

## Marxist Consciousness in the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz

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### (Abstract)

The paper focuses on the Marxist Consciousness in the poetry of all-time great Indian poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The poet took to writing as an inclination and passion and not due to any need or ambition. His poems show his inclination towards the Marxist ideology and the motif of his poetry is concern of the commoners and local masses. He raises human concerns in his poetry however he also showcases political issues and concerns in his Urdu poems. He always believes in love, peace and equality in the society. The paper an endeavor to explore the different aspects in Faiz's poetry such as human values, love, political viewpoint and especially the Marxist Consciousness. The present study shows a paradigm shift from a romantic love poet to a poet of people and the concerns.

**Keywords: Marxist, Consciousness, Love, Romanticism, Socialism, Ideology and Politics**

Faiz Ahamad Faiz, a well-known and famous poet, became a writer who recorded the dominant aspirations of people – freedom from oppression and exploitation and for him that was the fundamental individual artistic vision that any writer must possess. He also contributed in society as a teacher, soldier, socialist as well as a cultural programme organizer, a political ideologist, a journalist, an essayist, a film maker and even a trade unionist. Progressive and socialist inclinations in his writings had everything to do with his involvement with people, culture – an ongoing dialogue aimed towards a better understanding of the human condition and the right action towards freedom from exploitative politics. As a writer he was fully conscious of the political events unfolding around him, the volume of social injustice extant during and after the British Rule and he articulated this in his writings. took up a job at Muhammedan Anglo Oriental College, Amritsar in 1935 and moved to Hailey College of Commerce in 1940. A year later, he married British-born Alys George, who was also a poet and human rights activist. In 1942 their first daughter Salima was born, and in 1945 their other daughter Muneeza. During this time Faiz became active in the progressive writers Movement, which was founded in 1936. He never held formal membership in the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), yet he played an active role in the progressive writers Movement, the Progressive Papers Limited, and the Pakistan Trade Union Federation, and was imprisoned for his alleged role in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case.

During the 1971 Indo- Pakistani War, controversy over his anti-war poems such as “The festival of Bloodshed” and “The Dust of Hatred in My eyes” forced him to go into hiding. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan Peoples Party took over as the first elected prime Minister and invited Faiz to join his government. Faiz became an advisor on cultural affairs and founded the Pakistan National Council of Arts and Folk Arts (renamed as National Institute of Folk Heritage) In 1977, military forced removed Bhutto and a new dictatorship was imposed. Faiz went into exile in Beirut and became the editor of the Afro-Asian literary quarterly Lotus. He ended his exile and returned to Lahore in 1984 but died the same year on November 19.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a true humanist, firmly believing in the unity of human spirit and worked for a world in which differences in race and colour, given by nature, were of no social significance. While the differences in religion and nationality, which were products of history, must be freed of the elements of domination, particularism (opposite of universalism) and zealotry which were de-humanizing. The liberation he believed in was unused and indivisible. At the global level, Faiz saw the modern-day struggle between oppression and liberation being articulated in the conflict between imperialism and socialism. He was uncompromisingly against the former and felt it necessary to side with the latter. In the specific conditions of Pakistan, he struggled against the dehumanizing manifestations peculiar to his environment. He was a severe critic of what he detected as the pathological hatred for India and its concomitant religious bigotry. He worked for friendship between Pakistani and India. Yet this did not deter Faiz from opposing Indian intervention in Pakistan’s civil war in 1971.

His view of the inner man is panoramic as well sensitive. He allows the reader to experience and feel-exile, a separation from the beloved and humanity alike, loneliness and pain which alienate and set apart; impatience and life’s gamut of other uncertainties; the horrors of nearly forgetting the face of a loved one. He even makes silence real and audible through synaesthetic imagery (images involving two or more senses). Urdu has a long enough tradition of concealing politics in symbols. In nineteenth century, Urdu poetry, the stock figure of the executioner often represented the British (a way of dodging the censors as well as the gallows; in the summer of 1857, the British had hanged almost thirty thousand people from the trees of Delhi to terrorize the population and punish it for what is often called the Mutiny). In Faiz’s poetry as well, political suggestions are immersed in images and symbolism. Prison has played a great part in the lives of artists socially and humanly committed and understandably those moments of solitude resulted in most of Faiz’s exemplary work. What he composed is personal, intimate, subtle and inspired. In a world of confusion and of principalities all underwritten by poverty, slavery and death sanctions, Faiz is the voice of consciousness, of self-awareness and of hope for humanity. As a

man, whispering the secrets of ourselves he is a comrade-citizen. Faiz was, at best, a humanist whose vision was holistic, and for whom culture and politics were inseparable, ideas and practice formed a unity and art, beside meeting the highest standards of aesthetics, was meant to serve the man striving for peace, progress, justice, equality and freedom. Faiz's Prison Poems, composed during his confinement, best illustrate his irrepressible joy at the gift of life. All these poems and on a triumphant or at least a hopeful note.

