

**DIALECTICAL CRITICISM IN THE POETRY OF FAIZ AHMED
FAIZ AND PABLO NERUDA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Mahar Mazhar Hayat

Assistant Professor in English, Government Post-Graduate College,
Samanabad, Faisalabad

&

Muhammad Safeer Awan

Ph.D. and Assistant Professor in English, International Islamic University,
Islamabad

ABSTRACT

Introduction

There is no denying that dialectical criticism in literature is much needed in this age of corporate imperialism/globalisation because wealth is being concentrated evermore in even fewer hands. The multi-national corporations are posing formidable threat to the national and cultural autonomy of the nation states. They are also undermining the relevance of trade unions in protecting workers' rights. Dialectical criticism exposes inherent contradictions in the discourses of the ruling ideology and glorifies the principle of mutation against status quo. The present study invokes the principle of dialectical realism in Pablo Neruda's Canto General and the poetry of Faiz, affirming resistance against social oppression and economic exploitation. In a comparative mode, the study examines and determines similarities in the dialectical method of the two poets and also identifies specificities arising out of the particular frames of reference in which the two poets have produced their art.

Marxist Principle of Dialectical Materialism

Marxism is primarily a set of lego-historical and economic ideas which offers materialistic interpretation of the socio-political, historical, economic and cultural aspects of society. It also advocates the materialistic readings of all literatures. “Marx had nothing but scorn for the idea that there was something called History which had purposes and laws of motion quite independent of human being” (Eagleton, 2007, p. 45). Karl Marx has propounded the pillar principles of his ideology in his works such as *Communist Manifesto*(2008), *Theory of Surplus Value* (1963), *Capital* (1967) and *German Ideology* (1974).In *Manifesto*, he clearly underlines the fundamental tenets of Marxism and also explains in precise terms the history of capitalism, its unlimited potential to generate capital and its profit principle. He also warns of the dangers that capitalism poses to the world if the working class (proletariat) does not become organized. The pillar principles of Marxism are dialectical materialism, the critique of capitalism and the advocacy of proletariat revolution. Marx borrowed his theory of dialectical materialism from Hegel’s view of dialectics. Bertell Ollman and Tony Smith (2008) in Introduction of *Dialectics for the New Century* state that Heraclitus is the pioneer of the theory of dialectics in western philosophical tradition. He affirmed that “the cosmos was in endless flux, in contrast to those for whom ‘true’ reality was immutable” (p. 2).This constant flux occurs at a certain pattern called dialectic. This pattern consists of the cycle of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Socrates added intellectual orientation to Heraclitus’ theory of dialectics. Aristotle equated dialectics with rhetoric. For Kant, dialectics refers to the process of the inconclusive disputation in which the interlocutors expose each other’s inconsistencies. However, Hegel’s concept of dialectic is affirmative. It means that contentions and controversies lead to the resolution. For him,

the reality is spiritual. Marx (1963) in *Theory of Surplus Value* argues that the ultimate reality is material and history is the product of class struggle for materialistic dominance. He applies his dialectical method to investigate contradictions in the existing bourgeois economy. He sees “capitalism as full of intersecting and overlapping contradictions” (p. 218). Marx points out that the most conspicuous contradictions in the capitalistic economy are between the capital and the labour, the capitalists and the proletariats, between the competition and the cooperation and the democratic values and the economic inequality. Capitalism by virtue of its profit principle and the peculiar structure continues to produce surplus but does not offer its equitable distribution. It is socialism which can manage equitable distribution of the capital. So, in Marxism class conflict is the thesis. Existing capitalistic system with its inherent contradictions is the anti-thesis and dialectical criticism with its propositions for an exploitation-free future world is the synthesis.

Dialectical Realism

Marxists reject bourgeois interpretation of reality and its realistic tradition in literature. In bourgeois literary tradition, the reality of existence was believed to reside in the subjective world of the poet which was expressed in a highly personalized set of signs and symbols. This personalized world of the poet transcended the temporal and the spatial limitations and had nothing to do with the immediate collective existence of the social world around him. This segregation of existence of the individual and the collective life was furthered in post-colonial societies where absolutism was replaced by imperialism. The process of colonization unleashed the brutal forces of exploitation and tyranny pushing the poets and writers further into their personal world for solace and escape. The most powerful

