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It seems like eternity since Afghanistan became synonym to conflict. Not a day passes when we do not hear of bombs, bullets and blood. State and non-state actors both have put their best efforts to turn this beautiful land into graveyard. Now since, Osama bin laden has been eliminated, one would have imagined (or we were made to imagine) that peace will prevail. But bombs continue to explode. Bullets fires continue to tear apart human bodies. Blood is spilled all over the country. Amidst all this, Afghans mourn, pray for peace. Let us join them. One such Afghan is Partaw Naderi. Here are a few poems from Partaw Naderi :

The Bloody Epitaph

This palm tree has no hope of spring
This palm tree blossoms
with a hundred wounds
the daily wounds of a thousand tragedies
the nightly wounds of a thousand calamities
This palm tree is a bloody epitaph
at the crossroads of the century

◆

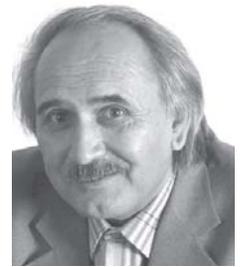
Here, by the river,
a river of blood and tears -
the roots of this palm tree
are congealed with disaster
are knotted with the blind roots of time

◆

Here, the sky
unwinds its bloody cloth
from barren red clouds
to shroud the shattered lid of a coffin
a broken mirror of rain
This palm tree has no hope of spring

◆

This palm tree has no hope of spring
This palm tree is starred
with a hundred bruises



Partaw Naderi

from the whip of the north wind
My palm!
My only tree!
My spring!
Many years have passed
since the bird of blossoms
flew away from your desiccated branches
Butterflies abandon you
My heart is broken

Earth

The earth opens her warm arms
to embrace me
The earth is my mother
She understands the sorrow
of my wandering
My wandering
is an old crow
that conquers
the very top of an aspen
a thousand times a day
Perhaps life is a crow
that each dawn
dips its blackened beak
in the holy well of the sun
Perhaps life is a crow
that takes flight with Satan's wings
Perhaps life is Satan himself
awakening a wicked man to murder
Perhaps life is the grief-stricken earth
who has opened up her bloodied arms to me
And here I give thanks
on the brink of 'victory'

The Mirror

The Mirror
I have spent a lifetime in the mirrors of exile
busy absorbing my reflection
Listen -
I come from the unending conflicts of wisdom
I have grasped the meaning of nothingness

Relative

I know the language of the mirror -
its perplexities and mine
spring from one race
our roots can be traced

I Still Have Time

It's well past midnight
I should get up to pray
The mirrors of my honesty
have long been filmed with dust
I should get up
I still have time
My hands can yet discern
a jug of water from a jug of wine
as time's wheeled chariot
hurtles down the slope of my life
Perhaps tomorrow
the poisonous arrows aimed at me
will hunt down my eyes
two speckled birds startled into flight
Perhaps tomorrow
my children
will grow old
awaiting my return

Beauty

Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village
whose tall and graceful frame
is known to the pine trees on the mountains
Your voice is like a girl
who, at dusk,
will bathe in the clear springs of heaven
beneath the parasol of the moon
who, at dawn,
bears home a jar of pure light
who will drink sip by sip
from the river of the sun
Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village
who wears an anklet
forged from the songs of a brook
who wears an earring
spun from the whispering rain
who wears a necklace
woven from the silk of a waterfall
all of which grace the garden of the sun
with their many-coloured blossoms of love -
and you
are as beautiful as your voice.

Noam Chomsky : My reaction to Osama Bin Laden's Death

We might ask ourselves how we would be reacting if Iraqi commandos landed at George W. Bush's compound, assassinated him, and dumped his body in the Atlantic.

Noam Chomsky

It's increasingly clear that the operation was a planned assassination, multiply violating elementary norms of international law. There appears to have been no attempt to apprehend the unarmed victim, as presumably could have been done by 80 commandos facing virtually no opposition—except, they claim, from his wife, who lunged towards them. In societies that profess some respect for law, suspects are apprehended and brought to fair trial. I stress “suspects.” In April 2002, the head of the FBI, Robert Mueller, informed the press that after the most intensive investigation in history, the FBI could say no more than that it “believed” that the plot was hatched in Afghanistan, though implemented in the UAE and Germany. What they only believed in April 2002, they obviously didn't know 8 months earlier, when Washington dismissed tentative offers by the Taliban (how serious, we do not know, because they were instantly dismissed) to extradite bin Laden if they were presented with evidence—which, as we soon learned, Washington didn't have. Thus Obama was simply lying when he said, in his White House statement, that “we quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Al Qaeda.”

Nothing serious has been provided since. There is much talk of Bin Laden's “confession,” but that is rather like my confession that I won the Boston Marathon. He boasted of what he regarded as a great achievement.

There is also much media discussion of Washington's anger that Pakistan didn't turn over Bin Laden, though surely elements of the military and security forces were aware of his presence in Abbottabad. Less is said about Pakistani anger that the U.S. invaded their territory to carry out a political assassination. Anti-American fervor is already very high in Pakistan, and these events are likely to exacerbate it. The decision to dump the body at sea is already,

predictably, provoking both anger and skepticism in much of the Muslim world.

It's like naming our murder weapons after victims of our crimes: Apache, Tomahawk... It's as if the Luftwaffe were to call its fighter planes “Jew” and “Gypsy.”

We might ask ourselves how we would be reacting if Iraqi commandos landed at George W. Bush's compound, assassinated him, and dumped his body in the Atlantic. Uncontroversially, his crimes vastly exceed Bin Laden's, and he is not a “suspect” but uncontroversially the “decider” who gave the orders to commit the “supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole” (quoting the Nuremberg Tribunal) for which Nazi criminals were hanged: the hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of refugees, destruction of much of the country, the bitter sectarian conflict that has now spread to the rest of the region.

There's more to say about [Cuban airline bomber Orlando] Bosch, who just died peacefully in Florida, including reference to the “Bush doctrine” that societies that harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves and should be treated accordingly. No one seemed to notice that Bush was calling for invasion and destruction of the U.S. and murder of its criminal president.

Same with the name, Operation Geronimo. The imperial mentality is so profound, throughout western society, that no one can perceive that they are glorifying Bin Laden by identifying him with courageous resistance against genocidal invaders. It's like naming our murder weapons after victims of our crimes: Apache, Tomahawk... It's as if the Luftwaffe were to call its fighter planes “Jew” and “Gypsy.”

There is much more to say, but even the most obvious and elementary facts should provide us with a good deal to think about.

The Poet of Romance and Revolution

Sohail Hashmi

If you met him on the street you would never imagine that he was a poet, and not your run of the mill poet, but among the most important poets of the 20th century, not only in Urdu, not only in the subcontinent but in the entire world of the 20th century. I have always wondered how could someone who invariably dressed in rather unimpressively stitched, unromantic terrycot Safari suits, someone who could at best pass off as a joint secretary in the ministry of shipping or something similar, be such a wizard with words and not only with words but with content and with form?

The answer to this question lies perhaps in the linguistic cultural traditions that Faiz had inherited, the extent to which Faiz was able to build upon, deepen and add to this inheritance through his own reading and through the insightful guidance of his teachers like Maulvi Mohammad Sialkoti, Shams-ul-Ulema Syed Mir Hasan, Professor Yusuf Salim Chishti, Ahmad Shah 'Pitras' Bukhari, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa 'Tabassum', Maulvi Mohammad Shafi, Dr Mohammad Deen Taseer, Maulana Abdul Majid Salik, Maulana Chiragh Hasan 'Hasrat' and Pandit Hari Chand 'Akhtar'.

In fact the tradition goes back into the past, a few centuries if not more and it may not be a bad idea to trace the tradition upon which Faiz meticulously built the grand imposing and dare I say everlasting edifice of his poetic discourse.

Over the last three centuries Urdu has produced one great poet every 100 years or so, the 18th century was the century of Meer, the 19th belonged to Ghalib and the 20th was the century of Faiz. Whether this trend will continue in the present century, though, seems a little doubtful.

There have naturally been many other significant poets in these three hundred years but and this is a big but, there have not been too many aside from these three that have created a new discourse in poetics.

Meer was to use the metaphor of the broken, shattered, distraught heart to describe

both his own personal loss as also the pillage and destruction of Delhi, an adopted city that he came to love and hold dear, not only physically but also metaphorically. The deserted streets and empty houses became symbols of the passing away of a lifestyle and an aesthetic urbane milieu.

Ghalib was to infuse the Ghazal with a depth and a multilayerity that the form had not hitherto seen. Ghalib also contributed significantly to freeing the Ghazal from the constricting grip of a cold heartless beloved, a successful rival and the perpetually unsuccessful lover-the poet-drowning himself in wine or wallowing in masochistic self pity.

There were others before him, Wali Daccani and Meer Taqi Meer to name just two, who too contributed to this broadening of the horizons of the Ghazal. What Ghalib did was to introduce content that had, by and large, not been explored by versifiers. Ghalib raised fundamental questions of existence and being, raised doubts about received world views and established that the Ghazal was capable of tackling complex ideas. The imagery of Ghalib's poetry drew as much from his immediate surroundings and the rich cultural heritage of South Asia, Central Asia that had in turn drawn from the myths of ancient Greece and Egypt, tales and fables that also resonated in the Torah, the Bible and the Quraan.

