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Poetry of Resistance: A Study with Reference to Faiz Ahmad Faiz

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Abstract

Resistance poets and their poems have proved profoundly meaningful in understanding and exposing the corrupt ideologies on the one hand and the excruciating experiences and psychic traumas of the people on the other.Faiz Ahmad Faiz was an influential left-wing intellectual, revolutionary poet, and afamous poet of Urdu language. Major influences that shapedFaiz's outlook and expression include the struggle with colonialism, the attraction of Marxism and the struggles of the left in Pakistan in the pernicious context of the Cold War.

The study proposes to highlight the ideology of rebellion and resistance in Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetry by means of a pragmatic analysis. It has tried to establish his voice as a strong move against injustice and oppression underscoring the context of his poetry. The study has attempted to highlight the intention of his poetry reflecting on suffering of people while offering a direct approach to the underpinnings of resistance. It has also discussed the features of resistance/revolutionary literature and the role of poets in society especially in the tumultuous times.

Key Words: Language, Poetry, Resistance, Literature, Poetics, Pragmatics

I. Introduction

a. Pragmatic Analysis

Linguistic interpretation of texts within the ambit of pragmatics resorts to the understanding of various activities like beliefs, feelings, knowledge, intentions. It is only by understanding these activities can a successful interpretation of a text be reached. It is only with the aid of considerations of a pragmatic nature that we can answer questions like, what does a text mean?, and ask why was a certain text produced?, what is motive behind the production of a text? etc.

According to Lo Castro (2003), Pragmatics is the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and nonlinguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organized activities" (15).

According to Robinson, "pragmaticians and discourse analysts study how people use words in context, analyzing how the ways people use words are shaped by what they know about the physical and social world in which they live, by their personalities, alone and in groups, and by what they know about the time and place in which the speaker spoke the words or the writer wrote them (2006, p.42)"

Shea (1994) maintains that we must also take into account the larger social and political context which generates 'top-down' assumptions that speakers bring to a text which 'skew "accurate" (and "intended") interpretation' (360).

According to Hall (1999: 210–16) a pragmatic analyst intends to unravel and reconstruct, through emplotment, historical episodes that were meaningful to historical actors before they became meaningful as objects of analysis. Analysts endeavor to recover this meaning in order to understand agents' actions and thereby to understand why events turned out the way they did rather than some other way.

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b. Revolutionary Poetry

Over the years, 'resistance' has proved to be a potent discourse against inequalities, sufferings, and oppression. The strategies of resistance – including mass rallies, boycotts, strikes, fasts, political non-cooperation and civil disobedience – have been used progressively more around the world in past few decades. There has been a growing awareness that resistance can be utilized as a powerful strategy in acquiring one's due rights.

A resistance or revolutionary movement seeks to achieve its objectives either through the use of non-violent resistance (also called civil resistance which includes literature) or through the use of armed force. In many cases, it utilizes both the apparatuses: ". . . the language skills of rhetoric together with armed struggle are essential to an oppressed people's resistance to domination and oppression and to an organized liberation movement" (Harlow, 1987, xv). GhassanKanafani asserts that there is an "integral relationship between armed resistance and resistance literature." He maintains that "resistance is not just the husk, but the very fruit of cultivation forcing its roots deep into the land" (qtd in Harlow,1987,11). There is no possibility to return to the state that was prior to the domination and oppression. There is no "cure for colonialism; recuperation is only possible through violence. Only insurrection and civil war, matching the violence of imperial domination with the violence of resistance, will enable the colonial subject to achieve catharsis and be healed" (Chew and Richards, 2010, 13). When GhassanKanafani was seen carrying a weapon, a friend asked: "Ghassan, I've seen you holding a paintbrush, then a pen, and now a gun. What will you be holding next?" Kanafani replied: "Whatever I can use to protect myself: paintbrush, pen, gun – they are all tools of self-defense." To Kanafani, "art and literature were part and parcel of his political activism and resistance to the usurpation of his homeland; each had a role to play. In fact, politics and literature were virtually inseparable" (Coffin, 2015, 98).

Kanafani along with Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the Guinea-Bissau liberation movement and the major theoretician of African resistance and liberation struggles, locate the "historical specificity of the resistance movement within the larger collective struggle throughout the world." Kanafani further maintains: "If resistance springs from the barrel of gun, the gun itself issues from the desire of liberation and that desire for liberation is nothing but the natural, logical and necessary product of resistance in its broadest sense: as refusal and as a firm grasp of roots and situations." Both the resistance writers, Kanafani and Cabral were assassinated by the imperialistic representatives they were 'fighting' against. Kanafani's obituary in the *Daily Star*, a Beirut English-language newspaper described him "as the commando who never fired a gun and went on to say that his weapon was ballpoint pen and his arena newspaper pages. And he hurt the enemy more than a column of commandos" (Harlow, 1987, 11). Kanafani himself asserts that "Resistance was not an easy choice; it was rather a daily battle with a ferocious enemy who considered it a question of life and death. And as the measures of persecution became fiercer, resistance consolidated" (Hijjawi, 2009, 7).

