

## A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ'S REBELLIOUS NATURE IN "FOR YOUR LANES, MY COUNTRY" THROUGH MARXIST AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the rebellious nature of Faiz Ahmad Faiz in his poem "For Your Lanes, My Country." It uses the Marxist literary theory and postcolonial criticism to explore themes of resistance, national identity, and social change. Through a close reading of the text, this research looks at the connections between class struggle and decolonization in Faiz's poetry. The analysis shows how Faiz transcends traditional boundaries by blending Marxist thoughts on material conditions with postcolonial issues of cultural identity and opposition to imperialism. This study reveals that Faiz's poetry criticizes capitalist exploitation while celebrating local cultural values. He emerges as a distinctive voice in progressive literature, merging revolutionary ideas with cultural nationalism. By examining specific poetic devices, imagery, and themes, this research uncovers how South Asian poets faced the challenges of postcolonial modernity while remaining committed to social justice and cultural honesty.*

**Keywords:** Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Marxist literary theory, Postcolonial criticism, Resistance, National identity, Class struggle, Decolonization, Imperialism, Cultural nationalism.

### 1. Introduction

Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911–1984) is one of the most famous Urdu poets of the 20th century. His work still has an impact on people from all walks of life. Faiz was born in Sialkot, British India, and during the chaos of decolonization and partition, he became a strong voice. He was a key figure in the Progressive Writers Movement, which wanted to change South Asian literature by getting people to be more aware of social issues and get involved in politics. His poems mix old Urdu styles with new revolutionary ideas. It is a good example of how to look at how Marxist ideas and postcolonial identity formation are connected.

Faiz's poetry is important not only because it is beautiful, but also because it gave voice to the hopes of oppressed and marginalized groups during both colonial and postcolonial times. Faiz was a founding member of the All Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association and a dedicated Marxist thinker. He used his writing to fight against imperial rule and social hierarchies in his own country. His imprisonment in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case of 1951 and the years he spent in

exile after that made him even more famous as a poet whose art was closely tied to his political beliefs. A lot of researchers have looked at Faiz by either looking at his Marxist views or his identity as a postcolonial person. But in his poetry, these two ideas really go together. Faiz shows how the fight for equal rights for all classes and the fight to create a cultural identity after colonialism are connected.

Comparative studies show that Faiz's poetry has a lot in common with the work of other revolutionary poets, such as Pablo Neruda, Habib Jalib and Percy Bysshe Shelley. But it is still one of a kind in terms of language and culture. His impact is not limited to Urdu literature; it also includes larger conversations about Third World literature and anti-imperial movements. Faiz's work earned him international praise, including the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962 and several nominations for the Nobel Prize. This shows how important he was as a writer and a politician.

### 1.1. Background to the Study

To know Faiz Ahmad Faiz, both as a writer and as a political thinker, the complicated history of South Asia in the early 1900s must be kept in mind. Between the 1930s and 1950s, a wave of social, political, and cultural changes reshaped societies across the Indian subcontinent.

The Progressive Writers Movement, which began in London in 1935 and later moved to the Indian subcontinent, set the intellectual stage shaping Faiz's artistic vision. Inspired by European left-wing writers and Soviet socialist realism, this group aimed to write about urgent issues like hunger, poverty, backwardness, and political injustice. They believed literature should fight for society's change, not just please the eye, as manifested in the movement's manifesto drafted by writers including Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. Marxist criticism heavily influenced the movement's ideas, particularly the belief that literature must mirror and question the material realities of life. Writers were seen as thinkers who must speak for oppressed groups and confront dominant beliefs. This gave Faiz a strong perspective on how art can push society toward progress.

Then came the partition of 1947, which created Pakistan and brought new challenges. For Faiz, this was the dawn of political independence but also a start of fresh internal oppressions. His poem "*Subh-e-Azadi*" (Freedom's Dawn) shows this mix of hope and sorrow, revealing disappointment with the incomplete process of decolonization and ongoing social inequalities. Looking at Urdu poems, the influence of Persian and Arabic styles like the ghazal and nazm is clear in Faiz's work. Yet, what made him distinct was blending these classic forms with modern political ideas. Critics call this blend "*revolutionary romanticism*"—linking deep artistic beauty with strong social commitment. This challenged the idea that "*art for art's sake*" and politically engaged literature are separate, proving that artistic quality and social awareness can coexist.

The poem "*For Your Lanes, My Country*" (*Nisar Main Teri Galiyon Ke*) was born out of Pakistan's tense 1950s when Faiz was jailed during the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case. Written inside Hyderabad Central Jail, it reflects direct experience of state cruelty and Faiz's steady hope for justice despite hardship. It appeared in the 1952 collection "*Dast-e-Saba*," joining the tradition of prison writing and poems of resistance.