He lived in strange times, an order was dying and the new was yet to replace it, Ghalib was a witness to these cataclysmic times. The rapid collapse of the Mughal court led to the replacement of a system of patronage with unending uncertainty and penury. The revolt took away with it the last vestiges of an order that India had known and the ruthless crushing of the uprising led to an era of unprecedented changes whose impact was to inform the creation of literature in a fundamental and far reaching manner.

The rhythm and organization of life, its ethos and aesthetics, the system of patronage, everything that gave a sense of continuity to life of the period was changing, mutating and getting transformed. Ghalib, like many of his

contemporaries, was deeply shaken by these events and suffered the consequences of this upheaval.

It is in times such as these that questions began to be raised about the capacity of the Ghazal to encapsulate these rapid changes and express them in a substantial and comprehensible manner. Ghalib was among those who tried to address this question and was to say[1] :

The range of the Ghazal is inadequate – I need a larger canvass for my expression[2]

Questions began to be raised about received ideas and accepted world views, new forms of expression began to be explored, prose made its mark, Urdu Journalism began to come into its own and both verse and prose began to engage with this ever changing world. Creatively this was among the most fertile periods for Urdu and for many other Indian languages.

The Ghazal, even as it was being challenged, began to explore newer areas of expression and non Ghazal verse like the Marsia (the elegy) the Masnavi (long narrative poems) had begun to make their mark. This is also the time when poets began to move out of the traditional themes of poetry writing and poetry as political commentary became increasingly acceptable, this trend received a big fillip with the publication of the Musaddas by Khwaja Altaf Husain 'Hali'

The process of social comment in poetry had gradually been gathering steam for a while, Jafar Zatali's street-wise satire about corrupt and debauch nobility in the miniscule reign of Farrukh Seyar (1713-1719) and Nazeer (1735-1830) Akbarabadi's long poems about Poverty, Hunger, old age, old prostitutes and eunuchs and about all kinds of artisans, street performers and the like had begun to lay the ground for a new poetic and literary discourse. Jafar had to pay with his life for heaping scorn on Farrukh Seyar, he was executed on the orders of the king in 1713 and Nazeer was virtually ignored till the late nineteenth century and had to wait till the 1950s to get his due.

The devastation that was visited upon Delhi, Lucknow and vast areas of India in the aftermath of 1857 led, on the one hand to a sense of hopelessness and constant harking back to a glorious past and on the other hand to a seething anger against the British and their collaborators. The former was to trigger to several

reformist movements while the latter fed the growing anti imperialist mood, leading to mass mobilizations and also to the creation of the poetry and prose of protest. These two streams, mass protest and the writings of protest and for change, inhabited a by and large common space. Many practitioners of one also indulged in the other, many activists were writers and many writers were activists.

Both the reformists and the anti imperialists used the written word, prose and verse to communicate their ideas and despite a handful of, largely ignored, dissenters the debate between art for art sake versus art for life's sake was settled in favour of art for life's sake rather quickly.

Ghalib died in extreme penury in 1869 and Faiz published his first collection in 1941. Many new trends in poetics, that had begun to emerge in the time of Ghalib, had developed rapidly during the intervening 70 years.

The rapid decay of the Mughal empire and its vestiges, the replacement of the traditional patterns of patronage, the large scale collapse of traditional crafts, the increasing destitution of large sections of population was leading to a glorification of the past and at another to a search for alternatives to these devastating changes and to calls for Indians to take their fate into their own hands and to recapture the past glory of India. Echoes of these sentiments were to be heard in Hali and later in Iqbal and so the question that Ghalib had raised with reference to need of a larger canvass was answered through the emergence of the Nazm, in the main through the writing of Iqbal.

Iqbal's contribution to the evolution of the Nazm is substantial and if there is one poet who can claim a place among the greats along with Meer, Ghalib and Faiz it can only be Iqbal. It is perhaps his engagement with the ideas of Khudi (being, self, ego) and Pan Islamism, ideas that did not have too many takers among the intellectuals of the 20th century and therefore despite impressing a large number of those that appreciated him, Iqbal fails to leave behind a continuing tradition.

Though Iqbal does not leave behind a school of poetry that was to carry forward his ideas, the vehicle of the nazm, that he chose as the medium for propagating his ideas, left a lasting impact and the Nazm was, in the early

decades of the 20th century, put to effective use by a very large number of poets writing against colonial depredation and using the Nazm to mobilize public opinion.

Despite these developments, the Ghazal did not yield ground easily; in fact for a while the upholders of 'tradition' strongly resisted this new onslaught, initially of metred and later of the unmetred Nazm. The Nazm did not replace the Ghazal fully; in fact till much later there were not too many poets who took to this new form to the total exclusion of the Ghazal. Even Iqbal, who can rightly claim credit for firmly establishing the Nazm, continues to use the Ghazal for political comment, for instance :

Race, Nationalism, Church (religion) and colour

How cleverly have the masters created these illusions[3]

The time that Faiz appears on the poetic scene with his first slim collection of poetry in 1941 is the time when the entire subcontinent is in ferment, Faiz is already recognized as a powerful new voice, he has met Dr. Rashid Jahan, Mohammad Deen Taseer, Syed Sajjad Zaheer and in 1936 becomes one of the founders of the All India Progressive writers' Association (AIPWA) or PWA as it popularly came to be known.

The time when Faiz becomes secretary of the PWA in Punjab he was only 25 Mohammad Deen Taseer was 39 and both Sajjad Zaheer and Rashid Jahan were 37. Obviously this young man had built a reputation even at this young age, for compared to him these three were seasoned campaigners.

Rashid Jahan and Sajjad Zaheer along with Ahmad Ali and Mahmud-uz-Zafar had contributed to *Angarey (Ambers)* a collection of short stories that had triggered a storm among the conservatives, because the stories attacked the oppression of women in the name of religion, they attacked superstition and feudalism. *Angarey* was banned in 1933 by the colonial government, because the book "hurt the religious sentiments of a particular community".

It was the banning of the book that eventually lead to the formation of the PWA, an organization committed to oppose Imperialism, Fascism, feudalism and to work for the spread of progressive ideas through literature and to fight for an end to exploitation of man by man.

Incidentally Mohammad Deen Taseer Married a British Leftist Christabel and Faiz was to later marry Alys, the younger sister of Christabel. The recently assassinated Governor of Punjab in Pakistan was the son of Mohammad Deen Taseer and Christabel and a nephew of Alys and Faiz.

The PWA held its first conference in Lucknow, presided over by Munshi Prem Chand in 1936 and Faiz became the secretary of PWA Punjab in the same year.

The PWA and Faiz with it, represented a continuation of a tradition that was rooted in the people centric poetry of Nazeer, a tradition that, like Meer, saw personal tragedies and sufferings as part of a larger social loss, a tradition that had from the time of Ghalib, begun to move away consciously from hackneyed themes in poetry and had begun to imbue poetry with meaning, to engage itself with complex thoughts and ideas and to question and reject the ossified moribund and inane discourse of 'conversations with the beloved' that the Ghazal had been reduced to, a tradition that had roots in the reformist zeal of Hali and his contemporaries and most significantly a tradition that was inspired by the struggle against imperialism and oppression going back to the 1857 revolt of the peasants and the sepoys. The poetic and literary tradition that Faiz and his comrades upheld was also a tradition that had as its precursors the literary campaigners for change like Iqbal.

Faiz like many of his contemporaries had the advantage of drawing from the traditional cultural resources and scholarship of the Persian and Arabic, literature. Faiz incidentally had done his masters in both Arabic and English literature, Arabic Persian and Urdu he had begun to study from early childhood.

Faiz's father Sultan Mohammad Khan had begun life as a shepherd who was paid to look after the animals of the village for rupees 2 a month. The young shepherd had a thirst for knowledge and education that saw him overcoming almost impossible odds to rise to the position of the chief secretary of Abdul Rehman Khan, the then king of Afghanistan, being appointed the Ambassador of Afghanistan in Britain, studying Law in London, becoming a barrister and returning to Sialkot to practice and being decorated with the title of Khan Bahadur. When Khan Bahadur Sultan Mohammad Khan died he was under a colossal

debt and his children had to sell off most of his property to pay off the debts.

So Faiz had seen it all, growing up in plenty, losing it all in his early youth and then to gradually rebuild his life. Along the way he taught edited literary Journals, served as war correspondent, edited Pakistan Times and Imroz, worked actively in Trade Unions, arrested on charges of Conspiracy, spent years in Jail, more years in exile, awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, edited Lotus from Beirut, even as the city was bombed and throughout this tumultuous life, he continued to write, 7 volumes of Poetry, and almost as many in prose, including critical essays, memoirs, articles on a diverse range of issues and much more.

In the short speech that Faiz made while accepting the Lenin Peace Prize, Faiz was to say, *I do not find anything in my writing or my conduct that qualifies me for this great Award, the only reason that I can think of is the fact the great ideals that I and my friends have been associated with, that is the desire for peace and freedom, are ideals that are so grand and beautiful that even those associated with them, even though peripherally, acquire respectability.*[4]

He concluded the speech with these words :

I am confident that humanity that has never accepted defeat at the hands of its enemies will once again emerge victorious and finally the foundations of our mutual existence will be built not on war, hate, oppression and acrimony but something that had been pointed out by the Persian poet Hafiz a long time ago.