However, it is absurd to imagine that resistance is more efficient through acts of violence. "The medium of language and literary form for the anti-colonial writers continues to be important mode of resistance" (Boehmer, 2005, 165). Albeit, guerilla warfare appears to be an effective or more heroic choice, but resistance literature continues to be a conscious choice of intellectuals. "Resistance to imperial domination especially on part of those who lacked guns or money frequently assumed textual form" says EllekeBoehmer (15). Literature has played a significant role in 'giving voice to the oppressed.' In fact, it is the resistance literature that propels the other means of resistance. Resistance literature created an independent niche for resistance writers – especially poets – by assigning them with a significant role to contribute in freedom struggles. Like Boehmer maintains that "Many writers in English from Africa and the Caribbean took up

the call to include literature as a moving spirit in the nationalist struggle. Anti-colonial resistance became for them a rallying cause, an enabling context, and a focal subject. . . Ngugi insisted, in its own sphere, the pen might do the work of the gun; a play might pack the power of a hand grenade (Barrel of a Pen,1983)." The writers essentially are invoked, he further asserts, "as the beacons, soothsayers and seers of political movements . . . [it is] writer's role to interpret the world, to grasp the initiative in cultural self definition" (Boehmer, 2005, 175-176).

According to Stephen Slemon, resistance theory has been defined by many but notable definitions are given by Barbara Harlow[i] and Selwyn Cudjoe[ii] in *Resistance Literature*, and *Resistance and Carribean Literature* respectively. He says, "For Cudjoe and Harlow, resistance is an act, or a set of acts, that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors, and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under the oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle" (qtd in Ashcroft et al. 1995, 107). According to Barbara Harlow, the term "resistance" was first brought in use by GhassanKanafani.[iii] In his work, *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine*, He described Palestinian literature as "resistance literature." He further said that while Palestine was struggling for liberation the literature in this particular time and space bears a special essence. And "because of the special character of [this] literature, it cannot be studied within the framework of classicism, romanticism or modernism; nor of ancient, medieval or modern; nor of popular and literary poetry, etc."(Harlow, 1987, 9).

A 'writer' as Caryl Phillips observes in an essay, "can infuse in a people with a sense of their own unique identity and spiritually kindle the fire of resistance" (Boehmer, 2005, 176). He may be counted among 'courageous resisters,' who voluntarily engage in the selfless behavior with a significantly high risk or cost to themselves or their associates, "Whether courageous resistance is the action of an individual, collective, or institution, it is conscious, voluntary, sustained, other-oriented behavior in a high-risk environment. Even though risks are high, courageous resisters elect to struggle for others' well-being . . ." (Thalhammer et al. 2007, 18). The writer in this condition imagines the world from his own point of view to help change the way the dominant ideology sees it and tries to 'wage a battle of mind' as Chinua Achebe calls it. "One of its charming miracles is that through its form, poetry can resist the content of authoritarian discourse" writes MouridBarghouti.[iv]

Barbara Harlow writes that "Resistance literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity . . . sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production" (Harlow, 1987, 29). Resistance poetry as a genre has proved to be important paraphernalia among others for the expression of resistance. It not only serves as a means for the expression of personal identity or nationalist sentiment but poetry, says Harlow, "as a part of cultural institutions and historical existence of a people, is itself an arena of struggle." Comparing poets with the guerilla leaders, she furthermore says, "The poets, like the guerilla leaders of the resistance movements, consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order" (Harlow, 1987, 33).

2. Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Resistance Poetry

The ideological matrix of Faiz's poetry is set by the changing status of Pakistan and its political apparatus. After the independence, violence and communal riots continued to wreck both India and Pakistan. The majorities in India and Pakistan began to attack their minorities which finally led to the mass migration, in which, more than 14 million migrated; more than a million were killed and countless other miseries were seen. Pakistan had to go through various problems regarding the governance. Many wanted Pakistan to be a modern state with democratic system while others strived for it to become an epitome of Islamic state. After the untimely death of

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, his Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan came forward as a supreme leader. In 1951, Major General Akbar Khan was in total opposition to the measures of Liaquat's government and decided to overthrow it but the plan did not materialize. Instead he was tried with many other officers and civil members. Liaquat Ali Khan is believed to be shot dead by a follower of Jamaat-e-Islami for advocating the Western form of government.

