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SAARE JAHAAÑ SE ACHCHA

Progressive Poets and the Problematic of Nationalism

On 2 March 2002, during the communal pogrom in Gujarat, one act of destruction did not receive much attention, perhaps because it was dwarfed by the scale of violence unleashed in the state. Among the several mosques and *dargahs* that were destroyed was the tomb of one of Urdu's earliest poets, Wali Deccani-Gujrati.

Wali, who lived and worked in the seventeenth century, once spoke about the place he was buried in the following words:

Vahaañ saakin ite haiñ ahl-e mazhab, ke ginti meiñ na aaveñ unke mashrab

Agarche sab haiñ voh abnaa-e Aadam, vale beenash meiñ rangaarang-e aalam

Bhari hai seerat-o soorat suñ Surat, har ek soorat hai vhaañ anmol moorat

Sabha Indar ki hai har ek qadam meiñ, chupa Indar, sabha kun le adam meiñ

Kishan ki gopiyañ ki naiñ hai yeh nasl, rhaeñ sab gopiañ voh naql, yeh asl

So many people of so many religions live there, their sects cannot possibly be counted

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Even though they are all children of Adam, in their appearance, they are a multi-coloured spectrum
Surat (the city) is filled with numerous ways and *surats* (forms), each one of these, a priceless image
At every step, stands the court of Indra, and Indra himself envies these courts
This generation is not of Krishna's *gopis*
For those *gopis* were imperfect imitations – this, the real!

Around the same time that Wali's tomb was being torn down, a mob was burning a home that housed the ex-Congress member of Parliament, Ehsan Jafri, and several members of his family. Though we did not know much about Ehsan Jafri, the reports about him after his death seemed to indicate he was a decent man, who had refused to move to a 'safer' Muslim neighbourhood because he thought that would be a betrayal of his secular ideals and whose wife insisted on moving back into the same home to give lie to the contention that the ability of Muslims and Hindus to coexist had been incinerated in the conflagration of Gujarat. We also found out that Ehsan Jafri was a poet who wrote in the vein of the progressive writers. His book *Qandeel* (Lantern) was filled with poems on religious harmony, pacifism and nationalism. Two homes burnt on the same day, two homes of two Urdu poets separated by three centuries. The span of time between their respective deaths contains the story of a language, its engagement with colonialism, fascism, nationalism and secularism.

In this chapter, we intend to examine the deployment of Urdu poetry as a tool of Indian nationalism, particularly by the poets of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) and attempt to reflect the story of nationalism in the mirror of Urdu poetry. Specifically, we highlight four moments that mark the modes of engagement of the Progressives with the

problematic of nationalism: the anti-colonial struggle against the British, the attitude of the Progressives towards the Second World War, the trauma of the Partition, and the reconfiguration of their politics vis-à-vis the Indian state.

The Anti-Colonial Struggle as Workers' Movement

*Saare jahaan se achcha Hindostaan hamaara
Hum bulbuleñ haiñ uski, voh gulsitaan hamaara*

This simple 'East or West, India is Best' song, still frequently heard in India, was written by Mohammad Iqbal around 1905 and echoed the sentiments of a generation of Urdu poets. The period of 1850s onwards, sometimes referred to as the *Nisheet-e Saania* (Renaissance) in Urdu literature exhibited a new sensibility that was spurred by an attitude of resentment and rebellion against the yoke of colonialism. Around the turn of the century, the call by Altaf Husain Hali and Mohammad Husain Azad to poets asking for mushairas to be organized on the basis of themes such as the love of the nation also provided an impetus to *qaumi shaa'iri*, or the poetry of nationalism.

Urdu poetry for long had had a tradition of an engagement with the human condition but the period of 1920s onwards saw a new mood, one that Jan Nisar Akhtar calls *avaami bedaari ki lehar* (the awakening of the masses). An anthology of Urdu patriotic poetry called *Hindustan Hamara* (Our India), edited by Akhtar, covering the period 1857-1970 runs into two volumes with its thousand or so pages containing over seven hundred poems.