criticism of bourgeois realism comes from Georg Lukacs. His primary criticism of capitalism is its individualistic approach. His approval for dialectical realism is its concern for classes that make society. Lukacs (1971) in *History and Class Consciousness* praises Marxism for its social praxis as Marxism has for the first time acknowledged the existence of the proletariat class into history. “When the proletariat proclaims the dissolution of the existing social order,” Marx declares, “it does no more than disclose the secret of its own existence, for it is the effective dissolution of that order” (as cited in Lukacs, 1971, p. 3). Lukacs rejects the modernist experimental literature as individualistic, fragmented and fixed in immediacy. His main reservation regarding modernist writings was its ahistorical and static structure. He is equally critical of the avant-gardist literature. The avant-gardists in their obsession to achieve critical distance from the socio-political perspective of the individuals fail to depict concrete and complicated reality. Lukacs affirms that dialectical realism evaluates existing reality in terms of social totality. It evaluates present as a part of temporal process. Dialectical method analyses present socio-political and economic conditions as a result of historical process marked by class struggle and also evaluates the propositions through which present can be transformed into a different and more viable future. Under capitalism, the biased perception of history and reality is accelerated through the superstructure. In order to understand the true reality beyond dominant ideology, we need to transcend the temporal limits of immediacy. Without historicizing present through dialectical analysis, genuine reality cannot be perceived. So the true literature that represents social totality is Marxist literature. Lukacs emphasises that dialectical realism is a highly demanding process. The writer must sweat to peep into the history of class struggle, the fetishism of commodities under bourgeois

economy. Only those writers can portray reality in a convincing manner who take their position outside the absolute circle of the dominant ideological assumptions.

Similarly, Frederic Jameson (1983) in *The Political Unconscious* elaborates the function of the dialectical analysis in exposing the falsity of bourgeois ideology. He says that bourgeois ideology is created through the discursive practices of all the ideological apparatuses. The author argues that it is impossible for an individual worker to see through the bourgeois consciousness as the hegemonic class monopolises and controls all the means and sources of propaganda. Dialectical analysis aims to change the perception of the whole proletariat class, not the individual worker. It is of course a painful experience because the individual subject has been nurtured in that particular ideological construct. S/he lives and thinks through a peculiar discourse. Dialectical analyst strikes the subject in order to establish the view that the bourgeois ideology is an extrinsic incursion into his/her conscious experience.

Dialectical Realism of Faiz

Being dialectical in approach, Faiz rejects bourgeois aesthetics which considers the world both physical and human as immutable and that the art provides only the escapist entertainment to man. The poet's glorification of praxis in nature accentuates his faith in social praxis because the poet draws strong analogies between material and social worlds. He considers natural world as a macrocosm and the social world its microcosm. His Socialist realism aspires to critically comprehend the various dynamics of social totality. His dialectical realism includes understanding of individual thoughts and feelings in terms of the social relations, the class struggle for monopoly of means of production and the profit principle, etc. The poet

historicises present to establish it as part of the temporal process. Faiz sees existing exploitative system as an antithesis of a utopian order in past where there was social harmony and cooperation among the people. Faiz's view of good poetry strengthens dialectical realism. In an interview with Shafi Aqeel (1984) titled "What Faiz Said" (Jo Faiz Ne Kaha), Faiz identifies:

three elements which determine the quality and worth of the art. The three elements are: i) subjectivism ii) external social realities surrounding the poet iii) universality based on the perception of the contemporary situation. External social realities surrounding the poet need to be studied through awareness of the past and universality refers to the futuristic vision based on the understanding of past and present world.(p. 105)

4.1 History as a Perpetual Conflict

Faiz projects history as a perpetual conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between the oppressors and the oppressed and glorifies the sacrifices of the purveyors of hope. He continues to expose the inherent contradictions of the dominant system which is the result of the prolonged oppression ranging from slavery, feudalism to the current exploitative system. Under normal socio-political conditions as they once existed in primitive communist era, human relations must be built on the principles of social, economic and political justice. People must work for their collective welfare. The capital produced should be shared equitably whereas history tells that ordinary people are denied their share out of the collective labour. They live in pain, hunger and destitution. This concern for injustice with the oppressed which is reflected throughout Faiz's poetry is dialectical. It not only disillusion the masses from the hegemonic class but also

motivates them for collective action against tyranny. Faiz has encapsulated his dialectical view of history in his speech on the eve of Lenin peace prize in Moscow in the following words:

There has always been a struggle between people who believe in progress and the evolution of the human beings and people who want to prevent progress and evolution. The struggle between people who want humanity to progress and those who want it to regress has been going on for centuries and is even present in our time.