### 1.2. Research Questions

- 1) How does Faiz express his rebellious spirit by combining Marxist ideas of class struggle with postcolonial themes of identity and resistance?
- 2) How do the poem's language and style mix traditional Urdu poetry with new, revolutionary ideas?

- 3) In what ways does Faiz's poem rebel against those in power while honoring and protecting local cultural values?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Existing Research

Over the years, the way people study Faiz Ahmad Faiz has changed a lot. Soon after he died in 1984, critics, mostly writing in Urdu, looked mostly at his life story and the big themes in his poetry. Back then, many called him a “*revolutionary poet*,” but they didn't always dive deep into complex theories. In recent times, more researchers use modern ideas and tools to explore the poetry of Faiz, showing just how layered and impressive his writing is.

One key research on Faiz's life and work is Ludmila Vasil'eva's book, “*Faiz Ahmad Faiz: Life and Work*” (published in 2002, later translated into Urdu in 2007). This book took Faiz's life and poems seriously, with careful, detailed study. Vasil'eva stands out because she does not just look at Faiz in Pakistan; she connects him to big world events and movements, without ignoring his roots. She traces how Faiz shifted from writing love poems in old styles to creating bold, modern poetry shaped by politics and his personal ties.

Outside Pakistan, scholars give Faiz more attention now than ever. Carlo Coppola has written a lot about the Progressive Writers Movement, giving context to Faiz's development as both a writer and activist. Coppola explores how this group linked up with Soviet writers and European thinkers, showing how global Faiz's influences and reach became.

Although many scholars have studied Faiz Ahmad Faiz, some important areas still need more focus. People often miss how the Progressive Writers Movement mixed Marxist ideas with local traditions, instead treating it like a copy of European ideas. There are few detailed studies about when and why Faiz wrote certain poems, so we don't fully understand how history affected his poetry. While it's known that Faiz used classic Urdu poetry styles, not enough attention has been given to how he changed these forms to fit new, revolutionary themes. Also, most studies compare Faiz only with poets who write in European languages, leaving out valuable insights from other postcolonial poets who write in their own local languages.

### 2.2. Related Theories

Marxist literary theory stands as an important tool to understand Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetry. It highlights how Faiz criticizes capitalist inequalities and imagines revolutionary change. According to Marx, Engels, and thinkers who followed, literature is always linked to the real social and economic conditions around it; it is not just created in isolation. It does more than just reflect society; it shapes how people understand their class and rights. Writers like Faiz become voices for change, revealing injustice and inspiring resistance. For him, this theory was both a way to analyze society and a guide for his art.

At the heart of Marxism is dialectical materialism. This approach looks for conflicts and contradictions in any historical period. Faiz's poems show the distance between the promises of freedom made by leaders and the harsh realities faced by common people, who remain exploited. Through this lens, his poetry is not only beautiful but also political. The idea of “*false consciousness*” is important here in a way that it explains how people accept misleading ideas that keep them oppressed. Faiz challenges these false beliefs in his work, urging readers to see the truth behind polished words. Modern critics like Terry Eagleton say that poetry should be both meaningful and artistically strong. Faiz's work balances politics and beauty instead of being mere propaganda.

Postcolonial literary theory also offers another valuable perspective on Faiz's poetry. It explores how writers from colonized nations confront issues of culture, identity, and language as part of resisting colonial legacies. Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak are some key figures here. Bhabha's "*cultural hybridity*" is especially useful as it explains how Faiz blends old Urdu poetic forms with new revolutionary themes, crafting something fresh and original. Postcolonial theory encourages the rebirth of native voices and opposes the dominance of European literary standards. Faiz's choice to write in Urdu, rejecting English, and drawing from South Asian traditions reflects this resistance.

The concept of the "*subaltern*," from Antonio Gramsci and expanded by postcolonial scholars, focuses on voices often ignored such as workers, peasants, and the marginalized. Faiz's poetry amplifies their struggles and challenges elite literary traditions that exclude them. Finally, postcolonial theory pays close attention to language politics. Faiz's use of Urdu, along with Islamic and Sufi imagery, asserts pride in his own culture. It offers a strong form of resistance against Western cultural dominance.

### 3. Data Analysis

Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem "*For Your Lanes, My Country*" is written in simple, clear Urdu. Anyone can understand it, but the message it carries is deep and really strong. It follows the traditional style of Urdu poetry; the rhythm and flow make it smooth and easy to read. But at the same time, Faiz mixes the old poetic ways with new ideas, about fighting against unfairness and loving your country with all your heart. He paints vivid pictures, like "prison bars" and "flowers growing in fire," to show pain but also hope. The lines are arranged carefully, telling a story of struggle mixed with trust in a better future. That is what makes it so powerful and moving. It speaks to people personally and to society as a whole. This study is aimed at the translated version of the poem.

