

**Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

**<https://llrjournal.com/index.php/11>**

**Hope and Disillusionment: The Paradox of Poetry of Revolution in  
Pakistan**



**Muhammad Usman Shahzad**

MPhil English, Riphah Institute of Language and Literature,  
Riphah International University Islamabad, Pakistan  
Email: usmanshahzad1444@gmail.com

**Maria Arshid**

MS English Literature, Department of English, University of  
Sialkot, Pakistan Email: mariaashad123@gmail.com

**Muhammad Bilal Ashraf**

MPhil, English Literature, GIFT University, Pakistan  
Email: bilalabbasi1992.ba92@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to explore the link between poetry and possibilities of revolution in Pakistan. Hope and disillusionment are two dominant features of the poetry of revolution. There is a strong hope and desire for a revolutionary change and at the same time there is an element of disillusionment with aesthetics. Firstly, the researcher tends to analyze the nature of this hope and form of revolution expected by these poets. Secondly, the purpose is to decipher the elements of disillusionment. The poets actually seem disillusioned with other poets and artists who are not playing their role that aesthetics can play for radical change in the society. Literature plays a vital role in paving a path for revolution as the poets and artists played a pivotal role during the 'Pakistan Movement', but unfortunately, according to the contemporary poetry, the poets and artists have been unable to play an honest role to make people resist against the exploiting forces. This is the reason, the poets who wrote about revolution in Pakistan have displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the possibility of revolution. Poetry by Habib Jalib and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, have been focused for this purpose. The researcher has also linked these poets with the tradition of poetry of revolution that existed before the creation of Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Aesthetics, Paradox, Disillusionment, Ambivalence, Exploitation, Revolution

**Introduction**

Literature is deeply imbedded in socio-political conditions of its time and reflects and comments on political events happening around it. Pakistani literature is also no difference and has a history of resistance against the oppression of political regimes. Among other genres of literature, poetry stands out as a metaphor of change and revolution. This is why there are a number of poets who emerged whose poetry carries the theme of revolution. Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Habib Jalib are the oft quoted names when poetry of revolution is discussed in Pakistan. They are the canonical poets as far as the question of poetry of resistance and revolution is concerned. In this paper, the researcher seeks to question the concept of revolution put forth by the poets. Although the dream of revolution is recurrent in their poetry but they are also disillusioned and dejected. This paradox of poetry of revolution is hardly mentioned by the researchers and scholars. In this paper, the researcher has tried to establish the nature of revolution, being expected by these poets, through the in depth analyses of this poetry. A thorough examination of the famous poems has shown that the idea of revolution is more vague and abstract than concrete and subtle. The hope being expressed seems to be a hope against hope rather than a tangible and accessible reality. Secondly, there is an obvious disillusionment with the other poets and writers. So, the dishonesty of the scholars is far greater reason than the dishonesty of the politicians that revolution seems impossible in Pakistani society. So, the purpose of this research paper is identify this paradox of poetry revolution. The idiom of this poetry is also of a special focus of this paper. Revolution is for masses and for moving the masses, suitable idiom is very important. The paper shows that how far they have

been successful in addressing the masses in a style that could be easily comprehended by the masses.

### **Relationship of Literature and Revolution**

Literature being a reflection of life, comments on the social and political condition of its time. The history of literature reflects that during the times of political instability, colonization or dictatorship, writers and poets not only criticized the authoritative regimes but also urged the people to raise their voice and fight against such forces. Literature under oppression always motivates people for radical change and revolution. All the revolutions of the world were greatly inspired and motivated by the poets and writers. Voltaire, Rousseau were among those who inspired the French people to overthrow monarchy and get their fundamental rights and freedom. Similarly, Tolstoy, Gorky, Plekhanov and Dostoyevsky were the real instigators behind Russian Revolution. Every revolution has its roots deeper into its literature. In each part of the world where people got freedom and emancipated themselves, have their poets and writers who commented, criticized and presented a road map for the people to stand and fight. Pakistan is also such a country where poets and writers have been vocal against the oppressors. There are two generations of poets who wrote for change and revolution in Pakistan. First generation of these poets belong to pre partition era and they wrote against the colonial powers while the second generation of poets wrote against dictatorship after partition. So, Pakistan has a legacy of poetry that carries the message of mass awakening, change and revolution. There is no doubt poets and writers played a vital role in instilling spirit of freedom among the masses and moved them for struggle. Moving people against colonizers and Hindu oppressors was relatively an easy task as the enemy was well defined but raising voice against our political regimes and system demand a lot of courage and boldness which the poets did show and faced its consequences too. Shibli, Abul Kalam Azad, and Iqbal infused a spirit of resistance against the British colonizers. Poetry Published in 'Zameendar', 'Alhail' and 'Comrade' was really inspiring and motivating. Poetry of revolution has made people think and motivate them to stand against those forces which usurp their rights.