It is important to note that the poetic style of Faiz makes use of a unifying model in which politics and aesthetics portray the communal issues at one place.In his surroundings, the facts include the plight of general populace afflicted by unemployment, violent strategies of powerful, separation, wrong governance, and uncertainty among others. Depicting an ideology via radical poetry, in connection with left-wing politics, Faiz's poetry adds to other existing critical perspectives of common evils and acts as a definite agent to speak for oppressed individuals.

As it has been a tradition to incarcerate the Urdu poets, Faiz was no exception. In connection with the political poetry of Faiz, the questions arise about the role of poetry in politics; and the artistic value of this kind of poetry. Faiz's poems certainly have the potential to influence an individual which affects the whole society as it is effectually made up of individuals. Faiz writes:

One cannot isolate oneself from the rest of the world and be oblivious to the environment. Isolation, even if it is possible, is an unprofitable act because an individual ... is a very limited and ordinary being. The measure of one's depth is only to be found in one's emotional (and psychological) relationship with the human community, particularly those relationships that involve the sharing of pain and suffering. The sorrows of loving and the sorrows of living are different forms of the same expression. (Mir and Mir, 2006, 35)

It will not be an exaggeration to say that if people get a ray of hope, even for a moment, from poems, it is a matter of pride for the poet. "As a poet-thinker, he believed that art should never be divorced from social reality, and he adhered to this credo from his days as an active member of the Progressive Writers' Movement" (Kumar, 1995, xii).

After the successful revolution of Russia in 1917, the ideology of communism gained currency all over. It started influencing the mindset of young Indians who were fed up by the suppressive governance of British Empire. They found in it the peace, dignity and equality. This ideology swayed them completely and they began to imagine the communism as the perfect ideology for ruling the people. It was in 1935 when Faiz started showing interest towards Marxist thought. RasheedJahan provided the Manifesto to Faiz. It is considered to be an important milestone in his life. It was at this point that his ideology changed and he became the people's poet. On reading the Communist Manifesto, he expresses the metamorphosis of his thought by stating that the book had an immense influence: "it was as if a key to treasure was given to him" (Malik, 1994, 33; translation mine). After this recognition, Faiz started the journey outside his own self and identified himself with that of his surroundings to build a new society. To him, Marxism was not a dogma but a science which is improved upon day-by-day. He believed the things which can be proved wrong by experimentation should be revised instead of showing rigidity.

The poetry of Faiz had a peculiar kind of beauty since beginning but his contact with Progressive Writers' Movement had a different kind of effect on his verses as if a new life was injected in his voice. This adhesion with PWM was so apparent that the name of Faiz became synonymous with its creed. Earlier, Faiz would consider the pain of love as the only pain and fit subject for his poetry but it was with the advent of PWM that he began to consider the other serious pains around him. Accordingly, the verses of Faiz were in line with the creed of Progressives.

The Progressives fashioned a new poetic tradition, turning the conventional metaphors of *shama-parwaana* (flame-moth), *firaaq-visaal*(separation-union) and *husn-ishq*(beauty-love) on

their heads in the service of a new aesthetic of social change. Instead of writing ghazals about pining lovers, they penned popular poems to celebrate progress and modernity. Instead of elegies to Majnoon and Farhad, they composed dirges about martyred revolutionaries . . . (Mir and Mir, 2006, 21-22)

The effect of this thought was so immense that it put Faiz's poetry on the whole new orbit. Thus, the poet was compelled to address his beloved as:

> Love, do not ask for my old love again.
> Once I thought life, because you lived, a prize –
> The time's pains nothing, you alone were pain;
> . . . . . .
> Our age knows other torments than of love,
> And other raptures than a fond embrace.
> The dark curse of uncounted centuries,
> Inwowen with all their satins, silks, gold lace –
> Men's bodies sold in street and market-place,
> Bodies that caked grime fouls 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 wiped out;
> Not be wiped out, though your looks catch the heart still.
> . . . . . .
> Love, do not ask me for that love again. (Faiz, *Poems,* 1958, 22)

The poet earlier had believed that his beloved's mere existence was a great subject to think about. But with the advent of new world order, the poet is compelled to tell his beloved that there are various other crucial subjects that demand his attention. Love, to him, remains now a subsidiary issue. Regarding the poem, Agha Shahid Ali writes, "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 social commitment as more important than their love" (Ali, *Rebel's,* 1991, 3). The other problems of the world are more serious than the private love affair. As Gopi Chand Narang maintains "once the parameter of love changes form personal to social, and it is realised that Faiz is a poet with social consciousness, it becomes easy to multiply the obvious with the metaphorical. After such realization, effortlessly every figure of speech starts revolving round a socio-political axis in accordance with expectations" (Narang, 2015, 50).