Love in Faiz's works is intimately personal and political, an extension of love for one that reaches out to the entire human population. Love presents the possibility to break away from stifling conventions and rebel against oppression. This is also how a revolution was defined hence in Faiz's poems 'love' has a resonance. It is a revolutionary urge and desire that is fed upon by the rightful action of protest, resistance to domination. The love of romantic passion in him hungers to unite his heartbeat with his beloved's as if only that merger would abate the flood of his feelings and give meaning to his existence. At the same time, however, the social reformer in him seeks to justify his existence by championing the cause of toiling and exploited masses. For example, in pre-modern love poetry the poet (lover) and his rival vie for the affection of the cruel and often indifferent beloved. In the famous, "Mere Raqib se" (translated as "Top My Rival") Faiz asks the rival to join him in putting aside their differences and to work together to overcome the country's enemies. Similarly, in "Mujh se pahli si mahabbat, mere mahboob na mang" (translated as "Ask Me Not for That Old Fervour") Faiz indicates to the beloved that he can no longer offer her the kind of love she had enjoyed from him in the past; he is now preoccupied with the more important issues of human exploitation and suffering pathos, longing, hope, despair, resilience and beauty. This poem makes Faiz's transition from romantic poetry to poems of social concern. In its stature, in its intensity, its subject, its inherent irony and paradox, this poem is comparable to William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium", where the speaker in Yeats poem renounces the sensual world of flesh not because he wants to do so but because he has to do so, he can no longer be a part of that world. His age has become a barrier, making it impossible to fit in with the world of physical sensations and youth. At the same time, however, his physical desires, which have not abandoned him, impede his progress toward a spiritual intellectual goal.

In Faiz's poetry, suffering is seldom, perhaps never, private, even if deeply personal; it is almost never isolated from a sense of history and injustice. In a very famous poem, don't ask me now, beloved, "Faiz breaks from Urdu's traditional way of looking at the beloved. Not only does he refuse to despair but in a radical departure from convention, asks the beloved – even while acknowledging her immense importance – to accept his love. But then often, when he is addressing the beloved, he is also addressing

a figure that, depending on the context, may very well be the Revolution. Revolution as a lost lover or a cruel lover, who is refusing to return. So the subject of poetry continues to be truly, the loss of the beloved.

The poem plots a gradual but a sure rejection of romantic ideals of love and union with the soulmate, a reassessment of the traditional concept of love and declaration of a new manifesto of love and regard for suffering of humanity. The poet-speaker recalls the intimacies and intricacies of an emergent and sweet love he had felt for his beloved – an ideal of beauty, which on closer examination was selfish and even indifferent to all and everything other than the beloved. Such a love was also focused on gratification even if it came in the form of the glimpse of the beloved. This incessant questioning of the self, an interrogation of self does not cause a sense of loss or guilt, but a sense of elation as the poet further develops how the altruistic (humane) turn in the sensibilities drove the poet – speaker to experience the human suffering and its nature through a careful study of history. In the confessional mode, Faiz outlines his own transition from a young and native poet – lower (of the romantic tradition) to a poet – activist with awakened sensibilities in relation to social injustice, oppression. The poem thus becomes an affidavit of the history of Faiz's Marxist and socialist leanings which enlivened his poetry and other works. Thus the beloved is now not a flesh – body figure of a person, but consciousness of an entire humanity whom the poet has come to love. Faiz's own development as a Marxist is outlined when he reveals the important role that acquaintance with history and uncovering of facts hitherto unknown has played in the transformation of the lover, who has acquired a new historical consciousness. That history is made of class struggle brings in a change in the worldview of the poet – lover.

The rich had cast their spell on history.

Dark centuries had been embroidered on brocades and skills.