Revolutionary poetry had been a medium of expression of a number of famous poets. Their poetry made people THINK, raised their hope and motivated them to stand against the imperialism & other humiliating systems. By the value of their thought provoking poetry, these poets live in the hearts of people. Their literary efforts are still applauded and remembered.

### **Pakistani Poetry and Possibility of Revolution**

It is pertinent to explore how Pakistani poetry views the possibility of revolution in Pakistan. Though, after the creation of Pakistan, Pakistanis had got a country where they could live freely, but their problems were never over. They got freedom from the colonial rulers but the common people caught into another situation where freedom of speech and action was prohibited. It was even worse than the colonial era as the oppressors were our very own. Martial Law administration right after the creation of Pakistan made it difficult for the writers and poets especially the progressive ones to express themselves freely. This was a reason that the language of these poets was more symbolic and metaphoric than being direct and colloquial. Apart from the dictatorship, there were many other issues faced by the people of Pakistan. Hence,

there hopes and dreams were not realized because that was not the Pakistan imagined by Quid-e-Azam and other leaders of Pakistan movement. People had to face the corrupt beurocracy, feudalism, religious extremism and dictatorship all at the same time. They usurped the freedom of expression and the writers who were talking about their rights were prosecuted and jailed. These oppressing strategies and persecutions could not stop the poets to comment of the ongoing situation in the country. The poetry became more symbolic and metaphoric but did have an element of resistance. The Following analyses of the poetry by Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib shows, how they have imagined the face of revolution in Pakistan.

### **Faiz and Revolution**

#### **Faiz as a Poet**

Faiz is undoubtedly a pure artist and poet. His poetry is truly romantic as it reflects all the traits of romanticism. Although his style is classical yet his treatment, imagery, tone and attitude is romantic. Sensitivity, sensuousness, desire for change and social consciousness of his poetry make him a true romantic. English romantics and Romantic Movement were inspired by the French writers and French revolution, similarly Progressive movement and poets like Faiz were inspired by the Russian progressive writers and Russian Revolution. His poetry clearly reflects, as he is generally associated with leftist political thoughts, the spirit of socialist and Marxist revolution of Russia. Though all English romantics were not revolutionary, Faiz is generally hailed as a voice of resistance and revolution not only in Pakistan but also around the world. His poetry is an example of relationship of aesthetics and politics and clearly reflects his ideology and political bent of mind. He is famous among the literary circles as a poet of revolution and mostly known for his struggle that he did against dictatorship. He was an active member of progressive writers association, so his poetry cannot be separated from his political thoughts. His popularity owes a great deal to his daring tone of resistance and revolution

Faiz has received a variety of criticism as many critics call him a revolutionary, the other perceive him as a romantic and quite a few call him a romantic realist or romantic revolutionary. Before discussing these views, it is pertinent to discuss the relationship of art and politics. There are few questions to be raised for maintaining some parameters to gauge the validity of poetry to be called a poetry of revolution. What part is played by language in the poetry of resistance? Does poetry of revolution demand some different idiom? Should ideology be preferred to the artistic demands of poetry? Can the traditional method of analyses and criticism be applied to the poetry of revolution? Is romantic idiom suitable for the poetry of resistance and revolution? How far Faiz's poetry associate itself with the masses? Should an artist compromise the aesthetics of poetry for reaching out masses? The answer of these questions will help in making some conclusion about the nature and function of poetry of revolution.

#### **Analyses of Faiz's Poetry**

Faiz's poetry as mentioned earlier has a romantic idiom and thus makes itself aesthetically appealing but complex. He uses traditional symbols and metaphors but gives them new meaning. This is his success and failure at the same time; success as an artist and aesthetes but failure as a poet of revolution. Revolution is for masses and it demands a kind style that links the poet with masses but unfortunately Faiz's style was not meant for the masses. Rasheed Hassan Khan in his essay 'Certain Aspects of

