

## Marginalized Voiced in the Poems “Speak” and “Africa, Come Back” by Faiz Ahmed Faiz

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**Abstract:** The marginalized sections or the marginalized people have been ignored since long in the history of mankind, be it socially, culturally, religiously or in the works of literature. They have been considered not worth discussing, speaking or being discussed about. Their ways of life, likes and dislikes have been ignored. Along with women, there are many other castes and classes of society that have been ignored or marginalized. Women have been doubly marginalized as compared to the men belonging to the marginalized sections. In the India, the situation had been grim as compared to the other parts of the world. The social system prevailing here makes it tough for the marginalized sections to come up and speak up for their rights. The poems “Speak” and “Africa, Come Back” by Faiz Ahmed Faiz talk about voicing the silenced and revolutionizing against the tyranny. The paper discusses the two poems being analyzed from the point of view of voicing the marginalized.

**Keywords:** Mankind, Marginalized Sections, Tyranny, Subaltern.

**Introduction:** In today’s world, when globalization has influenced every aspect of literature and culture, still remains a field untouched, unaffected, which forces one’s critical mind to ponder over the fact that there remain cultures and traditions which till date being unrecognized and their issues being swept under the carpet. These are none but the marginalized that have been demarcated from the mainstream. These were called ‘subaltern’ by Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist thinker.

The mainstream literature has its own literary cannons and models to look back

on, to imitate, and to take inspiration from, both in the oral and written forms. The writers of mainstream literature largely rely on the same for their compositions. However, when it is discussed about the literature of tribes, folk, Dalit, and women, etc. which is known as subaltern literature, a need to generate a separate philosophical base is felt and lacks a cannon to look back on.

if you talk about tribal literature, folk literature, Dalit literature or Dalit women literature, which form the major part of subaltern literature, these literatures need

to create their own philosophical base. Nothing is given to these literatures.<sup>1</sup>

The literature of and about marginalized sections is not merely about the struggles between rich and poor, but the tug of war among castes, as observed by the low caste, vulnerable, etc. The idea of marginalized literature is founded upon this struggle. Prima facie, the literature of the marginalized is considered as literature of peasants and tribal and their insurrection against the ones empowering them. But there is more to it.<sup>2</sup> The major and basic dispute was the necessity of these insurrections that the imperial, nationalist and rich/poor dichotomy of the area had neglected.

The contemporary discussions about the history of Indian culture and its society put the art, literature and culture of the people of margins in the modernized fashion and largely being untrue and unfaithful accounts. The existential question, just like feminist literature, remains the same, whether the literature of the marginalized should only be written by and based on those who are themselves marginalized. The marginalized literature brings forth the angst and the discrimination faced by the marginalized sections. A new sense of pride, creativity and strong will is characteristic of marginalized writings. They are coming out

of the closet and accepting who they are, what their identity and accepting it with pride. In spite of all this development, they have new challenges on their way and yet, even after travelling miles, have a long way to go.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was an influential left-wing intellectual, revolutionary poet. In his works there is constant struggle against the prevailing oppressive systems. The themes of his poems move around the difficulties of independence, democracy, development, destiny and persecution of intellectuals. The central theme of Faiz's poetry is man's emotional and mental journey, a struggle for justice. Edward Said names Faiz as one of the victims of "system".<sup>3</sup>

Faiz's poem "speak" is a good example of the "poetry with a purpose". It moves around the themes of bondage, freedom and courage. The poem advocates the timeless need to stand up and speak. The poet tells the oppressed and the downtrodden that they are the masters of their lives. Nobody has the right to control their bodies and mind. The poet says that we must speak before inevitable death seizes our mind and our body. There is a passionate appeal from the poet. Storm is raising in the heart of the poet. Flames are leaping and the red-hot iron in the foundry in are the hints from the poet to look and see. This is the point in the poem from

where the evolvment of strong and clear imagery begins. The leaping of flames pave way for the opening up of chains and the opened chains begin to expand symbolic of promising freedom to the reader. From this stage the poet forces the reader to speak up after they have witnessed such an emphatic view. The poet then says that they don't have enough time but this "little time" can't stop them to speak the truth and whatever they have in their mind. There is a universal appeal in the poem. This is for all those people who are anywhere suffering and humiliated all over the world. He is urging people not to keep on suffering. The poet is disturbed from the silence of the silence of the masses.

