MEMORIES OF FAIZ

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An unexpected telephone call began for me a journey into the past. A journey that led into memories long submerged or shelved into that grey area of the mind which retains, subconsciously, what I consider far too precious and dear to be discarded forever. The voice at the other end of the telephone introduced herself as Edith Coliver. She sounded tremulous, expectant, and yet hesitant to ask a favor that she longed for, something that meant a great deal to her. She asked me if I would meet with her to talk about someone she held very dear. She was on a visit to Cairo, where I now live with my family, and had learned that I was a niece of the person she loved and respected. So began my journey into recalling memories of days long gone, some of which are still vivid and alive as on the days when the events took place.

The memories that are brought forth here may seem disjointed; they certainly are not in chronological order, as the mind has a tendency to play tricks, and one tends to forget — generally speaking — what transpired first, and what came later. One of the delimitations that I face while writing this paper is that most of my books by Faiz as well as books and articles about him and his work are not with me. The only two books that I can refer to in order to authenticate my memories are *Faiz A. Faiz: The Living Word,* and *The Rebel's Silhouette*.

My earliest memory of my uncle, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, was that of conversations in hushed voices, quickly suppressed, attempts to divert our attention, as my sisters and I wandered in upon our elders talking somberly. That was the time when I learned the difference between the common criminals — hose who had committed crimes such as theft, robbery, murder, rape, etc. — and those who were imprisoned for political reasons. I learned that my uncle, Faiz, had been imprisoned because the Pakistani government thought that he, along with others, was conspiring against it. I was five or six years old when

this happened, and to me it was inconceivable that my two cousins (his daughters) and their mother (my aunt) should be left on their own. Nobody knew how long Faiz would be in prison, or if he would ever come out alive. People talk glibly about political prisoners, and the time they spend behind bars, but few realize, or wish to acknowledge the anguish, the horror, the pain that these people undergo. At that time, I was only aware of the fact that my uncle was not at home, that he was far from home, and that my father, his elder brother, was trying to find ways to bring him back home. It was not till much later that I realized the heartache and anguish experienced by those taken into custody for political reasons, as well as by their families and friends. This mental suffering affected Faiz's poetry — and he wrote poems which reflected his pain, his suffering, his criticism of the existing social and political systems, and, above all, his love for humanity. I do not profess to be well-versed in the writings of Faiz, nor have I read all of his work, but what I have read, has given me cause to think about various aspects of life, and ponder over different issues.

Faiz was taken to a jail in Hyderabad, about seven hundred or so miles from Lahore, his city of residence. Our family was originally not from Lahore but came from a village in the district of Sialkot, Pakistan. Faiz and his brothers went to school in Sialkot, and later, Lahore. When these brothers were still young their father died, leaving their mother to look after her four sons, as well as other relatives. She tried to make sure that her sons received a good education, and she succeeded admirably. Her eldest son, my father, received not only his master's degree in physics but also a law degree, and became a judge; Faiz worked towards two masters — in English and in Arabic; the third son, went to Law School and joined the army — during World War II, he was part of the British Army's Intelligence Corp in Egypt, and later was part of the legal branch of the army. The fourth son, at an early age, had a severe reaction to a medicine which affected his brain, so he never went to school. When I learned that Faiz had studied both English and Arabic literature, I was in awe; to me it seemed that anyone who could study the two languages in order to master them had to be extremely bright and intelligent. Somehow, to me that kind of an education was of far more worth than a degree in history, or geography...one needs to realize that the age during which these brothers got their education was the age when few men went beyond their bachelor's degrees. That was an age

when education was for the elite, whether one likes to believe it or not. So, to have not one degree, but two — and in foreign languages — was an incredible accomplishment! I was very impressed that my uncle was a linguist; he was fluent in Punjabi (his mother tongue), Urdu, English and Arabic, as well as Persian. Reflecting on Faiz and his accomplishments, I wonder how much of this admiration for him influenced me to work towards a master's degree in English literature. Subconsciously, I must have been influenced to some extent — just as I was by the fact that my father had a law degree, and I wanted to work towards one, and did. I seem to be digressing from Faiz, and my memories of him!