There is a veil of poetic art over his progressive political ideas. Some would consider it as an imperfection but in fact it is the thing that lets his poetry universal appeal. Frederick Engels in a letter to Margaret Harkness says "The more the opinions of author remain hidden, the better for the work of art" (Engels, 2015, N.P.) So, this is true of Faiz's poetry too. Regarding Faiz's universality, Carlo Coppola remarks,

A spokesperson for the world's voiceless and suffering people – whether Indians oppressed by British in the '40s, freedom fighters in Africa, the Rosenbergs in cold-war America in the '50s, Vietnamese peasants fleeing American napalm in the '60s, or Palestinian children living in the refugee camps in the '70s – Faiz wrote painfully, stunningly, and compassionately of the human aspirations for freedom: a hallmark of his verse and, more than once, an excuse to refuse him entry into the United States. (qtd. in Ali xiii-xiv)

The Progressive Writers emphasized that good poetry should consist of simple diction even if a writer has to compromise on intricacy of art because it has to reach the masses. They used rhetoric and razor-sharp words but it was always in the view to support the cause of common people. Their credo was to believe realism as the basis of literature; taking part in freedom

struggle was considered immensely important for a writer; and to free society from the evil of superstition was its other objective. In the arena of Urdu Poetry, The Progressive Movement also thrived because it spoke of its time, its history and its politics. The anti-imperialist struggle, the Second World War, the trauma of Partition, the Telangana uprising, and the failure of the new nation to deliver on its promise of a better life for all citizens, all allowed these poets to speak in a voice that resonated with the aspirations of the people. (Mir and Mir, 2006, 10)

Basically, PWM was the movement of change. It wanted to bring in new vigour in age-old art but instead it was considered as a movement devoted to communism. In fact, all its advocates, including Faiz, had interest in communism. As a Marxist to the core, Faiz in a poem, "I Don't Know Why I'm So Unhappy," shows how he cares for the community as a whole. He identifies himself with the poor and oppressed class and says:

I don't know why I'm so unhappy
. . . . . .
And even if, darling, you could be mine
It would not make this world benign
And there'll be malice; there'll be spite
And cruelty in it will not decline.
We'll still have sorrow, we'll still have pain
. . . . . .
And no matter how much we moan and groan
We'll always have bondage; we'll always have chain.
But the pain of other can become our grief
. . . . . .
And if we all have right dreams
They can surely give us a little relief
And since there are people in commonwealth
Who make their money by using stealth
So instead of keeping it all to themselves
With us we can make them share their wealth
But for this to happen, we'll have to unite
And to get our share we'll have to fight
And one day when we have the power
Our rich, I'm sure, will see the light. (Faiz, *Wailing*, 2011, 20)

These lines are full of Marxist thought: it does not consider the mere presence of beloved to be end of problems; the pain of others needs to be felt by even those who don't have anything to worry about; the wealth needs to be shared among all to bring the economic stability in the society. In the same manner, poet expresses his inner most feeling for the oppressed in the following lines of the poem, "To My Rival":

Humility I've learnt, sympathy for the poor,
learnt the meaning of despair, suffering and pain;
learnt to comprehend the miseries of the oppressed,
the meaning of cold sighs, of pallid faces.
. . . . . .
whenever is traded in the market place the flesh of the labourer,
and on the highways flows the blood of the poor,
a sort of fire upsurges in my bosom
and I lose all hold over my heart. (Faiz, *Best*, 2001, 26)

The poet reveals that he has learnt the humility from the poor, who suffer in pain or go through miseries of oppression. The 'fire' that arises in poet's heart after seeing this gets transferred into the form of poetry that speaks against their oppressors.

Good poetry is possible only when, according to Faiz, ideology becomes a part of poetry and in fact when a poet becomes a part of his own being. He says, "Every poet has an ideology. Ideology is the lens through which a poet sees the world. I too have an ideology . . . but it doesn't mean that a poet should always talk about politics of ideology. . . I don't know of any artist, painter or musician who doesn't have any ideology or stance about his times" (Mirza, 2002, 82; translation mine). In his poetry, love and revolution are so mingled with each other that one cannot separate them. Faiz has revealed his own being in his poetry in such a way that accentuates the quality of unity in it. If we look at the oeuvre of Faiz, it becomes apparent that he had prepared an intelligent strategy for the expression of his influential poetry. Speaking of revolution, Faiz writes, "when there is a revolution in state every individual has to take part. Be it labourers, farmers, or intellectuals. After the Russian Revolution, its people have sacrificed a lot. They have fought wars, defeated Fascism and lived from hand to mouth" (Mirza, 2002, 371; translation mine).