There were plenty of standard patriotic pieces, but a large number of poems of this period indicated the beginning of a new form of social and political awakening. The interesting thing about this consciousness was that the poems of this time

such as 'The Farmer' by Josh, 'The Rise of the New Sun' by Hamidullah, 'The Cry of the New Times' by Sarosh Kashmiri, 'The Challenge of Life' by Firaq Gorakhpuri, 'The Labourer's Flute' by Jameel Manzari, 'Revolution' by Israr-ul-Haq Majaz, 'The Farmer's Song' by Masood Akhtar Jamaal and dozens of others – actively sought to reframe the anti-colonial struggle along the binaries of the exploiters and the exploited, the zamindars and the landless farmers and the *sarmaayadaars* and the *mazdoors* (the capitalists and the labourers). The October Revolution that helped form the Soviet Union was held up as a model and was seen as a source of inspiration. Majaz in his poem 'Inquilab' (Revolution) composed in 1933 writes:

*Kohsaaron ki taraf se surkh aandhi aayegi
Jabaja aabaadiyon mein aag si lag jaayegi ...
Aur is rang-e shafaq mein ba-hazaraan aab-o taab
Jagmagagaega vatan ki hurriyat ka aaftaab*

A red storm is approaching from over the mountains
Sparking a fire in the settlements ...
And on this horizon, amidst a thousand tumults
Shall shine the sun of our land's freedom

This influence is visible even in Iqbal's poetry of this period, which included some unabashed odes to Lenin. An interesting trilogy in *Baal-e Gibreel* (Gabriel's Wing, 1935) starts with a poem in which a startled Lenin finds himself face to face with God he never believed existed. Undaunted, he lets loose a Marxist critique of the poor job that God was doing, starting with the question:

Maiñ kaise samajhta ke tu hai ya ke nahiñ hai?

How do you expect me to have believed in your existence?

As the poem proceeds, Lenin asks: 'Whose God are you; of the same ones who live under the sky? For as far as I could tell, the gods of the East are the foreigners of the West, while the West prays only to the shining dollar. The appropriators of wealth, power and knowledge exploit the poor while preaching equality; profit for one is death for millions.' Lenin concludes with the following observation:

*Tu qaadir-o aadil hai magar tere jahaan mein
Haiñ talq bahut banda-e mazdoor ke auqaat*

You may be powerful and just, but in your world
Bitter are the lives of the slaves of labour

The watching angels mull this over and, convinced by Lenin's analysis, offer their own response in the second poem titled 'Farishton Ka Geet' (The Song of the Angels):

*Aql hai bezamaam abhi, ishq hai bemaqaam abhi
Naqshgar-e azal tera, naqsh hai natamaam abhi*

The Intellect is still unreined, Love still unmoored
Architect of Eternity, your design is still incomplete!

Suitably chastised, God in turn offers his 'Farmaan-e Khuda Farishton Se' (God's Command to the Angels):

*Utho meri duniya ke ghareebon ko jagaado
Kaakh-e umara ke dar-o deewaar hilaado
Jis khet se dahkhaan ko mayassar nahin rozi
Us khet ke har gosha-e gandum ko jalaado*

Rise, awaken the poor of my land
Rattle the palaces of the rich men's band
A field whose crop the farmer can't eat?
Burn, burn every grain of that wheat

In some ways, this mood provided the ground in which the PWA took root in the mid-thirties and flourished in the following decades, spurring the large-scale production of radical cultural leftist fiction and poetry in India. Urdu poetry responded with great enthusiasm, so much so that the PWA defined the social agenda for a whole generation of writers. Since most of the leadership and much of the rank-and-file of the PWA was composed of leftist poets and writers, the goal of the anti-colonial struggle was seen as not merely independence, but the formation of a socialist society. The dawn that was awaited was going to be a red one. In Makhdoom's words:

*Lo surkh savera aata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka
Gulnaar taraana gaata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka
Dekho parcham lahraata hai, aazaadi ka, aazaadi ka*

Behold, the red dawn of independence arrives
Singing the red anthem of liberty
And look, the banner of freedom waves in the wind

For the Progressives, the freedom struggle was inextricably intertwined with their socialist aspirations. The end of one form of oppression, they believed, would come hand in hand with the end of all forms of oppression.