Faulted are the foundations of all that I have seen.

But for the foundation of Love that alone is without fault. [5]

His remarks about his being undeserving of the Lenin Peace Prize and his confidence in the ultimate victory of the human spirit are things that define Faiz, he was humble and this humility was not an act, it was not put on, all those who were with him in jail for four years and more, have in their writings and recollections talked about his gentle and undemanding nature. He was gentle and mild-mannered and yet firm and steadfast in his commitment; his poetry drew strength from these two constituents of his being. Joan Baez, one of the most popular singers of

the Anti Vietnam War campaign in the US used to sing a song that was titled "What have They Done to the Rain" and before she sang the song she once said, this is a very powerful song, because it protests gently, what she was probably suggesting was the fact that if you stand with just causes, with truth, you do not have to shout from roof tops, your conviction in justice and truthfulness shines through even without unnecessary aggression. Faiz was like that and so was his poetry.

Faiz was soft spoken, genial, affable, and polite to a fault, spoke little, and rarely got into arguments, what he had to say, he said through his pen, more powerfully in verse and more like a tolerant teacher in his prose. The sole source of the adulation that he received and also the brickbats, the persecution, the imprisonment was his writing. Left to himself he would not hurt a fly, he was probably afraid of Lizards. That is the idea one gets from recollections of those who were with him in prison and yet his poetry talks of revolution, of snatching crowns, toppling thrones, of uncontrollable rivers in spate. His poem, 'Beware of My Being' on *Bangla Desh* speaks in the tongue of the oppressed, warning all oppressors to steer clear, '*beware, for I am an ocean of Venom*'[6].

The poem is also a testimony to the courage of Faiz, to write such a poem at a time when *Bangla Desh* was being born, at a time when the establishment in Pakistan and many others besides, saw the East Pakistanis as people who had betrayed the cause of Islam. To stand with those who rebelled against oppression and to speak on their behalf called for exemplary courage.

Where did such a soft spoken man, such a harmless looking soul, draw the strength for verses such as these?

In the stray interviews and conversations that Faiz had with his friends and his prison mates he fondly remembers all his teachers and in beginning almost all of his collections with a couplet from one of the masters like Ghalib, Saadi, Sauda, Meer, Iqbal, Hafiz and Bedil he underlines his debt to his literary inheritance.

Many of his teachers that he was close to, were drawn towards the progressive movement, the impact of the Socialist revolution in Russia had stirred up the colonized people all over the world. The rise of Fascism was seen as a threat

to all freedom loving people and the formation of the PWA must have come as a catalytic force that gave a purpose and direction to Faiz's writing.

The solid grounding in the classical languages and the opportunity to be a favourite pupil of some of the finest minds in Lahore of the 30s, his exposure to, and deep interest in, English and western literature generally and progressive literature particularly provided him a larger canvass. He, more than many of his contemporaries, was able to draw profitably from these diverse resources and the result was visible from his early writings.

Languages, cultures, the arts – painting, music, poetry and prose- flourish in times of flux, in times of great upheavals and turmoil, for it is in times such as these that cross pollination of ideas, of content and form takes place at an unprecedented scale. The formative years of Faiz, the years when he was growing up were times of great flux. There was the ever growing upsurge of popular resistance to colonial oppression, when Jalianwallah Bagh Massacre took place, Faiz was barely 8 but when Bhagat Singh was hanged Faiz was 20.

These were epochal times and Faiz was drawn to the ideals of Freedom, equality and Socialism. Faiz was attracted to these ideas like so many others including Raghupati Sahay 'Firaq' Gorakhpuri, Shabbir Hasan Khan 'Josh' Malihabadi, Asrar ul Haq "Majaz", Moin Ahsan Jazbi, Jan Nisar Akhtar, Ali Sardar Jafri, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Kaifi Azmi and others were drawn to and influenced by these events and developments.

So aside from his inheritance and his own addition to this inheritance and what he imbibed from his teachers, the two other elements that had a defining influence on Faiz and his poetry were, firstly the all encompassing sentiment for freedom, no one could escape the subterranean simmering that threatened to explode any moment, and did from time to time and secondly the growing influence of Marxism and the fight against Fascism that intellectuals, poets, writers, artists, filmmakers and others were joining in large numbers all over the world. Behind this upsurge was of course the ideal of building an equitable and just order and to stand with the soviet people who formed the vanguard against Fascism.

All these elements combined in the writing of Faiz to give it a unique colour. His vocabulary, his symbols, his similes were rooted deeply in the traditional diction of Urdu, even when he coined new expressions, he drew from the large traditional reservoir that he had at his disposal and the cadence did not sound alien to the listener.

Writing about the poetry of Majaz, Faiz had once said, 'what distinguishes Majaz from other progressive writers is the fact that he sings of the beauty of the revolution..... he is not a drummer boy for the revolution'. This comment aptly describes almost all of Faiz's poetry as well.

While talking about his own understanding of the place of literature and the role of the writer he was to say "To be aware of the collective struggle of Humanity and to participate in this struggle to the best of one's ability, is a demand that life places upon us, literature too places the same demand upon us..... Art is a constituent of this life and the creative struggle is one aspect of this (wider) struggle."[7]

What is unique in the writing of Faiz is his grasp of both the Ghazal and the Nazm. Faiz was equally dexterous in both forms, many of his contemporaries tried their hand at both forms but some were known as poets of the Ghazal and others were poets of the Nazm, but Faiz is equally at ease in both forms.

Major Mohammad Is'haaq, Faiz and some other accused in the Rawalpindi conspiracy case were kept in the Montgomery Central Jail, Sajjad Zaheer was sent to the Central Jail Machh in Baluchistan while Captain Poshni and Ata Mohammad were despatched to the Central Jail Hyderabad. Major Is'haaq used to mail Faiz's latest writings to the other accused in different jails. Sajjad Zaheer wrote to Major Is'haaq about 'Unrequited Love', a Ghazal of Faiz that he had received a few days earlier. The letter has been reproduced by Major Is'haaq in The Prison Chronicle[8]

"This Ghazal that you call Wasokht is a fine work, each Sher is like a scalpel, each one deserves praise and appreciation especially

If we worried about our wounds, we were accused

Of not singing paeans to the artistry of the sword wielder[9]

Say nothing of Ja'afar Ali Khan 'Asar', Faiz

would have received appreciation for this, even from Mirza Nausha (Ghalib)."

Jafar Ali Khan 'Asar' Lakhnawi, one of the finest critics of Urdu literature, especially of progressive Urdu literature was to assess Faiz in the following words

"The poetry of Faiz, having risen through various stages of development has scaled heights that have perhaps never been reached by any other progressive writer.

Ghalib had complained of the limited canvass of the Ghazal, to Faiz must go the credit of expanding the horizons of the Ghazal and for firmly establishing the political Ghazal as a form distinct from the Gul-o-Bul, Hijr-o-Visaal, Masjid-o-Maikhana kind of dichotomies that the Ghazal had come to be known for. Unfortunately among many well meaning fans of the form it continues to be known as such, thanks to singers and listeners who refuse to explore changes in the form and the content of the Ghazal and continue to wallow in empty sentimental prattle. To Faiz must also go the credit for establishing that meanings and possibilities that lay concealed within the recesses of the layered raiment of the Ghazal, presented possibilities that poetry and poets had still to explore.

Faiz and Majrooh, among others contributed significantly to the evolution of the Political Ghazal. There has been a suggestion that Majrooh initiated the process before Faiz, but the fact remains that the Political Ghazal as we know it today owes much more to its popularity through Faiz than it does through the writings of Majrooh.

Majrooh, decidedly one of the leading lights of the PWA, did not get the kind of recognition he deserved, perhaps due to a much smaller body of work, also because unlike Faiz he did not remain in the thick of political turmoil and so his poetry was not as sought after as was Faiz's. The rather abrupt and at times abrasive manner of Majrooh could have also contributed to this. These things should not, ideally, count in an objective assessment of a writer's worth, unfortunately they do. Despite what others might say, Majrooh himself recognized the contribution of Faiz to progressive poetry in the sub continent and said "Faiz was the Meer Taqi Meer of the Progressives" this is high praise indeed, Ghalib who was loath to acknowledge anyone as his superior recognized only Bedil and Meer as

Ustads (great teachers) so when Majrooh describes Faiz as the Meer of the progressives, he is giving him an exalted position. One needs to remember that Majrooh can never be accused of excess, not in the area of appreciating others at least.

What sets Faiz above his contemporaries in both the Nazm and the Ghazal is his rich vocabulary, his ability to draw upon mythological symbols, events, references and fables and to reinterpret them[10], to create visual images in the mind of the reader through a careful selection of words[11], and create new images through the use of Eisenstein like montages of clashing images[12].

