INTRODUCTION

Section 1: Ideology and Art

“Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh and too self-ful to seek other than itself” (Gibran 119). The above lines by Gibran sum up the whole apparatus of purposeful art as it speaks beyond its restricted arena. Wherefore, poets especially writing protest poetry have always been the voice of nation’s conscience. Here, the term ‘nation’ is used in naive sense sans its demonic implications. It addresses its population at large, the inhabitants and the victims of oppression and subjugation. Poetry is not simply a flight of imagination and a pleasure seeking object. Is it just a revelatory distillation of experience, an insight which is trebled in its force and impact because of its virile word-play? Rather “it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before” (Lorde 36). The adherents of the school of ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ do not seek principles of empowerment in art as for them gratification of senses is the prime motive behind any literary and artistic pursuit. Joseph Brodsky adhering to the premise of art playing the role of resistor writes in his essay “Poetry as a Form” that:

Art is a form of resistance to the imperfection of reality, as well as an attempt to create an alternative reality, an alternative that one hopes will possess the hallmarks of a conceivable, if not an achievable, perfection. The moment art relinquishes the principle of necessity and comprehensibility, it surrenders its position and dooms itself to fulfilling a purely decorative function. (221)

The rejoinder to the tussle between these two schools of thought (namely ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ and ‘Art for Life’s Sake’) is given by that school of literature which advocates that art is meant to record and bring about social change. It is not simply an agency for promotion of status quo howsoever reflective it may be. Even in contemporary postcolonial theory, poetry has been invested with an interventionist role. Contemporary postcolonial African writers such as Leopold Senghor and Chinua Achebe have criticised the former slogan for being narrow in its scope and fostering eurocentric view of art and creation. In “Negro African Aesthetics”, Senghor argues that “art and literature of negro is committed” and that “in black Africa, ‘art for art’s sake’ does not exist” (qtd. in Larsen “African Literature or African
Achebe is more scathing in his collection of essays and criticism entitled *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, where he asserts that “art for art’s sake is just another piece of deodorised dog shit” (19). Even socially active writers from other continents approach art in terms of its activist potential. Joseph Brodsky, for instance, views that “True art is always democratic precisely because there is no denominator more common, in either society or history, than the sense that reality is imperfect and that a better alternative should be sought” (221). It is with the same design that the Progressive Writers Association is formed worldwide. The progressive writers especially in Urdu stand by these democratic precepts and innovate and revolutionise the content of the poetry without rejecting the form.

The thinkers of the New Left have explained the reasons as to why art is deliberately reduced to mere aesthetic pleasure sans any social role. In every epoch, the ruling classes befuddle the minds of the oppressed classes by systematically incorporating in them the ideas that seek to maintain the balance of class forces intact. In order to maintain their hegemony, they convince the broadest section of the masses that status quo is in the best of interest of the oppressed classes as well. Thus, the ruling classes maintain their rule by means of propaganda. According to Althusser’s definition of Ideological State Apparatuses, the ruling classes maintain a pro-capitalist status quo with the help of school, religion, media, art and academic circulation. He says by doing so:

The individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself’. There are no subjects except by and for their subjection. (169)

In short, all possible realms of knowledge dissemination are directly or indirectly controlled by the ruling classes as they aspire to establish their ideological hegemony over the masses. Gramsci also holds similar view. He says:

...the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as “domination” and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’” and “The ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime
is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. (qtd. in Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* 215)

Adorno gives a seemingly bleak view of a reified society, yet for him in this commodified world, aesthetics of redemption highlight the critical role of art in society. As an ideology Althusser says:

…the culture industry becomes a new form of religion or pop-religion; it is legitimated by “the spiritual constitution of the masses” and its promise of providing “standards of orientation” to organize a chaotic world. “The power of the culture industry’s ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness.” (qtd. in Bolanos, “The Critical Role of Art” 26)

This is perhaps the greatest danger that the culture industry poses on us. It is not so much direct physical harm that Adorno fears. Instead, focus of his writings is on the stupefaction of the masses which results in the diminishment of critical incredulity.

Art participates in the dialectical dynamism of society and culture and it mobilizes itself as a counter-culture of the well-accepted culture or ideology. It is precisely at this stage that role of revolutionary intellectuals, artists, institutions and movements (PWA, IPTA, SAHMAT) acquire utmost significance. In an interview, Edward W. Said, the great intellectual of our time points out that: “In a world so long might is right, the powerful in the global politics want the perpetuation of their control through handpicked cronies and lackeys in different countries, we will need poets like Faiz and Neruda to expose them and give us courage to fight against them” (“Faiz-Neruda” Web). In Asiatic societies, poetry and music have played an extensively important role in forming the psychological make-up of society. The oriental culture when traced back to its nascent stage has primarily been oral. Our religious scriptures are known for their mnemonic quality. That is why the role of the revolutionary writers and poets becomes paramount. These poets and artists not only inspire but also strike a chord with the popular masses that enable people to form connection with their poetry. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sahir Ludhianavi, Ahmed Nadeem, Jaan Nisar Akhtar, Habib Jalib, Amrita Pritam, Kaifi Azmi and later Ahmed Faraz continue to hold aloft the banner of
purposive art and poetry.

Section II: Rise of Progressive Literature in the Indian Subcontinent

Before the arrival of the Progressive Movement as an established platform, progressive elements can be found in the works of various poets, novelists and short story writers. All forms of obsolete and retrogressive behaviours and practices dominating the social and cultural set up are taken to task by them. The Movement of progressive literature is a mature form of the literary movement that begins after ascendency of British in India. In Urdu, the foundation of progressive elements in literature is laid down by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and his friends. Ghalib is considered as the vanguard of this Movement. It was he who advised Syed Ahmed, “how long will you weave garlands from the bones of the past? Take a look around you, and think how future is going to shape the country” (qtd. in Zaheer, The Light xvi). The establishment of the scientific society, the Aligarh College, and the issue of the magazine, Tahzeeb-ul-Akhlaq, are links in the new chain of thought. The literary achievement of progressivism makes impact on the writers like Azad, Hali, Ismail and Meeruthi as they try to rescue literature from the effects of melancholy, despair, escapism and fantasy and propel it towards realism, hope and optimism.

It is the desire for Independence, the turmoil of war world-wide and the retrogression being spread in order to promote interests of the colonisers that spearhead a turn towards more advance form of revolt. The writings of the new writers gather intensity in this period. Writers like Iqbal, Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Qazi Abdul Ghaffar, Premchand, Josh Malihabadi, and other writers of the age herald freedom and so literature of protest is born in the subcontinent and writers begin to write about issues of national and international importance. The Progressive Movement as an established association takes leap from these revolutionary traditions.

Urdu poetry for a very long time has tradition of engagement with human sentiments and emotions but around 1920s, the poets start writing quami shayari or poetry of nationalism. Mohammad Iqbal writes Tarana- E-Hind in 1905 and echoes the sentiments of generation of Urdu poets. Ali Hussain Mir and Raza Mir trace a shift in this period as the period indicates the beginning of a new form of social and political awakening. They write:
The interesting thing about this new 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 New Times” by Sarosh Kashmiri, “The Challenge of Life” by Masood Akhtar Jamaal and dozens of others actively sought to reframe the anti-colonial struggle along binaries of the exploiters and exploited, the Zamindars and landless farmers and the *sarmaayadaars* and the *mazdoors* (the capitalists and the labourers). (Mir & Mir 55)

Premchand is of the view that: “Beauty was not confined to an upper-class woman with a well-made-up face; there was beauty in the woman working in a field, perspiring freely, and tending a sleeping child at the same time” (qtd. in Padmanabhan, “A Progressive Poet” 20). In a couplet in one of his ghazals, Jafri explains his commitment toward sufferings of humanity as for him:

\[
\begin{align*}
Kahin bijli gire woh apna gulshan ho ke auron ka \\
Mujhe apni hi shaakh-i-aashiyan maaloom hoi hai
\end{align*}
\]

[Wherever there is lightning, in our garden or of others
I see it crashing upon my own nest’s branch.] (Trans. S N H Jafri web)

The forward marching in literature is not confined to poetry writing. The novelists, short story writers like Ismat Chughtai, Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand all contribute to the advancing trend that challenge the old and obsolete themes and trends in literature. Premchand’s 1934 novel *Gaban* (Stolen Jewels) reflects on the political turmoil in its story of a peasant disillusioned with corrupt Congress leaders. Mulk Raj Anand’s 1936 novel *Coolie* is about a strike of Bombay textile workers and features a confrontation between a ‘red’ trade unionist and a compromising Congress union leader.