At the very beginning of Faiz's "*For Your Lanes, My Country*," we can feel a strong pull between love for the homeland and the disappointment seen in society. Faiz says, "**For your lanes, my country, / I can sacrifice all I have / But the custom these days is / No one walks with head held high.**" On one hand, there is deep loyalty and a readiness to give up everything. But at the same time, there's sadness, because people have lost their pride. This is what Marxist thinkers call contradiction: the poet's desire to bring change sits side by side with his honest look at how people feel worn down. Both feelings are there, together, right from the start.

The phrase "**for your lanes**" (nisar main teri galiyon ke) uses a traditional Urdu expression often linked to religious devotion. But Faiz turns this sacred language toward a political, secular purpose instead. This clever move shows what postcolonial thinkers call "*abrogation and appropriation*", where colonized people take old or colonial ideas and change them to fight back. By replacing the divine beloved with the nation, Faiz changes classic Urdu poetry in a big way, yet keeps its deep feelings and rich language true to tradition.

In the second stanza, Faiz gets stronger with his images: "**The lovers looking for each other must sneak out / Afraid of life and limb, and / For them, a new order of the day now: / The bricks and stones are imprisoned / and the stray dogs free to roam.**" It is like turning the world upside down. The "bricks and stones", which symbolize honest workers and the foundation of society, are chained up, trapped. But the "stray dogs", refer to lazy or harmful people, run loose, free to do whatever they want. This shows a Marxist idea that those who work and build suffer, while selfish parasites get power and freedom.

But these "lovers" sneaking out are not just figures of romance. They stand for a bigger hope who are people wanting real connection, true freedom to live and create. This mixes Faiz's



feelings about love with his fight for social justice. Love and freedom are both part of the same struggle. Faiz uses this rich picture to show how not just bodies, but hearts and culture get controlled and silenced under bad systems. It is Karl Marx's idea of how people feel cut off or alienated but told through beautiful postcolonial images about losing voice and spirit.

### Marxist Elements and Class Consciousness

In the poem's third stanza, Faiz turns sharper, bringing clear political critique: **"For the many apologists of tyranny, / it's enough that a few of your dear friends / have turned into power-seekers, judges and plaintiffs. / Who can you ask to represent you, / Who can you ask justice from?"** Here, he shows a hard truth about how ruling classes keep their grip on power by pulling potential opponents into their fold. This is a key idea in Marxist thought that the way those who might lead change get absorbed and become part of the system. The change of "dear friends" into "power-seekers, judges and plaintiffs" is powerful. It points to the Marxist idea of class betrayal: people from oppressed groups who join the rulers and start enforcing oppression themselves. Faiz seems to foresee the problem common in postcolonial countries where leaders of independence quickly become new oppressors, rather than champions of true freedom. His words warn that political freedom alone isn't enough; real justice demands deep social and economic change too.

The rhetorical questions, **"Who can you ask to represent you, / Who can you ask justice from?"** do more than just point to bad people in power. They show that the problem is bigger which is a deep, structural kind of oppression that exists both during colonial times and after. It is not just about a few individuals failing morally. Instead, it is about a whole system that keeps people powerless. These questions quietly push us to think about new ways to organize politics in ways that truly include everyone, where real democracy matters, and not just rule by a small group of elites. The hope here is for collective action and fair participation, not relying on those who have already shown themselves to be opposed to justice.

The questions "Who can you ask to represent you, / Who can you ask justice from?" highlight the structural nature of oppression under both colonial and postcolonial conditions. This analysis goes beyond individual moral failings to examine systemic problems that require collective rather than individual solutions. In other words, these questions point toward the need for collective action and political structures based on genuine participation, not elite control.

In the poem's fourth stanza, the tone changes from critique to hope: **"But people do survive, away from you, / worry about you, day and night but manage somehow."** Faiz shows strong faith in the resilience of ordinary people. Even when official systems fail them or turn their backs, these people find ways to survive and resist in their own quiet ways. This reflects a core Marxist idea that the working class has the strength and ability to endure and push back against oppression. At the same time, this idea links to postcolonial thinking, which shows how local communities find their own ways to survive despite being controlled first by colonizers and later by new governments. Faiz respects and praises this strength, saying that true power and hope come from the people themselves, not from those in power or official institutions.

