

Universality of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Faiz Ahmed Faiz Ideological Art: A Comparative Study

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Abstract – *This paper is based on the comparative study of the two revolutionary poets of their own times, PB Shelley (1792–1822) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984). These two poets belonged different social, political and cultural contexts. However, both the poets revolted against all sorts of anarchy, tyranny and misrule, for the creation of a new world, where equality and peace would prevail, and oppression, exploitation and war would disappear forever. They covered an area of remarkable width and variety in literature. The present paper focuses on Shelley and Faiz’s universality of art and humanitarian approach. Copyright © 2016 Penerbit Akademia Baru - All rights reserved.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Art is significant to people. It has always been so from the earliest human societies. Art adds colour to a colorless world. It gives a light of hope and optimism to lives without meaning. Art in all its forms makes us lift up our eyes, if only for a transitory moment, above the tedious everyday existence, and enables us to feel that there is something more to life than this, that we can improve ourselves than we are, that human beings can act much better than they are, that the world could become more peaceful and civilized than it is [3]. Hence, art is the aggregate dream for humankind, the outflow of a profound feeling that our lives are not what they should be, and an enthusiastic, if unconscious, endeavoring for something different. Therefore, Marx cited in [1] considered art as universal and claimed that every writer is the product of his age and art, therefore, should be studied in social, political and cultural background of an artist.

Poetry is an important art which has been used by centuries by the poets to express their feelings and thoughts. Different poets deal with different themes in their poetry. Some poets are worshippers of romance and beauty [2]. While others write poetry for revolutionary purposes. Revolutionary poets are of the opinion that the prior condition for the advancement of humankind is the battle for the socialist change of society on a world scale. And poets, artists and writers can play a vital role in this struggle [10].

PB Shelley and Faiz Ahmed Faiz are two revolutionary poets of their own times. They both have written their poetry for the cause of the betterment of all human beings. This paper seeks to investigate universality of their ideological art in their poetry.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 About PB Shelley

PB Shelley, the son of the British Parliamentarian Sir Timothy Shelley, was born on August 4, 1792, five years after the end of the American Revolution and three years after the start of the French Revolution, into a noble family involved in political undertakings. His teenage was spent in times of turmoil and various changes, as the French Revolution was spreading in its full swing, with the Napoleonic wars, all through the Continental Europe [14].

Different studies have been conducted on Shelley with different themes. For instance, Miller [12] has analyzed Shelley's earlier novels with respect to his later poetry. Shelley's practicability of love has been studied by [15] whereby he claimed that Shelley's idealism and skepticism dragged him to the practicability of love and passion. Scrivener [18] has studied the spirit of reform in Shelleys writings.

Kurtz [9] has explained the development of the theme of death in Shelley's writings. He described that this development of the theme of death in his writings was the result of his French revolution and its drastic effects, even then, Shelley was able to hide the ugliness of death by the beauty of life.

Shelley's thoughts on science and religion are discussed by Weaver [21]. He has described that many of Shelley's thoughts in his literary writings are parallel to Christ's teachings. Hence Shelley can be regarded as a religious teacher.

Stovall [19] pointed out the effectiveness of Shelley's philosophical ideas. He asserts that Shelley was indeed a vigorous teacher and an advocate for institutional reform.

Thus majority of the critics agree that there is a rational and scholarly concept of reform underlying Shelley's most subtle fancies.

2.2 About Faiz

Faiz Ahmad Faiz was born in the jatt family line on 13th February 1911, in Kala Qader (Faiz Nagar), District Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan [16]. Faiz acclaimed from an academic family that was well known in literary circles. His home was often the scene of a gathering of local poets and writers who met to promote the literacy effort in his aborigine province (Official website of Faiz, 2016). His father Sultan Muhammad Khan was a barrister [16]. Faiz was the first Asian poet to receive the Lenin peace Award by the Soviet government in 1962. He was also nominated four times for the Nobel prize for literature [7].