To return to Hyderabad...in 1951, Faiz was arrested on charges of conspiracy against the government and taken to a prison in a city in Sindh, not far from Karachi. In 1952, my parents, my three sisters and I traveled to Karachi. So that my parents could visit my uncle in Hyderabad. They left the four of us with relatives in Karachi and went to Hyderabad to visit Faiz. Soon after my father and mother had visited Faiz in jail, my father suffered a heart attack and died. The news of my father's sudden and unexpected death shocked and devastated the entire family. On hearing of his brother's death, Faiz wrote a poem, a lament — mourning that his brother had not only left him, but had taken all his (Faiz's) childhood, his youth, his memories with him. This poem is one of my favorite pieces of Faiz's works, as it has sentimental value for me. At Faiz's funeral, a grief stricken mourner recalls the letter Faiz had written to his wife, Alys, on hearing of his elder brother's death: "I have held my head high in the pride of my pain, I have not lowered my eyes before anyone. It was difficult, it was harrowing, but now I am alone with my anguish in my cell and do not feel ashamed in bending under this immense injustice" (59).

Faiz's poetry had a tremendous appeal. His verses, written in Urdu and translated into many languages, appealed not only to poets, writers, and the educated, but also to the masses. His poetry communicated the experiences of people, of an age, and the pain, suffering, and struggle undergone by societies collectively. Through his poetry Faiz hoped to awaken and enlighten the people and develop in them an understanding of their own destiny. On November 22, 1984, the editorial in *The Pakistan Times* paid tribute to him, his poetry, and to his life-long struggle:

His powerful, motivated poetry painted not only a verbal picture of the struggle of humanity, the turmoil, the suffering and pathos but also the beauty and romanticism of our daily lives. With bold motivated expression he gave any subject he touched, a new meaning, a new trend, a new style, and in the process, the richness and depth of his thought gave Urdu poetry a new dimension.

His poetry with its understanding of humanity, realism and liberalism combined with finesse, pulsated and projected the events of the century. With the magic of his words he influenced three generations in his lifetime. His *Naqsh-e-Faryadi, Dast-e-Saba* and other literary works will continue to live on.

Few people leave this world with the satisfaction of recognition — but Faiz was one who had received the coveted Lenin Prize, the International Lotus Prize for poetry, and was a nominee for the Nobel Literature Prize. But more important than official recognition is the fact that he warmed the hearts of a large segment of society who loved and respected him. . . . His sparkling wit, passion for the people, analysis of human mind and identification with the throbbings of their heart endeared him to scholars, teachers, students, music lovers and all those who have love for aesthetics.

In 1955, Faiz was released from prison and he returned to his home in Lahore, much to the joy of his family and friends. I recall visiting him, with my mother and sisters, at his house near Simla Pahari, overlooking the residence of the US Consulate-General. As his daughters, my sisters and I were fairly close we would often get together, either at their house or at ours. I remember him sitting on the terrace, in one of the cane *mooras,* with a cigarette between his fingers, and a gentle smile on his face. His hands were always beautifully manicured and had a delicate beauty — maybe, reflecting his sensitive nature. I do not think that during all the years that I knew him, I ever saw him frown, or look displeased about anything. There must have been a number of incidents or events that bothered him, but

he never let people around him feel that anything was amiss.

He was a man who spoke seldom, and when he did everyone listened to him. One evening, when a group of us was surrounding him, he talked about the horrors that had taken place during the partition of India. He described, with anguish in his voice, the trains that came into Pakistan full of people who had been mutilated and slaughtered. I remember his saying, years later, that sight haunted him still. Though moved by his account of the massacres that took place, of friends and families pulled asunder, I could not fully understand his feelings of pain and suffering, till I lived through the revolution in Iran. The horror of seeing people hounded and chased, of seeing them wounded, screaming in pain, trying desperately to find a "safe" place, buildings on fire, gunfire everywhere, chaos, destruction, blood soaked sheets hanging in defiance in the streets, made me think of his account of the Partition and the feelings he had experienced. I could understand and empathize with his feelings as well as with the feelings of those who suffered. I still have nightmares related to that period of my life. Often I ask myself, "Why is man so cruel to man?" I have not received an answer that will absolve mankind of its many iniquities and sins. Like my uncle, I believe in peace, and often wonder why man cannot live in peace.