It is important to note here that he wrote very little political poetry in his youth. Perhaps he was aware, consciously or unconsciously, that the extra radical and revolutionary poetry from a youngster tarnishes the art. His poetry evolved with the passage of time and attained a political status of its own. In the preface to *Dast e Saba (Fingers of the Wind),* which he wrote in Central Prison Hyderabad, he says that "the duty of the poet is not only to observe but to fight" (Faiz, *Nuskha,* 2013, 103; translation mine).Faiz was of the opinion that good poetry includes three orbits: first is poet's own being; second is of his society and nation; and third is of the whole humanity. His poetry passed from first and second orbit and culminated at third with marvellous dexterity. He talked about his own self, his nation and did not stop there – he painted the picture of oppressed humanity by talking about Africa, Iran, Palestine and other places.

When Faiz was asked about progressive poetry and non-progressive poetry, he replied: The basic difference between poets of Progressive Movement and others lies in the way a poet observes the history and the future of society. But it doesn't mean that there is an interdiction for Progressive poet to write about love (the earlier poetry of Faiz is romantic and so are his many poems in his later poetry) or to write on any other subject is proscribed. Progressive poet tries to be more realistic to present the actual state of the society. Every experiment is acceptable that also includes personal love. It includes dust, sunshine, moonlight, earth, sky, hunger, poverty, and almost all other things. (Mirza, 2002, 85; translation mine)

Similarly, at other place he maintains that "A revolutionary poet cannot be ordered to write just about revolutionary themes and not to write about his other experiences. A perfect revolutionary poet does not restrict his revolutionary ideology to mere revolutionary themes. To him, beauty, love, natural surroundings . . . are different faces of same reality" (Aqeel, 2011, 280; translation mine).

Faiz was full of enthusiasm when he met Pablo Neruda in Moscow. Regarding him, he says that "He [Neruda] is meek but so much enthusiastic and determined in case of revolution." Apart from Neruda he was very much interested in the poetry of Lorca, MakhdoomMohiud din and NazimHikmet. He says "they all were devoted to great historical fights" (Mirza, 2002, 545; translation mine). Faiz was also influenced by Russian poets and litterateurs. In addition to Communist Manifesto, he read Vladimir Mayakovsky with devotion. Faiz was much influenced by the movement of Progressive Writers. The movement was against every oppression and wanted to see an individual free in private and in public. The movement was fully aware of the advancements of freedom struggles and resistance measures against tyrannical forces. Among the writings of fellow authors of PWM, Faiz's diction and expressive strategy was far more

comforting and extensive than others. Regarding the Progressive Movement, Faiz writes that "it was a sort of realistic movement. Because previously during the classical period and the period afterwards, our poetry and our literature was very largely given up to legends and fanciful tales and romanticizing and poetry of largely linguistic gymnastics. During this period, a genuine lyrical political poetry was born" (Faiz, *Culture*, 2005, 9).

Many political poems of Faiz were so effective that people quickly identified themselves with the verses and it became the reason for his popularity. There are many other reasons for his popularity like he blended feelings and emotions in such a manner that one forgets about his political creed or ignores the political ideology and falls in love with the art. Good poetry is not made up of just feelings or form in isolation but it is the perfect combination of the two. In his art, Faiz proves, even if inadvertently, that if political ideology is ornamented by perfect diction, it can entice even those who are against politics.

In an interview, Faiz was asked about the role of an artist in politics and he replied:

The poet has two identities: one is of the common citizen who is accountable for many duties; and second is of the political responsibility. Political responsibility means that if there are any loopholes in the structure of politics, he has to eradicate them. And if there are good qualities in it, he has to enrich them. . . He should not limit his intellect to his own benefit only but should include all others.

The first duty of the poet is to write poems . . . and the second duty is to bring politics on the right track . . . he has to strive in one way or the other. It is not necessary that he joins the demonstrations but he must protest with his pen. He need not be a politician but he must be a man of politics. (Hussayn, 2011, 333-334; translation mine)

In this connection, the poem, "We Poets" delineates the role of a poet in society. It reads:

We were there – in every age, in every clime,
drinking poison, singing songs;
we kept sacrificing ourselves for life's sake –
. . . . . .
Whatever path we chose, we stuck to it
even while the affluent kept staring at us disdainfully,
reproachfully, rubbing their palms.
On them we hurled the stone of the word of truth
whose dread kept the world reeling.
And for those who'd none to shed tears over,
our eyes rained tears for their sorrow.
At the ruler's command, we went out of sight,
endured prisons, suffered flogging.
As people listened to the strains of our hearts' cries,
our songs kept filtering through the prison bars.
We are the blood-stained mirrors of this blood-stained world,
we are the sorrowful heart of anguished humankind.
A poet's temper is to battle against injustice and tyranny;
we are the arbiters of good and evil, right and wrong. (Faiz, *Best* 176)