Faiz's Poetry' says, 'Faiz's romantic bent of mind hinders him being a revolutionary' (Hassan, 110). Actually, it was his own choice as he believes that an artist should not compromise on the aesthetic side of poetry. For him art is even more important than the subject matter and themes of the poetry; they are secondary for him. Doctor Anwar Pasha quotes Faiz 'Creation of art is not only an aesthetic experience but it is useful as well....anything that makes our life beautiful, adds aesthetic pleasure and colors, makes us human, does our catharses, and enlighten our spirit and mind is beautiful. Any subject like laborers, Farmers or peace without aesthetic beautify can no way be called progressive' (Pasha, 19). So it can be seen that for Faiz Aesthetic beauty was more important for him than his subject. It becomes obvious that why his poetry has a romantic idiom. Pasha also states that 'Faiz's poetry is a blend of romance and realism' which in itself is a paradoxical statement. Here it is important to mention that every form of poetry has its own aesthetics. Poetry of revolution has its own standards of aesthetics and it must be analyzed on those parameters. If those aesthetics are not available then they must be produced for the creation of a more subtle poetry. But this criticism does not lessen Faiz's stature as a poet. His sensitivity, romance and artistic depth is acknowledged by the critics. Doctor Kausar Mazhari acknowledges the artistic beauty of Faiz's poetry with these words, 'Faiz's poetry more a representative of senses and emotions than representing particular thought and philosophy' (Mazhari, 27).

Coming back to his revolutionary poems, it can be easily observed that he is oscillating between two extremes; his romantic self, which he naturally is, and his revolutionary self which he has to become for being a part of progressive movement. His famous Ghazals and poems mostly begin with romantic imagery and end with the thoughts of revolution, resistance and change. Sometime they seem superimposed and does not match with rest of the poem. Rasheed Hassan explains this element with the following words, 'Faiz's poetry lacks unification of thoughts because he is lurking between romance, which is a very part of his personality, and his political affiliations' (Hassan, 112). His famous poem 'Mujh Say Pehli See Muhabbat Mere Mehboob na Mang', the start of the poem is highly metaphoric, he is addressing to his beloved, although the tone is melancholic but the pangs of love have been camouflaged in romantic imagery. The whole poem is metaphoric and symbolic and Faiz is giving hints of his pain but the two lines where he has openly talked about the bodies being 'bloody' 'mutilated' seem to be quite different from rest of the poem.

"Jabaja biktay huye Koocha o bazar men jism"

Khak men kuthray huye khoon men nahaye huye' (Faiz, 54)

If we talk about disillusionment, 'Mere Nadeem' is a poem where similarity between Iqbal and Faiz can be observed. He is mourning the loss of knowledge, passion, dream, beauty and hope. He is disillusioned with other poets that they are unable to play their active role for the well-being of his beloved land. 'Yas' is another poem, where he is lamenting and seems to be disillusioned and say that light of hope is out now because thought and actions have gone from the society. 'Intzar' is another poem where he is waiting for something to happen. Idiom of these poems is romantic and poetry is highly sensuous. Faiz here seems to have escape in 'Mey' aur 'Jaam'. He is never very outspoken but in chunks. 'Sarod e Shabana' is a complaint about silence and stillness. He can't see anything around. 'Do jahan teri Muhabbat men har k' is another poem of lament and escape. 'Soch' is a poem that carries the message of struggle and revolution. Here Faiz is talking about socialism and wants that happiness

should be shared otherwise there could be a bloody revolution. He does have a hope of change and revolution but again he is very soft spoken and says everything with a romantic idiom.

‘we believe that war is terrible

It will mash heads and spill blood’ (Faiz, 52)

The use color red is frequent, traditionally it is associated with love and passion but he has used it as a symbol of revolution and change. He loves ‘red’ and portrays it through different images. ‘Raqeeb’ (The Rival) is a very strong poem where Faiz is addressing to the oppressing forces. He talks about the losses that nation has born. He has also talked about the marginalized and oppressed classes of the society in a quite direct manners but it is very rare. Like all other poems it comes in the end.

‘jab kabhi bikta hay bazar men mazdoor ka gosht

Shahrahon pe ghareebon ka lahoo bahta hay

Aag see seenay men reh reh k ubalti hay na pooch

Apnay dil pe mujhay kaboo he nahen rahta’ (Faiz, 62)

