian rebellion of 1857, the British deported him to Rangoon in British controlled Burma (now in Myanmar) after convicting him in several charges, where he died in 1862 and his body was buried in Rangoon.

⁸ Tafazzul Husain Khan Kaukab Delhvi, died in 1868.

⁹ Muhammad Husain Azad (181830-1910) was one of the Indian scholars, who wrote both prose and poetry. He was born in Delhi and died in Lahore (now in Pakistan).

major patriotic poets of Urdu, Durga Sahay Suroor (d. 1910), and Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1887-1938). Iqbal, one of the best celebrated poets, devoted himself to his country, composed verses on nationalistic and anti-colonial themes abundantly. In the words of Narang:

Iqbal's early poetry is permeated with his love for India, and to him goes the credit of composing some of the finest songs of Urdu, like *Himalya*, *Aftab*, (translation of Gayatri Mantra of the Vedas), *Naya Shivala*, *Swami Ram Tirath*, *Ram Nayak*, and the most famous of all, *Tarana-e-Hindi* which is sung even to day in India, and is one of the most popular national songs among Indian children:

Sare jahan se achcha Hindostan hamara

Hum bulbulen hain iski yeh gulsitan hamara...

India our country is the most beautiful in the world

This is our garden, we its nightingales... (qtd. in Narang 66)

He did not stop here, but, in love with his land, he has exceeded the limit of his religion and bluntly said:

Pathther kee moorti mein samjha hai too Khuda hai

Khaak-e-watan ka mujhko har zarra devta hai

You believe that an idol made of stone is God

For me, every speck of the dust of my homeland is a god. (Trans. By Singh 104-105)

The mutiny of 1857, on the one hand, overthrew the Indian government, and on the other, created awareness among India's literati that poetry and literature should be brought closer to life. That is why with the change of circumstances, the spirit of patriotism began to stir more in the hearts of the people, and it went on to transform into nationalism, which can be obviously felt in the verses composed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Around the First World War, the nationalist verse of Urdu was further enriched by stalwarts like Chakbast and Hasrat Mohani. Chakbast being a moderate was inspired by leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Gokhle, and Mrs. Annie Besant. His poems, *khak-e-Hind*, *Awaz-e-Qaum* and *Hamara Watan Dil se Pyara Watan* portray the liberal-moderate aspect of our freedom movement, whereas Hasrat was an extremist and he never settled for anything less than full freedom. His political mentor was Bal Gangadhar Tilak and like him, Hasrat always emphasized on full freedom, swaraj, as goal of the Indians. (Narang, 67)

The phrase *Inqalab Zindabad* (Lonh Live Revolution), coined and raised first by Hasrat Mohani, in 1921,

which became a watchword for the movement. Similarly, the first couplet of the one of Bismil Azeemabadi's famous revolutionary *ghazals*, composed in 1921, following the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre and other atrocities perpetrated by the British, became the cry of a generation of revolutionaries and was hummed by Bhagat Singh, Raj Gru, and Sukhdev as they marched to the gallows. The couplet is as the following:

Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamaare dil mein hai

Dekhna hai zor kitna bazoo-e-qatil mei hai

Keen our desire to lay down our lives for the country

Now is the time to challenge the murderer's strength... (qtd. in Narang, 70)

The subsequent period saw the rise of many poets. To name a few, Prem Chand, Josh, Majnoon, Faiz, Majaz, Hasrat Mohani, Krishan Chandra, Jan Nisar Akhtar, Akhter Rai Puri Ali Sardr Jafri, Jazbi, Makhdoom Muhiyuddin and others, "whose main poetic inspiration came from the national struggle and the freedom movement" (Narang, 69). These poets, undertaking the task of freedom stood up, accumulated and joined an association which history records as the "Progressive Writers' Association". One of the aims of the PWA was to produce "art for life's sake" rather than the traditional notion of the "art for art's sake" and deploy it in the struggle for freedom. Therefore, deviating from their personal concerns, they preferred their nation, and played prominent role in the liberation movement.