At his death, a friend paying his tribute to the memory of Faiz said, "I have never seen a more modest, unassuming and quiet person, who could also be a man of such high stature. Calm and quiet, he would sit with you for hours, with bits of conversation here and there, a little laugh, a little anecdote, but most of the time quiet, just radiating love and friendliness" (p. 91). To me this description is quintessential of him. I remember the quiet smile, his slow, thoughtful speech, and his "little" laugh — which would, sometimes, turn into a bout of coughing. We would attribute his coughing spasms to his constant smoking, as one seldom saw him without a cigarette.

Some of my fondest memories of him include the time he came to our house to visit his mother (my amazing grandmother). They would sit on the couch in the living room, simply holding hands and smiling — a wonderful aura of peace and contentment surrounding them. Not a word would have been spoken by either, yet a world of communication had taken place. When my grandmother knew in advance that he would be coming, she would spend hours making and preparing his favorite delicacies — such as *palak walla paratha*. After he had left, she would bemoan his small appetite. I also remember that

the two of them resembled each other not only in their mannerisms, but they had a very strong physical resemblance, as well. I think that of all her sons, he resembled her the most — his features, as well as his smile, were the same as hers, though he was taller and somewhat heavier than her. Another memory that I have of him is that he seldom let his feelings show, and seldom talked about himself. The only time that I ever saw him visibly shaken and sad, trying desperately to hide his sorrow and sense of loss from the entire world, was when my grandmother passed away. There had been a very strong bond between the two of them, a bond that spanned years, events, political boundaries. His years in jail or exile did not lessen the bond, but strengthened it — it was invisible, yet tangible. She often said that when he came to see her she was at peace, and was happy.

The heartache and despair that my grandmother felt — when my uncle was in jail, under sentence of death, or in exile, away from his beloved homeland — was seldom voiced by her. Like him, she seldom talked about or discussed issues that concerned her deeply. Though there was a difference here; he did voice these issues and concerns in his poetry. Faiz was an acknowledged left-winger, which must have troubled her — a devout Muslim. I remember when my grandmother, one of my sisters and I went to Karachi for the wedding of Cheemie (Salima, his elder daughter). My aunt put us up in my uncle's study, a lovely room, full of books, a desk that he used for his work, a divan, and a couple of comfortable chairs — all looking out on a spacious balcony. One day my grandmother looked into one of the desk drawers (I don't know what caused her to do that, as normally she was not the kind of person to 'nose' around) and found a string of prayer beads. She was thrilled, for she thought that at heart he was still a Muslim. Over the years she would constantly pray for his health and safety, as he spent several years of his life either in exile or in jail. His living in Karachi — away from Lahore — was also a hardship for her.

Faiz had suffered a heart attack (I think that it was soon after he was released from jail, in 1955) and the doctors had warned him that both smoking and drinking were hazardous for his health. He, however, chose to disregard the doctors' advice, till just a few months before his death in 1984. This bout with ill-health did not set him back with his work or with his writing. At the time of Partition, when India and Pakistan came into being as two separate nations, Faiz took on the job of Editor for the newly founded *The Pakistan Times*. Under him,

the paper took on a progressive and enlightened identity, and built up a large circulation. During the time that he was in jail, the newspaper had another Editor, who did not do much to increase the circulation. So, on his release from jail, in 1955, he returned to his position with the paper. Soon after he resumed his work with the newspaper, it was not only read avidly nationwide, but also had a fairly large circulation abroad.

The year 1958 was a busy year for him, but it also held trials and tribulations. This was the year that he attended the first Afro-Asian Writers' Conference, held in Tashkent. At the conference, as always, he advocated world peace and universal brotherhood. Through his various conference addresses and writings, he appealed for people to work towards peace as he saw the survival of the human race dependent on it. Through his poems he passed on his ideology regarding peace and brotherhood, and drew attention to his own social conscience. His poetry also reflected his strong social and political commitment and his struggle against imperialism. His poetry with its strong, underlying messages won the hearts of millions of readers in his native Urdu as well as in translation; during his life-time, his poetry was acclaimed by critics as well as poetry lovers. He was one of those rare poets who was loved, admired and honored during his life-time. His poems were recited by people from all areas, not only literary elite, but also the masses. His work was read at different levels — some read it at the surface level, without delving into the underlying message, while others read it as a criticism of the prevalent social and political order.