(In Sohail, 2011, p. 54)

Faiz believes that existing bourgeois culture is the product of class struggle in which capitalistic class has acquired dominance over means of production. Faiz does not agree with capitalistic propaganda in favour of uneven distribution of material resources as an imperative of economy. He considers human beings as basically benign and does not acknowledge human nature as unchangeable in its formation. For him existing socio-economic injustice is the result of the manipulation of wealth and comforts by the few. He is critical of the role of intellectuals and the dogma in promoting capitalistic world view. He exhorts upon the intellectuals and the writers to drag the oppressed out of their misery by exposing contradictions of the dominant ideology and the system surrounding them. Appreciating Faiz's dialectical view, Muhammad Fayyaz (n.d) in "Faiz and the Dialectics of Revolution" says:

He could well see that the consciousness and the cognition of the poor and the exploited now mystified with dogma and mythology, must be purified: they must be dragged out of their misery and shown the glaring contradictions that surround them.(p. 213)

Faiz took oppression for a global issue which was perpetrated at the workers, peasants and all the honest beings who did not determine their hours of work. Their potential, intelligence, vision and labour are exploited by those who regulate their wages. Hence, majority is subjected to the will of minority. Faiz believes that art must be committed to forge collective will of the masses to materialise their dream of a dignified life. An excerpt from the poem “To the Rival” depicts the plight of the humiliated who are reified as objects/ unit of production and are pushed into the helplessness by those who have monopolised the resources and determine their hours of work and wages:

Where ever now the friendless crouch and wail
Till in their eyes the trickling tears grow cold
Are where the vultures hovering on broad pinions

Snatches the morsel from their feeble hold (tr. Kiernan, 1971, p.69)

The metaphor of vulture refers to the exploitative and greedy ruling elites who are so materialistic and selfish that they do not grant the poor even their bare subsistence level of existence. Referring to Faiz’s dialectical vision, Fayyaz says, “the source of this naturalness obviously did not lie in any immutable human attribute, rather it was the result of what the few had done to the many in order to amass and monopolise wealth and comforts” (p. 213).

4.2 Past and Future Utopias of Faiz

Faiz, like Marxists, believes in past utopia of justice, harmony and collectivity against existing dystopia of injustice. Marxist doctrine which is chronologically rooted in its dissatisfaction with the 19th century western capitalism and its imperialistic agenda, glorifies pre-feudal/pre-colonial pluralistic cultural and social patterns which reflected the aspirations of the

masses. Faiz equates the pre-imperial plural cultural heritage of the sub-continent with primitive communist stage of social history as envisaged by Karl Marx. It is this belief in the existence of primitive communist society in the past, that renders the establishment of future Marxist utopia as realizable. Elucidating the cultural growth in sub-continent between the 16th and 19th centuries, Faiz asserts that there flourished two distinct cultural patterns of socio-political behavior: imperial culture and the popular mass culture. The imperial culture “stood for social elitism, racial exclusiveness, doctrinaire religion, political absolutism, and total alienation from their new homeland and its culture. The other school (mass culture) propagated social egalitarianism, humanistic mysticism, racial and national integration and total identification with the land” (2011, p.27). Faiz romanticizes the latter ‘integrationist’ culture which is reflected in the folk literature of Sultan Baho¹, Waris Shah², Sachal Sar Mast³, Bulleh Shah⁴, Shah Latif⁵, Ameer Khusroo⁶ and other mystic poets of sub-continent. Appreciating universal and integrationist role of mysticism and mystic poetic tradition, Anne Marie Schimmel says, “The Sufi is no longer Arab, Hindu, Turk, or Peshawari; eventually Hallaj and the judge who condemned him, the lover and the theologian, are seen as nothing but different manifestations of the one divine reality” (2006, p. 386). Faiz invokes legends both heroic and mystical in pre-colonial past in his society and everywhere irrespective of caste, colour and creed. Faiz’s utopia both past and future does not incorporate within its folds the exploitative feudals and capitalists and their religious cronies.

As sub-continent is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society, the mystic movement tried to cultivate intra-religious harmony among followers of various dogmas. The mystic poets upheld culture and aesthetics based on spiritual and humanistic values and rejected the

aristocratic norms of power politics, accumulation of riches and social divisions. They promoted austerity, simplicity and humility and repudiated the culture of greed, luxury and arrogance. They sought self-fulfillment through selflessness, sacrifice and social-cooperation. To paraphrase Faiz's admiration for the mystic poets like Bulleh Shah, Sultan Bahoo, Ameer Khusroo, etc. who are the true representatives of the pre-imperial pluralistic culture, Ayub Mirza says, "In fact these Sufi poets were the popular poets whose verses and folklores were narrated by everyone. In their tales these poets reflected the sociopolitical economic condition, customs and romantic values of their age" (2005, p. 437-438). This past utopia helps replace cultural hegemony of socially privileged ruling elites who are descendants of their imperialistic masters.