The contribution of Faiz, except for a handful of post modernist detractors who tried to belittle him, out of pique, unconcealed envy and perhaps a feeling of inadequacy in the face of his talent, was recognized by most of his contemporaries and many of his seniors. Raghupati Sahay 'Firaq' Gorakhpuri, a senior in age by as much as 15 years, an extremely proud man and rather economical in his recognition of the talent of others was to lavish fulsome praise on Faiz when he said

"Faiz established a new school of Poetry, the creative skill, affection, creative dexterity and breadth of vision with which Faiz relates the event of love with other significant social concerns was something entirely new and worthwhile in the love poetry of Urdu."

Noon Meem Rashid a contemporary poet and someone who was in the vanguard of those who were at the time experimenting with non rhyming or what was then called blank verse spoke of Faiz in terms that are no less than laudatory. "Faiz is alone among contemporary poets who, with his imagination, wishes to create an alluring heaven of pure beauty, but has also glimpsed the reality that lurks behind the golden drapes of beauty and romance'

Professor Aal-e-Ahmad Suroor, and Asar Lucknawi were two of the most respected critics of Urdu literature in their times and are read, consulted and quoted extensively in literary debates even to this day.

Suroor in his earliest writings about faiz was to say "The poetry of Faiz is like a resplendent rain bow consisting of pleasant influences of English Literature and worthwhile and valuable elements of the Asian civilisation."

Syed Sajjad Zaheer, a contributor to Angarey, one of the moving spirits behind the formation of PWA along with Mulk Raj Anand Mahmood-uz-Zafar, and a key accused in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case and a close associate of Faiz, was asked to write the preface of Zindan Nama and this is what he had to say about Faiz's poetry:

"The values that the poetry of Faiz represents and upholds are the values of progressive humanity the world over, they are such an inseparable part of his writing that nowhere do they appear either to be different from our finest cultural and civilisational values, nor do they lead to any cleavage between the unique style of the poet and his soft, sweet and lyrical writing. His moving similes and metaphors carry the fragrance of our land, his ideas glisten with the truth and democratic ideals that enlighten the hearts of the overwhelming majority of our people. If the purpose of cultural development and growth is to free humans from material and spiritual poverty, fill their hearts with compassion, give them the strength of character and the vision to stand up for justice and truth and to, enrich our collective and individual lives both externally and internally, then the poetry of Faiz seeks to reach out and touch all these cultural goals."

Faiz was in his own life time translated in dozens of languages of the subcontinent and scores of other languages across the world. Alexander Surkov, a well known Urdu Scholar from the erstwhile USSR wrote the preface to the Russian translation of Faiz's poetry, the article was translated by Seher Ansaari[13] in Urdu, an English translation by the author of the present piece is reproduced here as a conclusion of this hurriedly put together piece.

While we sat in a room in the office of the writers association in Moscow, reading poetry and talking about the possibility of publishing a Russian translation of Faiz's poetry the conversation moved away from poetry to a discussion about contemporary politics :

What are your plans in the immediate future ?

Faiz looked at me, in the depths of his dark eyes I noticed a certain sadness while a gentle smile played on his lips,

"I'll first go to London to meet a few friends who have recently arrived from Pakistan and then I'll go to Karachi, to Lahore, home....."

"But you know what it is like there....."

"All the more reason for me to go back to my country"

"Imprisonment then is a certainty....."

"Perhaps..... if serving a lofty ideal involves a trip to the jail, one must undertake the journey"

"And if it is worse than a prison term?"

The poet looked out of the window, at the Statute of Tolstoy in the middle of the garden, at the cold autumn sky, the smile was still there, a short pause later, he spoke, in his typical low and measured tone,

"If there is something worse than a prison term, it will certainly be bad, but you know well the struggle has to carry on".

This article originally appeared in the Faiz Centenary special of 'Think India' Quarterly Jan-March 2011

- [1] Translating poetry is not my cup of tea, what I have sought to do is to place a literal translation, to communicate, the general idea, in my view poetry can best be understood in the original, translations are at best very rough approximations, some more some less.
- [2] Baqdr-e-Shauq nahin, zarf-e-tangna-e-Ghazal
Kuchh aur chaahiye wus'at mere bayan ke liye—
GHALIB.
- [3] Nasl, Qaumiyat, Kaleesa, Sultanat, Tehzeeb, Rang
Khwawajgi ne khoob chun chun kar banaaye
maskraat—Iqbal
- [4] Reproduced in Dast Tah-e-Sang pp 9-12
- [5] Khalal Pezeer Buwad Har Bina ke mi beeni
Bajuz benaaye mohabbat ke khaali az khalal ast
- [6] Hazar Karo Mere Tan se ye Sam ka Darya hai Sar-e-
Wadi-e-Sienna pp 85-86
- [7] Faiz, preface to Dast-e-Saba, pp 5-6, written in central
Jail Hyderabad 16.9.1952
- [8] Roodaad-e-Qafas, Zindaan Naamaah pp 9-46
- [9] Gar fikr-e-zakhm ki to khataawaar hain kr hum –
Kyon mahv-e- madh-e-khoobi-e- tegh-e-ada na thay.
- [10] Nisar Main Teri Galiyon ke....pp 65-67 Dast-e-Saba
and
Hum dekhenge, Mere Dil Mere Musafir, pp 53-54
- [11] Sarod-e-Shabana, Naqsh-e-Faryadi, p15.
Sham, Dast-e-Tah-e-Sang, p33,
Manzar, Dast-e-Tah-e-Sang' p79,
- [12] Pass Raho, Dast-e-tah-e-Sang, p73.
- [13] Ek Hausla Mand Dil ki Aawaaz, Sar-e-Vaadi-e-Sienna
pp13-18
This article has already appeared, in a slightly modified
version, in 'Think India Quarterly', special issue on Faiz
Ahmad Faiz, January-March 2011.

Situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Mrinal Kanti Tripura

Rangamati, BANGLADESH

(This lecture was delivered during Peace in South Asia Consultation in 2005)

Chittagong Hill Tracts is the South-eastern region of Bangladesh. Total area is 5,089 square miles. We have different people, different languages. Chittagong Hill Tracts was kept under Pakistan in 1947, when Pakistan became independent. During the British period, we were administered with our own status. Though the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts are basically non-Muslims, but we were kept under Pakistan. This is the brief history of how we became a part of Bangladesh.

We have several issues of conflict, and for that we had to go under armed conflict between the indigenous peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Bangladesh Military and Government since 1973, which ended in December 1997 through signing an 'Accord'. This accord is called 'Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord'. It has been years since the peace accord was signed, but still we are facing many problems because of the non-implementation of the 'Peace Accord'. Main issues or main causes of the present Chittagong Hill Tracts conflicts are the control over natural resources, and the land in this territory. We, the indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tracts, should have control over our land and the natural resources, which were taken away by the Bangladesh Government and the settlers, who are sponsored by the Bangladesh Government to settle in Chittagong Hill Tracts, especially in 1980s. Therefore, our concern, at present, is our existence, whether we would be able to live as people with dignity

and honor. Because the present government policy is just to outnumber the Chittagong Hill Tracts people by bringing people from the plain land to our Chittagong Hill Tracts.

At present, the indigenous people consist of 52% of total population of CHT, and the Bengalees are 48%. But in 1971 the Bengalees were only 14%. So there has been a rapid change in the ratio of population over the last three decades. If we look at the actors involved in CHT presently, particularly after the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord, we can see World Bank, ADB, UNDP, WFP and other bilateral agencies like JAICA etc. undertaking program in that area in the name of Development. I would like to share in the PISA consultation, that we have bitter experiences of the negative impact of development activities in Chittagong Hill Tracts. There are many examples, such as: Biggest man made lake in Asia, called 'Kaptai Lake', on the river 'Karnaphuli' destroyed 54 thousand acres arable land. Still we have our people in Arunachal State of India, who are living there without citizenship. We all are internally displaced. In addition, during the conflict situation, more than 12000 families were compelled to flee to Tripura State of India as 'Refugees'. They returned now to Bangladesh, but most of them are yet to get back to their lands, which are still occupied by the Military and the Settlers.

Therefore, causes behind the conflict are control over natural resources and land. We have timber logging. Because of the geographical location, we can see also Arms Trafficking through Chittagong Hill Tracts. There is another conflict between the indigenous people and the Bengalee settlers in relation to control over business and marketing. We, the indigenous

people, don't have control over the market and the business, which is still in the hands of the 'Outsiders'.

How different institutions or agencies do play role enhancing the conflict is a big issue in CHT. If you look at WB, ADB or UNDP, they have projects. Still there are problems between the Indigenous Groups and the Settlers. Whenever any new fund allocated for CHT, new conflicts initiate again over the 'Funding'. Because there is direct involvement of Military, and Military controls general administration in the Hill Tracts, as well as the Bangalee Settlers groups. We have new group in CHT called 'Samo Adhikar' (equal rights), formed by Bengalee Settlers backed by the Military and the present ruling party BNP.