In the introduction to his translation of Faiz's poems, *The Rebel's Silhouette*, Agha Shahid Ali (1991) describes the form of the *ghazal* as much of Faiz's poetry is written in that form:

> Composed of thematically autonomous couplets that are linked together in a strict scheme of rhyme and meter, the *ghazal*, in its first couplet establishes a scheme that occurs in both lines. As John Hollander says, "For couplets, the *ghazal* is prime; at the end / Of each one's a refrain like a chime:'*at the end.*'" Having seen this couplet, the reader would know that the second line of every succeeding couplet would end with "at the end," the phrase preceded by a word or syllable rhyming with prime and chime. Thus Hollander continues: "But in

subsequent couplets throughout the whole poem, / It's the second line only will rhyme at the end." The reason this form is so tantalizing is that it gives the poet the freedom to engage with all kinds of themes, issues, attitudes, while keeping him gratefully shackled. Thus one couplet may be political, another religious, another romantic, and so on. A *ghazal* must have at least four couplets; there is no maximum limit.

Faiz's poems were not only recited when a group of people got together for a poetry recitation evening, or even in daily conversations, but were also set to music. Some of the poems were used as lyrics to popular music, while others were provided a semi-classical form by the musicians. His poems, set to music, are aired over the radio, blaring over loudspeakers, and are listened to by millions in the fields, work places, inside the quiet of homes, and at the kiosks on the streets. These musical renderings of his work are done by such well-known singers as Iqbal Bano, Nur Jehan and Nayyara Noor. Once, at a family gathering, with amusement in his voice, he related the story of what had occurred at a *mushaira* (an evening devoted to the recitation of poetry). He was asked to recite his poem, *Muj se Pahali se Muhabat* (Don't Ask For That Love Again, My Love) and he responded that the poem was no longer his, it belonged to Nur Jehan! I think that by saying that it belonged to her, he was referring to the incident when, at a musical evening, in Lahore, Nur Jehan chose to sing this particular poem, even though she knew that Faiz was out of favor with the government of the time, and that a public display of support would not be looked on kindly. She was applauded by many for her defiance of the government. This beautiful, memorable poem reflects the strong social and political commitment of the poet's, a commitment that is stronger than any other emotion or feeling.

The strength of his poems, his messages with their ability to reach people across all walks of life, has caused critics to compare him to Pablo Neruda, Nazim Hikmat, Octavio Paz, and Mahmoud Darwish. The back cover of *The Rebel's Silhouette* has an excerpt from Edward W. Said's critique of Faiz's work. Praising Faiz's poetry, he says:

Like Garcia Marquez (Faiz) was read and listened to

> both by the literary elite and by the masses. His major achievement — indeed it is unique in any language — was to have created a contrapuntal rhetoric and rhythm whereby he would use classical forms (*qasida, ghazal, masnavi, qita*) and transform them before his readers...You could hear old and new together. His purity and precision were astonishing...a poet whose poetry combined the sensuousness of Yeats with the power of Neruda. He was, I think, one of the greatest poets of this century...

Faiz's poetry was often a union of the romantic and the political. This mingling of the two elements was characteristic of his poems, therefore not easily separable. However, some of his poems were purely political, such as those written for/about Bangladesh.

Reference to the Bangladesh poems made me think of his film, which came out in the 50s. The film, *Jago Huwa Sawera,* drew attention to the social plight of the Bengalis, in what was then East Pakistan. I have a hazy recollection of the film; I think that I had understood the message and had liked the film. It was slow moving and portrayed the drudgery and hard life led by the Bengali fishermen. A life that seemed (to me) devoid of any sunshine or hope. I believe that though the film won an award in London, it was not well-received at home. The departure from the usual plot in Pakistani films, a plot that unfolds through slapstick humor, innumerable songs and dances, fights, romantic interludes, was missing in *Jago Huwa Sawera*, hence it did not appeal to the general viewers. I believe it portrayed life far too realistically for them to appreciate it! Generally, people went to the movies in order to find a respite from their everyday life, and not to be reminded of what life actually was. For them, a couple of hours when they could suspend their awareness of the many problems they faced was all that they wanted, and not to be rudely shaken into an unwanted awareness.