Although, the previous generations have the same sentiment of patriotism, nationalism and the desire to strengthen the freedom movement, yet there is an obvious difference in their thought and ideas, and the thinking of "the progressive" poets. The PWA was the brain child of the Communists; consequently, its effect on them was inevitable. Therefore, these poets were either officially committed to or influenced intellectually by the Marxism. Many of them considered Communism, the solution of all problems, and determined to establish it in the country, after achievement of freedom. Junaidi in this connection comments:

Progressive poets and writers understood the meaning of political revolution as the fight against feudalism, capitalism, economic exploitation, hunger, poverty and religious monopoly. They called communism the solution of it and promoted it, even though it was against the country's environment and cultural tradition. (Junaidi, 159; translation mine)

Undoubtedly, these poets produced a huge nationalistic repertoire by composing patriotic and very inflammatory anti-imperial poems, depicting India's lurid picture to arouse the Indian masses against the English, to inspire their patriotic and

nationalistic sentiments urging to join the movement, with an eager anticipation to achieve freedom and establishment of Communism in India, though this presumption is applicable not to all. But, for instance, according to Alam:

Makhdoom was a supporter of communist ideology and a preacher of progress. Propagating communism he attempted to raise the banner of communism high as well as to popularize the Communist Party's vision of independence for the country. To quote some verses of his poem *Jang-e-Aazadi* (Fight for Freedom), in which 'freedom flag' means the 'red flag' of communism and 'freedom' means 'the freedom in which there would be a rule of communism. (Alam, 207; translation mine)

'But, because the poem was composed during the British rule and it mentions the war of independence, so the poem, in any case, proved to be helpful to stir the spirit of the Indians for freedom':

This fight, is the fight for freedom,

Under the flag of freedom

This fight is, for the inhabitants of India,

For the subjugated and suppressed,

For drunkard of freedom,

For farmers and labours;

This fight is the fight for freedom. (Alam: 207-208; translation mine)

Sahir Ludhianvi also attempts to stir the masses up to provoke a storm of protest against the British by numerous poems. The following couplets, for instance, can be reproduced, where his communist stance is obviously expressed in the second couplet:

Here we go, stoking fire through song-laden lips

The fear of the world can never staunch the flow of our words

In all, we have just one view, our own

Why should we see the world through someone else's eyes?

It is true, we did not turn the world into a garden

But at least we lessened some thorns from the paths we travelled. (qtd. in Mir and Mir, 1)

One of the most eminent poets of progressive movement is Josh Malihabadi. He was the champion of humanity and worked hard for the cause of human dignity, whose voice was the loudest among all. A true patriot and freedom fighter, Josh composed his verses

with such enthusiasm, revolutionary zeal, and heat like a nuclear energy that he came to be called *Shaa'ir-e-Inqalab* (the poet of revolution). In his poems the message of nationalism, democracy, Hindu Muslim unity, peace and freedom is prominent. He made attempts to arouse the spirit of rebellion in the hearts of youths by teaching them devotion and sacrifice to the country. One of his famous revolutionary poems *To the Sons of East India Company*, composed in reaction to a call, in the name of humanity, by the English governor to support them against the Nazis during the World War II, which was very offensive to Josh, is the piercing account of the dark deeds of the British. Josh says that those who had been committed atrocities, murders, and massacre i.e. inhumane actions, for a long, their call in the name of humanity, was nothing but again a great deception. By taking into account their dark deeds he pleads with the compatriots not to response their call, because the time was favorable to overthrow their government. Thus he concludes:

Anyways, shopkeepers, this is what needs to be done;

That you bow down before the verdict of destiny

Time will write a new story, with a new title

And this story needs to be reddened with your blood.

The verdict of time cannot be made to change course

Death may wait, but this verdict awaits no one. (Josh: Mefilsukhan)

"Among all the progressive poets mentioned above, one poet who has been most widely read and discussed is Faiz Ahmad Faiz, precisely because he has been singularly successful in striking a balance between arts and ideas", (Rehman). Born in early 20th century and brought up during the stirring nationalistic movements in colonial India, Faiz started his poetic career in 1930s, when the whole world was going under frenzied political activism against anti-fascist movement in Europe and America, which influenced literary circles not only in Europe and America but other parts of the world, including Indian Sub-continent. Despite, Faiz remained aloof from any movement, until he made his acquaintance with the Marxist group of writers. He commenced his poetic career with pure personal themes, with the expression of individual sentiment of love and romance. The evolution of these individual themes was the direct consequence of such mental and emotional experience, which is common at the point of life, and of the prevailing atmosphere of romantic poetry, he says. However, soon he announced to renounce the misery of the beloved just after his acquaintance with the *Angare*

group, especially Dr Rashida Jahan,¹⁰ who provided him the “Communist Manifesto” for the first time. Faiz remembers this event and writes: “I read it in one sitting, then re-read it two or three times.”

