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Study of Motifs in Faiz's *Rebel's Silhouette*

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Abstract

Present paper focuses on study of some major motifs in Faiz Ahmed Faiz's *Rebel's Silhouette*. Motifs like spring, blood, wine, night and solitude are studied here. Spring is the motif of promised destination. It symbolizes hope for the revolutionary spirit. Blood symbolizes martyr and cruelty. It has been frequently appeared in these poems. Wine is the motif of epicurean tendency of poet to celebrate expressions like love and freedom. Motif like night expresses the darkness and hopelessness in the personal life of poet. It is the cushion of pessimism. The last motif solitude appears as meditative need of the poet. It is much closer and vitally experienced state of poetic mind.

Keywords: Communist Thinking, Spring, General Motif, The Ecstatic State, Night, Violent Image, Inner Violence, Solitude

Introduction

The Rebel's Silhouette is the translated poetry collection of Pakistani Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz by Agha Shahid Ali in English. Revolutionary spirit and communist thinking have been primarily focused in these poems. Selected and major motifs are highlighted throughout this poetry collection. The motif is defined as 'a conspicuous element, such as a type of event, device, reference, or formula which occurs frequently in works of literature. (Abrams, 178.) In the present context the studied motifs are in form of symbols and images which have been recurred many times. Intermingling of these motifs in poetry examines the psychological state of poetic mind during creation. Like every poet there is fixed set of motifs which has been repeatedly occurred in major poems. These motifs are definitely having some historical and personal influence on poetic mindset. So let's study these motifs.

A) Spring:

In Faiz's present poetry collection spring has been appeared as an epitome of promised gift for which one has been waiting since from the long ages. This is very optimistic motif which has been

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frequently recurred. In Indian subcontinent spring has special atmospheric significance. It also has been the general motif of Eastern poetry. Some major repetitions of this motif are in first poem where springtime is the special era which has been awaited by the poet since from long period,

and I was like the empty field where springtime,
without being noticed, is bringing flowers (Faiz, 3)

Poet's life was like empty field. It was only the springtime which gifted his empty field with full of flowers. Thus it carries the optimistic significance. In another poem Faiz interrogates the timing of spring itself,

In what strange manner
has spring come this time? (Faiz, 11)

He has expressed doubt within his mind. There is only two worlds in poets mind; one with spring another without spring. That's why all barren and unblossomed things have been presented without spring. In later ghazal such springtime becomes 'promised springtime'. Once again poet hopes for its arrival.

Poem entitled "It is spring Again" is the complete implementation of this motif. This is very optimistic poem. Poet celebrates that special time where all lost objects have been returned. There is return of roses, sorrow, beauty of moon and poets happy days. This poem presents full psychological inclination of poet towards season like spring. Even though it arrived; poet could not get the answers of the questions which he had expected.

and spring has come once again asking
the same questions, reopening account after account. (Faiz, 89)

However poet enjoys that time. In his contemplative depth there is lot of unanswerable questions. Thus spring signifies the ecstatic state of poetic mind. It is the natural motif of optimism and promise of optimistic land.

B) Blood:

This is the most frequent motif regarding this poetry collection. As mentioned earlier, revolutionary tendency is at the core of inspiration of Faiz's poetry. Revolution in his mind always demands for blood. The blood is of martyr of killers. Sometime it signifies cruelty, many times it denotes martyr. But Faiz's poems are so much wounded that blood keeps flow out through his wounds. He appeals to ruler that,

Don't regret our breath's use as air,
our blood's as oil (Faiz, 17)

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He challenges for the rebellion. He has to ignite the lamp of revolutions even in the dark night of discrimination and instability. That's why he has to use blood as oil. In another poem this blood transforms into the ink. This is ink of accusation. It became the symbol of protest,

with blood on the streets

darkened there with inks of accusation (Faiz, 49)

Blood becomes flag too-

my blood, like a flag, has been unfurled there.

I have nothing left to give (Faiz, 55)

Poet has to devote his life for such blood. It is the blood of protest of integration and of energy. He uses it as an epitome for revolution. Having the influence of communism he is involved in blood revolution like above.