**Section III: Formation of Progressive Writer’s Association (PWA) and its Associate Wings**

Munshi Premchand’s presidential address of the PWA conference reverberates with the strong sentiments of realism, democracy and representation. He says:
If you cannot see beauty in a poor woman whose perspiration flows as, laying down her sleeping child on a mound along the field, she works in the field, then, it is your own vision that is to blame. For, behind those wilted lips and withered checks reside sacrifice, devotion, and endurance. Youth is not the name for poetic ecstasy and sighing over the coyness, perverseness, and vanity of the fair sex; it is the name for idealism, courage, endurance, and sacrifice, it will prepare us to dig out the foundations of a culture in which thousands of human beings are subjected to the tyranny of one. (qtd. in Zaheer, *The Light* 64)

He firmly believes in the power of revolt. He acknowledges that energy of people when channelized in the right direction can give impetus to reform in the society. The progressive writers are of the opinion that artist must rebel against the outmoded mores of society, devoting all their energies to economic and political freedom.

The influence of Karl Marx is revealed in the writings of progressive writers who strive for purposive art in opposition to romanticized representation of reality. Marx and Engels consider it impossible to understand art and literature proceeding only from their internal laws of development. In their opinion, the essence, origin, development, and social role of art can only be understood through analysis of the social system as a whole, within which the economic factor, of productive forces in complex interaction with production relations play a decisive role. Thus, art, as defined by Marx and Engels, is one of the forms of social consciousness. In the book *On Literature and Art*, Marx and Engels link the aesthetic work and realism as they say that in work of art:

The principal characters are representatives of distinct classes and tendencies and hence definite ideas of their time, and the motives of their actions are to be found not only in trivial individual desires but in the historical stream on which they are carried. (145)

The formation of Progressive Writers Association (PWA) is a result of various monumental transformations that take place not only on political, social, and economic fronts but also on cultural front of our country. Progressive Movement since its inception to its decline
witnesses various cultural and sociological influxes which are revolutionary in nature and cause a national and international quiver and palpitation. The Movement has witnessed various historical phases like colonialism and its resultant nationalism, Partition and its incidental communalism, anti-imperialism and its consequent social revolution (marxist sense). The theme of poetry is neither religion nor simple recording of political and social events. It embraces all aspects of human life, because the basic and the only theme of poetry, as that of all literature and art, is Man.

The factors that lead to the rise of the Movement are varied. The limited expansion of industry, trade, education, and other sectors (after Independence) lead to frustration at national level. The economic policies are also framed to pursue the capitalist path of development as it helps only the capitalists while they emaciate the working masses. The Movement is product of the circumstances prevailing at the end of the First World War. The economic depression worldwide affected India as so many youths were in the war debacle and billions were wasted which could have profited millions of deprived masses. In such difficult times, when there is suffering everywhere and capitalist greed is set on buying the conscience of helpless men, it is the Progressive Writers Association with other forward looking movements like Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) who share the grief of suffering humanity and breathe in them the willingness to struggle for their rights and create in them the confidence to expose the clever manipulation of the masses by the selected few.

They even attempt to create harmony between literature and claims of life. So the writings of this age herald democratic principles and the literature of protest is born in the subcontinent. The writers start to address all international and national issues and cater to the democratic principles of freedom and equality. Their preference for revivalism and efforts to present religion in a new light also is a way to promote rationality and democratic ideas. When British try to instill a feeling of inferiority amongst Indians, the progressive writers become resolute in preserving the dignity of our culture and history. They make use of all possible cultural, religious and historical symbols in their writings with the purpose to instill a sense of self-esteem in the citizens of the country. This further enables them to give up the lassitude and confusion and the masses begin to think more rationally.

PWA together with IPTA (Indian People’s Theatre Association) reaches both rural
and urban masses as the literary and dramatic productions of these two organisations, is understood by people belonging to every class. Both these cultural institutions support each other tremendously and have united Indians to the vicissitudes of their country folk by involving masses in the struggle at all levels. The material, mental and spiritual condition of the people are portrayed so effectively that it pleases our heart and mind both, and create a clear awareness of modern life and its problems. The pressing need for the establishment of the PWA is mass involvement. Earlier reform movements like the one started by Syed Ahmed Khan, Hali, Nazir Ahmed remain popular amongst people inhabiting a particular geographical region, sect and religion. In these movements, the participation of non-Muslims was limited, which in a way further limited its reach to common man. But the reach of PWA and IPTA surpasses geographical and cultural barriers and boundaries.

The concept and culture of mushaira (which spread rapidly) increases the access, availability and popularity of progressive literature. Alongside this literary platform, literary publications of the day like Naya Adab and Naya Zamana (in all possible Indian languages) help to spread progressive literature and views amongst intellectuals. The revolutionary poetry and performances reach not only the working people but also the intellectuals of the country who are till then immersed in western theory and aesthetics. It is only with the spread of literature of progressives that all social evils attributed to religion, capitalism, superstition, and caste system are taken into a holistic view without assigning any special reverence to any religion, sect or ghetto. The Movement proves to be a platform which caters to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Brahmins and Dalits alike.

Section IV: The Manifesto of PWA

It is only in 1925 that a formal organisation of the writers who believe in purposive art gather in Nanking Hotel in London and draft a Manifesto for their organisation. The Manifesto clearly states:

1. It is the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes in Indian life and to assist the spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature. They should undertake to develop an attitude of literary criticism which will discourage the general reactionary and revivalist tendencies on questions like family, religion, sex, war and society, and to
combat literary trends reflecting communalism, racial antagonism, sexual libertinism and exploitation of man by man.

2. It is the object of our Association to rescue literature from the conservative classes-to bring the arts into the closest touch with the people.

3. We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today-the problems of hunger and poverty, social backward-ness and political subjection.

4. All that arouses in us the critical spirit, which examines customs and institutions in the light of reason, which helps us to act, to organize ourselves, to transform, we accept as progressive. (Mir & Mir 5)

With the above aims in mind, a need is felt to rescue literature from decadence. For the same purpose, following steps are undertaken:

1. The establishment of organisations of writers to correspond to the various linguistic zones of India, the co-ordination of these organisations by holding conferences, publishing of magazines, pamphlets, etc.

2. To cooperate with those literary organisations whose aims do not conflict with the basic aims of the association.

3. To produce and translate literature of a progressive nature and of a high technical standard, to fight cultural reaction, and in this way to further the cause of Indian freedom and social organisation.

4. To strive for the acceptance of a common language (Hindustani) and a common script and a common script (Indo-Roman) for India.

5. To protect the interests of authors, to help authors who require and deserve assistance for the publication of their works.

6. To fight for the right of free expression of thought and opinion. (Mir & Mir 6)

The Movement is modern and advocates sentiments that are against retrogressive elements prevalent in the society in the name of religion and culture. It is around this time that concept of freedom attains new dimension. It is not simply over-throwing of colonial powers but establishment of a system in which exploitation of working classes can be stopped and power
can be vested in the hands of all, making rich and poor both equal claimants to the wealth of the nation. These thoughts gain currency ever since the inception of Russian Revolution but they spread with great speed as the influence of the left wing pushes off in the country with the establishment of parties advocating socialism at national level and Kisan Sabhas and Students Federation at grass root level. The international level leftist politics witness a big upsurge at this time as the five year plans of Soviet Union become very successful. The Progressive Writer’s Movement is inspired by marxism and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. As a result their poetry is heavily ideological-political and hence somewhat propagandist in nature.

As committed marxists, they view society in perennial conflict – the conflict between exploiter and the exploited. Indeed their poems sound like a war cry against the capitalists and feudal lords. This binary approach is so dominant in the poetry of the forties and fifties that it leaves little space for articulating other forms of conflict and complex nuances of human life. Despite this accusation of pamphleteering and party sloganeering, most of the progressives never let their aesthetic marxism be reduced to Leninism. The poets and writers of the Movement maintain the balance between propaganda and aesthetics.