Different studies have been conducted on Faiz with different themes. For instance, Nasir [13] in Ham Jitay Ji Masroof Rahay (Enough Time There Never Was) gives adequate knowledge about the socio-political connection in which the greater part of the political lyrics of Faiz are composed. Explaining the ideological centrality of the blend of the political and the lyrical Dr Muhammad Arif Hussain [6] in "Faiz Ahmad Faiz: Romaan aur Shairi (Faiz Ahmad Faiz: Romance and Poetry)" expounds that Faiz utilized sexual symbolism to substantiate his sentimental vision of the primitive phase of humankind. Faiz, similar to Marxist scholars, trusts that the most primitive phase of man was basically a communist period. Faiz, in his romantic approach in art, was tremendously impacted by the English artists of the mid nineteenth century. Romantic perspective of life considers culture, society, ethical values and state as restraints on the liberty of man. They prevent him from the satisfaction of his yearnings and

aspirations. Faiz romanticizes a pre- bourgeois, pre-medieval phase of human culture and society. Moreover, the romantic people trust that the magnificence of the universe is represented in human especially female body. Dr. Arif expounds that Faiz was obviously a romantic poet yet his sentiment did not bring about insensibility or departure from the shameful substances of life. The author goes ahead to say that the best temperances of man are his sense of pride, poise and liberty which he delighted during the primitive time. Since the formation of society, state and bourgeois society, man is being denied his magnificence and flexibility. Romantic symbolism customarily indicates common purity, innocence, liberty and glory of man. The utilization of romantic symbolism by Faiz summons past perfect world of equity, concordance and freedom against the current oppressed world of injustice.

Based on the past studies on both Shelley and Faiz, this paper seeks to investigate the universality of the ideological art of these two revolutionary poets. The paper also explores the similarities and differences in their ideological poetry based on the biographical and cultural differences of these two poets.

2.3 Universality of Shelley's Ideological art

Shelley believes in the universality of literature. For him, any writer or poet is a reflection of his age. Therefore, Shelley did not restrict himself to the cause for the abused in his own nation only. He was a staunch believer of universal love. Shelley was internationalist in his ideological responsibilities. He commends truth and rejects dishonesty in any form. The poet regards the qualities of resistance and change against authoritative order transcending all racial and social predispositions. He conveyed the voice of his conscience, with determination over the issues of overall political advantage. His prose works "*An address to the Irish people*", "*A declaration of rights*" and "*Statemen Boast of wealth*" demonstrate the universality of his own philosophical and artistic vision. These works were composed in 1812 for the betterment of the Irish lower classes who were suffering from poverty due to the British rule in Ireland in 1812. In "*An address to the Irish people*", Shelley strongly condemns the British government for mistreating the Irish people. He says,

"I have said that the rich command and the poor obey, and that money is only a kind of sign which shows that according to government the rich man has a right to command the poor man" [22].

Though Shelley himself was a Britisher but he strongly resisted against injustices of the British government against Ireland which shows the universality of his ideological art. In his prose work, "*Statemen boast of wealth*" he explains the miseries of the Irish people suffering due to the British rule in Ireland, in the following words,

"The poor (Irish) are set to labour for what? Not the food they famish; not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels; not those comforts of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage-oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of hundredth part of society" [22].

Similarly, in "*A declaration of rights*" the poet claims that all human beings in any part of the world are equal and should have equal democratic rights. He says,

"Man, whatever be his country, has the same rights in one place as another, the rights of universal citizenship" [22].

2.4 Universality of Faiz's Ideological Art

Likewise Shelley, Faiz believes that literature is universal and every writer or poet is the product of his age. Every writer can bring about positive changes, anywhere, in any society during his lifetime, with the help of his pen. Therefore, Faiz never limited himself to the cause for the abused in his country only. He believed in love for all humanity. Faiz was a humanitarian in ideological responsibilities. He praises truth and condemns deception in any form. The poet respects the strengths of resistance and change against authoritative order rising above all racial and social biases. Regardless of his ideological duties Faiz kept on putting stock in autonomy of art. Estelle Dryland [4] in Faiz Ahmad Faiz –Urdu Poet of Social Realism says that Faiz did not subscribe to any official equation about innovative art. Not at all like numerous scholars of his age who were plainly utilizing art to spread Leninist approach, Faiz guarded art against its vulgarization of structure coming about because of the dictates of Soviet-supported communist policy. Moreover, he was persuaded of the significance of the cultural effect upon art to improve its allure. Conceding his philosophy to the literary, social and religious conventions, Faiz showed cultural reaction against general persecution.