On his return from his visits to Tashkent and London, in 1958, Faiz was arrested, once again. This time his imprisonment was for a much shorter duration. The government, under the military ruler, Ayub Khan, was wary of him and his connections with the left. He was removed from his post as the editor of *The Pakistan Times*, so he decided to devote his energies towards promoting cultural activities. During this time UNESCO approached various governments to

recommend representative writers from their nations, so that their work could be translated into other languages. Ayub Khan recommended Faiz Ahmad Faiz. I find it very intriguing that though the government was against Faiz's political leanings, it was willing to acknowledge his literary genius.

His work was read, in the original and translated forms, by many all over the world. Through his poetry, he continued to struggle for what he ardently believed in — peace and a brotherhood that would encompass all humankind. His life-long struggle for world peace and universal brotherhood resulted in his being awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, in 1962. I recall that though the government was cognizant of the honor awarded Faiz, it was reluctant to allow him to visit the Soviet Union in order to receive the award. This was the time when the US and Pakistan were busy wooing each other, and the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union was on. Faiz did obtain the permission to travel, practically at the last moment, and went to Moscow to collect his award. His acceptance speech at the ceremony, delivered in Urdu, reiterated his desire for world peace, for a brotherhood that would know no boundaries, which called for an end to the oppression imposed on millions, for justice, and for mankind to work towards these.

In my memory Lahore was never so alive as it was during the time that Faiz was the Chairman of the National Council of the Arts. He was asked to lead the National Council of the Arts by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister. Lahore, which had always been known for its cultural activities, seemed to have reached a new peak. The various forms of art and entertainment provided cultural satisfaction for the people. Literature, film, music, theater, dance, painting, and sculpture were all promoted in national artists and writers. Many of these artists and writers represented the country abroad, thus projecting Pakistan's image on the international scene. Many artists and writers from abroad were welcomed to Pakistan. This period was an era of cultural exchange.

This cultural "utopia" came to a grinding stop with Zia ul Haq, who deposed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, taking over power as the military ruler of the country. The various forms of art and entertainment were drastically curtailed, censorship was imposed, and, as a result, Faiz asked to be relieved of his duties as the chairman of the National Council of the Arts. Shortly after he gave up this chairmanship, he left for Beirut, Lebanon. He made Beirut his home till 1982, when the

Israelis invaded Lebanon. During his time there, he not only edited *Lotus*, the journal of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, but he also continued to write poems. As during the time of his 1951-55 imprisonment, his poetry reached similar intensity and depth of feeling. He was tremendously influenced by the plight of the Palestinians and had a direct involvement with their cause. His poetry, written during this time, reflected the pain and anguish he felt for the Palestinians and their plight.

In 1975, I moved to Tehran, Iran, and lived there till the summer of 1979. While I lived in Tehran, Faiz came to visit. One of the officials at the Pakistan Embassy arranged for a *mushaira* to be held at the Embassy. For me this was a wonderful opportunity to see him. A large number of people had gathered in order to hear him recite his poems. Once again, the reverence and adoration that people felt for him was evident. It was a vibrant force that seemed to buoy up his spirits. When I first saw him that evening, hedged in by a number of men, I thought that he looked tired, sad and lonely. But as the evening progressed, he seemed to shed his tiredness, though the aura of sadness still hung over him.

I think that the time Faiz spent in Beirut was a time that, for him, was fraught with a despairing sense of homesickness and loneliness. Recently, I came across the book, *Faiz A. Faiz: The Living Word* (1987), a compilation of articles written in tribute to him and his memory. One of the articles in this collection, "Death in a Dark Alley" was originally published in the newspaper, *Dawn*, by Zafar Samdani, who quotes Faiz's elder daughter's account of her father's time in Beirut:

> But to the question: Is Faiz happy? The answer lies in the fact that every evening he leaves home alone to walk around the once glittering streets of Raouche (district of Beirut) where militia guards are now posted to protect buildings around which (Palestinian) refugee children play. Faiz takes his walk late in the evenings, a cigarette under his lips. The rest of the evenings he mostly spends at the balcony of his flat, constantly staring at the sea at some distance. Faiz is silent. Another person hesitates to intrude on his silence or scratch his pain. This routine and the nostalgia for home are the source of his poetry. He is writing at a fast and ferocious pace, much like his poetry

from the prison. (67)

The heartache of his loneliness and his intense longing for home was something he had touched on in some of the letters he wrote to me, while I was in Tehran. Unfortunately, in all my moving around the world, I seem to have lost them, but the contents are still vivid in my mind. In one of the letters he had touched on his concern for the Iranian students and their struggle. The time that he visited Tehran was the time when people lived in constant fear. They kept their innermost thoughts locked up, afraid to allow even the slightest breath of air touch them! I regret that I never got around to asking him about what he thought of the Iranian revolution, or about the new form of government under Khomeni.