The Movement blazes like a star across the national and international galaxy. The Movement has its democratic and egalitarian ideals endorsed by the greatest living poets and men of letters. These include stalwarts such as Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand, Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, Maulvi Abdul Haq, Vallathol, and Maulana Hasrat Mohani. Even the political leaders of the times find affiliations with its ideologies and support it. Among leading politicians, the Movement receives support from Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan and other leaders who show their trust in the socialist ideology.

The cultural apparatus of the Movement widens its ambit in all possible domains and it has patrons representing varied professions, religions, affiliations and status. Ali Sardar Jafri, emphasises on the wide canvass of the writers of the Movement by stating that:

Urdu poetry has recorded the major events of the last 250 years with all their concomitant joys and sorrows, tears and laughter’s, heart-aches and heart-breaks with extraordinary force, clarity, warmth and aesthetic excellence. No
major event has gone unrecorded, be it the Battle of Plassey in 1757 and the advent of East India Company rule or 1857 rebellion, freedom struggle, Independence and Partition in 1947, events of 1962, 1965, 1971, December 6, 1992. There is a monumental body of Urdu poetry on all this poetry that is excellent and highly charged. (qtd. in Noorani, “Urdu & Secularism” 23)

The pen of the writers (affiliated with the Progressive Movement), deal with the major events taking place on cultural and political platforms, both nationally and internationally.

Section V: Writings of Progressives: An Umbrella Term for Change.

While providing the necessary aesthetic delight, the progressives try to raise the level of consciousness of the masses through their poetic metaphors. Progressive poetry enlightens the minds of the masses by uplifting the darkness from their minds which in turn capacitates them to resist their own reification and objectification. The strength and impact of their ideas can be gauged from the fear that these artistes instil in the hearts of military dictators, colonisers and capitalists. The banning of publication of Angarey – an anthology of short stories by progressive writers, the imprisonment of Faiz Ahmed Faiz under counterfeit Rawalpindi Case, banning poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Habib Jalib from publications in newspapers and the imprisonment of Ali Sardar Jafri in Aligarh Muslim University are testaments to the defiance, resistance and counteraction enacted by these artistes who still continue to inspire millions of workers and peasants towards rebellion.

Ali Sardar Jafri and Majaz for the inaugural issue of Naya Adab claim that “progressive literature does not break off relations with old literature; it embodies the best tradition of old and constructs new edifices on the foundations of these traditions. In fact, progressive literature is most trustworthy guardian and heir of ancient literature” (qtd. in Mir & Mir 9). British imperialism sustains and keeps alive various obsolete and regressive mental and cultural constructs for their flagship. They back the ideas, beliefs and institutions that sanction superstition, worship of deities and tombs and other forms of ritualism. The habitual dependence on these false percepts ingrains religious bigotry (in the minds of naïve people) and people are led astray to violate logic, reason and science at every step. The British for instance (for their vested interest) with the help of local rulers, pandits and maulvis patronise the antiquated system of outmoded ideas and beliefs. Harnessing well the negativity
of the superannuated beliefs, the British oppose all kinds of political, cultural and social thought that maneuvered the country towards enlightenment and revolution. This clearly states the relationship of religious and cultural conservatism with economic system of colonization.

As a reaction to the religious dogmatism of the priestly class, the writers of PWA favour and disseminate Islamic concepts of monotheism and equality (of mankind) which are conveyed to them by sufis saints. The history of communalism in the subcontinent encourage their scathing remarks on religion as they believe that organised religion is to an enormous extent responsible for creating inter-religious strife which further deters the peace and progress of the country. In their opinion, religious orthodoxy prevalent in all the dominant religions of the world is the ‘Other’ of progress and stands in way of redemption of masses.

Religion has been reviewed and critiqued by poets before the formation of Progressive Writers Association. The ridicule of Ghalib and Mir is very subtle and sly. Ghalib in one of his oft quoted and oft recited sher dresses down the religious preacher for not practicing his own preaching’s as he says: “Kahaan maikhane ka darwaaza, Ghalib aur kahan Waaiz/ Par itna jante hain, kal who jata tha ke hum nikle” (qtd. in Mir & Mir 96). [Look at the preacher and tavern/ How strange! I was coming out while he was entering the tavern. (Translation mine)]. In the above mentioned couplet, the attack on religion is not fierce. The progressive poets on the other not only lampoon the religious figure for his dissemblance but also directly and fiercely condemn the religious faith and belief. The progressive writers offer two solutions to this treacherous and misinforming notion of faith. For them it is either defiant atheism or tolerant sufism that fulfills the promise of progressivism. The refusal to be controlled and co-opted by any religious system makes the Movement bone of contention amongst religious groups.

As most of the writers and poets of the Movement were Muslims, it is the Islamic religious practices that become the focal point of their wrath. Faiz rebuffs religion fiercely in his poetry. In the following sher of one of his ghazals, he shows the superfluity of religious fronts of reward/ punishment and heaven/ hell. He is of the view that these concepts simply impregnate fear in the hearts of people and in pretext of that fear incapacitate humanity.
Sahir Ludhianvi in the following couplet directly condemns the faith which he, just like Faiz equates with superstition and impairment. He says: “O saqi, faith is but superstition, religion an inferior idea/ Since the dawn of time, this blindness has impared our imagination (qtd. in Mir & Mir 97). Sahir is so despaired of a world where religious leaders are allowed to control the aspirations of the people that he conjures up an era where the power of atheistic critique will rule. He says:

bezaar hai kanisht o kaleesa se ye jahaan
saudagaraan e deen ki saudagari ki qair
ilhaad kar raha hai murattab jahaan e nau
dair o haram ki hailia ghaaratgari ki qair
insaan ulat raha hai ruq e zeest se naqaab
mazhab ke ehtemaam e fusoon parwari ki qair

[This world is sick of the temple and the church
You who peddle the power of religion, beware
Atheism is now placing the foundation of a new world
You who call out in the name of shrines, beware
Humanity is unveiling the real face of life
Religion's wily artifice. beware]. (“The Poetry of No” web)

Sahir wants to lay threadbare the religious dogmatism which has no other purpose but to beguile the masses. Henceforth, he suggests accepting the faith and creed of non-believers as they are oblivious to the treachery and artifice of organised religion.
Ali Sardar Jafri is an ardent reader of Rumi, Kabir and Meera and believes in spirituality. He fosters the understanding of a *sufi* in matters of God and Godliness. This is not to say that Jafri encourages superstition and ritualism attached to religion. Instead he ushers the belief in existence of some power which is manifested in everything around us and also that no human intervention is needed to attain true God. In one of the ghazals by Ali Sardar Jafri, he looks at twin sides of belief and doubt in faith. He writes:

> Come to me,
> Come to me where I call you.
> …leave doubt and fear,
> To come to the beauty of belief,
> But sometime, leave belief to
> Come up to valley of doubt. (Trans. Bakht & Jaeger 176)

In the above ghazal, Jafri extends invitation to both believer and non-believer to come to God without any doubt and fear. The last three lines confuse us as firstly he shows how doubt and belief are intertwined, inseparable and inevitable in the true quest of spirituality. The outlook towards religion varies in the writings of progressive writers. Sahir Ludhianvi and Faiz are nonconformists and advance their views against God and godmen strictly whereas others like Kaifi Azmi and Ali Sardar Jafri furthers *sufism*. The progressive poets find in Islam tools to challenge capitalism, nationalism and imperialism. Karbala, symbol associated with Islam becomes a trans-religious and transnational symbol by the poetic genius of progressives like Ali Sardar Jafri, Iqbal and Premchand. They transform Karbala into a nationalist allegory. The allegorical significance of the metaphors of *saqi* (Cup bearer), *raqib* (competitor), *hijr* (separation), *wasl* (union) and *mehbooba* (beloved) undergo a considerable transformation with changing times.

The writings of the progressive writers touch other problems being faced by the country. Colonialism, neo-colonialism, corruption and other pressing concerns affecting country find ample voice in their writings. The pen of the progressives strive to wage a collective battle against the ruling class within the country in order to safeguard and pursue the interests of the working masses, who are exploited under the illusion of freedom and democracy.
Sahir trenchantly critiques liberal nationalism. In a poem titled 26 January, he acerbically lays out the failed promises of the Indian nation-state and says:

\[
\text{aao ke aaj ghaur karen is sawaal par} \\
\text{dekhe thhe hum ne jo, wo haseen khwaab kya hue...} \\
\text{bekas barehnagi ko kafan tak nahin naseeb} \\
\text{wo waada-haa e atlas o kamkhwaab kya hue...} \\
\text{jamhooriyat-nawaaz, bashar-dost, amn-khwaah} \\
\text{khud ko jo khud diye thhe, wo alqaab kya hue}
\]

[Come, and let us ponder on the question 
Those beautiful dreams we had dreamt, what happened to them 
Helpless nakedness does not even merit a shroud 
What happened to those promises of silk and satin 
Democrat, humanist, pacifist 
What happened to all those self-conferred titles?] (“The Poetry of No” web)

Sahir abrasively penalises the leaders who themselves take upon the role of neo-colonisers and unlearn their democratic ideologies.