This last staza is free from his other most of the poems, its diction is quite in contrast to other construction. Sibte-Hassan has rightly been quoted by Shamim Hanfi in his essay, ‘Faiz is not in habit of being loud and vocal, he speaks softly through symbols’ (Hanfi, 4). ‘Kuch Ishaq Kiya Kuch kaam kiya’ is also suggestive of problem of Faiz’s poetry; he is divided between his political association and his poetic self. Doctor Wazir Agha in ‘Traqi Pasand Adab’ mentions that ‘Faiz’s Poetry has glimps of romantic rebel but he is never a pure revolutionary’ (Agha, 73). Baqar Mahdi in his Essay, ‘Faiz aik Tajzia’ also have the same views that ‘even during the prime era of progressive movement, Faiz remained a romantic poet.... He could never cross the boundary line between love and revolution’ (Mahdi, 213). ‘Chand Roz aur meri Jaan’ is another poem where he is hoping for changing asking his beloved/his fellow people whom he loves a lot that these days of oppression are going to be over soon. There are numerous other examples that could be quoted from his poetry but the pattern of his poetry is very clear. He is a romantic who is yearning and dreaming a revolution but either is finds escape or gets disillusioned. He lacks conviction and directness which is necessary for a writer who writes for revolution. He has not clearly portrayed what sort of revolution he is imagining. His diction is quite contrasting to his political ideology and it is because he was a true romantic who had to write about other things but by being limited to his own style without compromising to his own aesthetic theory.

### **Jalab as a Poet**

Habib Jalib is also one of those poets who need no introduction rather he stands head and shoulder above as far as public love is concerned. He has been given the title of ‘Awami Shair’, the poet of masses and undoubtedly he is a poet of masses because he is one of them, speaks for them, speaks with them and speaks like them. His rustic and colloquial idiom, his directness, outspokenness, undoubtedness, truthfulness and revolutionary spirit made him the most famous public figure among the poets and artists in Pakistan. Sibte- Hassan in his essay ‘Sacha Awami Shair’ says ‘He always represented the pains, oppression and pangs of masses in their language’ (Hassan, 37). Although critics often criticized him for his use of language but this very fact has made him a more successful poet of revolution than his contemporaries. It is not his flaw rather his quality that he has opted a style that suits the masses and understood

by the masses because revolution is always brought by the masses and if an artist is not speaking to them or they cannot understand them, revolution always remains a far cry for the people. Critics rejected Jalib's poetry in the beginning as Nazir Akbar Abadi was not accepted by the critics earlier. Intzar Hussain calls Habib Jalib the second Nazir Akbar Abadi whose poetry was discarded as a street poetry. This so called weakness became Jalib's biggest success as he was hailed as their hero by the masses. He got tremendous fame and love around the country. Jalib began to write when progressive writer movement was not in full swing, but he alone stood against the dictators and oppressors and never showed any weakness or regret. It is quite ironic he was criticized by the member of his own movement. A question rises here that why Jalib had adopted a style that was unartistic and unaesthetic? Was he unaware of the criticism? Or he was unable to produce traditional poetry with symbols and metaphors? The answer is no. As an artist he is not less than any of his contemporaries. He did so, because he understood well the aesthetics of revolutionary literature which must be in the idiom of common masses so that they could understand it and move themselves to bring change and revolution. Ataulhaq Qasmi, quite ironically, gives his comments on Jalib's directness in poetry and says, 'Jalib has never hidden himself behind the screen of symbols nor he ever has used metaphors to hide his point of view' (Qasmi, 15). He was not compromising; neither on his ideology nor on artistic impulse. Qasmi in his essay 'Jalib ki Infradiyat' further says 'Whatever Jalib Says, he says in manner of day to day talk and pierce into the heart and spirit of common man' (Qasmi, 11)

### **Jalib as a Revolutionary**

There is hardly any voice that could surpass Jalib in his emphatic style of revolutionary poetry. Even a lay man could understand his revolutionary poetry and be motivated for anything. His great attachment with the masses and his popularity among the masses had cost him a lot of atrocities but he never stopped from speaking truth. This quality makes him a true revolutionary poet. Anwar Sadeed in one of his essays states that Jalib 'has no hollow slogans like other Progressives'. He is a true revolutionary. (Sadeed, 25). He is true revolutionary and always motivated the masses. He has become a metaphor of courage and resistance in the history of Pakistani literature. Zahida Hina in 'yeh Ishaq Nahen Asan' states that he loved masses and 'he was keeping his promise of sharing their pangs' (Hina, 29). He is a poet of laborers and farmers and speaks against the oppressors, land owners and mill owners. He directly hits the system of government and never hesitates. Shahid Shaidai talking about the courage and determination of Jalib says, 'He always speaks truth and calls a spade a spade and represents the emotions of the masses... he encouraged the marginalized strata of society' (Shaidai, 51)

There is not much ambiguity about Jalib's craft and his being outspoken and blunt on the issues like freedom of speech, oppression and rights of marginalized groups. Although there is clarity in his poetry and has high hopes about the future of nation, yet he seems disillusioned with other poets and writers as he thinks that they are not playing their true role and making the revolution and change in Pakistan impossible. In most of this poem this element is prominent. In majority of his poems, he addresses to the poets and writers and asks them to be firm as they have sold themselves on the hands of oppressors. In his poem, 'Such he Likhtay jana', he clearly advises the poets, to his own self, that they should be true and honest. They

should write truth quite realistically without any fear. ‘Sad Shukar’ is a single verse but it carries a recurrent theme of his poetry that is his disillusionment with poets and writers. During the dictatorship, poets and writers get opportunities for earning wealth and that’s why compromise their conscience but Jalib is strongly against such act.