The poet talks about his creed as a responsible citizen who has to endure the hardships for the betterment of others. The poet goes on to sing the songs of defiance, revolution, and resistance even if he is made to drink 'poison;' endure exile; suffer imprisonment and 'flogging.' No obstacle is big enough to stop him from this 'battle' of truth which he thinks will triumph eventually. In one of his prose pieces, Faiz discusses the concepts of art and propaganda. He writes:

Is propaganda the aim of literature? Yes, absolutely! . . . a writer has experienced a thing, he has felt a thing, he has thought of something and he wants you to experience the same thing; feel the same thing, and think the same. If this is not the propaganda that what is?! The difference between progressive literature and other kinds of literature does not lie in the fact that one is full of propaganda and the other is not. The only difference is that the former carries the beneficial propaganda and the latter has detrimental or useless propaganda. So, isn't there any difference between propaganda and literature? Why don't we call political speeches and journalistic stories literature? We don't call them literature because the artistic features of literature are missing in them. . ." (Faiz, *Adab, 2011*, 727; translation mine)

At another place he says, "In a sense all literature is propaganda . . . literature fails to be literature and becomes journalism or pure propaganda only when it lacks the additional aesthetic dimension required of all literature" (Faiz, *Culture*, 2005, 193). In spite of explicit propaganda, the poems of Faiz are so much appealing because of their strategy and uniqueness that one cannot help but admire his work. The poem, "The Slave" has an interesting appeal as it studies the existential being of pain, pleasure, and God:

Night comes down; the fountain inside
every pain is released. Morning arrives;
the stitches of every wound unravel.
. . . . . .
This is my declension, the chain of hours,
morning, noon, and night,
my miserable trudge from eternity to eternity.
Is it you, oh God of mine,
who have ordained this for me?
Is it You who have disinherited me
from every human pleasure?
Canon has that every torture has Your sanction;
every atrocity is Your commandment.
You, the Just One – should I denounce Your Judgment?
Can I accept this canon;
can I believe that You exist? (Faiz, *True* 117)

The poem ends with a question that was the basic one in the Faiz's life. This is the question that gave birth to the tussle between his spirit and politics. The ramifications of this situation were apparent in his life as well as in his art. Because according to poet, 'submission to tyrants' and 'being of God' are two opposites that are impossible at the same time.

To many critics, Faiz's revolutionary politics had its genesis in his revolutionary love – the love that encompasses not just humanity but the whole universe. This is the reason that one finds allusions to different personages and diverse lands in the poetry of Faiz. He includes many like NazimHikmet[v], Yasser Arafat, Iranian students, martyrs of Africa and Palestine. He not only sympathizes with them but allows them to become a part of his identity. He addresses Yasser Arafat, in the poem, "For the Palestinian Martyrs":

Wherever I go,
My beloved land,
The pain of your humiliation burns my heart.
But there are compensations:
Your dignity enhances mine,
Your love walks with me,
The fragrance of your citrus groves
Breathes through my mouth.

. . . . . .
Wherever I unfurl
The banner of my blood,
There flutters the flag of Palestine.
One Palestine has been destroyed
By my enemies
But my agony has given birth
To innumerable Palestines. (Faiz, *City*, 2006,162)

Faiz literally joined the Palestinian struggle in Beirut. Along with MuinBseiso[vi] and Mahmoud Darwish,[vii]Faiz composed various poems on Palestine. Yasser Arafat claims that just after the first meeting with Faiz, he felt that Faiz "had been among us all the time; had suffered all our troubles; and had been our partner in cultivating hope" (qtd. in Malik, 1994, 120; translation mine). Under the supervision of Yasser Arafat, Faiz was selected as the chief editor of the Afro-Asian Journal, *Lotus*. During this time, Faiz stayed in Beirut which was the headquarter of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).[viii] It was the base-camp from where Palestinians launched their liberation struggle. Faiz joined other freedom fighters and proved his mettle in print.

"Faiz never submitted himself to any form of tyranny – political, social or religious. His poetry exudes dissent, anger, at times even broiling wrath" (Kumar, 1995, xii). The ideology and actions of Faiz were always people-oriented and unsurprisingly rulers were never happy with him and even snatched away from him the pen and paper - the two tools through which suppressed can raise his voice and make his presence felt. In his remarkable poetic piece, he writes:

What if my pen and paper have been snatched away?
I've dipped my fingers in the heart's blood,
What if my lips are sealed?
I've lent my tongue to each link in the chain. (Faiz, *Best*, 2001,48)

The biographers of Faiz reveal the background of this piece at a time when he was incarcerated and the restrictions were so severe that even pen and paper were not allowed. As the poem "Love, Do Not Ask" was an important starting point of his first collection, so is this piece – a significant beginning of revolutionary poetry. Agha Shahid Ali acclaiming Faiz's creativity says, "Given Faiz's political commitments, particularly his Marxist understanding of history, audience may hastily assume that he was a poet of slogans. His genius lay in his ability to balance his politics with his (in some ways stringently traditional and often classical) aesthetics without compromising either" (qtd. in Zaidi, 2014, 114).