Habib Jalib, the leftist Pakistani poet also writes scathing verses on the demise of democracy in state of Pakistan under Ayub Khan’s military rule. He criticises the dictator and its supporters and says:

\[
\text{Kahin gas ka dhuan hae} \\
\text{kahin golion ki baarish} \\
\text{Shab-e-ehd-e-kum nigahi} \\
\text{tujhay kis tarah sarahain} (\text{qtd. in “Role of Pakistani Literature in Uplift of Democracy” web})
\]

[Somewhere smoke emanates 
Elsewhere it is raining bullets 
Hey ruler!}
How should we praise you] (Translation mine)

He equates the military regime with symbols like bomb, teargas and bullets. He is appalled at the short-sightedness and impassivity of the supporters and public at large. Jalib is unable to reconcile with the dictatorship that dominates politics and society of Pakistan. He continues to take the dictators in sweep of his criticism. He throws light on the tyrannical rule of Zia-Ul-Haq and writes a scathing poem titled “Zia”. In the poem, he refuses to acknowledge Zia as source of light (its literal meaning) as the same Zia is spreading darkness in the country.

Section VI: Nationalism and Progressive Movement

Nationalism has been the most difficult ‘ism’ to define as each national movement manifest distinct historical and thematic tenant. Eastern culture in contrast to the west has followed cultural marxism or ethnocentric marxism which focuses more on either social life, (i.e., language, culture and tradition) or on emotions and imagination. Progressive poets are aware of the dangerous propensities of this percept of imagination. They start to advocate that brand of nationalism in which people share loyalty to a particular set of ideology, a political and constitutional purpose and are not influenced by any religious, linguistic and cultural contour. The progressives are so enamoured of the Soviet political ideology that their nationalism also becomes another manifestation of marxist ideology. Nationalism as an ideology is opposed to cosmopolitanism but in the hands of progressives, it becomes synonymous to commitment against narrow parochialism. In face of growing parochial tendencies like Muslim nationalism, Hindu nationalism, Statism, Naxalism and Sanskrit Nationalism, the progressive writers attempt a dialogic standpoint where concerns of the country are not limited by any ethnic, geographic or cultural continuum. Instead they aim to unite everyone towards the cause of uplift of the oppressed and marginalized classes, the ‘other’ who have since ages been marginalized and silenced.

The indigenous view of nationalism does not spin off from the Russian impact but the writings of intellectuals like Tagore, Bipinchandra Pal, Gandhi and others have a deep impact on nationalist thinking. Bipin Chandra Pal, the Bengali extremist leader propagates the integrationist idea of nationalism. In the very first issue of New India in 1900, he writes:

The new India is neither Hindu, though Hindu unquestioningly forms the
original stock and staple of it, nor Mohamedan, though they have made very material contribution to it, not even British, though they are political masters of it now- but it is made up of varied and variable material supplied by the successive stages of its evolution by three great world civilization which three nations of present Indian community represent. (Pal, qtd. in Sabahuddin 11)

It comes as no surprise after reading Bipinchandra Pal’s views that there is no major literary language in India whose modern literature has not been fundamentally transformed by external, principally West European and Soviet influences. Aijaz Ahmed, a postcolonial thinker, supports the same premise while he delineates the character of Progressive Movement and says that:

The literary movement of the 1930s and 40s which we associate with the history of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), and which was arguably the first self-consciously trans-Indic literary movement since Bhakti (only wider), would be inconceivable without a complex set of influences that included not only the direct Soviet influence but also a much wider influence of a global cultural front that came into being in consequence of the Comintern’s turn to an anti-fascist popular front after 1935 not to speak of even a wider web of influences that ranged from Balzac to Chekov. (“The Communist Manifesto and World Literature” 23)

He traces the varied influences that have left impact on the thinking and character of the Movement. The Progressive Writers Movement (PWA) shows cross-cultural activity. The multiplicity of influences and its acceptance by the members of the Movement speaks for the plural character of the Movement.

But nationalism in India takes a different form altogether. Anthony. D. Smith in the Introduction to his book Nationalists Movements while elaborating on the various issues that lead to nationalism states that nationalism has existed since time immemorial. The definitions and dimensions it has acquired over the ages have been majorly influenced by the social milieu. Hero worshipping, patriotism, imperialism, colonialism and its resistance all are varied divergences of the same unified concept of loyalty towards a certain ethnicity, race,
culture, religion, individual or geographical identity. In India, the masses have always united against a despotic ruler or administrators. The “divide and rule” policy of the British sowed the seeds of suspicion and fear to the extent that two communities namely Hindus and Muslims could never reconcile leaving behind old scars and wounds. Religious acrimony becomes an open wound which still hurts the sensibilities of both the countries and communities inhabiting the same soil. The fear, suspicion and doubt divert masses towards the negative yet powerful strains of parochialism and communalism.

The intellectuals and scholars also come under the influence of religious bigotry. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in hey-days of reformism refers to “Hindus and Muslims as two eyes of India” (Syed, qtd. in Sabahuddin 27). But his inability to foster education in Muslims and the lurking fear of subordination and discrimination makes him change his stance and he also starts to support the demand for a separate Muslim state. Iqbal and Jinnah also change their position. Earlier these leaders denounce nationalism as a narrow prejudice which harms Islamic concept of universal fraternity and even volunteer to preach true spirit of Islam to heathens who set up races, nationalities and states as idols. Iqbal writes the following lines speaking for shared and integrated nation where there is no room for hypocrisy and infidelity practiced in the name of religion. He says:

I shall tell the truth, O Brahman, but take it not as an offence:
The idols in the temple have decayed.
Thou hast learnt from these images to bear ill-will to thine own people,
… My heart was sick: I turned away both from the temple and Kabah.
… to thee images of stone embody the divine—
For me, every particle of my country’s dust is a deity.
Come lets remove all the causes of estrangement, (Trans. Mujeeb 485)

The integrationist vision of Iqbal changes into separatism and his fascist tendencies are evident in his later works where he vouches for separate state for Muslims. In response to the concept of composite nationalism as fostered by Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani, Iqbal writes:

Ajam (non-Arab) world still does not know the secrets of religion... . Milat
(religious community) is from nation (watan). Reach yourself to Mustafa (the prophet) that he is the embodiment of religion. If you do not reach him it is all Bu-lahabi (i.e. it is following Abu Lahab, the inveterate enemy of the Prophet. (qtd. in Engineer, The Role of Minorities in Freedom Struggle 9)

Jawaharlal Nehru also shows his concern and anxiety about the rise of narrow national communities that aim to limit the scope and domain of nationalism. He is of the opinion that once the filter of syncretic nationality, the composite ethos and the shared culture is removed, the nationalist poetry becomes a propaganda. Aijaz Ahmed in his essay “The Communist Manifesto and World Literature” points out to “Marx’s unease with—perhaps even denigration of numerous national and local literatures” (9). He rests his premise on the consolidation of the nation-state in Europe during the 19th century which is backed by the idea of a single national language, a unique national culture, and a consolidated national literature which signifies a unique national character; literature and culture. These characteristics are often associated with race. But the worst consequence of this kind of nationalism is being currently witnessed by us in the savage regimes that have arisen in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Rabindranath Tagore exhibits equivocation on the subject of nationalism. In the heydays of nationalist movement, Tagore himself writes patriotic songs of intense nationalist fervor but when he sees the movement turning violent, he changes his position. He sees nationalism becoming domain of powerful people in which the minorities and their interests are being overlooked. He launches a fierce diatribe on nationalism. In a mood of outrage and disenchantment, tempered with intermittent hope, he writes a poem “The Sunset of the Century” in which he says:

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.
The naked passion of the self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and howling verses of vengeance.
The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its shameless feeding.
For it has made the world its food.
And licking it, crunching it and swallowing it in big morsels,
It swells and swells
Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends the sudden shaft of heaven
piercing its heart of grossness. (Tagore 157)

The sentiment that nationalism is a source of war, carnage, death, destruction and
divisiveness rather than international solidarity remains at the heart of Tagore’s writings. In
this sense Tagore stands as a precursor to many of the modern critics and philosophers of
trans-nationalism and globalism such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Noam Chomsky.
Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Tom Nairn also point out the irrationality, prejudice
and hatred that nationalism generates. Leela Gandhi speaks of its attendant racism where
citizens are willing to both kill and die for the sake of the nation.