Bitter threads began to unravel t before me

As I went into alleys and in open markets

Saw bodies plastered with ash, bathed in blood.

It is only when the historical facts that have been either manufactured (embroidered on brocades and skills) and/or silenced and manipulated (their spell on history) get exposed that the actual truth emerges and the inoculated sensibilities of a generation are awakened (Bitter threads began to unravel before me)

A Prison Evening Prison's dark night is the setting of this poem and the meeting with the beloved is probably imaginary. The blackness of the night is modified by two touches of light – the poet's own song and the strong conviction in freedom from tyranny and oppression. Faiz employs classical Urdu lyrical

poetic imagery and language to map the contours of love. But actually, he is ending the isolation of the classic lyric subjectivity and through participation on both the political and the social he is orienting it towards larger world – in embracing the sky, moon and the natural elements and also being steadfast about love which as discussed earlier, in a revolutionary concept, rather a revolution itself in Faiz's paradigm. The rendition of night in a prison is invocation of a graceful, steady, assured relationship that subjectivity and interiority has established with the world outside. Night is personified, almost a surreal vision that descends like the muse inside a prison, a sanctuary where love is literally, in the air. The absorbed refuges in the courtyard of the prison allude to historically displaced people during the Partition, but the immediate reference is to the political and intellectual leaders imprisoned during the suppression regime in the 1960s in Pakistan. However, it also is an indirect comment on the tyrannical and oppressive forces that existed in the social order.

The poem, was written in the times of political resistance Third World solidarity when the Progressive Writers wrote about the various struggles around the world struggles of Iranian students in 1959, the McCarthy era of repression of dissent in the United States, The European student uprisings in the 1960s, the Algerian freedom movement, the Palestinian struggle and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. A true internationalist, Faiz expressed support towards the working class struggles and the anti-colonial protests throughout the world. This poem was composed as a tribute to the state execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953 by the US government on the charge of being Soviet spies. He wrote about their love and refusal to betray each other despite threats, imprisonment and ultimately, execution. This act of love is not a person-to-person love but a commitment to principals and ideological resistance towards the power bloc. Faiz likens the execution of Rosenberg's to a political murder, a political act to erase the ideologues of Marxist during the cold war era.

The first two stanzas re-create a mental solidarity with the couple at the very time of their execution - a tribute as well as an attempt to presence the memory. While using the language of love, lovers parting and separation. Faiz elides his own resolution of lover-revolutionary with that of the executed couple. The union realization of the struggle may not be in the hands of the separated lovers, but loving (a person as well as ideological principles) is entirely possible and becomes an act of protest. The imaginative lovers, the real lovers, actual people, a large population, the poor, the exploited – all come together as the 'we' the power of the people. The execution of the lovers is however not a waste of human life, even if highly unethical. But an inspiration for more to follow. In the concluding stanza, Faiz reasserts the outcome of the execution – new lovers will emerge from the lanes where we were killed.

The poem was written as a response to the violence, death, suffering and exploitative human transaction that the Partition of India brought about in 1947. But by not giving it a particular coordinate of place and time, Faiz has in style termed it an age old suffering of the nameless populace whose fate is cruelly underwritten, hidden and not even written. The poem is about the nameless mass of people who are subjected to a fate and destiny that is man made rather than a natural occurrence. He likens such death to execution, even murder where no witnesses or trace is left- such is the extent of obliteration and erasure of the 'vanished'. He maps all possible places for a tiny bit of evidence, closely investigating and examining all possibilities but not a trace is found anywhere. This is also an attempt to evoke the historical consciousness by questioning the historiography and official record which the poet suspects always manipulate information, delete or do not mention the inconvenient truths and facts. On further examination, the exasperated poet – protagonist also distills all the reasons and purposes for the bloodshed and death to find none of the known reasons are applicable – allegiance to country, honour, loyalty, religious Fervour, brave acts in wars, battles – none. Then the poet arrives at the central image of the poem and declares that such a blood which has no reason, 'orphan blood' has never entered the record books for posterity to know and remember. Such a blood arose from the dust and was turned into dust. A high point of Faiz's Marxist Socialist consciousness is where the nameless poor – suffering the ignominy (humiliation) of being unknown, possessing no identity, denied human rights or a civil status of a citizen and whose blood, life and presence has been reified into oblivion, untraceable existence – have finally a witness, a historian, a comrade in the poet.

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