This historical utopia of Faiz is rooted in and accentuated by the scriptural truths of the vice-regency of man and the decree of the Doomsday as ordained in the Holy Quran. In the poetry of Faiz, the consolation about the victory of proletariat and the day of reckoning – a kind of future utopia is in reality the future regeneration of the pre-lapsarian era under the vice-regency of man as ordained in the Holy Quran. The myth of vice-regency of man which finds its classic manifestation in Faiz's poem "Supplication" refers to the scriptural injunctions in which God proclaimed man as 'Lord of the Universe' with bounties of nature at his service. The persona of the poem who belongs to the oppressed class not only laments over the loss of that utopia in post-lapsarian world but also protests with his creator over his indifference to the plight of his successor in this dystopia of injustice. He categorises and denounces the coercive role of repressive state apparatuses like police, revenue and civil administration in forcing complicity from the oppressed people. The persona of the poem rejects bourgeois made socio-political hierarchy. He

questions the validity of concentration of wealth in few hands and laments over the loss of human dignity and self-respect. He no longer aspires for wealth and mansions which symbolize Mammon worship but asserts availability of means who fulfill his genuine and human social needs. In the words of Malik: “Faiz feels no hesitation in addressing to that Islamic God who has bestowed upon the farmers, the labourers and the poor the vice regency and the kingdom of the world” (2008, p.103). He is even ready to defy God, in case he continues to subscribe to the false consciousness of bourgeois class. An excerpt from the poem reflects the process of radical transformation from a true believer into a skeptic under circumstances of socio-economic injustice:

God-

You had promised

Earth’s vicegerency to man.

Grace abounding

And dignity. (tr. Kamal & Hasan, 2006, p.180)

However, this process of radical change in the ideology of the former is not mechanistic. It is through the conscious self-analysis that the peasant has challenged dominant ideology. He places himself outside the boundaries of the assumptions of the hegemonic class based on particular discursive practices. Commenting on Faiz’s emphasis on human effort in affecting better change in the poem under discussion, Fayyaz (1990) in “Towards a Grammar of Politics: An Overview of Faiz’s Poetry” says:

What Faiz wishes to emphasise is the well-entrenched maxim that the more one reflects on one’s existence and the constraint imposed upon it by power and politics, the more one is likely to approximate an authentic consciousness. As long as an uncritical submissiveness

to power prevails neither will diminish nor will a consciousness of emancipated existence emerge. (p. 224)

The divine decree of Doomsday which is inscribed in the Holy Quran refers to the promise of the Day of Judgment where the innocent (oppressed) will be rewarded and the evil doers will be penalized. Faiz's unflinching faith in the day of reckoning is best expressed in his poem "We shall See". In his oracular voice, the poet glorifies the affinity between his ideological commitments and the socialistic spirit of Islam. The picture of the day of reckoning in the poem is closely modeled on the divine design of the Doomsday when mountains will be blowing like the wisps of cotton. In the poem, the mountains of oppression stand for repressive regimes which will be dashed to the ground by the revolutionary forces. An excerpt from the poem testifies to this conviction of the poet.

We, the rejects of the earth,
Will be raised to a place of honour.
All crowns'll be tossed in the air,
All thrones'll be smashed.
(tr. Kamal & Hasan, 2006, p. 230)

The poem provides spiritual inspiration to the humiliated people by exposing to them the manipulative and cunning role of the super-structure of the feudal-cum-capitalistic regimes and motivates them to materialise the Islamic concept of equity of man transcending all materialistic, economic socio-political and racial barriers.