He imparted the voice of his ethics, with determination over the issues of overall political advantage. His poem "Ham Jo Tareek Rahon Me Maray Gae" (An Elegy for the Rosenbergs) demonstrates the inclusiveness of his own philosophical and artistic vision. The poem was composed in 1954 and it applauds the sufferings of an American Scientist who was born in Germany. These researchers were captured for sharing data about the American Nuclear Energy system to the Soviet Union. The administration of US blamed these researchers under the charge for treason. This poem of Faiz spotlights on the moral part of the researchers, the endeavor to share an innovation outside the space of USA. The poet raises the issue whether it is a wrongdoing to share a creation or disclosure of the basic human advantage with someone outside the national limits. Truth be told, the trial of American Scientists happened amid a period when against Soviet feelings were at its top in America. In the 1950s, influenced by the threatening hostile to Soviet arrangement of the American Senator McCarthy, most of the US locals, including academic individuals were under total supervision against any kind of proclivity for the socialistic cause on the place that is known for US. Faiz while paying tribute to the sacrifice of the American scientists, portrays them as the promoters of the entire humankind, whose affliction will keep on inspiring the purveyors of trust, hope and truth. The poet says:

“But from the spot where we fell
Others will set out, carrying our banner
For we have shortened their journey
Softened the pain they would have suffered
Made the world of gift of our love
We who fell by the wayside”.

(tr. Khalid Hasan, 2006, p. 194)

Conveying his international vision Faiz states:

“As a poet or artist, even though I run no state and command no power, I am entitled ...that I am my brother’s keeper and my brother is the whole of mankind.” (In Adeeb Khalid, n.d, p. 264).

In his poem, “Falasteeni Shohda Jo Pardais Me Kam Ai” (For the Palestinian Martyrs), Faiz directly admires the sacrifices of the Palestinian freedom-fighters who have received martyrdom during resistance against the occupying Israeli forces. The title of the poem itself suggests Faiz’s direct approach towards appreciating the Palestinian fighters. The sacrifice of a single freedom-fighter gives birth to many other Palestinian freedom-fighters. The poet says:

One Palestine has been destroyed

By my enemies

But my agony has given birth to innumerable Palestines

(tr. Daud Kamal, 2006, p. 162)

In another poem “Aik Naghma Karbala-e-Beirut Kay Liay” (The Massacre of Beirut), Faiz directly commemorates the beauty of Beirut and the valiant courage of Labanese against Israeli occupation. In this poem also, the title directly refers to Beirut. He says:

Every single destroyed house, every single ruin

Is more magnificent than the legendary palace of Dara.

Every single fighter is more valiant than Alexander.

Every single girl is more alluring Lyla.

(tr. Daud Kamal, 2006, p. 160)

To add to it in the poem “Ajao Mere Africa” (Africa Come Back), Faiz anticipates the rising African resistance movement against French imperialism. This poem also directly refers to Africans. He affirms that the Africans have started to shake the shackles of foreign bondage. It is interesting to note that in this poem the poet also makes use of hidden transcripts such as drum-beats and the dances which symbolize emergence of armed resistance against foreign occupation. The poet says:

“I have caught the madness of your drum

My wild blood beats and throbs with it

Come Africa come

Come back for I have lifted my forehead from the dust;

Come back for I have stripped away the bark of sorrow from My eyes;

Come back for I have shaken away my pain.”

(tr. Khalid Hassan, 2006, p. 254)

“Come back” is a straight forward clarion call to the pre-imperial Africa of drum beats and marshall dances.

2.5 Universality of Shelley and Faiz’s Ideological art (A comparison).

Both Shelley and Faiz believe in the universality of art. It is due to this reason that both the poets did not confine themselves to the cause of the oppressed in their own respective homelands. Shelley has clearly indicated his universality of art in his support for the poor and oppressed Irish people suffering under the British rule in 1812. In “An address to the Irish people”, “A declaration of rights” and Statemen Boast Wealth”, Shelley strongly supported the Irish people and motivated them to raise their voice against injustices. Similarly, Faiz, though a Muslim, supported the struggle of American scientist in his poem “Ham Jo Tareek Rahon Me Maray Gae” (An Elegy for the Rosenbergs) who were arrested for sharing information about the American Nuclear Energy programme to the Soviet Union. In another poem, “Irani Talaba kay Naam” (For the Iranian Students), Faiz explained the sacrifice of the Iranian students and payed tribute to them for embracing martyrdom for the sake of liberty and national independence against France and Britain.