Many of his poems, written during this time concerned his preoccupation with the Palestinian cause. He felt that he could uphold and further their cause through his poetry. His poems reflected the Palestinians' struggle for freedom, for their fight for the land that had been taken away from them, thus leaving them homeless. The injustice of this was the basis of much of Faiz's poems. His support and advocation of their cause led Yasser Arafat to say that with Faiz's death the Palestinians had lost a firm supporter of their cause.

As I have already mentioned, Beirut, the city where he spent a number of years, was not only full of loneliness for him, but it also posed danger. In another of his letters he wrote about the constant shelling and firing going on. He wrote about the time that a bomb burst outside his building, shattering the windows, sending splinters of glass everywhere. Fortunately, he was in another room at that time, and was not hurt. For him those days must have been exceedingly lonely (Cheemie's account seems to verify this) and fraught with uncertainties. Despite, or maybe because of, his loneliness and the danger he faced, living in Beirut, this was a very productive period as far as his literary work is concerned. His poetry reflected his acute longing and nostalgia for home. One of his often quoted and recited poems, *Mere Dil Mere Musafir*, belongs to this phase of his life. Other poems from this period include *Sare Wadi-e-Sina*, a lullaby for a Palestinian child, and another written for the Palestinian martyrs who died in exile. According to Nagi Ali's article published in *Faiz A. Faiz: The Living Word*, while living in Beirut,

[Faiz] witnessed the real face of aggression — the

> repeatedly bombed Palestinian camps, the burnt children, the agonizing mothers, the amputated old men, phosphorus bombs turning human bodies into porous sponge, cluster bombs ripping through the bellies of pregnant women, charred bodies and rotten corpses. At the same time Faiz saw the resolve of these courageous people and their steel will, and heard the potent voice of the Resistance, asserting the will of the Palestinians to emerge from the long night of oppression. (111)

In an interview that he granted to Dr. Abdel-Qader Yassine (a Palestinian scholar) in the summer of 1983, he responded to the question regarding the future of the Palestinians by saying:

> People have always asked me this question: will there be a Palestine? And my answer is always the same: If there can be an Israel after 3,000 years, why can't there be Palestine after 50 years? I think that so long as there is a Palestinian alive, there will be Palestine because he will continue the struggle until that noble goal is achieved. (79)

The next time I saw Faiz was in the United States. He had flown into Canada and from there to Michigan before he came to Alexandria, not far from Washington, DC. I was, at that time, in Alexandria, visiting my sister. I remember, as though it were yesterday, going to the airport to receive him. He walked towards me, carrying, very precariously, a container full of Pakistani sweets that an admirer of his had made and sent for me. I still remember his look of relief at getting rid of his burden! As soon as he saw me, he thrust the packet at me and said, "Here, this is for you." I could not believe that she had actually foisted this packet on him. I had never met her, but she had got in touch with me, and continued to telephone me every day. Her conversations were almost purely concerned with him and his poetry. Like many others she was totally smitten by him, his charisma, his gentle smile, and above all, his poetry.

The days that he spent with us in Alexandria were good days, as I had the opportunity to talk to him, in between the times that people came to see him or called him on the phone. I think that despite all the people calling on him, he did manage to get some rest. Some of his

admirers and followers had asked for the opportunity to meet with him, so an Evening with Faiz was arranged. I remember that he recited a number of his poems upon request. He discussed different issues and topics, including the various translations of his works. He said that one of the best translations of his work into the English language was done by a woman, with whom he had had meetings in Canada, before coming to the United States. When I think back on that conversation, I could kick myself for not remembering her name. He had said that she was the one who had come closest to capturing the essence of his words.

During the course of that evening he also touched on various other topics. He regretted that many Asian and African nations had been culturally influenced by nations that wielded power over them. He pointed to the source of some of the cultural problems faced by Asian nations, that of colonial domination. He advocated decolonization, and a return to one's cultural heritage and folk traditions. He was a staunch supporter of cultural heritage and did not take kindly to people forgetting their traditions and customs.