Faiz's view of history is universal and pervasive. He not only glorifies the heroic struggle of Ibrahim, Shabbir⁷ and Mansoor Al Hallaj⁸ in past but continues to refer to the conflicts between the tyrants and the freedom fighters in the current era anywhere across the globe in order to inspire the

humiliated people of the society. His poems like “Africa Come Back”, “For the Iranian Students”, and “An Elegy of the Rosenbergs” are substantial evidence of the continuity of the centuries-old conflict between the forces of falsehood and the forces of liberation. Commenting on the universality of the dialectical appeal in “An Elegy for The Rosenbergs”, Major Ishaq, a co-accused with Faiz in Rawalpindi conspiracy case says that:

The universality of this poem is strange. It has transcended the limitations of space and time to unite the martyrs of every country. This poem seems to repeat the slogan of the blood-stained freedom-fighters of Karbala, Palasi, Suranga Puttam, Jhansi, Stalingrad, Malaya, Kenya, Morocco, Tehran, Karachi and Dhaka. (In Jabeen, 2008, p. 361)

4.3 The Role of the Artist in Faiz

Emphasizing the role of dialectical realism in literature, Faiz asserts that the true artist is one who makes the suffering people realize their true self and inspires them to act collectively and defiantly against those who are responsible for their miseries. A progressive artist is a worshipper of human potential who does not keep the masses in a state of stupor and ignorance and tries to bring them out of uncritical acceptance of hegemonic ideology by making them believe in human dignity irrespective of their materialistic conditions. In his famous poem “Dogs”, Faiz addresses the humiliated ones as ‘stray street dogs’ whose existence is worthless and miserable, who are condemned to live like beggars and whose lot is only to suffer. They are insulted and forced to live on garbage and trash. Their oppressors keep them divided by giving them incentives in personal capacities. But if someone makes them realise that their miserable plight is not the work of Divine design rather they are deprived of their due dignity

and rights by those who have monopolized means of production, the same worthless creatures can create commotion in the world by turning the tables against their oppressors:

If these oppressed creatures lifted their heads,

Mankind would forget all its insolence; (tr. Kiernan, 1971, p. 85)

In terms of dialectics, two issues are raised in the poem, which are indictment of existing capitalistic system and the emancipatory function of literature.

4.4 Dialectical Value of the Poetry of Faiz

The dialectical criticism of Faiz gains more prominence in our age as the economic disparity between the classes, societies and nations is growing alarmingly in this uni-polar world. The basic reason of the growing inequality is the bourgeois principle of the uneven distribution of capital which is being supported by the liberal democracies. Electronic media is also supporting this parameter of bourgeois economy as vital for the economic growth. In this age of technocratic capitalism where alternative system which defends workers' rights against individual's commodification has ceased to exist, the voice and criticism of the dialectical thinkers is much needed. Faiz exposes materialistic nature of bourgeois economy. He advocates the economic principle of sufficiency for all through local enterprise. He glorifies human respect and dignity against reification. So, dialectical criticism of Faiz which offers counter-point to the neo-imperialists remains more valid today than it was in the bi-polar world.

To sum up the study of Faiz's dialectical method, it is established that Faiz presents history as a perpetual conflict between classes for mastery over

resources. His Marxist's vision of future utopia is rooted in the pre-imperial, pre-feudal pluralistic culture of the sub-continent and the Quranic Injunctions. As a progressive writer, he comprehends reality on the basis of three concentring circles of being: subjectivism, immediate socio-historical surroundings and the contemporary world.

5. Dialectical Method of Neruda in *Canto General*

Neruda's dialectical realism is the product of his Marxist vision of history, politics and literature. He rejects bourgeois aesthetics which depicts natural and social worlds as separate entities. He analyses the existing bourgeois system in terms of temporality and historicises present as a phase of history. He considers bourgeois aesthetics as a discursive practice which perpetuates capitalistic culture to serve the vested interests of the hegemonic class. He also discards Eurocentric myths that a literary text is ahistorical and apolitical. His realism enjoins upon the artist to perceive reality in its totality. Indebted to Georg Lukacs, in his vision of realism, Neruda rejects avant-gardist's desire of absolute autonomy of literature from socialistic perspective. He affirms that dialectical method is essential for convincing analysis and representation of reality. He comprehends various socio-political, economic and cultural dynamics moulding and forming reality into its existing manifestation.

Rejecting bourgeois theory of immutability of the physical and human world, Neruda perceives natural and social world in a perpetual flow. His futuristic vision of human society is indebted to the principle of death and resurrection in nature. Commenting on Neruda's vision of the universe Duran and Safir say "Even where Neruda's poetry treats the external world of nature, it often remains in essence lyrical, for nature is seen not only as a force in and of itself, but at times as a projection and reflection of the poet"

(1986, p. 74). The poet locates close affinities between nature and man, between natural praxis and social praxis to substantiate his dialectical view of society.