Apart from the similarities in the universality of their art, there lies a slight difference between the approach of these two poets. Shelley is more outright in his expression than Faiz. There are two major reasons behind this fact. Firstly, Shelley lived in England (Western culture), where the culture, society does not take part in the individual’s life [20]. On the other hand, Faiz lived in Pakistan (Eastern culture), where the society, plays a major role in the individual’s life [17]. Therefore, individuals, particularly the writers, poets and intellectuals are too conscious to express their feelings and are not as direct in their expression as compared to the western writers [11].

Moreover, Pakistan had been under the influence of two military takeovers during Faiz’s time. The writers and the poets were not allowed to speak or write against the military or higher authorities. Therefore, the writers, poets and individuals adopted hidden means to express their agony and anger over the false state apparatuses of their time. These hidden means were adopted in the form of symbols, metaphors and imagery of various kinds.

Another reason of Shelley’s direct expression is the biographical factor. Shelley was an aristocrat. He was the son of a parliamentarian named Sir Timothy Shelley. On the other hand, Faiz was the son of a retired barrister. Therefore, Shelley criticized all sorts of injustices in a direct way. He pointed out the names of the tyrants fearlessly. without covering them in a sheath of general words.

Both Shelley and Faiz were dedicated and brave supporters of liberty, a political stance that immediately bloomed into a wild anti militarism: their contempt of war was one of the strengths that pushed them into poetry.

However, when Shelley was composing poetry against the Napoleonic wars during his early age, he could not control his anger and criticizes the statemen in a direct manner, in his poem Queen Mab,

“War is the statesman's game, the priests delight,

The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade" [22].

His first and characterizing political campaign was about Irish religious and political liberty - and it is here where the revelation of Poetical Essay is generally applicable. Shelley distributed it in backing of Peter Finnerty, the Irish writer imprisoned for defaming Viscount Castlereagh, the Anglo-Irish politician who was sent to Ireland in 1797 to pound the United Irishmen opposing British tenet. Castlereagh's ruthlessness made him the most abhorred man in Ireland. Shelley was a proclaimed admirer of the United Irishmen, and the occasions and identities of the 1798 defiance were pivotal to his political and scholarly advancement. His tolerating scorn for Castlereagh was venomously communicated in his poem, "the Mask of Anarchy":

"I met murder on the way -

He had a mask like Castlereagh -

Very smooth he looked, yet grim;

Seven bloodhounds followed him" [22].

The use of the words "murder", "bloodhounds" clearly show Shelley's out righteousness towards his ideological art. He also directly points out the name "Castlereagh" which indicates his direct approach in criticizing the tyrant.

On the other hand, Faiz's expression is mild and indirect. Though he is against tyranny and oppression, but he hides it in different expressions. For instance, in his poem "Not enough" the expresses his grief and hatred against tyranny and war in the following words,

"the tear stained eye, the storm tossed life,

Come today in fetters to the market place,

Walk with waving hands, run in a drunkard's dance,

Clothes besmeared with blood and head begrimed with dust!" [8].

The use of the phrases such as "waving hands", "drunkard dance" clearly indicate Faiz's hidden ideas regarding his grief over the weak state apparatuses of his time. The line, "Clothes besmeared with blood and head begrimed with dust!" indicate that Faiz does not want the oppressed class to be oppressed by the hegemonic class. Even though oppressed class was not allowed to speak against the hegemonic class in his time, he encouraged the people to come out with "fetters", blood stained clothes and heads "begrimed with dust" to resist against tyranny and oppression, since their fetters, blood clothes and dusty heads will show their deplorable condition even if they were banned to speak for their rights. however, unlike Shelley, who directly mentions the names of the tyrant, Faiz is seen to be indirect, thus pointing out the sufferings of the common people due to the cruel state apparatuses of his time.

3.0 CONCLUSION

PB Shelley and Faiz Ahmed Faiz have written poetry for the general benefit of all. Though belonging to different social, political and cultural contexts, both the poets share common feelings of revolution and removal of tyranny and oppression. Both are humanitarian in their artistic commitments. They wrote poetry to make the world at large, a better place for the

downtrodden. The remarkable thing about Shelley and Faiz is that in spite of their overwhelming revolutionary ideas, they never allowed ideological epiphany to bound their art to their own national boundaries. They believed in internationalism of art; a quality lacked by many revolutionary poets of their time. Their art is universal and everlasting— for two centuries in case of Shelley and Faiz, for nearly half a century. Both the poets inimitably articulated the suffering of the people, the agony of dispossession and exile.

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