Poem entitled "In Search of Vanished Blood" highlights this motif with historical significance. The vanished blood itself is appeal for historical revolution for which Faiz demands. He claims,

This blood which has disappeared without leaving a trace
isn't part of written history (Faiz, 63)

He appeals this historical hidden truth to be followed by masses. He presents this vanished blood which had inspired him then, but now it has disappeared.

from the beginning this blood was nourished only by dust.

Then it turned to ashes, left no trace, became food for dust (Faiz, 63)

Faiz wants to suggest that the revolution always has been ended in the favour of the common people. In poem "Let Me Think" poet imagines a withered garden where he thought trees drained by the blood. Such like violent image in the general poem signifies uneasiness in poetic mind. He was experiencing the loneliness. In this poem there appear, ..the first arrows, tipped with blood (Faiz, 69)

Both symbolic figure of tree and arrow signify former as static force while later as dynamic force of violence in poetic mind. Bangladesh freedom war has a special significance for Faiz. He had experienced this war and cruelty. He observed the demon of cruelty that crushed every sensitive citizen of his country. So the blood motif occurred in these poems is of cruelty, despite of any holistic purpose. The first poem on Bangladesh incident like "Stay Away From Me" poet mentions,-

So stay away from me.

Because I'm thirsting for blood (Faiz, 75)

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He imagines himself as responsible citizen for Bangladesh Massacre. He supposes himself as demon that was thirsting for blood. In second poem on Bangladesh same plea has been repeated,

...my friends

told me to wash my eyes with blood... (Faiz, 77)

Somewhere he considers himself responsible for such cruelty. He craves his mind within poem as "Wash the Blood off Your Feet" highlights this emotion of guiltiness in large extend. He saw everywhere blood was flowing. There was famine of love; compassion and sympathy. So Faiz wants to make him clear by this cruelty. So he appeals,

so wash this blood off your feet, they said...

Let your feet heal (Faiz, 85)

Thus healing of his guilt has been hidden within the heart of nation, thought of nation and system of nation. That's why he appeals to cure this wound, to wash those old stamps of cruelty on his beloved citizens. Hashmi comments on such bloodshed as, 'To observe the restless drops (of life) in his surroundings is dependent upon his vision, to show them to others, upon his artistic abilities and to enter into them, to change the flow (of life) is dependent on the depth of his desire and the passion in his blood.' (Yaqin). In such a way important motif like blood has been used something having positive revolutionary approach, as the symbol of crime, guilt and inner violence of poet's mind.

C) Wine:

Faiz is Urdu poet. He belongs to Muslim religion. In this religion wine is prohibited. But paradoxically in the present book there are so many poems where wine has appeared. Being communist, there is materialistic tendency over empowered on Faiz. So motif like wine appears in his poem frequently. It acts as certain matter of fuel to his depressed mind. It is some sort of drug to make him efficient. He treats wine as inspiration, which rinses his conflicted mind. The strife between hopeful and hopeless is filled by the wine. It imports some melodious taste for Faiz's violent poetry. Another motif like blood, wine neutralizes the harshness and thus poet maintains that equilibrium brilliantly.

In Ghazal he states,

there is no lover

and no wine (Faiz, 11)

He treats wine as object of celebration. It fulfills his unsatisfied demand of love. In the next ghazal Faiz states the symbol of wine house but in very sarcastic manner,

worshippers have abandoned the mosques

they're coming here to the wine house (Faiz, 13)

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He compares between masques and wine houses. This is very sensitive contrast for Muslim poet like Faiz. That's why this poem could be said as real-silhouette of the rebel like Faiz. In this context also Faiz enjoys freedom. He does not want to captivate his mind and life for any religion. He just wants to enjoy the life without rules. Once again the materialistic tendency has been repeated. In another poem Faiz asks question as,

who'll dare to drink this wine of love...? (Faiz, 55)

Here wine is treated as the matter of love. In romantic context Faiz asks rhetorical question. He wants to suggest that this is decorative world where love itself is like a wine. Sometime it is also like blood and poison. He challenges those daring lovers to take this drink. He tries to explore challenges in love and revolution, as revolution is part of particular love. In the poem "Before You Came" appears image of glass of wine. This is romantic poem. He signifies a glass of wine as,

and the glass of wine a mirror in which
the sky, the road, the world keep changing (Faiz, 57)

Before these lines poet has described in details sky, crowd and world in sarcastic manner. These all images are appeared in glass of wine. In first three images Faiz interrogates the love, but in the image of glass of wine he concludes the expected necessity of love which will impart former elements. It is like a mirror which has power to energize whole world. In the poem, "Be Near Me" Faiz illustrates the peculiar mood of the drinking wine,

And when wine, as it is poured, is the sobbing
of children whom nothing will console (Faiz, 59)

He compares pouring of wine with that of sobbing of noisy children who are not able to be consoled by their parents.