### Postcolonial Identity and Cultural Resistance

The poem uses strong prison pictures that work on many levels at once. When Faiz says, **"When the prison gratings darken, / My heart sees stars sprinkled in your hair,"** it is more than just being locked up. The prison bars stand for his real physical imprisonment, yes, but also for the bigger trap of postcolonial societies stuck under new kinds of control. Even behind those bars, whether physical or political, Faiz's heart finds light and beauty. Those "stars" in someone's hair

show that inside feelings and culture stay free no matter what walls surround you. This idea matches what postcolonial thinkers call *"strategic essentialism"*. It is like taking a strong, shared identity and holding on to it briefly to fight back against domination.

Then there is the picture of dawn lighting up the beloved's face. This is not just about love or waiting for morning. It points to a bigger hope: the idea that pain and sacrifice today feed the waking up of the whole people tomorrow. Faiz borrows ideas from Islamic and Sufi beliefs where going through tough times helps you grow but he uses them in a new way, stripping out religion and putting in political hope instead. This mix of old religious symbols with modern revolutionary ideas shows a cultural hybridity that is at the heart of postcolonial literature. So, though Faiz is trapped, his words push beyond prison walls, shining a hopeful light on freedom waiting to break through. Hope and struggle live side by side here, making the poem both personal and political.

In the poem's second-last stanza, Faiz gives us a strong, clear statement about fighting oppression: **"This is how people fight oppression, / their ritual isn't new, nor are my ways new. / This is how we always grew flowers in fire, / their defeat isn't new, our victory isn't new."** These lines place today's resistance in a long line of history. Faiz is not saying struggle is something new or that victory comes easily or suddenly. Instead, he offers a mature view that avoids both giving up or being overly hopeful. It is a steady, thoughtful kind of revolutionary awareness. Moreover, that image of growing "flowers in fire" is powerful. It shows how beautiful things can come out of tough, painful times, not from comfort or ease. Faiz challenges some old ideas here. The kind of art that only looks pretty but ignores politics, Faiz rejects that. Also, the kind of thinking that says art must only serve a political goal, Faiz rejects that too. For him, real art grows from struggle. It needs to be tied to history and conflict, not run away from it.

### Synthesis of Related Theories

The poem's final stanza brings together both Marxist and postcolonial ideas in a powerful way:

**"That's why I don't complain to the Heaven,**

**or make myself sad thinking about you.**

**We are apart today, but tomorrow**

**we'll be together;**

**separation for one night isn't much,**

**What if my rivals are riding high today**

**their reign of a few days isn't much."**

Here, the poet shows how personal feelings and big historical facts actually support each other instead of being in conflict. When Faiz says he doesn't complain "to the Heaven," it reflects a Marxist and postcolonial belief: problems made by humans need human solutions, not prayers or divine help. Yet, the tone is not bitter or angry. It is full of hope. Revolutionary awareness, according to Faiz, does not take away from love or closeness; in fact, it can make those feelings stronger.

The way he talks about separation and hardship as only temporary shows dialectical thinking too. What look like permanent problems are really passing moments in history. This kind of thinking helps people keep fighting because it gives a long-term view. The confident phrase, "tomorrow we'll be together," is not just hopeful wishful thinking. It is based on a clear understanding that social change will come not by magic but through the way history moves and develops.

At the end, the picture of rivals whose **"reign of a few days isn't much"** talks about all kinds of oppressors. It means both the old colonial rulers and the new leaders who took over after

independence. Faiz shows that these systems of exploitation are not strong forever. The same things that help them stay in power will make them fall too. The poem finishes by putting all these ideas together, but it does something more. Through poetry, it goes beyond simple theory. It gives us a hopeful and human view of struggle, of love, and of freedom coming in the future.

### Conclusion

Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem "For Your Lanes, My Country" shows us a rare and rich blend of ideas. Marxist theory and postcolonial criticism are not battling here; instead, they join hands, helping us see how people resist, how identity shifts, and how culture changes in the shadows of colonial histories. Faiz does not stick strictly to one school of thought. He mixes class struggle with cultural pride, economic critique with artistic beauty, and political passion with honest feeling. Holding onto the elegance of classical Urdu poetry, he talks about the tough issues of his time. This proves that revolutionary poetry can be both deeply meaningful and truly beautiful, without giving up one for the other.

This study does more than just praise Faiz's work. It pushes us to rethink how we read political poetry and concludes that politics and art are not enemies but partners. It reminds us to look closely at poems in their own languages and cultures instead of forcing outside ideas on them. It also shows that old ways of thinking, like dialectics, still help us understand today's tangled world, full of economic and cultural problems. Moving ahead, there's much to learn by comparing poets from different lands, exploring the legacy of the Progressive Writers Movement, and seeing how today's poets build on Faiz's path. Above all, Faiz's poetry proves that true culture and revolutionary spirit grow strongest together. His words inspire us to hold onto our roots and keep fighting for justice, offering hope in a world too often pulled toward sameness and inequality.

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