The last time I saw him was in Lahore, not long after his return from Beirut. He came to visit my husband and me, in our house in Gulberg. He came with his son-in-law, Humair Hashmi, and his grandson Adeel. My husband brought out the drinks, but because Adeel was still very young, he was given apple juice, mixed with soda, in a wine glass; my husband told him that it was white wine. Faiz gave his little laugh and was amused to see his grandson guzzling his "wine". I left Lahore in July 1984 for the United States. During this time he was in London. Later that year, in November, I received the news that Faiz had died. At first I could not believe it. Despite his bouts with ill-health, I had the feeling that he would always be there, that he was eternal. I was devastated. I wanted to be with the rest of my family, so that we could share our grief and find strength and solace from each other. Being far from home only served to increase an acute sense of isolation and irretrievable loss.

Even though Faiz is no longer alive, he continues to live through his poetry. The love, admiration and devotion that people felt for him during his lifetime continue to keep his memory alive. This fact became all the more apparent to me when I received the telephone call from the lady who was on a visit to Cairo.

Edith Coliver, from California, brought back memories which had been relegated to the subconscious. She brought back to life the

image of Faiz. When we finally met, Edith's memories of Faiz, her meetings with him in Karachi were so alive and vibrant that I could almost see him sitting in a chair with a cigarette between his lips and a glass of Scotch by his elbow. Some of his characteristics that always fascinated me were his patience with people, and his readiness to share his ideas and views on various subjects when asked about them. He was equally at ease sitting quietly, soaking in what was going on around him.

Edith had met him through a mutual friend, and was immediately engulfed by his charisma and charm. She was delighted to meet a poet who was beloved by millions, not only in his own country, but also in the neighboring country of India, as well as in other countries. I think that what really delighted her was the fact that he was so very modest. He also impressed her with his intelligence, wisdom, and his insatiable desire to promote freedom and peace. She saw in him a man who was more than willing to make a just cause, and the resulting struggle, his own cause, his own struggle. As Nagi Ali points out, "And the world also knows that when justice is denied to the people, when the smile is uprooted from the lips of the innocent children, sometimes it turns into the guns of El Salvadorean guerillas, sometimes into Palestinian martyrs' blood and sometimes into the poetry of Faiz" (110).

Edith spent an evening and an afternoon with me talking about my uncle. She talked about his involvement with the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case which led to his subsequent imprisonment in 1951. He along with others was accused of planning treason against the government. She knew that he had been the editor of three of Pakistan's leading newspapers: *The Pakistan Times, Imroze and Nawa-e-Waqt*; that he had been awarded the Lenin Peace Prize; that he had been nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature; and that the Avicenna Award had been awarded him, posthumously, in 1986; that he had devoted considerable time to work with working class people, trying to teach some of them to read; that through his poetry he tried to raise the social conscience of the people; that he was a founder member of both the Afro-Asian and Progressive Writers Associations; that he represented Pakistan in UNESCO and the International Labor Organization; that the US government had blacklisted him due to his strong leftist involvement. As she talked about Faiz, she became quite emotional and teary-eyed. Listening to her reminisce about Faiz, I realized that though physically he may no longer be in this world, he

is still very much alive through his words — through his poetry that is loved, read and heard by millions all over the world.

At some point in our conversations, Edith told me that Faiz had written a poem, especially for her. She promised to send me a copy of that poem when she got back to California. She kept her word, and she was pleased to give me permission to include it in my memories of Faiz. I am truly indebted to her for allowing me to include this poem as it has never been published. I had shared with her the book, *Faiz A. Faiz: The Living Word*, and in a note to me she said that she was touched by reading the tributes to him. She goes on to say, "They bespoke of great love among his peers and disciples for a man who had brains, heart and commitment. I am enclosing a copy of a poem that he wrote to and for me. I treasure it, of course." The poem was written in Urdu, in January, 1979, and was addressed to her. Faiz knew that she knew no Urdu, so he translated and signed it for her. The poem that he wrote for her shows his sensitivity and charm, as well as his ability to draw people to him.

To Edith

We met in such a way and
parted in such fashion
That the impression left
in the heart is not a scar
but a flower

References

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