Tagore is opposed to the idea of the nation; he is even more fiercely opposed to India
joining the bandwagon of nationalism as it may compromise India’s history and identity as a
culture and bring it under the shadow of the west. He warns in the book *Nationalism* that:

> We, in India, must make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people’s
history, and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide. When you
borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your
life. . . . I believe that it does India no good to compete with Western
civilization in its own field. . . . India is no beggar of the west. (128)

Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand shows his belief in spiritual nationalism and the divinity of
the ‘motherland. The age shows division in its claims on nationalism. In 1908, Sri Aurobindo
delineates his idea of spiritual nationalism in his speeches and says that:

> Nationalism is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that
has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live. If
you are going to be nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of
nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must remember that
you are the instrument of God. (qtd. in Bhatt, Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths 38)

He elevates the demand for national freedom to a religious faith so that the masses can be awakened. Another contribution of Aurobindo is his ideal of complete freedom. He believes that ideal of patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood and it looks beyond the unity of the nation which is the ultimate unity of mankind.

The problem with such utopian, luminous and simplistic view of nationalism is that such naive assumptions ignore the dark side of human beings which transmute them into jingoists. The philosophy of Indian nationalism as advocated by nationalist leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai is untenable as there is diversity of race, religion and language in India. In the absence of these essential conditions of a nationality, the possibility of creating a nationality in our country is a distant dream. The development of Indian nationalism is not as linear and consistent as it may seem. The confluence of religion and politics prohibit the broadening of the base of the nationalist movement. Religion and nationalism become almost convertible terms in the speeches and the writings. The progressive writers and their writings also exhibit similar dilemma as they eventually traverse from romantic nationalism of Sri Aurobindo to scepticism of Tagore. Unaware of the dividing leanings of the naive nationalism, progressive poets start to write of a utopian nation sans British control.

The advent of Second World War provides more impetus to the pen of the progressive poets. When British ask Indians to join it, the voice of the pen of the progressive poets becomes more acerbic and virulent. Faiz himself serves as a lieutenant colonel in the Second World War. In his writings, he does not exhibit any strong goal to achieve peace in the world, except of overthrowing the capitalism to end the sufferings of the workers. This is not to say that Faiz favours the imperialistic designs of the British. Hafeez Malik in his article, “The Marxist Literary Movement of India and Pakistan” directing at the antagonistic attitude of the progressive poets sites the curious case of Faiz Ahmed Faiz and his poem “To a Political Leader” and says:
On June 22, 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, and six months later Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The All-India National Congress adopted the slogan of Quit India, demanding freedom for India in return for its cooperation in the war effort. Faiz Ahmad Faiz wrote a highly moving poem Siyasi Leader Kay Nam (To a Political Leader) to warn the Congress leaders of the dangers lurking in this strategy, asking them not to crush "the web of light" illumined on the horizon of the Soviet East". (655)

Faiz shows his faith in ideology of socialism and dreams of laying the foundations of his motherland on the same premise. In the later days, when the political situation in Pakistan becomes worse, he endeavours to establish socialist principles by making constant efforts on literary and cultural fronts. The following lines of the poem, “To a Political Leader” demonstrate the gratitude and faith of the progressive poets in the Soviet Union and its practices of communism as:

The people's hands have been your coat of mail,  
Your gold; what else has given you strength but they?  
You do not wish this darkness to prevail  
For ever-yet those hands lopped off, and day.  
Now throbbing in its eastern ambush, doomed  
To lie under night's iron corpse entombed. (Trans. Kiernan 32)

Despite his disillusionment with the shape communism has taken, Faiz still continues to hold on to the ideology that serves as muse for his pen.

Freedom is achieved but disillusionment looms large on the national front as the new leaders of the country start to strengthen capitalists and fill their own coffers. The nation state is seen as a puppet in the hands of capitalists. In such situation, the condition of the country never improves as only the skin color of the exploiters changes, replacing foreign elites with local ones. Thus, pen of the progressives continues to mouth dissent wherein only the face and idiom of the exploitation changes. Even though Josh Malihabadi migrates to Pakistan by choice after partition, but he seems so disgusted with the politics and the state of affairs of India that he writes against Nehru, and vocalises his abhorrence for the policies of Nehru.
The exploitative class disguises its true objectives by making use of philosophy, religion, national character and custom. This further deadens the hearts and minds of millions of oppressed and they are easily dominated. This causes a lethal blow to the revivalism of the Progressive Movement. Around 1950s, the Movement suffers huge setbacks as the socialist vanguard which bonded the Movement together starts to wane both nationally and internationally and socialism and communism are considered refuge of ideologues and theoreticians with no practical worth.

Inception into internationalism takes two forms: interrogation and critique of worldwide colonialism and admiration for socialism of Soviet Union. The third world solidarity is not only confined to India but poets evincing their belief in progressive ideology worldwide share international ethos. Langston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Borges, Nazim Hikmet and Mahmoud Darwish have written extensively on these themes which address political, social and cultural issues at international level. In their revolutionary ideas, they never allow ideological epiphany to burden their poetry with shoddy rhetoric and hollow propaganda. Faiz is first and foremost an aesthete, a lover of beauty and refuses to become a spokesman for communist party or their ideology unlike many other members of PWA namely Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi and Sajjad Zaheer whose muse (at some point in their literary career) begins to dance to the tunes of party politics. Jafri even accuses Faiz once of equivocating about the goals of progressive poetry and of "drawing such curtains of metaphor [istiariyat] around one of his poems—"Freedom’s Dawn"—that "one cannot tell who is sitting behind them" (Jafri qtd. in Khan, Beyond Crisis 37). Their poetry, musical, lyrical and inspiring, stems from the main theme of making their homelands and the world at large a better place for the downtrodden: 'The wretched of the earth'. The poem, "We Who Were Executed" by Faiz Ahmed Faiz is written after the sacrifice of Rosenberg couple. The couple till their execution marched ahead with the flag of humanitarianism and revolution. Faiz in the poem by addressing the Rosenberg couple pays tribute to the martyrs and revolutionaries worldwide.

In the poem, "Come Africa", Faiz uses racial image of Africa evoking its primeval status. But to the dismay of many critics of Faiz, these images find solidarity among various African poets and intellectuals like Amile Cesaire and Martinique (associated with the negritude movement), who seek to reclaim the metaphors of blackness in service of an

Section VII: Ghazal and the form of Progressive Poetry

In India, the Persian ghazal remains predominant literary form of the Muslim intelligentsia for over five centuries, until it is eclipsed by the Urdu ghazal in the 18th century. While retaining the stock imagery, metaphors, and formal elements of the Persian ghazal, the Urdu ghazal develops its own character and is enjoyed and cultivated by Hindus, Muslims, literate, illiterate aficionado and aristocrats. Indeed, the popularity of ghazal among Urdu and Hindi speakers in South Asia has no parallel in the West, where poetry has become the pursuit of a small periphery of intellectuals rather than a widely popular mass art. Contemporary chronicles document the extraordinary popularity of ghazal in nineteenth century Lucknow.

Ghazal, a highly aristocratic art form, is intimately associated with the Urdu culture flourishing in the late Mughal period. Ghazal verses are an integral part of the education and the conversation of the nawabi class. More formally, the ghazal is an important performance art in several different settings, reflecting the ambiguities typical of the ghazals expression. The voice of the serious male poet is heard in the competitive poetic symposium (musaha’ira), which favours recitation either as rhythmic speech (tah tul lafz) or in the chanting style called tarannum. Ghazals of a mystical inspiration are suited to the rhythmic performance at sufi shrines called qawwali, while romantic feelings of a more human type are evoked in all-male audiences at the salon performances (mahfil, mujra) by professional courtesans (tawa’if). The memory of all these and the more elaborate settings of performance at royal courts have itself come to form a part of the romantic mystique of the ghazal.