The Second World War and the Progressive Flip-Flop

The advent of the Second World War provided more fodder for the Progressives' pens. When the British asked the people of India to join it in what the Progressives had dubbed the 'imperialist war', Josh Malihabadi responded with a biting sarcastic poem titled 'East India Company Ke Farzandon Se' (To the Sons of the East India Company)¹⁷:

*Kis zabaan se kah rahe ho aaj, ai saudaagaro
Dahr mein insaanayat ke naam ko ooncha karo
Jisko sab kahte hain Hitler, bhediya hai, bhediya
Bhediyee ko maar do goli pa'e amn-o baqaa
Baagh-e insaani pe chalne hi ko hai baad-e khizaañ
Aadamiiyyat le rahi hai hichkiyoñ par hichkiyaañ
Haath Hitler ka hai rakhsh-e khudsari ki baag par
Tegh ka paani chidak do Germany ki aag par.*

*Sakht hairaan hoon, ke mahfil mein tumhaari aur ye zikr
Nau-e insaani ke mustaqbil ki ab karte ho fikr?
Jab yahaan aaye the tum saudaagari ke vaaste
Nau-e insaani ke mustaqbil se kya vaaqif na the?
Hindiyon ke jism mein kya rooh-e aazaadi na thi?
Sach bataao, kya voh insaanoñ ki aabaadi na thi?*

*Apne zulm-e be-nihaayat ka fasaana yaad hai?
Company ka bhi voh daur-e mujrimaana yaad hai?
Loot-te phirte the tum jab kaarvaañ dar kaarvaañ?
Sar barahna phir rahi thi daulat-e Hindostaan
Dastkaaron ke angoothae kaat-te phirte the tum
Sard laashon se garhon ko paat-te phirte the tum
San'at-e Hindostaan par maut thi chaayi hui
Maut bhi kaisi? Tumhaare haath ki laayi hui*

*Allah! Allah! Kis qadar insaaf ke taalib ho aaj
Meer Jafar ki qasam, kya dushman-e haq tha Siraaj?
Voh Avadh ki begamon ka bhi sataana yaad hai?
Yaad hai Jhaansi ki Raani ka zamaana yaad hai?
Hijrat-e Sultan-e Dilli ka samaan bhi yaad hai?
Sher-dil Tipu ki khooni daastaañ bhi yaad hai?
Teesre faaqe mein ek girte hue ko thaamne
Kin ke sar laaye the tum Shaah-e Zafar ke saamne?*

*Voh Bhagat Singh jis ke gham mein ab bhi dil naashaad hai
Us ki gardan mein jo daala tha voh phanda yaad hai?
Zahn mein hoga ye taaza Hindiyon ka daagh bhi
Yaad to hoga tumheñ Jalianwala Baagh bhi*

With what tongue dare you counsel us, O traders!

You say: 'Restore the dignity of humanity in the world
He who they call Hitler is but a wolf
Let us shoot him down, in the name of peace and stability
The winds of bleak autumn are about to ruin the garden
Humanity is gasping in its death throes
Hitler's hand has grasped the mane of the horse of hubris
Let us douse Germany's fire with the water of the sword'

I am amazed by the words that emerge from your assembly!
You talk about the future of humanity now?
When you came here to ply your sorry trade
Were you not acquainted with humanity's future then?
Didn't the bodies of Indians have the soul of freedom?
Speak truthfully, wasn't it a community of humans?

Do you even remember the tales of your unparalleled cruelty?
Of the Company's criminal days in power?
When you went about looting every caravan
While the wealth of India wandered bare-headed
You, who used to cut off the thumbs of weavers,
And fill holes in the earth with cold corpses?
The industry of India was under the shadow of death
And what a wretched death! At your hands!

Allah! Allah! How you demand justice today!
Swear by Meer Jafar¹⁸; was Siraj such an enemy of truth?
Do you recall how you harassed the noblewomen of Oudh?
Remember the age of the Queen of Jhansi¹⁹? Remember?
Do you remember the flight of the King of Delhi²⁰?
Remember the bloody legend of Tipu²¹ the Lion-hearted?
And to support him as he was collapsing on his third hungry day
Whose heads did you bring in front of King Zafar²²?