Whenever we have projects in the name of 'Development', we always find the Bengalee settlers are opposing or trying to prevent the actors or the funders, and they are demanding equal rights. This is the new dimension of 'Conflict'. In the past, we had conflict between Indigenous People and Bengalee Settlers or Military or the Government, but now we also see the conflict between the Bengalee Settlers and the Permanent Bengalees. Even now we see conflict within the Indigenous groups, and also between Local NGOs and national NGOs and again within the Local NGOs. There is also non-cooperation of different administrative systems. We have three types of administrative systems – Traditional System, General Administrative System and then the new Administrative or Governance system, which we agreed through signing of the Peace Accord. Because of the non cooperation of Government, all these institutions are not functioning properly. This is also an issue of conflict. The institutions, established through the Accord, cannot execute their function properly, because of the deep interest of the government about the Resources or

Funding. Very recently, a new mission is trying to get into CHT, which is called UN – GoB – joint mission, on promotion of Economy in CHT. They are trying to assert the situation or possibility or feasibility for the private sector development in CHT, such as eco-tourism, employment, ICT, entrepreneurship etc. This is the present causes and scenario of emerging of conflicts in CHT.

Our Land

Ibn-e-Insha

Who lives in Iran?

In Iran lives the Iranian.

Who lives in England?

In England lives the British

Who lives in France?

In France lives the French.

Which country is this?

This is Pakistan.

Surely in this land lives the Pakistani nation.

No. the Pakistanis nation do not live here.

Here lives Sindhis.

Here lives Punjabis.

Here lives Bengalis.

Here lives this nation.

Here lives that nation.

But surely Punjabis also live in India.

Sindhis also live in India.

Bengalis also live in India.

So why was the country divided?

That was mistake. Sorry.

It won't happen again.

24 December 1969

Tribal Languages in Bangladesh (Tribals in Bangladesh)

Ali Nawaz

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has over thirty tribes most of whom live in Rajshahi, Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts, greater Mymensingh, Sylhet, Patuakhali and Barguna. With some exceptions, 2-3 million tribal people speak their own languages. **The well-known tribal languages are Chakma, Garo, Khasia, Magh, Manipuri, Munda, Oraon, and Santali. Other tribal languages are Kachhari, Kuki, Tipra, Malpahadi, Mikir, Shadri and Hajang.**

Over 100,000 people in Rangpur and Sylhet speak Oraon. The highest number of Oraon speaking people live in Rangpur and the lowest number in Sylhet. The Khasias, who live in the hilly and forest areas of Sylhet division, speak *Oyar*. A small number of Sinteng and Lalang tribes also live in these areas and they speak their own languages. The garos, living in greater Mymensingh and in the hilly Garo region of Meghalaya in India, speak hilly Garo or *Achik Kata*. Some Garo-speaking people also live in Rangpur, Sunamganj and in Sripur of Dhaka district. Over 300,000 people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts speak Chakma. The Magh language, which originated in Arakan, is spoken by over 200,000 people in Bangladesh. The Manipuri language was first spoken in Srimangal about 250 years ago. At one time, it was also spoken at Tejgaon in Dhaka, Durgapur, and Kasba in Comilla. Currently, about 50,000 people in the districts of Habiganj, Maulvi Bazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj speak Manipuri. About 15,000 to 20,000 people in Bangladesh speak Munda. The highest number of Santali speaking people live in the northern region. More than 50,000 people in north Mymensingh and Tangail speak Hajang and some Kachharis speak their own language. In Chittagong and the Hill Tracts the oldest tribes are those who speak Kuki, Tipra and Magh. In the Hill Tracts about 2,000 Murong and Riyang

speak tribal Tipra. At one time a large number of Tipra-speaking people used to live in the Lalmai hills of Comilla. About 9,000 people in Bangladesh speak Malpahadi. Some people in Sylhet speak Mikir. Nearly 50,000 people of the tribes of Malo, Mahato, Ganju, Kolkamar and some Oraon speak Sadri. Despite the existence of these tribal languages, quite a few tribes have forgotten their own languages and now speak only Bangla. Many Tipras in the Hill Tracts and Chittagong speak Bangla. Some tribal people from other areas like Hadi, Pator, Koch, Rajbangshi and Bedey also speak Bangla. In all, more than 300,000 indigenous people speak Bangla fluently. Some tribal groups like bagdis and Bindis speak their own languages but these are very close to Bangla. In terms of philology, prosody, folklore, idioms and phonology, the Chakma language is very close to Bangla. All the phonemes of Bangla are available in the Chakma language. This is also generally true of other tribal languages. But due to lack of written structure and dearth of students, no tribal language is part of the curriculum at schools. Educated tribal people use their own languages but write in the Bangla script. It has not been possible to introduce Roman script in any tribal language. **Except for Chakma and Magh, no other tribal language has a script.**

Almost all tribal languages have rich folk literatures, consisting of poems and songs, fairy tales and legends of their past nomadic life. There are plenty of narrative plays, similar to *maimensingha-gitika*, in the Magh, Chakma, Khasia and Garo languages. The folk tales of the tribal languages have similarities with those in Bangla. For instance, some Garo folk tales are almost identical to the tales in *Mymensingha-gitika*. The ballads in some of the languages of the Himalayan foothills are similar to those of Bangla folk literature. Their linguistic aspects are similar to those of early Bangla. The rhymes in Bangla and the tribal languages are similar in

subject, rhythm and vocabulary. Puzzles in Oraon and Bangla are similar in character as well as in words and rhythms to Bangla ones. Lullabies in both languages are also very similar. There are many tribes who are multilingual. Garos and Khasias are bilingual, that is to say, capable of speaking both in Bangla and in their own language. But Santals and the Oraons cannot speak each other's languages. There are some other tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts similarly placed. In such cases they use Bangla as a lingua franca. Munda, Santali, Khasia, Garo, Oraon and Manipuri languages are very well organised and orderly, testifying to a developed past. Garo and Chakma languages have slight Chinese tone. There is a basic similarity between the Garo and Magh languages as both tribes have the same origins. Munda, Santali, Kol, Khasia, Garo and Kurukh are interrelated languages. Munda and Kurukh are regarded as the same language as the syntax and verbs of both are almost identical. Munda, Santali and Kol languages are even more ancient than the Aryan languages of India. Not all Bangla words have come from the Aryan languages. Most, in fact, have originated from Munda. Munda has also had considerable influence on Bangla's idioms, phonology, morphology, philology and syntax. The tribal languages belong to either Austro-Asian, Indo-Chinese, Chinese-Tibetan, Tibetan-Burman or Dravidian families. An admixture of these languages created a pidgin language in ancient Bango-Magadh which had Munda at its centre. This established the initial foundation of Bangla or the East-Indic family of languages. The tribal languages thus contributed immensely to the formation of Bangla.

SOME OF THE MAIN TRIBAL LANGUAGES ARE DESCRIBED BRIEFLY IN WHAT FOLLOWS :

Chakma language is one of the most advanced tribal languages. Some old puthis are extant in this language. One of them, *Chadigang Chara Pala* was written on palm leaf. This puthi reveals that the Chakmas originated in Nepal and after roaming about in several Southeast Asian countries came to old Burma and Arakan before settling in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Their original name was 'Tsak', in the Arakani language

they were called 'Chak', in the dialect of Chittagong 'Chamua', and in the Chakma language 'Chakma'.

The alphabets of the Chakma language are similar to the alphabets of Thailand's Ksmer, Annam Laos, Cambodia, Siam (Thailand) and South Burma. Tara, the scripture of the Chakmas, is written in the Burmese script. When spoken, the Chakma alphabet has a soft sound and is generally articulated from the bottom of the tongue. It is primarily based on sound and has a Chinese tone. In many respects (including philology, prosody, folklore, idioms and phonology) it is close to Bangla. All sounds of Bangla language are also available in the Chakma language. Efforts are now being made to write the Chakma language in the Burmese or Myanmar script. A book of primary reading in Chakma has also been published from Rangamati. Its author is Nayanram Chakma. There are many songs written in the Chakma language. These have been composed in colloquial Chakma. The language of the book *Gozel Lama* written by the Chakma poet Shivcharan in 1777 is almost like Bangla. Its introductory song is similar to those in *purbabanga-gitika*. *Radhaman Dhanapadi* and *Chadigang Chara Pala* are two important lyrical poems. The metres used in Chakmas and Bangla verse are almost similar. The syntax of the two languages are also identical. The numbers in Chakma language are pronounced as in Bangla. The minus symbol in Chakma is called 'farak' and the sign of multiplication is called 'duna'. The other symbols are the same in both languages. In the Chakma language s (anusvar) is called 'ek fuda', t (bisarga) is called 'dvifuda' and u (chandrabindu) is called 'chanfuda'.

Chakma folk literature is quite rich. It has many folklores and fables. A traditional folk song of the Chakmas is 'ubhagit'. Proverbs and traditional sayings are a unique feature of the Chakma language. These sayings mainly centre on farming, animals and birds, nature, society, religion and the mystery of the human body. These sayings in the Chakma language are called 'dagwa kadha'. In conjugation and declension present day Chakma language is close to Bangla, Assamese, Rajbangshi, Garo, Sanghma and Chittagonian. This language has 6 regional forms.

Within the Chakmas different clans have their distinct dialects.

Garó language : The Garó language is, undoubtedly, an unwritten language, albeit an ancient Aryan language. This is a very rich language and full of proverbs, idioms, songs, rhymes, oral narratives, folk-tales, palagan, etc. This language bears most of the history of the Garó people and their religious and cultural codes. Its vocabulary contains words borrowed from many different languages. The syntax, semantics, positions of cases and inflections, verbs and transformations of words in this language are all very systematic and resemble those of other developed languages. It is likely that this language has a long history. Some believe that the Garó language is a mixed form of Bangla and Assamese as it resembles both languages. Actually, it is a primary language.