Speak, for your two lips are free;  
Speak, your tongue is still your own;  
This straight body still is yours---  
Speak, your life is still your own.  
See how in the blacksmith's forge  
Flames leap high and steel glows red,  
Padlocks opening wide their jaws,  
Every chain's embrace outspread!  
Time enough is this brief hour,  
Until body and tongue lie dead  
Speak for truth is living yet

Speak for whatever must be said.<sup>4</sup>

"Africa, Come Back" is a remarkable poem by Faiz. The inspiration behind this poem were the rebellious cries of the African revolutionaries. The central theme of the poem is man's emotional and mental journey, a struggle for justice. The struggle and passion of the rebels or the lovers of freedom gives strength to the poet. The poet's invitation to Africa universalizes the theme of the poem.

The poet has gained enough will power. He has decided to struggle with and face the oppression bravely. He is no longer in a miserable condition. He has decided to pursue his ideals and lead a life of dignity. He is beyond pain, grief, and helplessness. He again invites Africa. Africa awakens strength, freedom, and strong will power in him.

The poet is now full of courage. He is no longer afraid of "panacle" or "fetter". The phrase "deer-eyes of spears" gives us an idea of the poet's rebellious nature and new-found strength. The poet is attracted by the beauty and strength of Africa. He also loves the African people for their love of freedom. He calls Africa "the earth's heart". His identification with African people is full of hope. Here he becomes a spokesperson not only for the freedom fighters in Africa but also for the world's

voiceless and suffering people. The poem reveals his constant struggle against the prevailing oppressive systems. The spirit of freedom becomes one.

Complete poem is resonating with the idea that some action has to be taken up, a revolution. This wildness shows a wild desire for freedom. Poet is trying to seek a very warm participation. There is a swiftness of action in words. Even nature is joining them in their cause. Woods are keeping pace with time. There is a complete sense of identification in the poem. The poet asserts that in revolution simplicity is not required but ferocity is required. The struggle and passion of the rebels or the lovers of freedom gives strength to the poet. He is now with all the freedom fighters, one with this cause. The poem reflects his Marxist ideology, equality, and revolutionary stance.

I have caught the madness of your drum,  
My wild blood beats and throbs with it –  
come,  
Africa, come!  
Come, from the dust I have raised my head,  
Torn misery's bandage from my face,  
Wrenched my arm free from pain's grip, cut  
My way through the web of helplessness-  
Africa, come!

The hopeless manacle is my mace,  
From the broken fetter I forge my shield-  
Africa, come!

Spears burn like gazelles' eyes through the  
reeds

With enemy blood nights' shades turn re  
Africa, come!

The earth's heart, Africa, beats with mine

The river dances, the woods keep time;

I am Africa, I put on your mask,

I am you, my step is your lion tread,

Africa – come,

Come with your lion-tread,

Africa, come!<sup>5</sup>

Thus, these two poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz talk about the subaltern and voicing their silence out. The ideology of Faiz is not that of simplicity but revolutionary and fiery.

**Conclusion:** Academically, it is a big hurdle for the marginalized to stand in front of the mainstream and fight for their place. The existential question at hand is the essence of the marginalized sections, which Faiz somehow succeeded in spreading. The poet through his poems addresses those people who, like him, are the victims of

oppression and tyranny. In his these two poems, "Speak" and "Africa, Come Back", traces the struggle for survival against annihilating forces and imperialist designs in universal as well as in local and indigenous terms. His poems reveals that Faiz is an optimist and in the prevalent darkness of sooty blackness he finds embers of hope, associated with love. The poet requests everybody to go on until the destination of real freedom (peace, harmony, and brotherhood) is reached. The poetry of Faiz has not lost its essence with the passing of years and has never failed to inspire the oppressed and the marginalized. It has been well said by Vicente Fox, which is truly applicable to the marginalized,

"Prohibition didn't work in the Garden of Eden. Adam ate the apple".

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