That Bhagat Singh whose memory still fills the heart with sorrow
Surely you remember the noose you put round his neck?
The scars that Indians felt must be fresh in your memory
Those that were inflicted at Jalianwala Bagh. You remember, don't you?

Needless to say, this poem was banned immediately after it was published, and Josh's journal *Kaalim* (The Pen-Wielder) was

forced to close down. The Urdu press became a platform for the anti-war position of the Progressives, who decried the British position that this was a war for justice. The 'imperialist war' was roundly condemned and there were demands to transform the war into a revolution. Communists across the nation, including Sajjad Zaheer, were arrested and imprisoned. Poets wrote of the war as one that was being waged for wealth and as a sign that capitalism was tottering on its throne. Their sympathies were with the soldiers who were being condemned to die in the service of an imperial order.

This sentiment underwent a profound change with Hitler's launch of Operation Barbarossa – the German invasion of Russia – in June 1941. The jailed leadership of the PWA, most likely under a directive from Moscow, issued a statement from the Deoli detention camp near Ajmer – the 'Deoli thesis' – asking for unflinching support to the anti-fascist cause. Eventually, the poets responded. Makhdoom, who had written a poignant anti-war piece called 'Sipaahi' (Soldier), now produced his 'Jang-e Aazaadi' (The War for Freedom), a poem that reflected the new configuration of allies:

*Ye jang hai jang-e aazaadi
Saara sansaar hamaara hai
Poorab, pachchim, uttar, dakshin
Hum Afrangi, hum Amriki
Hum Cheeni jaanbaazan-e vatan
Hum surkh sipaahi zulm shikan
Aahan paikar, faulaad badan
Ye jang hai jang-e aazaadi
Aazaadi ke parcham ke tale*

This is a war for freedom
The whole world is ours
The East and the West, the North and the South
We Europeans, we Americans

We Chinese soldiers ready to sacrifice ourselves for our homeland
We, the red soldiers, the destroyers of tyranny
Iron-bodied, steely figured
This is the war for freedom
Under the banner of freedom

The Awaited Dawn of Freedom

Freedom did eventually dawn, but the redness of its colour came not from its revolutionary/socialist fervour but from the bloody Partition, and Urdu poetry reflected the mood of the times in a somber, mournful tone. Faiz Ahmad Faiz's famous lament 'Subh-e Aazaadi' (Freedom's Morning) exemplifies this mood:

*Ye daagh daagh ujaala, ye shab gazeeda sahar
Voh intezaar tha jiska ye voh sahar to nahiñ*

...
*Suna hai ho bhi chuka hai firaq-e zulmat-o noor
Suna hai ho bhi chuka hai visaal-e manzil-o gaam
Badal chuka hai bahut ahl-e dard ka dastoor
Najaat-e vasl halaal-o azaab-e hijr haraam*

*Jigar ki aag, nazar ki umang, dil ki jalan
Kisi pe chaara-e hijraañ ka kuch asar hi nahiñ
Kahaañ se aayi nigaar-e saba, kidhar ko gayi?
Abhi charaagh-e sar-e rah ko kuch khabar hi nahiñ*

This tarnished light, this ashen dawn
This is not that morning which we were awaiting

...
Now they tell us that Darkness has finally been expunged from the Light
That our Path has already merged with its Destination
That the fortunes of abject lovers have turned such that
The pleasure of union is now Permitted, the hell of separation Forbidden

But the fire in the soul, the yearning in the gaze, the wound of the heart
Are unaffected by the balm of those who seek to heal parting's sorrow

Where did the morning breeze come from, which way did it depart?
No one seems to know, not even the lamp that lights up the path

Offering a similar disillusioned take, but deploying a harsher tone, Sahir's poem 'Mufaahimat' (Compromise) announced:

*Ye jashn jashn-e masarrat nahiñ, tamaasha hai
Naye libaas mein nikla hai rahzani ka juloos
Hazaar sham-e aquawat bujha ke chamke haiñ
Ye teeragi ke ubhaare hue naye faanoos*

