

***Notes***

## **Poetic World of Ali Sardar Jafri**

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Ali Sardar Jafri was one of our major Urdu poets who enjoyed not only national distinction but also international fame. His poetry is distinguished by a breath of vision, secular and progressive outlook, deep involvement in life, intensity of thought and feeling, striking rhythmic patterns, bold and colourful imagery and high flown poetic style. He often employed a dramatic mode of expression. His best poems also have an intricate pattern of symbols and metaphors, presenting his vision in a concrete form. Some of these attributes bring to mind the stylistic features of modern English poetry in the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the progressive group of poets, the thought element is quite strong in the poetic contributions of Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Ali Sardar Jafri. While felt thought lends subtle nuances and richness of texture to Faiz's poetic expression, Sardar Jafri's thought, gaining strength from his passion, translates itself into bold images and metaphors. Infact, he often seems to be thinking in a pictorial language. Sardar Jafri's images and symbols embrace all manifestations of life from earth to heaven. But as 'man' is the centre of his poetic universe, there is a special emphasis on social and cultural aspects and man's achievements through the ages. Often human creativity and magnificent creative energy of nature seem to blend together in a rich harmony. A fine example of this pattern is 'Zindagi Ka Tarana' (song of life) in his dramatic poem 'Nai Duniya Ko Salam'. Even otherwise this remarkable creation of Jafri is not only a dramatic presentation of the freedom struggle but also abounds in themes of universal significance, such as the essential unity and continuity of life, the process of evolution, magnificent creativity of nature, vast possibilities of human existence and awe inspiring greatness and breathtaking beauty of the universe. Translating scientific and philosophic thought into imaginative forms was a striking aspect of Sardar Jafri's poetic talent.

Sardar Jafri was quite at home in the classical style but his special distinction lay in breaking the classical mould and creating new

and more expressive modes of poetic expression with colourful imagery and striking metaphors. A fine example of this style is his well known poem 'Fareb' (deception) in which passionate feelings and painful perceptions are translated into unique dramatic symbols and images. But sometimes, his poetic style tends to be more bold and rough as in another well known poem 'Pathar Ki Deewar' (wall of stone), in which the sense of protest is expressed in raw images almost unbearable in their intensity. Here by a repetition of a single word, that of stone, he has projected the inhuman character of the jail and painful image experiences of the inmates with great force. Similarly, in the introductory poem of 'Nai Dunya Ko Salam' he painted the woeful picture of India under British rule—which was entirely inhuman and unnatural by repeating the image of darkness in a unique way. Such examples can be seen elsewhere also in his poetry and are an important step in the creation of a modern poetic style.

On the other hand, Sardar Jafri also gave expression to the beauty and harmony of simple life with great delicacy and a deep sense of personal involvement. A fine example of this is his poem 'Awadh ki Khake Hasin' (The beautiful land of Awadh) which brings to mind the early poetry of Wordsworth in his 'Lyrical Ballads' in which the poet invites his readers to see the familiar environments and simple characters with a new sense of wonder and admiration.

On the whole the earlier phase of Sardar Jafri's poetry is marked by revolutionary enthusiasm and a sense of protest and his themes are expressed in bold and sometimes in rough and shocking imagery. When we turn to his later poetry of 'Ek Khawab Aur', 'Perahan-e-Sharar' and other collections we notice a mellowing process, with depth of feeling and thought, and also greater artistic control. The poems of this period are shorter but shaped more delicately. The title poem of 'Ek Khawab Aur', for example, combines a tragic sense with hope and courage expressed with fine artistry. 'Do Chirag', a short dramatic poem, embodies the eternal struggle of good and evil in metaphors of light, darkness and the wind. 'Hathon ka Trana' (the song of hands) is another important poem which not only pays tribute to man's creativity and achievements, but also reflects the evolution of culture and civilization in a nutshell. Another fine poem 'Sare Toor' (on Mount Sinai) though dedicated to the astronauts, has a universal frame of reference. Here the conquest of space is seen not only as an achievement of science but as a miracle of human creativity and passionate idealism, but perhaps the finest poem of this collection is 'Mera Safar' (my journey) which embodies the poets vision of creativity of nature, continuity of life and eternity of time, with great economy and delicate artistry. With its

intricate pattern of images and symbols this poem is essentially an extended metaphor of the poets comprehensive vision.

Sardar Jafri's poetry in this phase has also a fairly large number of love poems. His love poetry is emotional, vivacious and colourful and only occasionally tinged with pathos. Here I would like to mention only two of his love poems which are quite different from others, viz. 'Haseen Tar' (more beautiful) which embodies the experience of mature love and acceptance of life in its totality. Here the image of the aging beloved is recreated with great delicacy and perspective warmth. On the other hand 'Hamare Naam' recreates the experience of young love, in which the young lovers write each others names by combining the stars on the entire humanity in a chain of love. So this delicate and passionate poem also has a universal dimension.

Another striking feature of this period is Sardar Jafri's passionate pleas for world peace and Indo-Pak friendship and his memorable poems on this theme like 'Dushman Kaun Hai' and 'Subhe-Farda' which may not match 'Mera Safar' and 'Sare Toor' in artistic perfection, nevertheless mark him as a poet with a profound sense of social responsibility and a human outlook.

In the last period of Sardar Jafri's poetic career we notice an even greater degree of concentration and a more acute artistic sense. We also notice a tragic sense. Here I would like to mention his two admirable poems viz. 'The Naked Fakir' and 'Aabla Pa'. In 'The Naked Fakir' he concerns himself with the philosophic theme of being and non-being, time and eternity and transience and permanence. In 'Aabla Pa' life is seen as a journey in the desert, with uncertain destination. And this journey is both hard and painful, lovely and exciting. The travellers pass away, leaving their foot marks behind, but life continues with new travellers seeking their destination and making their mark. Both poems embody significant aspects of the poets comprehensive vision with great economy and artistic force. These, too, are essentially extended metaphors.

To conclude, we may say that Sardar Jafri was one of the most distinguished poets of the progressive writers group. He was also a popular and important modern poet. His poetic style is strikingly expressive, and even hard thoughts and concepts melt into lyricism under his poetic gaze. His striking rhythmic patterns, bold and apt imagery and dramatic style also contribute to meaningful communication. By virtue of his comprehensive vision, passionate involvement in life and original style he has extended the boundaries of Urdu poetry. His critical works and intellectual contributions also add to his stature as a significant writer of his time.