Thus his subsequent composition commenced with the second part of the first volume *Naqsh-e-Faryadi* (1941), accordingly inaugurates a new kind of poetry, remarkable in style, dramatic in manner, proclaiming *Dile Ba Farokhtam Wa Jane Kharidam*, which means ‘I sold my heart and bought myself a soul’ the verse quoted from Nizami, the Persian poet. He believes no more in the sole doctrine of “Art for art’s sake” or existentialism that artistic and social values were things apart. He begins from his poem, the landmark in Urdu poetry: *Mujh Se Pehli Si Muhabbat Mere Mehbhoob Na Maang* (Love Do Not Ask Me), composed just after his involvement in the progressive writer’s movement, where the poet announces to renounce the misery of the beloved whose “beauty kept earth’s spring- times from decay’ for a contemplation of the misery of the world’s suffering humanity, particularly, for the consideration of the misery of his homeland and bluntly declares:

Muje Se Pahli Si Muhabbat Mere Mahboob Na Mang...

Aur bhi gum hain Zamane mein muhabbat ke siwa

Rahatein aur bhi hein wasl ki rahat ke siwa

Love Do Not Ask Me for That Love Again...

Our world knows other torments than of love,

And other happiness than a fond embrace. (Faiz: Poems 65)

Subsequently, following the stance of PWA, he peeps into his homeland’s poor socio-political condition, where he found no one to give “their sluggish tails a twitch”; where his countrymen “in oppression’s shadows condemned to breathe”, living in their own land with “minds in bondage”, “fettered limbs” and “feelings held on a chain” (Faiz, Poems 79). Not only that but where:

Walls dark with secrets frown on every side,

That countless lamps of youth have sunk behind;
(Faiz: Poems, 95).

And where:

Everywhere scaffolds on which dreams have died,

That lit unnumbered candles in man’s mind. (Faiz: Poems, 95).

Here, the poet bereaves and sheds tears over those compatriots who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country and makes the masses conscious of the cruelties of their inhumane masters. Then he resolves on to propagate progressive ideas with the sole intention of the amelioration of existing socio-political condition depicting more human misery: class exploitation, cultural imperialism, economic capitalism and “degradation all attributable to the alien domination of his homeland” (Dryland 15).

Faiz’s verse is not merely a slogan mongering to achieve wealth, power and influence but it expresses a bitter pain, which he had in his bosom of social injustice and political instability in his country and which hardly found an expression in words. In a poem entitled “Our Kind or We People” (*Ham-log*), he depicts the shocking condition, in which they lived in colonial India, which was hard to communicate by the medium of verses. In fact, Faiz’s theme now becomes an attempt to depict:

Eik kadwa dard jo geet mei dhalta hi nahi

Dil kei taareek shigaafon sei nikalta hi nahi

A numb misery

Not melting into any song or escaping

From the heart’s shadowed crevices. (Faiz: Poems 99, *We People*).

Socio-political realism haunts his mind profoundly; he sets his eyes to look at the country, “Where daily combat rages of death with life”, “swarming progeny” of glamorous cities has to do with nothing but craves to die, in his colonial homeland. In one of his most famous poems entitled *To The Rival* (*Raqeeb Se*), the poet says:

Wherever now the friendless crouch and wail

Till in their eyes the trickling tears grow cold,

Or where the vulture hovering on broad pinions

Snatches the morsel from their feeble hold— (Faiz: Poems 73)

Faiz becomes angry at his nation’s insensitive ignorance, poverty and superstition. And when the anger grows, he starts to think indignantly. The wealth of feeling he has, does not allow him to remain still and calm, and when he thinks of his miserable people, the restlessness of his hearts increases:

When labourers flesh is sold in chaffering streets,

Or pavements run with poor men’s blood, a flame

¹⁰ Born and educated in Aligarh Muslim University and abroad (1905-1952), she was a famous Urdu writer.