Following the substantial destruction of the old aristocratic order after the suppression of the uprising of 1857, ghazal becomes increasingly associated with the new middle class.
The values of this class, which are influenced by those typical of the late nineteenth-century European bourgeoisie, dictate the modification of many features of the classical ghazal, whose elaborate rhetoric is seen as false and artificial. During the colonial period, it is the Urdu poet Hali (1914) who provides the most sustained critique along these lines, and poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1938) provides the most memorable demonstration of the serious possibilities of the ghazal.

Nazm (the thematic poem strongly influenced by nineteenth-century English models) till now is the chief vehicle for the expression (in Urdu) of the ideals of nationalism and other serious ideas. Later, ghazal too adopts to convey the message of nationalist poets rather than intellectually exploiting the conceits of the traditional imagery in the classical manner. Gauging from the history of the ghazal, we assess ghazal as a very strong ammunition in raging protest against religious bigotry (a hegemony that became supreme as well as autonomous). This hegemony is countered by transferring the traditional tropes on to secular motifs either by altering the categories—imagery, metaphors, symbolisms or through a subtle change of nuances of old images, symbols and metaphors.

The assessment of Adorno’s works on popular culture is of much relevance in the context of changing grimaces of the Urdu ghazal. Adorno is of the view that capitalism or the elitist culture operates through the acceptance of alienated and bewitched public. The masses are controlled and made to believe in legitimacy of the status quo. Similar is the preoccupation of the romantic form of ghazal with the nawabi stratum of the societies who not only immerse themselves but also enthuse in public a sense of envy related to the aish and aaram of nawabi class. The impact of the courtesan and nawab culture is so bewitching that the nouveau riche (landlords) also indulges in the same frivolity. The same popular culture also becomes site of contestations, resistance and meditations. Ghazal (otherwise a highly aristocratic and pleasure seeking genre of poetry) in hands of progressive writers, sublimate to dialogic level of negotiations and heterogeneity.

Harbans Mukhia dwelling on the location and role of ghazals and sufism in the history of secularisation states:
Islam, like every monotheistic religion, comprises two interrelated elements: universalism and protest both manifest in its ideological underpinnings. The ideology of the meek inheriting the earth, as in Christianity, or of the existence of one god who looks after all his children with equal favour, as in Islam, constitutes a discourse in the true Foucauldian sense—the assertion of a new relation of social power. This assertion invokes the universe of the ‘meek’ and the deprived and counterposes an egalitarian ideology to one of dominance and subordination, drawing upon the dormant memory of tribal egalitarianism, as secular ideologies, such as Marxism, were to do later on. (869)

Ghazal after entering the domain of the progressive writers becomes a site for protest which challenges its conventional usage.

Section VIII: Partition and Progressive Writers Association
The Partition crippled the movement as did the CPI's hardline in 1948. The Partition of India two years after the end of World War II puts a tremendous strain on the progressive writers’ sense of balance and impartiality. By mid 1942 the CPI commits itself to the view that India is a multinational entity, and that the unqualified right of self-determination should be granted to each nationality. Hafeez Malik observes in his article:

In Hyderabad some progressive writers, notably Ibrahim Jalis and Nazer Hyderabadi, severed their relations with the CPI and the Association. They joined with the Majlis Ittihad-al-Muslimin (a right wing Muslim organization seeking political independence for Hyderabad), and took over its propaganda department. A significant number of progressive writers created the Anjuman Muslim Musanafln (which later dropped “Muslim” from the name) as the transmission belt of the Majlis. In the heat of their passions they forgot Marxism and proletarian solidarity, hoping to create "South Pakistan" in Hyderabad. (644)

For some of the progressive writers, the pull of Muslim nationalism proves to be stronger than marxism. Hafeez Malik in his article “The Marxist Literary Movement in India and Pakistan” quotes Hajrah Masrur who says that during the days of the direct action movement
launched by the Muslim League for the acceptance of the Pakistan demand, Asrar al-Haq Majaz led several agitational marches in New Delhi, reciting his stirring national anthem for the future state of Pakistan (652).

But the Partition (which resulted out of communal frenzy) shakes the very edifice of the Movement. Despite hard claims and allegiance to its secular goals, it remains difficult for the progressive writers to show their upheld belief in the secular and national system. Being victims of communalism, writers in minority on both sides of the border face harsh challenges in order to prove their allegiance and loyalty to their preferred nation. Faiz despite being Muslim and having migrated to Pakistan has to bear the brunt for expressing forthright views on Pakistan’s governance, the decadence in national religion (Islam) and crushing of ideological rubric of the country. Consequently, he spends most of his life in prisons of Pakistan.

In March 1951 the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, accuses the CPP (Communist Party of Pakistan) of having conspired to overthrow the government with the aid of certain military officials of the Pakistan Army. Consequently, Sajjad Zaheer and Faiz Ahmad Faiz are arrested and tried along with Major General Akbar Khan, the Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army, and other military officers. The trial results in the conviction of all the accused persons in January 1953 and in July 1954 the CPP is banned throughout Pakistan.

Ali Sardar Jafri (Muslim) chooses to stay in India after partition and writes profusely on Indian saints and even translates Meera and Kabir, to prove his loyalties to a predominantly Hindu country. Kaifi Azmi is aghast to witness the communal hysteria of the country after so many years of Independence. The venom that Partition spits on the face of Hindustani culture still manifests itself in terms of communal riots, minority insecurity and ethnic, linguistic and regional hatred that perpetrates the country till today. PWA which reigned supreme starts to wither away after Partition. Partition weakens the cultural make up of this institution as many of its strong leaders shift to Pakistan including Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Sajjad Zaheer. Tariq Ali in his book, The Clash of Fundamentalism talks about partition arising out of religious nationalism or its postmodern avatar, religious multiculturalism. He writes: “Jawaharlal Nehru’s romantic nationalism failed him to see how at midnight, the tryst with destiny would usher a destiny and future of blood” (7).
Amrita Pritam in one of her poems titled, “Aaj Aakhan Waris Shah Nu” addresses Waris Shah to “Speak from your grave /And open a new chapter in the book of love”. She urges him to come to witness the deterioration of land of love, Punjab. After partition, she envisions the land of Punjab sprouting venom of hatred and debauchery as: “Wey waleesi wha phair, wan wan wagi jaa/ Ohney har ikk waans di wanjli diti naa bana”. [Poisoned air floated into the jungles /Turning all bamboo flutes to snakes]. She summons him to come as he is the same saint of love who composed the epic “Heer Ranjha” when: Ikk royi sii dhi Punjab di/ Tu likh likh maarey wain/ Ajj lahaan dhiyan rondiyen/ Tenn Waris Shah mat kain (Pritam 133). [A daughter of the Punjab once wept; You wrote her long story for her/ Today millions of daughters weep, Waris Shah. They’re calling you] (Trans. Coppola & Bajaj).

The progressive writers from both sides of the borders comment on the nihilism behind the whole act of Partition. The bloodbath, the communal frenzy and execration that boarded the train of Partition makes independence vacuous and shallow enterprise. The following lines by Faiz announce his rancour against shallow and disenchanting independence as it comes with pangs of separation, hatred and mania. For him, this is not the freedom that the leaders on both sides of the border had desired for. The golden dawn of the freedom is stained by red colour of the blood of innocent people across the borders. Witnessing this cacoethes, Faiz heralds that their destination is till faraway. Jan Nisan Akhtar in his poem “Jaa Baithte Hukumraanon ke Beech” shows in a nutshell his insight into the composite culture and ethos of India before Partition, and the pain that the Partition must have caused to all those who value the spirit of oneness of the seemingly disparate religious and cultural inhabitants of this great sub-continent. He throws flood of flight on the politics and politicians who ravage the country for their own vested interest.