Bourgeois realism brings forth poet's alienation with his surroundings. Neruda emphasises that reflection upon forms and objects of nature reestablishes man's link with his environment. This sense of integration between man and universe; between macrocosm and the microcosm educates and mobilises the legitimate sons of the soil to fight against the dystopia of injustice in order to regain exploitation-free social order where innocence and collectivity reigned supreme. Highlighting interconnectivity between the social and physical world in the poetry of Neruda, Russell Salman and Julia Lesage say (1977), "In Neruda's poetry neither humans nor objects nor phenomena of nature can be understood as separate individual units but only in their relation and interconnection" (p. 226). To signify the permanence of motion (dialectic) in natural and social world, the poet describes every single element of nature in terms of its coming into being and then reflecting upon human cycle of birth, death, regeneration he validates his call for socialistic revolution.

5.1 History as a Class Conflict and Glorification of Pre-Columbian Utopia

Neruda's *Canto General* is celebrated as the representative poem of his Marxist utopian doctrines. Contrary to the mechanistic and linear view of the western metanarrative of progress towards cultural excellence, the epic poem presents historical, political and cultural evolution of its continent as the product of bourgeois struggle for materialistic dominance and a proletariat struggle for socio-political and economic justice. Emphasizing

on the Marxist perspective of the historical account of Latin-America in *Canto General*, Ben Belitt (1978) says:

The dynamic that gave *Canto General* its unwavering sweep and thrust after three anguished Residencias was history; history as the court chronicler and the anthropologist conceive it, and history as the polemical Marxist conceives it in an escalating dialectic of freedom and bondage. (p. 158)

Pablo Neruda glorifies pre-Hispanic America as a utopia in which men were benevolent and patronizing and worked in groups. The poet creates analogies between pre-Columbian continent and the “Garden of Eden” as prescribed in the Genesis. In the first section of the epic “A Lamp on Earth”, the poetic description of the trees, flora and fauna closely resembles the catalogue of the vegetation in Biblical account of the Eden. In the poems “Some Beasts and The Birds Arrive” and in descriptions of the four legendary rivers of the South American continent we find the Biblical echo. As Bible is the most popular scripture of the land so these Biblical references help establish a Marxist cultural model which has wider acceptability in the public. Dialectical in method the poet establishes pre-colonial Latin-American continent as utopia of justice and as pre-lapsarian paradise to set it as a foil to the subsequent history of European conquest and rape of the virginal land. Appreciating Neruda’s dialectical method Greg Dawes (2003) says, “His (Neruda) poetry does not only aim at representing social relations as they are (through the mediation of language) but also those social relations that are distorted and alienated under capitalism” (p. 11). The opening lines of the poem “Amor America” set the entire plot of the narrative based upon the principle of the opposition:

Before the wig and the dress code
There were rivers, anterior rivers:
There were cordilleras, jagged waves where
The candor and the snow seemed immutable:
(tr. Schmitt , 1993, p. 13)

After depicting pre-colonial nature and raw continent as the Genesis, Neruda transcends the actual existing continent under bourgeois hegemony to establish the native American as the natural and the legitimate owner of the land. This descendant of the earth appears for the first time in 'Man' the last poem in the series of the first section. He is described as:

The mineral grace was
Like a cup of clay,
Man made of stone and atmosphere,
Clean as earthen jugs, sonorous.
(tr. Schmitt, 1993, p.24)

This real possessor of the land is described as springing from the earth and its raw elements. Then the poet goes on to catalogue the native tribes of various regions of Latin America including Mayas Aztecs, Araucanians, Guarani, Incas etc.

"The Liberators", fourth section of Canto General, deals with the struggle and sacrifices of the indigenous heroes who resisted Spanish invasion of Latin America. The American-Indian leaders also resisted the indigenous dictators who established their kingdoms after overthrowing central governments of the pioneers of Spanish rule. Indigenous heroes of post-Columbian era are equated with pre-Hispanic men of Nature. The liberators are portrayed as peaceful, generous and reliable in contrast to the colonisers who are depicted as greedy, unreliable and materialistic. Furthermore, the poet pays homage to the struggle, sacrifices and the

sufferings of the indigenous heroes. He glorifies the struggle of Cuauhtemoc, De Las Casas, Lautaro, TupecAmaru, O' Higgins, San Martin, Sandino and Recabarren who fought to defend their land against illegitimate rule. The section ends with clarion call to the sons of the soil to continue to wage battle against neo-imperialism as well as local oppression. In "The Day Will Come", the poet exhorts upon the masses to rise up:

Don't renounce the day bestowed on you
By those who died struggling.
(tr Schmitt, 1993, p. 148)

In this poem, says Mark J. Mascia (2001), "Neruda openly calls forth to all the unnamed heroes of Latin American independence to forge a brighter future and reject tyranny – a call replete with Marxist ideology" (p. 3).