That lurks inside me blazes up beyond

All power of quenching; do not ask its name. (Faiz: Poems 75)

Faiz was one among those India's literati, who opposed capitalism and the attributed imperialism by his poetic genius. He considers alien government the root of all evils prevailing in his homeland. Social reality draws his attention. Therefore, he tends to evoke a lurid picture of appalling socio-political condition in order to make the compatriots conscious of the vices of communal subjugation of his homeland (India) and to instigate them against imperialism. Read the following stanza:

Dark curse of countless ages savagery

In woven with silk and satin and gold lace,

Men's bodies sold in street and marketplace,

Bodies that caked grime fouts and thick blood smears,

Flesh issuing from the cauldrons of disease

With festered sores dripping corruption—these

Sights haunt me too, and will not be shut out;

Not be shut out, ... (Faiz: Poems, 65-67, *Love, Do Not Ask*)

In the subsequent poem *Mauzo-e-Sukhan* (Poetry's Theme) he attributes again all the socio-political maladies to the alien domination in his homeland. He looks at the country's masses and impatiently asks:

Why must those gay streets swarming progeny

So draw breath that to die is all they crave?

In those rich fields bursting with bounty, why

Must no ripe harvest except hunger wave? (Faiz: Poems, 93)

Faiz's style of address to the homeland is unconventional and unique as it is compared to his contemporaries. For him the country is a personified beloved. The poem *A Few Days More* (*Chand Roz Aur, Meri Jan*), for example, is composed in a state of intense protest against oppression of the British imperialism. It is one of those personifications of the country, in which the poet addresses his homeland in terms of his personified beloved. He is not satisfied with the circumstances that were to be seen in his beloved homeland. Being sad over the affairs of the state, he essays to provoke a storm of protest against imperialism and consoles at the same time with an eager anticipation of freedom. He states that the cycle of persecution does not last long. This is only temporary. He reassures the beloved (Indians) not to

grieve any more because the term of oppression is coming soon to an end:

Only a few days, dear one, a few days more.

Here in oppression's shadows condemned to breathe,

Still for a while we must suffer, and weep and endure

What our forefather's, not our own fault, bequeath -

Fettered limbs, our feelings held on a chain,

Minds in bondage, and words each watched and set down;

Courage still nerves us, or should we still live on,

Now when existence is only a beggar's gown

Tattered and patched every hour with new rags of pain?

Yes, but to tyranny not many hours are left now;

Patience, few hours of complaint are left to bear.

In these close bounds of an age that desert sands choke

We must stay now - not for ever and ever stay!

Under this load beyond words of a foreign yoke

We must bow down for a time - not for ever bow!

Dust of affliction that clings to your beauty to day,

Crosses unnumbered that mar youth's few mornings, soon gone,

Torment of silver nights that can find no cure,

Heartache unanswered, the body's long cry of despair -

Only a few days, dear one, a few days more. (Faiz: Poems 79)

Similarly, his great sympathy for the fellow being and his intention of socio-economical equality of their well being have excellently been communicated in an impressive and efficacious poem *My Companion My Friend* (*Mere Hamdam, Mere Dost*). Nationalism, romance and revolution have been, beautifully fused herein together. He addresses Indian masses, specifically, the lower classes in terms of his companion and friend in a very sympathetic tone. Pondering over the colonial India's lurid picture, the poet says that the white people had given a fatal wound to his beloved homeland. He compares social misery with festered sore or malignant wound, which could only be cured after undergoing surgical

operation. He says that if he could convince for certain that his kindness and compassion and his tender and sweet songs could revive communal consciousness, and the wound of his homeland might heal by any caring or comforting of his songs, or if it could save Indian working community from the life it lives in pain and humiliation bringing a wave of happiness to its dull and sad life, so the poet should continue to comfort companions by reciting songs of love and beauty: "Songs of cascades and springtides and flowery meadowlands / Of breaking dawns, of moonlight, or of the wandering stars", in the morning and evening—all day long. But his songs could neither cure their disease nor change their destiny, because the function of songs was not surgical procedure to cut the defect and fistula and separate it from the body. Verse might be soft balm for sorrow but "no lancet" and "no surgeon to save life". Not being a medical practitioner, the poet could not do surgical treatment, he could only sing songs. These songs could only grieve and bring to the heart and thus prove friendship and camaraderie but the evil that had arisen in their body and soul of the community could only be removed by the knife. He did not have knife, not only he, but every living being in this world had no such knife which could cure its disease. If such a knife was there, it was with the community itself; therefore it could cure its pain by itself. The poem is long, but to reproduce it in fragments would really be injustice with the poet. It reads:

If I could know for certain, my fellow- man, my friend -

If I could know for certain that your heart-weariness,

That boarding in your eyes and those thoughts that
sear you might

Be healed by any caring or comforting of mine;

Or if my words of solace were medicine that could
bring

Revival to your stricken and shadow-haunted brain,

Wipe from your brow the wrinkles that shame and
failure write,

And mend the pale consumption that wastes away
your youth;-

If I knew this for certain, my fellow-man, my friend!

Day and night I would cheer you, morning and evening
make

Songs and new songs to please you, honeyed, heart-
quieting-

Songs of cascades and springtides and flowery
meadowlands,

Of breaking dawns, of moonlight, or of the wandering
stars;

Or tell you old romances of shining eyes and love,

Of beautiful proud women and bosoms cold as snow

Melting under the fervent touch of a lover's hand;

Tell how familiar features, long known by heart, may
while

We watch them be transfigured in one short moment's
space,

Or how the crystal whiteness of the beloved one's
cheek

Will suddenly be kindled into wine's ruby glow,

—How of herself the rose-spray leans to be plucked,
and send

A breath of perfume stealing through the dark hall of
night;

Such songs I would keep making, to sing you hour
by hour,

Weaving new notes to charm you, sitting here by
your side.

But for your rooted trouble what is my rhyming
worth?

Verse is soft balm for sorrow, no surgeon to save
life:

Music a salve for sickness like yours, except the
knife -

The murderer, the redeemer, that is not in my power

Nor in the power of any that draw breath on this
earth:

Any, excerpting only - yourself, yourself, yourself!
(Faiz: Poems109-113)

It is one of the most appreciated poems by critics and readers and sung by various singers in Indian sub-continent addressed to the colonial India calling it "My Fellow-Man, My Friend". For its extraordinary thought and amorous style, it is one of the distinguished poems ever written on the theme of patriotism and protest in the literature of the world, in which colonial India has been artistically manipulated as the poet's personified fellowman or friend. Critics are in the opinion that by the poem Faiz means that if the poor people wanted to solve their problem and improve their condition then they would have to bring about such a revolutionary change in the society that

the class struggle would automatically die out. He tried to realise the proletariats that their destiny was in their own hands. No one else could change it; so it could be done by their hard work. In fact, the poem reflects Marxist ideology and therefore, it is a representative of Marxism. He thinks that the communist system could only cure the fatal wound of the society. Indeed, it represents Faiz's faith in communism.¹¹ He seems to be in the favour of red revolution as the communist often did. He seems to be urged the proletariats to unite and bring about the Red Revolution convincing them that only through the Red Revolution the destiny of the proletariats could change. Faiz wanted to establish such a system of socialism in which there would equality and the poor be given equal rights. This is the hidden message of the poem.

In poems like *Dogs (Kutte)*, *Speak (Bol)* and *To a Political Leader (Siyasi Leader Ke Nam)* the poet camouflages revolutionary zeal with an abundance of symbols and allusions. The second was written much later and became the anthem of Progressive Writers. It is steeped in allusions and insinuations. Perhaps, such poems motivated Ale Ahmad Suroor to state that "Faiz's poetry is oblique rather than direct", (qtd. Narang, 107). But, such was the circumstances that he had to communicate in sign language.

In *The Dogs (Kutte)*, the poet exemplifies the poor with dogs. Really here he would like to explain the philosophy of violence. He considers that a certain system has made a huge difference between man and man. One group after earning money by sucking the blood of the poor and the oppressed has revelled in these people's misery with all comforts of the world. The other has lost all comforts of the entire world due to his ignorance, poverty, weakness and superstition. This deprivation has grown to such an extent that every kind of feeling is gone. Such kinds of men are in majority. If they gather together and someone gives them a proper sense of their right, they can eliminate groups that discriminate through violence means, forever, he says. In the way Faiz has represented the idea, there is a sense of humiliation as well as a firm belief that the only cure is violence.