This is not a celebration of joy, but a vulgar spectacle
The same procession of robbers has emerged wearing new clothes
After extinguishing a thousand lamps of relationships
A new lampshade has been trotted out by the darkness

In a poem that was probably written a few years later, Ahmad Faraz echoes the sentiments that were dominant among the Progressives in Pakistan:

*Ab kis ka jashn manaate ho
Us desh ka jo taqseem hua
Us desh ka geet sunaate ho
Jo toot ke hi tasleem hua*

*In mazloomoñ ka jin ke lahu se
Tum ne firoza raateñ ki
Ya un mazloomoñ ka jin se
Khanjar ki zubaan mein baateñ ki*

Now what do you celebrate?
That country that was torn into two
Whose song do you sing?
Of that nation that came into being only upon being broken?

You celebrate the ones with whose blood
You painted your nights a ruby shade?
Or those oppressed with whom you spoke
In the murderous tongue of the blade?

Josh's quiet despair was evident in his couplet:

*Apna gala kharosh-e tarannum se phat gaya
Talvaar se bacha, to rag-e gul se kat gaya*

The strain of song tore our throats
We escaped the sword, but were beheaded by the rose's vein

The division of the nation along religious lines, particularly the formation of Pakistan as a state founded on the basis of Muslim nationalism, was repugnant to the Progressives. Independence had produced a condition that was far removed from their cherished dream of a socialist, united India. The use of religion as a means to unite, and consequently divide people, was widely condemned by them on both sides of the border. They wrote extensively about the conditions of independence, contending that it was the result of a deal made between the British government and an alliance of the rich and powerful in India and Pakistan. In an editorial published in *Savera*, Sahir Ludhianvi and Nazir Chaudhri asserted that 'the edifices of nationalism ... raised on the false view of religion' would soon 'crumble to dust'.²³

The newly formed states were seen as oppressive, an assessment that was borne out soon afterwards by the attitude of the governments of both India and Pakistan towards the Left. Abdul Majeed Bhatti's song depicts the irony of self-rule under which women and girls were being abducted and raped:

*Beti gaaon bhar ki beti
Beti sab ki laaj
Nagar nagar mein kaudi-kaudi bik gayi beti aaj
Aaya apna raaj!*

The girls who were the entire village's daughters
The girls who were everyone's honour

Are now being sold for a pittance
Self-rule has arrived!

In a comment about this poem, Zaheer Kashmiri contended that it was obvious that 'the riots and the so-called independence are two inevitable aspects of the imperialist policy'²⁴.

Faiz's 'Subh-e Azaadi' ended with the following lines asserting that the arrival of Independence was not the end of the struggle:

*Abhi giraani-e shab mein kami nahin aayi
Najaat-e deeda-o dil ki ghadī nahin aayi
Chale chalo ke woh manzil abhi nahin aayi*

The burden of the night still weighs us down
The eye and the heart are still not free
Move on, for our destination hasn't yet been reached

The Disillusionment with the Nation-State

The *manzil* (destination) for many of the Progressives was a socialist revolution. Freedom from the British was seen by many of them as the replacement of one form of imperialism by another. For them, the battle continued. The poets saw their work as a means to build a certain kind of political consciousness among their millions of listeners. The Congress leadership, once valourized, bore the brunt of the attack.

The Telangana peasant movement had been held aloft as the beacon of the revolutionary age to come. The rural poor of this region had generated an uprising that was unique in its caste/class participation and its vision of a new order. This revolutionary movement that had started in 1939 was still strong in 1947 when Makhdoom wrote 'Telangaana':

*Dayaar-e Hind ka woh raahbar Telangaana
Bana raha hai nayi ek sahar Telangaana*

*Bula raha hai ba simt-e digar Telangaana
Voh inquilaab ka paighoambar Telangaana*

The leader of a new India, Telangana
The creator of a new dawn, Telangana
Beckoning us towards a new place
The prophet of the revolution, Telangana

Since the ode to Telangana demanded a salute towards the source of its inspiration, the 'Arz-e Cheen' (the land of China), the poem ended with the following lines:

*Salaam surkh shaheedon ki sar-zameen salaam
Salaam azm-e buland, aahani yaqeen salaam
Mujaahidon ki chamakti hui jabeen salaam
Dayar-e Hind ki mahboob arz-e Cheen salaam*

Salutations to the land of the red martyrs
To the lofty purpose, its iron-clad certainty
To the shining foreheads of the revolutionaries
To the land of China, India's beloved

But the Telangana Movement was brutally crushed by the newly formed state. Jawaharlal Nehru, once the darling of the Progressives, received his share of the flak and was subjected to vitriolic criticism such as 'Commonwealth ka daas ye Nehru, aur tabaahi laane na paaye' ('Let us ensure that Nehru, the slave-agent of the Commonwealth does not wreak any more havoc'). The disillusionment with the bourgeois nation-state was expressed in acerbic terms by Sahir in his poem titled 'Chhabbees Janvary' (26th January²⁵):

*Aao ke aaj ghaur karen is savaal par
Dekhe the hum ne jo, woh haseen khwaab kya hue?
Behas barehnagi ko kafan tak nahin naseeb
Voh vaada-haa-e atlas-o hamkhwaab kya hue?
Jamhooriyat-navaaz, bashar-dost, amn-khwaah
Khud ko jo khud diye the, woh alqaab kya hue?*

Come, and let us ponder on the question
 Those beautiful dreams of ours, what became of them?
 The helpless and naked cannot even afford a shroud
 What happened to those promises of silk and satin?
 Democrat, humanist, pacifist
 What happened to all those self-conferred titles?

While the critique of the national leadership continued, the PWA lost much steam during this period. The internal struggles of the Communist Party of India, especially between the moderate faction headed by P. C. Joshi and the radicals led by B. T. Ranadive played themselves out in the literary arena as well. The Ranadive doctrine was more or less adopted by the PWA with Abdul Aleem issuing what amounted to a policy statement: 'The so-called nationalist government proclaim themselves as enemies of imperialism but make compromises with it. All their policies are in the interests of capitalists while they pretend to represent the people. This contradiction is demonstrated in every department of culture and civilization, especially literature.'

The world according to the new manifesto (1949) was split between two camps - the democratic and the imperialist. Similarly, India was divided into feudal reactionaries in collusion with foreign and domestic capitalists, and the forces of progressivism. The concept of Socialist Realism, as defined by the Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers, was invoked, demanding a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality that served the purposes of ideological transformation and the education of the workers in the spirit of socialism. The PWA denounced individualism and those who engaged in art for arts sake (*adab ba ra-e adab adeeb*), taking many of their own to task for failing to live up to these standards. Internal fights and purges followed and while the PWA eventually did weather

these storms, it emerged from them as a significantly weaker force. Its period of uncontested hegemony had come to an end.

Notwithstanding the fact that the moment of Independence and the following period had not resulted in the fulfilment of their socialist dream, the Progressives continued to write with great intensity about issues of social justice. But their aspirations were now different, their enthusiasm and hope for an egalitarian society now tempered. This period was marked by the decline of the movement and progressive Urdu poetry spoke chiefly through the remaining voices of those who had carried its banner so proudly in the past. Some of the more interesting poetry was produced through the attempts of the Progressives to seek newer configurations by turning their attention to struggles taking place in different parts of the world. Poems were composed on Palestine, Vietnam, the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, the Rosenbergs, Paul Robeson and Martin Luther King. In some ways, international solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles took the place of nationalist aspirations in the Progressives' repertoire.

The trajectory that we have laid out can be read in more ways than one. For example, one can see this account as a failure of the progressive Urdu poets to come to terms with the shifting terrain of nationalism. Or, one could understand it as the failure of nationalism and modernity to live up to their promises of liberty and equality for all. In either case, the Progressives can be seen as critics of nationalism in the revolutionary tradition of anti-colonial black intellectuals like Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James, positing universal goals like emancipation and giving prominence to what Fanon called social consciousness over national consciousness.

For the Progressives, the world was a secular space; it was the world of Time, the world of History and above all, a world fashioned by human beings. It had no room for revelation, redemption or a transcendental origin. And if it had a telos, it was the socialist revolution. The pursuit of this ideal led them to adopt a variety of strategies based on class solidarity in an attempt to create a socially just form of nationalism.