Faiz considered his land, Pakistan, as his Layla[ix] and spent all his life for its development. As Agha Shahid Ali asserts that "For example, the beloved – an archetypal figure in Urdu poetry – can mean friend, woman, God.Faiz not only tapped into these meanings but extended them to include the Revolution. . . Waiting for the Revolution can be as agonizing and intoxicating as waiting for one's lover" (Ali, 2015, 132). His daughter, Saleema says: "The more I read him, the more I get the impression that there is only one subject. That is politics. Perhaps I am biased. I am reminded of all the happenings that would strike his heart and the poems would come oozing out. And all these happening were mainly political" (qtd. in Malik, 1994, 68; translation mine). When freedom struggle against British Imperialism was at its peak, the idea of establishing a separate Pakistan became Faiz's beloved theme. He even brought radicalism in his poetry for its sake. Faiz's idea of Pakistan was based on freedom, justice, progression, and modernity. These ideas of him were in direct confrontation with those of corrupt rulers' ideology of capitalism. The war that Faiz started, with his poetry, is of great importance. This war of words was in

favour of his nation. To put a check on his revolutionary verses, Faiz was shown the door to prison but that had an adverse effect: his poetry became more intense:

> Just so, have I craved for my Laila, my land,
> my heart fluttered with the same longing;
> just so has passion sought fulfillment –
> . . . . . .
> Much has the priest roared from the pulpit,
> and much has the ruler thundered in the open court.
> Never did my enemies share the barb of abuse
> nor did my friends forsake their style of censure.
> I have no regrets over this love or that –
> my heart carries all the stains –
> except remorse. (Faiz, *Best*, 2001, 70)

This blending of the beloved with the country in this poem, "Two Loves," takes the well-known metaphors to new domains. This amalgamation of the personal and political is clearly obvious in the poem. "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 true: the loss of the beloved" (Ali, True, 2015, 135).

The poetry that Faiz wrote outside Pakistan shows thateven though his body was away from his nation but his heart and soul were always in Pakistan. He strived hard to look for remedies to the ailments of his nation. And when it became impossible to stay away from it, he came back only to find his beloved land a grim prison. Though his poetry could not provide the liberation but it became the resource that helped in achieving it. One cannot expect more from a poet. Faiz wrote numerous poems that guide towards a ray of hope in dark. He began the course of his poetry when the world had already seen the mass destruction by World War I and was waiting for another.

There has been a tradition of revolutionary writers in Urdu but Faiz is special because one can sense an outstanding combination of revolution and poetry. Almost all revolutionary poems of Faiz possess this blend of two entities. On their face, there is no apparent political theory but they are very much based on politics. On analyzing Faiz's oeuvre, one becomes aware of the fact that his art continues to be as appealing as his politics.It is due to this that Edward Said praises his creativity and compares him with Neruda and Yeats. He says:The crucial thing to understand about Faiz . . . is that like Garcia Marquez he was read and listened to both by the literary elite and by the masses. His major – indeed it is unique in any language – achievement was to have created a contrapuntal rhetoric and rhythm whereby he would use classical forms (*qasida*, *ghazal*, *masnavi*, *gita*) and transform them before his readers rather than break from the old forms . . . his purity and precision were astonishing, and you must imagine therefore a poet whose poetry combined the sensuousness of Yeats with the power of Neruda. (qtd. in Kumar, 1995, xviii)

He stays away from sloganeering and hysteria but the intensity to change the oppressive course remains intact. Hence, AnisurRahman is of the opinion that "His Marxist view of history, his association with Progressive Writers' Movement, Afro-Asian Writers Association, his exiles and imprisonments his whole life, so to say, do not make him a rebel just as W. B. Yeats is not a rebel in spite of all his commitment to the Irish cause" (Rahman, 2014, 25). He was a poet of fine class who could strike the balance with finesse.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

While some considered Faiz a poet who adhered to tradition, others see him as a poet who uses much of innovation. But a close analysis reveals that Faiz synthesized both convention and

innovation. The advocates of "art for art's sake" take literature as something like supernatural entity and believe that it cannot be understood under the defined social categories. But it is an established fact that humans are willy-nilly affected by their environment and they too shape the environment in turn. Faiz had already understood this fact. He instantly turned down the theory of "art for art's sake" and started his poetic journey to serve the ailing humanity. Being a poet, he was very much alive to his time and knew his duty as a responsible artist.