With fiery zeal endowed—to beg,
They roam the street on ideal leg,
And earn and own the general curse,
The abuse of all the universe;
At night no comfort, at dawn no banquet,
Gutter for lodging, mud for blanket,
Whenever you find them any bother,

Show them a crust—they will fight each other,
Those curse that all and sundry kick,
Destined to die of hunger'r prick.
—If those whipped creatures raised their heads,
Man's insolence would be pulled to shreds:
Once roused, they would make this earth their own,
And gnaw their betters to the bone—
If someone their misery itch,

Just gave their sluggish tail a twitch! (Faiz, Poems 83-85)

Here the dogs are symbol of humiliation as well as their violent nature. Hardly anyone has ever thought about dogs roaming in the street as in the way Faiz thought. The whole poem is replete with a lot of political satire. This is the way he has addressed the people and made them realize that violence was the first and the last tactics.

Out breaking of World War II made the citizens begin to loose their liberties. Arrest of the politically activists were on the rise. The fighters for freedom were being imprisoned. Considering the expediency of time, the Congress made an agreement with the British Government. On being all the prisoners released in 1944, the communists raised slogans against fascist government. They also joined the imperialist power against the Nazi regime. Therefore, Indian communists with their allies became involved in the side by side war against Germany and Italy. The poets and writers of India also used all their mental and spiritual powers for the safety and security of every individual life. Faiz has expressed the same condition in this poem; every word of which has become immortal. The poet says:

Speak, for your two lips are free;
Speak, your tongue is still your own;
This straight body still is yours -
Speak, your life is still your own.
See how in the blacksmith's forge
Flames leap high and steel glows red,
Padlocks opening wide their jaws,
Every chain's embrace outspread!
Time enough is this brief hour

¹¹ Faiz was not a member of Communist party. However, it does not deny his intellectual affinity with Marxists and his leaning towards Marxism.

Until body and tongue lie dead;

Speak, for truth is living yet -

Speak whatever must be said. (Faiz: Poems 87)

The poem is written in English stanza form with the rhyme scheme ABCB. The imagery of the smithy and padlock, symbolizes the increasing atrocities perpetrated on the nationalists. "Beginning quietly, in every forth line the tempo increases and one begins to feel the heat of the protest. In the last lines there is defiance and a hope for better future", observes Imdad Husain (23). One critic of Faiz called it "The testament of the Third World". Using the refrain "speak", the poem is proved to be the clarion call to the contemporary writers to do the act against brutality and oppression they were suffering from, or that was carried out elsewhere. "Moreover" Ralph Russell, in his article on Faiz, talking about its importance and universality writes: "the poem tells its audience to speak, but does not tell it what to speak. And so it remains a spirited call to all free men, in any country and any age, to speak out boldly what free men have a duty to say, even though they risk imprisonment if they do so"(comp.& ed. Hameed 43). Thus the poem is a beautiful piece of protest poetry in the history of literature.

Then India got freedom, but freedom along with Partition and Partition with communal riots, was the greatest tragedy of the time. Such freedom was unacceptable to the progressive poets like Faiz. "For the Progressives, the freedom struggle inextricably intertwined with their socialist aspirations. The end of one form of oppression, they believed, would come hand in hand with the end of all form of oppression" observes Mir and Mir (57), who adds further that:

The division of the nation along religious lines, particularly the formation of Pakistan as a state founded on the basis of Muslim nationalism was repugnant to the progressives. Independence had produced a condition that was far removed from their cherished dream of a socialist, united India. The use of religion as means to unite, and consequently divide people, was widely condemned by them of both sides of the border. They wrote extensively about the conditions of independence, contending that it was the result of a deal made between the British government and an alliance of the rich and powerful in India and Pakistan. (Mir and Mir 63)

Whatsoever with the other progressive poets, but Faiz was horribly shocked at the news of the communal riots from both sides and his humanistic spirit got deeply wounded. Immediately, the poet realised that freedom from foreign rule did not bring any qualitative change in the socio-political system, rather than it came with disaster of communal riots and partition of the country. He composed the one of his famous masterpieces *Freedom's Dawn August 1947 (Subh-e-Azadi-August-1947)*, which reflects the poet's

disappointment with such kind of liberation. Saddened by the event, and considering freedom not as freedom, the poet states the dawn of 15 August 1947 as 'pockmarked' or 'leprous daybreak' and 'night-bitten' and ends urging to let the struggle press on, as their destination has not yet arrived:

This leprous daybreak, dawn night's fangs have mangled -

This is not that long-looked- for break of day,

Not that clear dawn in quest of which those comrades

Set out, believing that in heaven's wide void

Somewhere must be the stars' last halting-place,

Somewhere the verge of night's slow-washing tide,

Somewhere an anchorage for the ship of heartache.

When we set out, we friends, taking youth's secret

Pathways, how many hands plucked at our sleeves!

From beauty's dwellings and their painting casements

Soft arms invoked us, flesh cried out to us;

But dearer was the lure of dawn's bright cheek,

Closer her shimmering robe of fairy rays;

Light-winged that longing, feather-light that toil.

But now word goes, the birth of day from darkness

Is finished, wandering feet stand at their goal;

Our leaders' ways are altering, festive looks

Are all the fashion, discontent reproved;

And yet this physic still on unslaked eye

Or heart fevered by severance works no cure.

Where did that fine breeze, that the way side lamp

Has not once felt, blow from-- where has it fled?

Night's heaviness is unlesened still, the hour

Of mind and spirit's ransom has not struck;

Let us go on, our goal is not reached yet. (Faiz: Poems,123-127)

Indicating to the last line of the poem originally *Chale chalo ki wo manzil abhi nahi aayi* (Let us go on, our

goal is not reached yet), Mir and Mir observes that: "The *manzil* (destination) for many of the Progressives was a socialist revolution. Freedom from the British was seen by many of them as the replacement of one form of imperialism by another. For them, the battle continued", (64). Thus, individually for Faiz, it can not be denied that along with intelligentsia, during Indian colonial period, the poet kept himself enmeshed in the struggle, which history records as the brutal struggle between Indian patriotism and British imperialism. Following freedom along with partition of the Indian subcontinent, however, he continued his struggle for social liberation in Pakistan, where in his words:

For new-style law and order are in use,

Good men learn,—‘Stones locked up, and dogs turned loose’. (Faiz: Poems, 183)

Now we can surmise that being aware of the nuances, circumstances and expediency of the time, they made three aspects in particular the subject of their poetry. Firstly, there is patriotic theme. By writing patriotic poems and conveying them to the people through various means, these poets lit the candle of patriotism and nationalism in the hearts of the Indians. Secondly, there are the themes of unison, integrity and cohesion. Their attempts to promote and maintain communal harmony, mutual love, and brotherhood among the Indians, divided into different grounds, created the sense of unison, took the majority into a common front, and made to feel the power of unity and solidarity in the country. Thirdly, there is the theme of exposition of the socio-political condition and British policies. By their poems they exposed the secrets of the British policies against the Indians, which helped the compatriots to treading on the right direction. And by writing fire branded poems depicting the atrocities being perpetrated on the Indians, taking into an account of the dark deeds of the British, the poets attempted to provoke the feelings and emotions of the Indian masses against the British Government, which increased the antagonism between the Indians and the British and paved the way to stand up against them and even to get sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country.

Collectively, it was our writers and poets who used to broke their spell of supremacy by confronting the imperialist government, time and again. The publication of news papers, magazines and literatures, recitation of poems in *mushairas* brought the people closer and made them understand each other. Repression of the differences based on the caste, culture, creed, religion, and language led to a growing sense of unanimity, concord, unity and togetherness. Thus Urdu poets played a significant role in liberation movement since the war of independence began in Indian sub-continent; however, the role of the poets of twentieth century is more prominent. To quote Alam:

The Urdu poets [1918-1947] fanned the political movements of the time by their verses. By awakening

the dormant political awareness of the masses trapped in the whirlpool of slavery they called them to join the freedom movement and by instilling the sentiment of unity, harmony, and libertarianism in their hearts, they prepared them even to get sacrifice their lives for the cause of freedom. Ultimately, after a long and continuous struggle, their sacrifice paid off, and on August 15, 1947, India became independent. (Alam, 229; translation mine)

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