Ironically, the urge to reject religious and sectarian identities was so overwhelming that the condition of minority existence in a polarizing society was never really addressed. One might argue that progressive Urdu poetry's abdication of the space of religion made it easier for retrograde and communal forces to appropriate it (though it would be unfair to blame the Progressives for this). A more sympathetic reading might be that perhaps the burden of the minority and the urge to prove their fidelity to an India that was growing suspicious of its Muslim citizens weighed heavily on them. One example of this can be found in their attitude towards the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and the Indo-Pak war of 1965. Despite the fact that many of the Progressives had maintained a strong anti-war stance in much of their work (with the 'peoples' war' period being a glaring exception), they penned some rather militant verses during this time, exemplified by the following lines from Kaifi's song for the movie *Haqeeqat* (1964):

*Khench do apne k̄hooñ se zameen̄ par lakeer
Is taraf aane paaye na Raavan̄ koi
Toḍ do haath gar haath uthne lageñ
Chhoone paaye na Sita ka daaman̄ koi
Raam ho tum, tumhiñ Lakhsman̄ saathiyo
Ab tumhaare havaale watan̄ saathiyo*

Draw a line on the sand with your blood
May no Ravan be able to cross it

Break those hands that rise against us
May no one be able to touch Sita's garment again
You are Ram, and you are Lakshman too, O compatriots
We now leave this land in your care

Most Indian writers took a hard stand against Pakistan during the 1965 war (an attitude that was reflected on the other side of the border). The notable exceptions were the old-timer Progressives such as Ali Sardar Jafri, who insisted on writing poetry urging the people of both countries to examine their attitudes and to turn the border from one that separated nations into one that symbolized kissing lips:

*Voh din aaye ke aansoo ho ke nafrat dil se bah jaaye
Voh din aaye ye sarhad bosa-e lab ban ke rah jaaye*

...
*Ye sarhad doobte taaron̄, ubharte aafaaon̄ ki
Ye sarhad k̄hooñ mein̄ lithde pyaar ke zakhmi gulaabon̄ ki
Maiñ is sarhad pe kabse muntazar hooñ subh-e farda ka*

May that day arrive when hatred ebbs from the heart in the form of tears
May that day arrive when this border becomes the kissing lips of the beloved

...
This is the border of setting stars, of rising suns
This the border of love's roses soaked in blood
I, for long, have been waiting at this border for a new morning

Sahir characteristically wrote a strong poem, urging the two nations to turn their attention to other, more important wars:

*Jang sarmaaye ke tasallut se
Amn jamhoor ki khushi ke liye
Jang jangoñ ke falsafe ke khilaaf
Amn pur-amn zindagi ke liye*

Wage war against the grip of capitalism
Seek peace for the happiness of the common people

Wage war against the philosophy of war
Seek peace for the sake of a harmonious life

Perhaps the most famous of Sardar Jafri's verses are these from a poem 'Kaun Dushman Hai?' (Who is the Enemy?) that was composed during the 1965 war and addressed to his Pakistani counterparts:

*Tum aao gulshan-e Lahore se chaman bar-dosh
Hum' aayeñ subh-e Banaaras ki raushni le kar
Himaalaya ke havaaon ki taazagi le kar
Phir us ke baad ye poochhenge, kaun dushman hai?*

You come bearing the gardens of Lahore on your shoulders
We will bring the brightness of Benaras' morning
The freshness of the Himalayan breeze
And then, we can ask one another: who is the enemy?

The Partition had divided the nation in more ways than one. The political partition of the region was followed in a gradual fashion by its cultural partition. The tensions between state and literary ideologies, between their durability and mutation were inscribed on the body of Urdu itself.