The growing communalization of the country leads to communalization of Urdu and Urdu starts to be identified as language of Pakistan and Muslims. Consequently, patronage to Urdu declines considerably in India. Till Independence, Urdu is regarded as language of Indian nationalism. Inquilab Zindabad (Long live the Revolution), the battle cry of Indian nationalists is also written in Urdu language. Ram Parshad Bismil, Durga Sahay Saroor, Brij Narain Chakbast, Tilok Chand Mehroom, Raghupati Sahay, Firaq Gorakhpuri and Jagannath Azad rank high among those who have enriched Urdu poetry.
Sahir Ludhianavi on witnessing prejudiced attitude towards Urdu shows his dismay in one of his poems where he says:

The same cities where once Ghalib’s voice resounded
Have now disavowed Urdu, made it homeless
The day that announced the arrival of freedom
Also declared Urdu a cursed and treacherous language. (qtd. in Mir & Mir 12-13)

Sahir trenchantly castigates the propagators of this bias who have reduced the language of Ghalib to a communal language. Tagore also shows his perplexity towards the communalisation of the language and says that:

I can’t understand this Urdu-Hindi conflict. After all, you people speak the same language; you can give it any name you like. And if you want to write for the people and want them to understand you, then the difference between the two languages becomes even less.” Those who aggravated “the difference” for their own political ends harmed both the languages. (qtd. in Noorani, “Urdu and Secularism” 23)

One of the major reasons behind migration of Josh Moradabadi to Pakistan was language bias. Victor Kiernan, translator and lifelong friend of Faiz, notes that Faiz:

was repelled by the prospect held up by Gandhi of a united ‘Hindostani’ language, a nondescript neither Hindi nor Urdu.” The mythopoetic universe of his work is replete with references to Persian, Arabic, and “Islamic” sources, although, as Kiernan has noted, “a fondness for allusion to things Hindu, even religious, has not left him.” an important question to which I shall return.” (qtd. in Khan, Beyond Crisis 34).

Jawahar Lal Nehru (an ardent supporter of Urdu language) views Urdu as an icon of secular tolerance in Hindu dominated society but changes his stance in favour on Hindustani under influence of Gandhiji, for whom Hindustani actually mean “Hindi Hindustani” (qtd. in “The Baba-e-Urdit: Abdul Haq and the Role of Language in Indian Nationalism” 68).
The language bias does not even spare the writers of Progressive Movement. Barry Pavier (in his review of Talat Ahmed’s book, *Literature and politics in the Age of Nationalism, The Progressive Episode in South Asia*), states how even PWA and its members cannot address this language bias effectively. Some of the members of PWA and CPI also contribute to the bias. After Partition, communalist politicians manage to get Hindi rather than *Hindustani* adopted as the language of the Indian state. When Rahul Sanskritayan, a member of Progressive Writers Association and a Communist Party sympathizer, becomes president of the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* (a literary organization) his inaugural speech denounces Urdu as the language of “Arab jihadis”, and Muslims as “fifth columnists” and traitors (qtd. in Pavier, “Reclaiming Radicalism” web).

**Section IX: Bombay Film Industry as Refuge for Progressive Poets**

With the diminishing patronage of Urdu language in the post-Independence era, it is Bombay film industry that gives a boost to the languishing careers of many Urdu poets. Indian cinema dating back to 1940s becomes the refuge of many progressive poets who give voice to their progressivism in their lyrics which are used extensively in the films. Even the Urdu poems (both classical and contemporary) of Ghalib, Amir Khusro, Mir and Iqbal are absorbed in Hindi cinema. The poets are also asked to write revolutionary songs for the movies. The poets of PWA like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Ali Sardar Jafri, Majrooh Sultanpuri and Makhdoom have a formidable impact on the lyrics of Hindi cinema. The poetry instead of remaining confined to a selected elitist audience reaches the masses. PWA takes advantage of this exposure and introduces a new aesthetics of realism in the Hindi cinema. Bombay then becomes the headquarters of the PWA and mecca of progressivism.

The progressive poets transform genre of lyric writing by introducing new themes interposing urban, modern and realistic sensibilities. In this process of bollywoodisation, a reciprocal effect can be witnessed. The poets in order to cater to the demands of film industry simplify their poetic idiom and incorporate many new metaphors in the songs of Hindi cinema which are symptomatic of progressive ideology. On closer analysis of the songs written by the progressive poets for the film industry, one can notice designed elimination of the ghazalic tropes in favor of more elementary usage of language in order to reach out to the masses. This does not imply that the revolutionary content of their work is lost.
Till 1980s progressive poets and their writings dominate Hindi cinema. The lyricists work under tremendous strain as most of the songs are written to invoke passion and love. Ali Hussain Mir and Raza Mir in the book *Anthems of Resistance* commenting on this predicament of Urdu progressive poets say that progressives manage to strike a balance between their passion and requirements of their profession by:

...producing a set of binaries between the purity of love (*ishq, pyaar*) and the corruption of the world, represented by tyranny, wealth, the throne or even god (*zulm, zar/daulat, takht, khudaai*). The struggle between the subaltern lovers and the dominant social order was invoked by the poet as a symbol of other battles between those who were driven by passion and those who valued money and power. (144-145)

Kaifi Azmi’s lyrics for the movie *Arth* abound in such images. He invokes the *gam* of social order in contrast to the counterfeit smile on the face of the beloved and says: “*Tum itna jo muskura rahe ho! Kya gham hai jisko chupa rahe ho*” (Azmi, MAS 241) [You who are smiling and smiling/ Which sorrow are you trying to hide (Translation mine)].

The theme of social injustice is even poignantly treated in the song, “*Yeh duniya, yeh mchfil mere kaam ki nahien*” (Azmi, MAS 137) [This world, this gathering is of no use to me (Translation mine)] from the movie *Heer Ranjha*. The songs from the movie *Kaghaz ke Phool* like “*Waqt ne kiya, kya hasin sitam*” (Azmi, MAS 41) (The sweet pangs of time) and “*Dekht Zaman ki Yuari*” (Azmi, MAS 42) (I have witnessed loyalty of the world) expose a melancholic contemplation of the changes wrought by time and also the songs are treatise on disenchantment at the world inhabited by people who are selfish and mean.

In the more famous *matla* of the ghazal, Kaifi expresses the restlessness that inspired him: “*Main dhoondta boon jise woh jahan nahin milta/ Nai zameen, naya aasmaan nahin milta*”. (The world that I search for, I do not find/ The New World, the New Heavens I do not find) (Azmi, SP 14-15). To look for Kaifi, is to keep on searching for new, better, more egalitarian worlds. And heavens that are more just. This search is so dominant in his works that in the much famous song of the movie *Hageeqat*, he argues for sacrifice as: “*Zinda rehne ke mansam bahut hai magar, jaan dene ki rut roz aati nahin... baandh lo apne sar pe kafan*” (Azmi, SP 14-15)
Unlike many other writers and poets, Jafri does not go to Bombay to write for Hindi films. He goes there to work as a full-time activist of the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI). His involvement with writing film lyrics comes much later. His composition for the film Footpath, “Shaam-e-gham ki kasam, aaj ghamgeen hain ham” remains memorable even today. Jafri even produces a film Gyarah Hazar Ladkiyan (Eleven Thousand Girls) in 1960 and it is for the film, Anhonee, Jafri lends his pen for the first time in 1952.

Ali Sardar Jafri though did not write many lyrics for Bollywood but his lyrics for the movies Dharti ke Lal and Pardesi evoke powerful emotions on several socially relevant subjects like Bengal famine and communal disharmony. Dharti ke Lal, the movie by Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, shows havoc created by Bengal Famine and is a revolutionary first step in the history of film making in India. The progressive writers are neither silent nor helpless spectators of the ravages of Bengal famine. Makhdoom, Ali Sardar Jafri, Jigar Muradabadi and Wamiq write moving and sorrowful poems on the condition of Bengal. The realistic and hard hitting works of the poets stir patriotism and evoke unity among millions of people

Section X: Disintegration of PWA

The disintegration of Soviet Union (the mecca of socialist practices) exterminates the Movement completely and the Movement ultimately peter off without much noise. Ali Sardar Jafri pens a dirge, which is an obituary of the Progressive Writers Association (PWA). In the poem he bids adieu to the red flag and says:

Farewell O Red flag, Red flag farewell
Farewell, O Symbol of the dynasty of the oppressed
Till yesterday my brimming eyes cheered you on
Today, those eyes filled with tears, bid you farewell
You will be missed in the battles between good and evil
Today, I find myself alone in the fight against the great Satan,
Farewell
O river that slaked the thirst of martyrs in the struggle of life

saathiyon” (Azmi, MAS 88). [Excuses you will find enough to stay alive, the season of sacrifice doesn’t come every day… whence cover yourself with shroud (Translation mine)].
O, eager waves that fed parched ones, farewell. (Jafri qtd. in Mir & Mir 14)

In these lines, Jafri mourns the death of his life-long ideology. In absence of life long political doctrines, he feels parentless in his fight against the evil practices.