Resistance/revolutionary poetry articulates abhorrence of the enemy and records the agonies of tyranny; it, at the same time, eulogizes the dedicated bravery of people, their willingness to die for their nation. K. Satchidanandan in his essay, "Poetry Against Violence" quotes James Joyce's line "Squeeze us, we are olives," and then goes on to say that it means that "writers yield their best under oppressive environments. And it is the fact that various forms of oppression and tyranny have produced some of the most passionate poetic works of our time" (2009, 8). Faiz is a poet who designed his art to rid the people of its injustice and instill in them the strength to carry on. Clearly, he seeks to depict a vision of revolution and resistance from different angles.On the whole, his poetry portrays the sophisticated accounts of power, ideology, class, and representation.

Faiz himself remarks that "art gets its particular direction with the changing of circumstances. . . see for example the literature coming out of Palestine, how their poet Mahmoud Darwish captures and presents the conditions with his artistic ability. Same should be the case with the poets of other places" (Abidi, 2013, 262; translation mine). He not only wrote for his beloved Pakistan but took into consideration other oppressed places as well. This reading of Faiz's poems takes into consideration his political and social commitments and tries to locate his ideas in the political context of his time. Praising Faiz, Ali remarks that "a non-subcontinental audience . . . may begin to understand his stature as a poet *and* public figure by imagining a combination of Pablo Neruda, NazimHikmet, Octavio Paz, and the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish" (Ali *Rebel's*, 1991,1). Regarding Faiz's commitment to justice and solidarity, Yasser Arafat writes: "Faiz was not just an editor-in-chief of *Lotus* but he had made his mind to stay with us . . . wherever he was, the revolutionary activities would lure him towards it . . . and this time it was Palestine" (Arafat, 2011, 1328; translation mine).

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End Notes:

[i]Barbara Harlow is the Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Texas atAustin. She taught at the American University in Cairo, University College Galway, and University of Minnesota twin cities. Her publications include *Resistance Literature* (1987), *Barred: Women, Writing,and Political Detention* (1992), and *After Lives*: *Legacies of Revolutionary Writing* (1996), and co-edited *Imperialism and Orientalism: A Documentary Sourcebook and Archives of Empire: Vol. 1 andVol. 11*.Her *Resistance Literature* is of immense importance in the field.

[ii]Selwyn R. Cudjoe is a professor of Africana Studies. He is an expert on Carribean literature and Carribean intellectual history on which he has produced several documentaries.

[iii]GhassanKanafani was a Palestinian writer, critic and a leading member of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He was assassinated by a car bomb in Beirut.

[iv]Barghouti is a Palestinian poet who has published numerous volumes of poetry. He has been a PLO representative in the World Federation of Democratic Youth and a cultural attaché.

[v]Known as Romantic Revolutionary of Turkey, he was a poet, novelist, and dramatist. He was often incarcerated for his political ideas and spent much of his life in exile and prison. His poetry and plays have been translated into more than fifty languages. "The revolutionary poet NazimHikmet was sentenced to twenty-eight years in prison 'on the grounds that the military cadets were reading his poems'" (Rich 19).

[vi]MuinBseiso was a famous poet of Palestine living in Egypt. He received the *Lotus* prize for literature and has been widely translated.

[vii]The most famous and critically acclaimed poet of Palestine. He was awarded the prestigious Lannan Foundation Prize, Lenin Peace Prize and Lotus Prize. Edward Said defines Darwish as "a brilliant poet – certainly the most gifted of his generation in the Arab world. . . his immense prestige as a poet made him politically invaluable…" (Said 112).

[viii] Because of popular pressure and in an attempt to contain the turbulence and escalating general frustration with Arab nationalist regimes, the Palestine Liberation Organization was established in 1964. The resistance groups like PLO marked arrival of new historical force on the political scene of the world. This organization believed that the Palestinian people could not wait for the Arab regimes to liberate Palestine and therefore, the Palestinians should begin to initiate military action against the Israeli state all by themselves. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is "recognized by over 100 nations and of course by *all* Palestinians, as the sole legitimate representative . . . and yet neither the United States nor Israel concedes that the PLO represents Palestinians" (Said, *Question* 25).

[ix]The beloved of Majnoon (Qais). The tale of their legendary love occupies a permanent place in literature like that of Romeo and Juliet. The story is said to have originated in ancient Arabia. For further reading, see book *The Fire of Love: The love Story of Layla and Majnoon*by GanjaviNizami. trans. Louis Rogers.