5.2 Spanish Invasion as an Intrusion upon Primeval Harmony

The 'wig' and the 'dress code' stand for the Hispanic conquerors who will intrude upon the primeval harmony. They are assigned artificial appearance through false hair and man-made dressing to conceal the naked reality of the body which is in conflict with the nature they intrude upon. This clash between Spanish invaders and the virginal nature and its American-Indian heirs is worked out in the following three cantos. The third canto "Conquistadores" brings the narrative back to the actual history. It narrates the Spanish occupation of the poet's land. Rejecting colonial discourse in which the imperialists are projected as explorers and the harbingers of civilisation; Neruda presents them as rapists who spoiled the virginal state of nature and its harmonious nature. The opening lines of this section establish Spaniard invasion of Latin American as a narrative of violence, bloodshed, destruction and plunder:

The butchers raised the islands.
Guanahani was the first
In this story of martyrdom.
The children of clay...
They were bound and tortured
Burned and branded
Bitten and buried. (tr. Schmitt , 1993, p. 43)

The poet catalogues Spanish conquerors from Cortes⁹, Alvarado¹⁰ down to Valdivia who ruled Latin America till the nineteenth century after Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492. The persistent use of the imagery of butchers, thieves, claws, knives, daggers, death and fangs verifies to the Marxist view of materialistic nature of European colonial enterprise. In the words of Wilson, "He (Neruda) ranges through Alvarado, Balboa¹¹, a foot soldier, Quesada¹², Almagro¹³, Valdivia¹⁴, cursing them all as [my green and naked land] is drenched in blood. He brings this raped American past to the present, as if history constantly repeats itself." (2008, p. 188). This narrative of colonial violence and plunder of the land testifies to the theme of perfidy. Marxists assert that western imperialism was an absolutely economic enterprise to manipulate the treasures and the raw material of the primitive land.

In "The Sand Betrayed", section V of Canto General, the poet's criticism is mainly directed against certain oligarchic regimes of South America. The poet rejects the textbook history in which Latin American dictators have been eulogized as symbols of national integration, saviours of Christian culture and defenders of ideological frontiers of their nations against communist ideological challenges. Neruda's version of the political history of post-independence oligarchies is the version of betrayal, vested interests, mercenary motives, oppression and exploitation. Independence

from imperial rule was just a replacement of foreign rulers by the local lackeys who suppressed native cultures, permitted monopoly of North American monetary institutions in return for personal aggrandisement. The poet catalogues all Latin American dictators as enemies of Asiatic population who manipulated freedom movements and wasted the sacrifices of the masses which they had rendered to liberate their lands from Hispanic hegemony. In his rejection of oligarchic regimes, Neruda is deeply indebted to his Chilean predecessor Gabriel Mistral. “He (Neruda) will emphasise her (Mistral) rejection of aristocratic impulses and tendencies towards Europeanisation. She will honor her country in its most profound and popular essence, turning her poetry and her message into an expression of the nation’s values” (Teitleboim, 1992, p. 278).

The catalogue of the Latin American dictators includes Dr Francia¹⁵, Rosas¹⁶, Garcia Moreno¹⁷, Estrada¹⁸, Gomez¹⁹, Ubico²⁰, Machado²¹, Melgarejo²², Martinez²³ and others. The poet labels them as America’s witches, tyrants, straps, wolves, rodents, hyenas, infernal plunderers, vultures – denoting their rapacious nature. In his *Memoirs*, Neruda says “In the fauna of our America, the great dictators have been giant saurian, survivors of a colossal feudalism in pre-historical lands” (2008, p. 172).

The last of this series of Latin American dictators is Chilean Gonzalez Videla. The poet depicts him as the personification of villainy and betrayal. In the last poem “Gonzalez Videla, Chile’s Traitor (Epilogue) 1949” of the section V, the poet alludes to his somersaults as he used the shoulders of the masses to gain power and afterwards betrayed his political friends. He made crackdown on Chilean miners for Lota strikes to express solidarity with the North (USA). Adam Feinstein in his biography of Neruda narrates that Gonzalez turned against the Chilean communists out of two motives.

He crushed mine workers and communists to please United States in order to strengthen his political position. He also did this to please the right-wing landowners of Chile who were the staunch critics of his government. To quote Adam Feinstein “Gonzalez Videla also hoped that in turning against the communists, he could find favour with – especially the landowners, to whom he guaranteed a continuing moratorium on peasant unionization” (2004, p. 194).