Poetry in times of historical transition in its most rebellious avatar either becomes propagandist or progressive. So many poets and writers of the times, swayed by the sectarianism and party loyalties turn towards writing propagandist literature. Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s decision to migrate to Pakistan brought him under suspicion of being a separatist. But his continuous struggle against the military regimes that aim at killing democracy, his explicit critiques of Muslim League government, his condolence on death of Gandhi and his critique of the creation of Bangladesh, all bear testimony to his stronger and stauncher belief in socialism.

The Rawalpindi conspiracy case and the destabilization of APPWA (All Pakistani Progressive Writers Association) in absence of strong leadership parent a severe blow to the left in Pakistan. It cannot be deduced that progressivism in literature dies in Pakistan; instead with the efforts of Habib Jalib, Ahmed Faraz, Kishwar Naheed, Fehmida Riyaz and many others, it still echoes. These poets after facing all odds stand against the state and establishment and play the bugle to make the voices of resistance and determination towards struggle heard. These sentiments are more powerfully reverberated in Faiz’s poem “Bol” which he writes immediately after the Second World War. In the poem he says:

Speak- your lips are free
Speak- for your tongue is still yours
The magnificent body
Is still yours
Speak- for your life is still your own. (Trans. Kamal 82)

Faiz discredits any amount of passivity shown by masses in face of oppression. Instead he goads the people of the country to speak against their oppression as to endure any form of tyranny tantamount to spiritual death.
Dwelling on the relationship of lyric poetry to society, Theodor Adorno suggests that it is precisely lyric’s apparent distance from social determinations that constitutes its social meaning. He holds out the paradoxical possibility that its distance from the social in fact makes lyric poetry an exemplary site for the inscription of social meanings. The more the lyric reduces itself to the pure subjectivity of the ‘I’ Adorno argues: “the more complete the precipitation of the social within its content will be. The more it immerses itself in what takes individual form, the more it is elevated to the level of universality, but a universality that is “social in nature”’ (qtd. in Khan, Beyond Crisis 33).

The poetic symbols change their significance and connotation and gain currency in relevance to the social milieu. For example, the cultural artefacts which in times of imperialism are used to instil a sense of pride in the native culture are now (in post-independence era) seen as a memento of neo-colonialism and capitalism. Taj Mahal which is once revoked as a cultural symbol against the imperial rule becomes as a sign of capitalism for Sahir. He asks his beloved to meet somewhere else as he says:

The Taj, may happen, to you may seem, a mark of love supreme
You may hold this beauteous vale in great esteem;
Yet, my love, meet me hence at some other place
How odd for poor folk to frequent royal resorts;
This is strange that amorous souls should tread the regal paths
Trodden once by mighty kings and their proud consorts.
Behind the façade of love my dear, you had better seen,
The marks of imperial might that herein lie screen. (Trans. Nanda 373)

Sahir likewise calls such monuments “…cancerous tumours on the face of the earth” (Trans. Nanda 373) and entreats his beloved to meet her somewhere else.

With the realization of progressive writers of the futility of traditional values of a bygone era, they serve to arrest the onward march of history and play a reactionary role. Yet, the same powerful tone and glorious manner of their heydays can never be achieved again. The main reasons for the failure of the Movement were communist affiliation, political partisanship and purists of ‘art for art's sake’. In the hands of less skilled and more biased
poets, literature starts to show more semblances to political pamphleteering, abstract economic analysis, historical commentary, and so forth. But the Movement survives still as a school of thought and its principles retain their vitality and relevance as an unfailing source of inspiration. Its leaders are worthy heirs to a fine tradition. With them ended the golden chapter of the history of Urdu literature that began in the 19th century and continued till Independence and beyond.

The chief problem with political poems (which characterizes most of the progressive poetry) is that they are ephemeral and topical and they rarely outlast the events which they are talking about. They rarely rise above the fray to endure past those times in which they are written. They might still be read in later centuries, but only as a footnote that reflects upon the historical chapter. But the poetry of the most of the progressive writers became ageless anthems of confrontation and opposition as their poems were not short-term angry protest-poems written out of short-term outrage rather it was expression of deep and lasting human experience. The pen of the progressive poets wrote sagas of universal mourning, meditation on death, and evocation of eternity. The popularity and after life that progressive writing especially poetry enjoys till today owes to the adaptive nature of the pen and medium which addresses the problems and peculiarities to every epoch.

The Progressive Movement in Urdu poetry thrives even today because it spoke to its time, its history and politics. Though for structural division, I have divided my thesis into three chapters which individually and separately focus on marxism, nationalism and Islamic manifestation in the poetry of the select poets, yet on deeper analysis of the subject, I realized how these three ideological constructs are embodiments of the same progressive ideology which encapsulate the history, politics, sociology, culture and economics of its time. The pen of the progressive poets have touched important historical and sociological episodes like anti-imperialist struggle, the Second World War, the trauma of Partition, the Telangana uprising, the carcass of old beliefs and systems, the failure of the new nation to deliver its promise of a better life for all its citizens and growing communalism.
METHODOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

The field of investigation and research being quite novel, not much of translation work is available. To do justice to my research and to encapsulate wider readings, I have relied on the devnagri script of the poetry of the select poets. Faiz is the only poet of the three select poets who has been extensively translated. The problem with the translations available on Faiz (though many in number) is that all the translators have more or less translated the same popular poems by him. A major part of his brilliant poetic works still remains untranslated. In order to acquaint the poetry lovers with his much magnificent work, I have incorporated several of his well-crafted verses in my thesis and given a working translation of the same. As far as Ali Sardar Jafri and Kaifi Azmi are concerned, there are not many translations available. Wherefore, I have translated their poetry wherever necessary. The translations do not claim finesse and excellence of professional translations as these are working translations but definitely endeavour to make the meaning of the verses clear to the readers. The literal translations facilitate basic understanding of the poems, and in no way do justice to the poetic genius of the select poets or to Urdu poetry. The poems are built around similes, metaphors and symbols that are difficult, if not impossible to translate. In order to understand the nuances of the language, I have also completed a certificate course in Urdu from the Department of Persian and Urdu, Panjab University. I have read some portions of their poetry in original Urdu script as well but these readings remain limited due to technical difficulties I faced in total comprehension of the script.

Notes

1 Ghalib has always shown bold assertion of things which are considered sinful and profane. He has challenged and ridiculed the restraints imposed by narrow-minded, legalistic protagonists of righteous living. The following verses bear testimony to progressive character of his poetry.

   I have a man’s nature, I am born of man
   And proud that I commit the sins I can.

The verses of Ghalib show his grievances as there are not enough sins to commit. He believes in experiencing this world than hanker after the world to come. He says:

   The severed hand is my symbol,
   I cannot tell beads and pray,
   Nor can I hold the wine-cup
   To drink all the wisdom away.
He explains exclusiveness in institutional religion as a sign of man’s incapacity for endless striving:

At every step the weary stopped and stayed;  
Not finding thee, they built Thy house and prayed  
…What is the temple, what is the Kabah?  
Baffled passion for union constructing  
Myths and illusions, asylums to shelter  
Its ardour, its hopes, its dream and despair.

2 IPTA is a cultural association of the theatre artists who have leftist political inclinations. The goal of the association is to bring cultural awakening in the people of the country.

3 It is theory of aesthetics based on theories of Karl Marx. It believes that role of art is not only to represent economic conditions but also improve them.

4 It is vulgar form of marxism that reduces every aspect of life and culture to principles of class conflict and economy.

5 Ghazal is a short poem rarely of more than a dozen couplets in the same metre. It consists of an indeterminate number of rhymed couplets (sher), set in accordance with strict rules of prosodic meter (bahr, aruz), in the scheme aa ba ca da, etc. It always opens with a rhyming couplet called the matla. The last couplet of the ghazal called makta often includes the pen-name of the poet, and is more personal than general in its tone and intent. The different couplets of the ghazal are not bound by the unity and consistency of thought. Each couplet is a self-sufficient unit, detachable and quotable, generally containing the complete expression of an idea.

For more details read “The Pursuit of Urdu Ghazal” by Ralph Russell.