Different dialects are found in the Garó language since the Garós are scattered in different regions of different districts. The Christian missionaries introduced Roman letters into Garó language and attempted to invent a script similar to the Chinese pictograph and apply them but without any success. The Garó language can be written in Bangla script without any difficulty. Now the Garó language is the family language of the Garó, but Bangla is their official language.

Khasia language is part of the Austro-Asiatic group of languages. In this language the tendency is to pronounce s as h, something also noticeable in some Bangla dialects. It has no alphabets nor is it written. In this language a village is called *punji*. The Khasia houses are clustered and that accounts for the name of *punji*. Khasia has many dialects, although Linggam, Pnad and Wayar are the major ones. Pnad means hilly. Linggam is spoken in areas close to the Garó Hills and Pnad is spoken in a wide area on the east of the Khasia-Jaintia Hills. Linggam indicates Garó Hills and Wayar means valley.

At one time the Khasia language used to be written in the Bangla script. A part of the bible has been translated into Khasia and written in the Bangla script. Currently, the Khasia language of the Cherapunji region is being written in the Roman script at the initiative of the Christian missionaries of the Indian State of Meghalaya where it is the medium of instruction

up to the high school level. This has however not been possible in Bangladesh as the Khasia population is small and live in scattered localities.

Magh language the language of the Magh people; a spoken form of Arakanese. It belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, but also contains some elements of the Austro-Asian family. Chinese, old Burmese and Mizo languages are related to it, but its closest links are with Burmese.

Magh is a hybrid of Arakanese and Bangla. Once upon a time a repressive Burmese king forced about two-thirds of the Arakanese people to flee to the Chittagong region of Bangladesh. The intermixing of the two ethnic groups led to the development of the Magh language. The influence of Burmese is strong as Burmese was the lingua franca of the Arakan region. The Magh alphabet is known as *jha*. Each letter is named after a part of the human body. The letters resemble the pictorial Chinese alphabet.

A section of the Maghs in Arakan and Bangladesh speak Bangla. Baruas are basically Maghs but they speak Bangla. Pali is the religious language of the Maghs. As a result, many Pali words have found their way into the Magh language, albeit, occasionally in distorted form: for instance, *bhiksu*, *nibban*, *bihar*, *bhabna*, *dukkha*, *bassa* (*barsa*). Some words in both languages are the same in pronunciation and meaning, for example, *adya*, *madhya*, *upadhi* and *apatti* etc. Some common words, however, differ in pronunciation and meaning. For instance, in the Magh language, grown-up children are called *chogri*, but in Bangla they are called *chhokda* and *chhokdi*. Some Magh words relating to kinship are similar to Bangla words, though some other words differ somewhat in meaning. In the local dialect, for example, *baba* and *baji* are words for father. In Magh, however, *baji* means uncle. The Maghs call a little girl *ma*, but in Bangla *ma* means mother, though a daughter is often endearingly called *ma*.

The Magh language has a limited number of words to mean relations. As a result, the same words are applied with derivatives to denote different relations. Many words relating to society, organisation, agriculture and domestic matters are common not only to Magh, Bangla and other tribal languages but also to many Southeast Asian languages. For example, the

Magh words *pida*, *turung* (trunk), *langi*, *dhuti* and *cheroot* are pronounced in Bangla as *pida* / *pidi*, *turang*, *langi* / *lungi*, *dhuti* and *churut*. In the Burmese and Magh languages, the names of days, months and numbers are the same.

The Magh language does not have a creative literature but is rich in elements of folk literature such as tales, riddles, fables, ballads, ghost stories and stories of Buddhist kings and queens. The Maghs are very fond of listening to tales and songs, and, during the lean season, spend whole nights in story telling, singing, dancing and participating in *paoye*, plays acted in the style of Bangla jatra. Some stories have been written in the Burmese script.

Manipuri language is about 3,500 years old and belongs to the Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burmese stream of the Mongoloid family of languages. Up to the middle of the 19th century this language was known as Moitai after the name of a tribe. In the original Moitai there were 18 alphabets. Other alphabets were added later. Its alphabets, like the Burmese-Arakanese alphabets, are pronounced in accordance with the limbs of a human body. Its alphabets are similar to the Tibetan family. The Manipuri language began to be written in the Bangla script when Vaisnavism assumed the form of the state religion during the days of Maharaja Garib Newaz in the 18th century. This trend continues still today. This was made possible because of the phonetic closeness of the two languages.

The first example of a lyrical composition in Manipuri language and literature was 'Ougri'. Prior to this a variety of love songs, proverbs and sayings, lyrical plays and ballads were current. The love songs are very poetic and are presented by youths in groups to the accompaniment of rhythmic songs and dances. Manipuri language has many martial songs and several plays, novels, short stories and poems have been written in it. Even epic poems have been composed in this language. Some well-known Bengali and western books as well as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been translated into Manipuri. In the Indian state of Manipur it is an official language and it is one of the national languages of India. George Gordon's *A Dictionary of English, Bengali and Manipuri* published

towards the middle of the 19th century was the first printed book in Manipuri.

Manipuri is a hybrid language. It is spoken by about 2 to 2.5 million people in Bangladesh, Tripura, Assam and Myanmar. Nearly half a million Manipuri speaking people live in greater Sylhet. However, Manipuri is not taught in the schools of Bangladesh as the Manipuris are dispersed over a wide area.

Munda language : It belongs to the Austro-Asian group of languages and is more ancient than the Aryan language. It was the basis of the Oriya, Assamese and Bangla languages. It has links with Khasia, Garo, Santal, Kol and other similar tribal languages. Innumerable Munda words are found in Bangla, especially in its regional dialects. The Munda language has had an influence on Bangla speech forms. Bangla words relating to agriculture housework, habitation, counting, family relationships, weights and measures, land, animals and birds and trees are derived from the Munda language.

Since the Munda language was spoken over a vast region of India, it has numerous regional forms. Nearly 10 million people in areas of South Bihar and Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal speak this language. About 15,000 to 20,000 Mundas live in Bangladesh. The Munda language evolved amongst the Mundas about 3 to 4 thousand years ago as a Pidgin language to facilitate communication and livelihood between them. Later, it spread to other Southeast Asian countries through agriculture and superior hunting practices. In due course it took the form of an established language and still later it became a written language for literature.

Bangla has many similarities with non-Aryan Munda language in respect of phonology, aesthetics and poetical arrangements. There is an abundance of diphthongs in the Munda language; pronunciation of its words can also be nasal. There is also an abundance of reduplication of words; gender is indicated by adding appropriate words. There is a tendency in it to duplicate words to indicate plural. This feature is also noticed in Bangla. The case and case ending in both Munda and Bangla languages are almost similar. The origins of numbers up to 10 are the same in both

languages. 'Hali' (four) and 'kudi' (score) are units of counting in both languages. Pronouns have no gender distinctions in either language. *Mundari-English Dictionary*, published by Christian missionaries, allows a wider understanding of the Munda language.

Oraon language : The language of the Oraon tribe, known as Kurukh. It is a spoken language and has no written form. Literate Oraons write their language in either Bangla or Roman script.

Kurukh has a rich oral literature, with innumerable fables, fairy tales, ballads, nursery rhymes, riddles and popular sayings. Some tales and riddles are remarkably similar in form in Bangla and Kurukh. Variants of some Oraon fables are found in other tribal languages as well as Chinese.

Kurukh resembles the contemporary Munda language in vocabulary and syntax. According to Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Munda and Kurukh are really the same language. Some words in Kurukh and the local Bangla dialect relating to household articles are similar. Earthen pots are called *taoya* in Kurukh, as in the local dialect. Some names of ornaments are common to Kurukh and Bangla, such as *tikli*, *bala*, *payra*, *bali* and *kanpasha*. Many words relating to relationships are also common to both languages: for example, *ma*, *baba*, *mama*, *bhagina*. The names of some shrubs, animals and fruits come from the same roots, but sound slightly different owing to the accretion or omission of some syllables: for example, *amba* for *am*, *katha* - *kanthal*, *sim* - *shimul*, *sak* - *shak*, *dali* - *dal*. Some religious words are also similar: the Kurukh *bhagoyan* is *bhagaban* in Bangla, the Kurukh *bhagati* is *bhakti* in Bangla, the Kurukh word *bhut* is the same in Bangla.

Santali language is a member of the eastern group of the Austro-Asiatic languages. The Austro-Asians came to the South Asian subcontinent about 10,000 years ago from Australia by way of Indonesia, Myanmar and Assam. About 10 million Santali speaking people live in the Santal Pargana of Jharkhand. About 1,25,000 Santals live in the West Bengal districts bordering Bihar and in Bangladesh's north-

western districts of Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Rangpur. They speak Bangla fluently and have adopted many Bangla words for their own language. The origin of both Santali and Munda languages is the same and both are interrelated. The Santali language has two dialects - Nahili and Korku. The Santali language has no script of its own. In India, Santali is now written in Devanagari script and has absorbed many elements from Hindi. During British rule Santali used to be written in the Roman script. No Santali books are available in Bangladesh. But some Christian missionaries have opened one or two schools to teach Santali in Roman script. Educated Santals write Santali in both Bangla and English scripts but prefer to write in Bangla because of phonetic similarities between it and Bangla.