The year 1947 was not the only partition that the region witnessed. In 1971, following a long and brutal repression of the aspirations of the Bengali population of East Pakistan, the state of Bangladesh came into being. In a poignant poem Faiz, returning from a trip to the new nation, wrote about the hatred and suspicion that now filled the hearts of his once-compatriots:

*Hum ke ihahre ajnabi itni madaaraaton ke baad
Phir banenge aashna kitni mulaqaaton ke baad
Kab nazar mein aayegi be-daagh sabze ki bahaar
Khoon ke dhabbe dhulenge kitni barsaaton ke baad
Dil to chaaha par shikast-e dil ne mohlat hi na di
Kuch gile-shikve bhi kar lete munaajaaton ke baad*

*The bahut be-dard lamheñ khatm-e dard-e ishq ke
Thi bahut be-mahr sub'heñ mehrbaañ raaton ke baad
Un se jo kahne gaye the Faiz, jaañ sadqa kiye
Ankahi hi rah gayee voh baat sab baaton ke baad*

We remain strangers, despite our histories of hospitality
How many more meetings will we need, before we become friends again?
When again will we see the bloom of an unspoiled spring?
How many rainfalls will it take to wash away the bloodstains?
The heart did desire fiercely, but its wounds gave no respite
If only we could share grievances too, after the pleasantries were done
Devastating were the moments when the pain of love came to an end
Very cruel were the mornings after the gentleness of those nights
Faiz, that one thing which I went there to say with all my heart
That very thing was left unsaid, after so much had been spoken

The engagement of the progressive poets with the issue of nationalism was complex and contingent. At different points in history, the Progressives were determined nationalists struggling against an imperial order, allies in common cause with other nationalist struggles, patriots averse to letting the promise of the nation-state be subverted by a self-serving leadership and internationalists who recognized no border in their expressions of solidarity with those who were battling injustice. The unifying theme of the Progressives' engagement with nationalism was their insistence that it be reclaimed from the grasp of the elites by the common people, that it be defined by the masses rather than the leaders and that it be held accountable to the consciousness of a universality that was underscored by justice and egalitarianism.

عقائد و رسم ہیں مذہب خیالِ خام ہے ساقی
ازل سے عقلِ انساں بستہ ادہام ہے ساقی

یہ دنیا دورنگی ہے
ایک طرف سے ریشم اور ٹٹھے ایک طرف سے تنگی ہے
ایک طرف اندھی دولت کی پاگل عیش پرستی
ایک طرف جسموں کی قیمت روٹی سے بھی سستی
ایک طرف ہے سونا گایچی ایک طرف چورنگی ہے
یہ دنیا دورنگی ہے

کھائیں بھی مزدور کا مزدور پر عشترا تین بھی
دن کو محنت بھی کرائیں رات کو رُلوائیں بھی
بھوک سے مزدور کے بچے بھی بلکیں مائیں بھی
تف ہے سرمایہ پرستوں پر کہیں مٹ جائیں بھی
انتقام اے انتقام اے انتقام اے انتقام

ہم دیکھیں گے
لازم ہے کہ ہم بھی دیکھیں گے، ہم دیکھیں گے
وہ دن کے جس کا وعدہ ہے
جو لوحِ ازل پہ لکھا ہے
ہم دیکھیں گے

فن جو نادار تک نہیں پہنچا
اپنے معیار تک نہیں پہنچا

اب اہل درد یہ جینے کا اہتمام کریں
اُسے بھلا کے غمِ زندگی کا نام کریں
سیکھائیں دستِ طلب کو اداسے بے باکی
پیغامِ زیرِ لبی کو صلا سے عام کریں
غلام رہ چکے توڑیں یہ بندِ رسوائی
کچھ اپنے بازو سے محنت کا احتتام کریں

اک محل کی آڑ سے نکلا وہ پیلا ماہتاب
جیسے مُلا کا عمامہ جیسے بننے کی کتاب

ہیں کہ اک محنت کش میں کہ تیرگی دشمن
صبحِ نو عبات ہے میرے سکرانے سے
سرخ انقلاب آیا دورِ آفتاب آیا
منتظر تھیں یہ آنکھیں جس کی اک زلمنے سے
اب زمین گلے گی ہل کے ساز پر نغمے
دادیوں میں ناچیں گے ہر طرف ترانے سے
مچلے بنیں گے اب رنگِ دلہ کے پیرا ہن
اب سنور کے نکلے گا حسنِ کارخانے سے