Thus wine is certain tendency of Faiz which repeats in form of desired illumination of his poetic spirit. He does not want to insult Muslim ethics; rather he wants to be free, to utilize of material needs around him than captivation in traditional compounds.

D) Night:

Faiz's major motifs are pessimistic. Out of them Night is the main. As spring designates the positive forces, night represents negative force in Faiz's poems. It is an epitome of darkness, vanity and longing. He declares this motif mentioning night as,

And the night
when I kindle our sorrow
is longing caught in itself (Faiz, 31)

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Sorrow with longing is addressed by the night. It is that time at which poet shares sorrow. Faiz accepts Night as symbolic figure of pessimism in his life. It is full of sorrow, longing and depression. Very hopelessly he states, "Oh Night of Sorrow you weren't diminished" (Faiz, 37)

The above apostrophe expresses helplessness of poet before the harassments during the night. This night changes its form and becomes cruel. In the poem *We Who Were Executed* he mentions,

when the night of cruelty merged with the roads you had taken,

I came as far as my feet could bring me (Faiz, 39)

Thus night is such a motif where poet has stored his sorrow. He does not deny this sorrow, but accepts it as it is. So the cruelty accompanies with sorrow also did not change his pessimistic approach. He uses Night as panorama for deadly situations and expressions in his life.

E) Solitude:

This is personal motif appeared in these poems. Faiz is very sensitive poet. Imagery, intensity of thought, expressive power these all things are but the product of solitary mind which had been contemplating even from the first to last line of these poems. In Faiz's life, he was kept in prison for four years. So only thing he shared during those days was the solitude. Like Wordsworth he also gives credit of his creation to this solitary state in his life.

Poem like "Evening" suggests this solitary mood. When poet was alone he was imagining various objects of nature in poetic form,

some terrible magician, hidden behind curtains,

has hypnotized Time (Faiz, 43)

So he expresses the pain which loneliness had given to him. That's why he was crumbling at that evening. Next poem "Solitary Confinement" itself is the expression of loneliness. The sorrow hidden in Faiz's mind suddenly sprouts at memories of lost life return at this state,

I say "To life"

and long for my friends at home

and in countries I'll never see (Faiz, 45)

The rebel in other poems, we find suddenly like handicapped person crying with pains. Even though sometime Faiz enjoys this loneliness, he regards it as great calm. During which his past wounds are healed,

it has come

the great calm

with its harvest of silence:

all lips have been sewn,

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perhaps some wounds also (Faiz, 51)

Words like harvest of silence amplify the effect. Faiz neither wants to express anything nor does he want to keep unhealed his inborn wounds. But Faiz regards solitude as power of contemplation. He states,

And when memory, for a moment, was a brief candle,

lighting up the consolation that you are,

it wasn't enough (Faiz, 73)

Thus memory is refreshed in solitude. It lighted like the candle. Solitude had truly consoled him in certain state of mind. It appears within him source of soother and consoler. In such a way solitude is the motif of mediation for poet like Faiz. He likes within himself in such state of mind. It was rebel's real castle where he had prepared his thoughts polished with his own weapons of soul.

Conclusion:

Every poet writes poem with certain set of imagery and motifs. Motifs are generally the replicas of poet's personality, as those are frequently repeated in his work. These motifs help to understand the man behind creation and creation behind the situation. Spring is such motif where hope and promise are focused. Blood appeals for martyr and violent revolution. It also appears as the sign of cruelty. Wine epitomises the celebration of freedom. Night and solitude expresses two different attitudes of poetic mind like frustration and mediation. These all motifs support Faiz's own opinion expressed in his words as 'The understanding of the struggle of human life; and a participation in it is not only a pre-requisite of life; it is also a pre-requisite of art. (*Pakistan Horizon*) In such a way motifs which are studied in this context of Faiz's selected poems represent psychic evaluation of poetic creation and the hidden codes to build up and to identify the man behind creation.

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