All sounds of Santali are also found in Bangla. There are other grammatical similarities too. As in the Munda language, vowels in Santali can be nasal. Gender is conveyed by using other words. Gender is also conveyed in Santali by using feminine inflection but this is an Aryan trend. In original Santali there is no scope for adding inflection at the end of words. In Santali different pronouns are used for animate and inanimate objects. The Santali, Kol and Munda languages are older than the Aryan languages. Many non-Aryan words have entered the Aryan languages. In Bengali and many of its regional dialects, many Santali words are in use in one form or the other. The origin of the Santali, its vocabulary and grammar have been discussed in books by Christian missionaries such as *An Introduction to the Santal Language* (1852), *A Grammar of the Santal Language* (1873) and PO Boding's *Materials of the Santal Grammar* (two volumes).

Courtesy : <http://cht-jumma.blogspot.com>

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The New Footsoldiers!

The Ideological and Institutional Incorporation of Dalits into Hindutva Maelstrom

Subhash Gatade

Delhi, INDIA

NAMDEO DHASAL : NOT JUST THE NAME OF A POET-ACTIVIST

A picture is worth so many words. And definitely it was no ordinary picture. It showed the present Sangh supremo Mr. K. S. Sudarshan hugging and saluting Namdeo Dhasal, the radical Dalit poet of the seventies. The next frame showed Dhasal returning the gesture in a similar manner. The occasion was a book release function where many other stalwarts of the Sangh Parivar were also present. But it was not just photo-op session. In his speech Dhasal underlined failure of the left to address caste question but simultaneously sang paeans to the RSS for its work among the Dalits and also declared openly that he had lot of expectations from this work. The said programme to release the book 'Samrasta ke Sutra' was held on 30th August 2006 at Hindi Bhavan, Delhi.

Keen watchers of the Dalit movement would vouch that it was unimaginable to even think of a similar photograph in the seventies. Times when its then Supremo Golwalkar had to face public wrath for his glorification of *Manusmriti* - the age old scripture of the Hindus, which legitimised and sanctified the secondary status of the Dalits - in an interview to the Marathi newspaper *Navakal*. It was a period when the resurgent Dalit movement found itself in continuous confrontation with this Brahminical project of Hindu consolidation.

It is clear that the abandonment of a radical agenda by a person of Dhasal's stature and his ultimate cooption in the project of Hindutva brigade cannot be considered an exception. (After a long innings in the Shiv Sena, Mr. Dhasal left it last year to join a grand

federation of disparate Dalit groups) It is rather a marker of the deeper malaise, which afflicts the post Ambedkarian Dalit movement.

May it be the case of Bahujan Samaj Party, a significant experiment espousing the cause of Ambedkar, joining hands with BJP thrice to form government in Uttar Pradesh in mid-nineties and early years of 21st century, or a section of the Dalits metamorphosing themselves into footsoldiers of Hindutva brigade in the Gujarat genocide of 2002 or for that matter the 'success' of the Hindutva brigade in pitting significant section of the Dalit masses against Muslims in the Eastern Part of UP, or the support a section of the Dalit intellectuals provided to the whole idea of Bhimshakti-Shivshakti peddled by Uddhav Thakre, the heir apparent in the Shiv Sena, before the last elections to the Maharashtra assembly, all goes to show the deep inroads made by the idea of Hindutva among the Dalits.

One could easily surmise that much water has flown down the Ganga-Jamuna as far as the trajectory of the Dalit movement is concerned. Definitely it also shows the distance travelled by the RSS itself, which had since its inception, detested Ambedkar, the legendary son of the oppressed and his brand of social-political intervention to challenge the purity-pollution based regime of Varna-caste hegemony.

Gone are the days when Ambedkar openly declared that 'He might have been born a Hindu but won't die a Hindu' way back in 1937 and led his followers to embrace Buddhism, today a section of his followers have no qualms in cosyng up to a project which is engaged in furthering a particular brand of Hinduism based on the *weltanschauung* of the likes of Golwalkars and Savarkars.

Question naturally arises why have things come to such a pass that the most oppressed section among the caste-Varna hierarchy is

happy adorning the Saffron bandanna and busy joining one of those fanatic gangs. How does one comprehend this metamorphosis of the age old victims of graded hierarchy of Brahminism into perpetrators themselves?

Despite attempts to dwell upon into it and discern the different threads of the phenomenon there are still many unanswered questions. If Hindutvaisation of the Dalit consciousness is a worrisome thing, then how does one look at the process of Hinduisation of these subalterns, which has been an ongoing phenomenon? How does one look at the plethora of sects and jet-age Sadhus, many of whom have made deep inroads among the Dalits? Is it possible to establish any interconnection between the two? How does one decipher the strategies used by the forces of Hindutva - mainly the Sangh Parivar - to co-opt the Dalits in their wider gameplan of reorganising the Indian society based on the *weltanschauung* of 'one people, one nation, one culture'? Does one notice any continuity in the methodologies adopted by it or one can see a clear break in its journey? Is it possible to draw on similar experiences of communalisation among other oppressed sections of society e.g. women, tribals etc?

DALIT'S FASCINATION TOWARD HINDUTVA : EARLY STIRRINGS!

It was year 2002 when the Indian Republic had to come to terms with many 'shocks' : A year which witnessed planned genocide of mainly Muslims in the western province of Gujarat in the aftermath of a tragic burning of bogey of a train which caught fire by accident.

It underlined the extent of brutality, which the Hindu right could engage in and simultaneously exposed the myth perpetuated by a section of the liberal intelligentsia that power could moderate it. In fact the brazenness with which the ideologues of the Hindu right glorified the planned genocide, wherein they talked of repeating 'the successful Gujarat experiment' elsewhere, came as a shock to many. All of us were witness to the tremendous communalisation of civil society which made it

impossible to put any pan-Indian resistance to the machinations of the Hindutva brigade. The way the state machinery connived in the carnage rather vindicated the 'institutionalised riot system' in operation in the country, a phenomenon made explicit by people like Paul Bremen.

But apart from many of these disturbing features, reports pouring in from different parts of the state also provided details of another kind of news - namely participation of a section of the Dalits and Adivasis in the mayhem. The way a section of these subaltern classes joined the marauders of the Hindutva brigade, has come out in many of the reports filed by reporters on the Gujarat situation. One such report was filed by an *Outlook* correspondent (date 1/7/2002). In the said report 'Poisoned Edge : The Sangh Exploits Dalit and tribal frustration to recruit soldiers for Hindutva's war' it was revealed :

"...Of all the disturbing facts that emerged from the post-mortem of the communal carnage in Gujarat, the most baffling and alarming is the large-scale participation of Dalits and tribals in the rioting. Independent observers, researchers and social activists agreed that their involvement was unprecedented. Never before was the divide between the Dalits and Muslims so pronounced and so violent. Even more shocking: tribals, who have little in common with mainstream Hinduism, brandished weapons, looted and killed as they violently avenged the 'attack on Hindus'."

While one could easily find glee on the faces of the Sangh ideologues, who came up with readymade rationalisations of such acts, for a large section of the activists of the anti-communal movement, the very piece of news itself was incomprehensible as well as baffling. The reaction of the Dalit/Bahujan intellectuals was no better. In fact, the only explanation of sorts which was resorted to by most of them, talked of the Dalits playing into the hands of the Hindutva brigade. It was told how they were lured into becoming perpetrators with simple promises.

Perhaps they did not mean it, but all these facile explanations were denigrating these subalterns further. They communicated an impression that Dalits were mere pawns who could be waylaid by anyone. At a deeper

philosophical level, this also led to the question of agency? Can the Dalits be considered mere victims who still remain at the mercy of the dominant castes or (to put it bluntly) whether the incorporation of the Dalits in the Hindutva maelstrom could be considered a matter of choice adopted by quite a few among them?

Of course, the simple sounding questions were not easy to answer.

A related question on mind was whether Gujarat 2002 which awakened us to this phenomenon could be considered as its point of emergence or whether it had a 'history' of its own which needed to be recovered.

A cursory glance at few of the old reports on communal flareups in post-independent India, makes it clear that eighties happened to be the decade when one could see Dalits growing affinity towards communal elements or their participation in anti-Muslim violence.

It is a less reported fact that the infamous Moradabad riots in early eighties were marked by the involvement of Balmikis (a Dalit caste whose 'occupation' under the Varna hierarchy revolves around cleaning) in the carnage. One still remembers the event which had sort of triggered the flareup. The sudden (inadvertent or so) appearance of a pig from a nearby Balmiki basti in a religious congregation of Muslims held on one of their auspicious days had provided the initial spark.

The year 1984 witnessed eruption of anti-Sikh riots in major part of northern India - aided and abetted by local Congress leaders - in the aftermath of the killing of Ms. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. South India also saw similar flareups albeit with reduced intensity. Thousands of innocent Sikhs lost their lives and lakhs of people were displaced in the ensuing mayhem. Delhi, the capital of India, was one of the worst affected during these riots. The report brought out by different civil rights organisation like People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL) and Citizens for Democracy (CFD) etc. titled 'Who Are The Guilty?' which documented the carnage in Delhi provides a glimpse of the manner in which Dalits also joined the mayhem.