‘Halqa e sitam k bagooshon men hum nahen’

Sad shukar k zameer faroshon men hum nahen’ (Jalib, 247)

‘Farangi ka jo men darban hota’ is a satire on those poets who serve in the power corridors. They get wealth and fame. Dastoor is the most anthologized poem. It is relevant to every age when people are under sanctions and there is no freedom of speech and action. It is a poem that directly expresses his resentment for the law which binds his freedom. His ghazal ‘Hajoo ko daikh k rasta nahen badaltay hum’ is example of his outspoken idiom. He seems determined to fight against the dictatorship but he is complaining about his contemporaries who have changed themselves with the change of power. There are numerous poems by Jalib which reflect his hope for change and revolution. He seems disillusioned with other artists who are not raising their voice for change and rights of the masses. This is paradoxical but at the same time poets like Jalib has rightfully expressed that why revolution have not been a possibility in Pakistan. The poets, fiction writer, artists have not played a role of true and brave stake holders. There are examples of revolution around the world which were made possible by the true, honest and dedicated writers which according to Jalib lack in Pakistan. But he is not disappointed and keeps speaking for the masses and hope to see the day when the light of freedom will emerge one day. This is why his response is ambivalent about the possibility of revolution in Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

The research in hand shows that both Jalib and Faiz wrote during the time of great oppression and targeted those forces which made the lives of the people miserable. Both have their own paradoxes but still their voices echo through ages. Faiz, though a romantic, does speak for his beloved in land in his own style. Jalib also has hope of revolution expresses it in a very open, direct and emphatic style but has his reservations too. He is a true revolutionary poet who becomes the voice of his nation in general and masses in particular.

### **Works Cited**

- Ahmad, Aziz. “Traqi Pasand Adab”. Idara e Ishaq-e-Urdu. Haidar Abad Dakan. March. 1945. <https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks>
- Faiz, Ahmad Faiz. “Nuskha Haye Wafa”. Pub. Educational Publishing House. Dehli. 6. 1989
- Hanfi, Shamim, “Faiz ki Syasi Baseerat”. Mahnama ‘Aj kal’. Edit. Dr. Abrar Rehmani. ADG Publication Division. New Dehli. Feb.2011.
- Hassan, Rasheed. “Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Ahwal-o-Afkar”. Mahnama ‘Aj kal’. Edit. Dr. Abrar Rehmani. ADG Publication Division. New Dehli. Feb.2011.
- Hussain, Intzar. “Aj ka Nazir Akbar Abadi”. Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli. <https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks>
- Hina, Zahida. “Yeh Ishaq Nahen Asan”. Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli.



## **Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

**Print ISSN: 3006-5887**

**Online ISSN: 3006-5895**

- Hassan, Sibte. "Jalib Aik Sacha Awami Shair". Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli
- Jalib, Habib. "Kulyat-e-Habib Jalib". Mawra Publishers. Lahore. 1993.
- Mehdi, Baqar. "Faiz, Aik Tajziya". Mahnama 'Aj kal'. Edit. Dr. Abrar Rehmani. ADG Publication Division. New Dehli. Feb.2011.
- Mazhari, Kausar. "Faiz Gul Rang Tmasal Ka Shair". Mahnama 'Aj kal'. Edit. Dr. Abrar Rehmani. ADG Publication Division. New Dehli. Feb.2011.
- Qasmi, Ahmad Nadeem. "Jalib ki Infradiyat". Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli
- Pasha, Anwar. "Traqi Psandi Jamliat aur Faiz ka Shairi Imtiaz". Mahnama 'Aj kal'. Edit. Dr. Abrar Rehmani. ADG Publication Division. New Dehli. Feb.2011.  
<https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks>
- Sadeed, Anwar. "Inqlabi Hakeekat ki aik Misal; Jalib". Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli
- Shaidai, Shahid. "Roba Roo". Almi Urdu Adab; Jalib Number. Vol. 9. Edit. Nand Kishor Vikrim.1994. J Krishan Nagar new Dehli.