The oral submission before the Citizens

Tribunal on Ayodhya (July 1993) made by Nalini Pandit, a retired Professor of Economics, gives us an idea about the thinking on the issue going on then. Her presentation before the tribunal focussed itself on 'attraction or otherwise of Dalits towards Hindutva', 'changing attitudes of Dalits to Muslims', 'effects of Hindutva on caste struggles' etc. In her submission she gave few examples of the participation of Dalit leaders/activists in the December'92 riots in Bombay after the demolition of Babri Mosque. Of course she also observed that where the Dalits '[l]ived as consolidated groups and one or the other Buddhist Party had an influence, they remained aloof and even gave protection to Muslim families living amidst them.'

One also notices similar processes at work elsewhere. The activities of the likes of *Hindu Munnani* in the Dalit bastis of Chennai and the brutalisation of the *Khatik* community in Kanpur under some Kala Baccha (since killed) for use in the communal conflagrations during the Ram Janambhoomi movement are also part of the same process. V. Geetha in her perceptive essay on 'Dalits, Hindutva and Dravidian movement' (Ref. *Hindutva and Dalits*, ed. Anand Teltumbde) shares her experience of the Tamil society. According to her: 'In Tamil Nadu, since the late 1980s, Hindu political groups aligned to the Sangh Parivar in one way or another have attempted to, and partially succeeded in, recruiting Dalit youth to their ranks. This has been the case with groups in Chennai that have looked to swelling their ranks during the annual Ganesh Chaturthi processions with a posse of young Dalits from the city's various slums...'

Looking back it is clear that today the idea of Hindutva has quite a few takers in the Dalit movement. But there was a time when Hindutva was an anathema in the ranks of the Dalits. Articulate sections of the Dalit movement rightly knew that the essence of *Hindu Rashtra* is restoration of Brahminical supremacy and relegation of the Dalits to a secondary status much on the lines of Manusmriti, the sacred edicts of the Hindus. People very well knew how the triumvirate of Hindutva Savarkar- Hedgewar and Golwalkar glorified Manusmriti.

To be continued...

My God, Your God, The King

Ibn-e-Insha

Once upon a time, there was a king who was very wise, very kind and very just. During this reign, his land prospered and his subjects loved him dearly. Evidence for this comes not only from the pamphlets issued by the Department of Information at that time, or from press-notices, but also from His Majesty's autobiography.

During the reign of king Jamjah, there was complete and universal freedom. People were free, the press was free; anyone could say what he liked, provided that he spoke in praise of the king and not against him.

The reign of the king was renowned for its progress and conquests. Everywhere prosperity was visible. Not a word of criticism can be made. People who were millionaires became billionaires. The administration ran so smoothly that right people took up their gold and travelled from one end of the land to the other. Sometimes they even travelled abroad. No one had the right to ask where the gold had come from or where it was going to.

There was great emphasis on spiritual matters. Several mystics would see the king off at the airport and then spend forty days fasting for his prosperity. In his heart he possessed unbounded forgiveness and mercy. If anyone came to him to complain that someone else had confiscated his property, even though he might be the king's nearest and dearest relative would be pardoned with the utmost clemency. Indeed, the one who complained would be upbraided for finding fault with others. When the king grew tired of ruling, taking his cheque-book with him, he disappeared from the world and went to live in the mountains. Some say he is still alive. May god have mercy on his soul.



Blessings of Non-English Rule

My friends! Many years ago in this country the English used to govern, and school-books included a chapter entitled: *The Blessings of English Rule*. Now we are free. In those times; writers used to praise English Rule, simply because there was no alternative. We shall praise the free national governments of our own times. The reason for this is equally clear. My friends! Of course, the English did some good things, but in their time there were many bad things as well. If anyone spoke or wrote against the government, they used to send him to jail. Now they do not. Bribery was rife. These days it is not. Shop-keepers would put up the prices of their goods and even adulterate them. Nowadays, no one raises his prices, and adulteration has ceased to exist. During the time of the English, rich landowners lived in luxury, and the poor were totally overlooked. Now the rich do not live in luxury, and people give so much attention to the poor that even they get fed up with it. This is especially the case after adult franchise. Just take education, industry and crafts. In the short space of a quarter of a century, the literacy rate has risen to eighteen per

cent. Could this have been accomplished under foreign rule? Right from the start, the English used to cut off the thumbs of our craftsmen. Now the factory bosses are our own people, and do not cut off the thumbs of craftsmen. On occasions, they might cut off the whole craftsman. But that is another matter. Before independence, Hindu money-lenders and landowners used to rob us. It was our dearest wish that this process should be stopped and we should be robbed instead by Muslim money-lenders and bankers. By the grace of Allah, this wish has come true. Since the government came into our own hands, we have made progress in every field. Imports and exports have greatly increased. There are two special kind of exports – official deputations and foreign exchange. But we are now decreasing our imports. At one time. We even used to import foreign policy, but is being manufactured at home.

A Lesson in Geography

The first thing that geography teaches us is that the world is round. At one time, it was certainly flat, but then it was established as being round. The great advantage of its being round is that people can set off in the direction of the east and emerge in the west. This is most useful for smugglers and politicians. Hitler once more tried to flatten the earth but he did not succeed..

In olden times, the earth was stationary, and the sun and the sky used to revolve around it. Poets used to say:

By night and day the seven heav'ns revolve

And then a person by the name of Galileo came along and began to make the earth revolve around the sun. The priests were very angry that someone had put them in such a spin. By giving due punishment to Galileo, they put a stop to these sorts of movements, but even so they could not stop the earth from rotating, and it still goes on moving in the same old way.

In the beginning, there were very few countries, and people lived in comparative peace and quiet. In the 15th century, Columbus discovered America. There are two theories concerning this. Some people are of the opinion that it was not his fault. He merely wanted to discover India, namely us. It was just a mistake that he discovered America instead. Weight is lent to this theory by the fact that we have still not been discovered.

A second body of opinion says that, on the contrary, Columbus discovered America on purpose. Whatever the case may be, if it was a mistake, it was a grave one. Columbus is dead, but we are still suffering its consequences.

Pakistan

The four borders: To the east of Pakistan is SEATO, to the west – CENTO.* In the north is Tashkent, and in the south – water! In other words there is no place for refuge.

There are parts of Pakistan: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. These are separated by a great

Note:

**SEATO: the South East Asia Treaty Organization; CENTO: the Baghdad Pact. Pakistan was a signatory to both these alliances.*

distance. How great the distance is that separates them is still under consideration.

Both parts have four borders.

To the north of West Pakistan is Punjab; to the south-Sindh; to the east-India; to the west – the North – West Frontier Province and Balochistan. Exactly where Pakistan exists or whether it exists at all is still a matter for research.

Nowadays on all four sides of East Pakistan is only East Pakistan.

India (Bharat)

This is India, of which the official name is Bharat*¹. Here Gandhiji was born. People used to honour him greatly, and call him Mahatma. And so when they killed him, they buried him in this very place and created a shrine. Important people come from other countries and lay flowers on his shrine. If Gandhiji had not died, i.e. if he had not been killed, there would be no place for the faithful to offer up their flowers.

We, that is Pakistanis, were faced with a similar problem. We should be grateful to the Qaid-e-Azam, our great leader Jinnah,*² for dying all by himself, thus giving ambassadorial representatives a place to offer up their flowers. If that had not happened, we should also have been obliged to kill him.

India is a very peace-loving country, the proof of which lies in the fact that it has concluded cease-fire agreements with most of its neighbours. Such agreements came about with us in 1965. Before that there was one with China.*

India's sacred animal is cow. The Indians drink her milk, smear their cooking area with her dung, and send her to a Muslim butcher to be slaughtered, because they consider it a sin to kill a cow.

In India a man is not considered to be a sacred animal. Famous among the kings of India are the Buddhist Raja Ashoka and Raja Nehru.

Ashoka's greatest memorials are his inscribed pillars and the Hotel Ashoka in Delhi. Nehru's greatest memorial is the Kashmir problem, which seems to be firmer and more lasting than the memorials of Ashoka.

Raja Nehru was an extremely pious man. He would get up every morning and practice the Yoga *shirshak* posture, i.e. he would stand on his head with his legs in the air. Little by little, he became accustomed to seeing everything upside-down. He saw the problem of Hyderabad from the point of view of the people, and the Kashmir problem from the point of view of the Raja.*³ In yoga there are all kinds of postures, ignorant people think that it is a kind of acrobatics. Nehru was very particular about cleanliness. Twice a day he changed, both his clothes and his statements.

February 1970

Note :

*1 *Bharat is the official name of India. In the Pakistan press the word is always used in preference to the more normal Hindustan.*

*2 *Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, is known as the Qaid-e-Azam, 'The Great Leader'.*

*3 *At the time of Independence, the rulers of the Princely States were given the option of going either to India or Pakistan. The Muslim Nizam of Hyderabad opted for Pakistan, but his request was refused; although the Raja of Kashmir opted for India, in Pakistan it is argued that, in view of its majority Muslim population, the state should have gone to Pakistan.*

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