5.3 Solidarity with the Forces of Political and Intellectual Resistance

Projecting history as a perpetual conflict between the forces of dominance and exploitation and the forces of resistance and emancipation, the poet expresses his solidarity with the marginalised. This solidarity of the poet with the forces of emancipation and the common people springs from his faith in materialization of future utopia via proletariat struggle. In *Canto General*, the poet’s ideological creed of liberation, perfidy and solidarity clarifies the enigma of the theme of independence which has frustrated the predecessors of Neruda. Quite contrary to the version of textbook histories, independence from Spanish rule did not bring in any meaningful change in the life of people of the continent. Liberation movements resulted in establishment of local oligarchic rules and the indigenous population remained as deprived as it was under foreign rule. Neruda equates local oligarchies of the continent with perfidy and calls upon the masses to strive for socialistic order. Robert Brotherston (1975) in his article “Neruda’s Canto General and the Great Song of America” says “With his creed of liberation, betrayal and solidarity, he (Neruda) unquestioningly overcame the dilemma of “independence” that had thwarted his predecessors” (p. 124).

In Canto VIII “The Land is Called Juan” the poet expresses solidarity with the common populace of the continent. He calls forth the Pueblo (common

people) – the heroes of the epic. Juan represents every man, every worker of the land who never appears on the pages of the bourgeois text. Here, he is the real possessor of the land, the earth. He is immortalized as the composing element of his self is the same earth, air, stone and water which have formed nature. His individual sacrifice gives birth to more Juans as after his burial under the soil, he is reborn. In this canto, the poet arranges a series of biographies of Juans representing various professions. They are given individual names as well as are named after their professions which are deeply entrenched in the soil, the geography, the environment. They are both individuals and types. They are the shoveler, the farmer, the shoemaker, the seaman, the people's poet, the fisherman, the mine worker and the banana worker. They are Bolivians, Chileans, Columbians, Costa Ricans. They transcend national boundaries and are part of the brotherhood based on common blood, culture and loyalty towards the land.

In order to strengthen this process of solidarity, the poet projects and exalts socially committed poets of his own continent as well as of the world particularly the Spanish speaking world. In Canto XII "The Rivers of Song" the poet pays rich tributes to the politically committed writers and their emancipatory literature. He goes on to affirm that the progressive writers have always stood for the cause of the oppressed in the perpetual conflict between the enemies of the people and the redeemers of the mankind. They have even received martyrdom for the sake of truth. The poet considers progressive writers as social bards whose social and historical accounts are more authentic than the official versions of history. In the second part of the Canto the poet uses the analogies of river, honeycomb and the tree for the progressive art. Progressive poetry is like the river that murmurs in the silence of the night. Night over here stands for oppression. It is like honeycomb which preserves the best creation

against the transitoriness of objects, things and individuals. It is like tree that continues to grow. Progressive artists and their art has been existing throughout the history of mankind to glorify the struggle of the marginalised against oppression. An excerpt from the third part of the Canto testifies to this analogy:

Brother, you're the longest river on earth
Behind the Orb your solemn river voice resounds,
(tr. Schmitt, 1993, p. 313)

The longest river stands for the oldest tradition of Bardic poetry.

In order to motivate the marginalised people of his continent for socialistic revolution, the poet glorifies Russian Communist regime under Stalin. He appreciates the pro-masses policies of the Soviet leader such as his abolition of serfdom in Russia and the distribution of land among the landless peasants. He also celebrates Stalin's policy of blood and iron towards the enemies of the people. An excerpt from the above-mentioned poem substantiates this:

Stalin erects, cleans, builds, fortifies,
Preserves, ponders, projects, nourishes,
But he punishes too (tr. Schmitt, 1993, p.253)

Certain dissidents of Neruda have dubbed him as a Stalinist who condones his atrocities against comrades and intellectuals of his country. Such criticism is a biased one. Neruda appreciated Stalin's industrial, economic and social reforms but he did not endorse Stalin's persecution of the communists who had supported Spanish peasants in Spanish Civil War.

The poet recounts the struggle and sacrifices of the Juans of his continent – the unknown soldiers who took part in every battle for freedom. The poet says that the real strength behind legendary figures and icons of resistance

like Recabarren and Tupac Amaru was the Juan. He provided both livelihood and fighting force to the sons of the soil against the usurpers.

Neruda's concern for the oppressed and his faith in return to roots and cultural heritage is so pervasive and universal that he does not remain focused only on the Juan of his own continent. He also turns towards the Juan of North America and the comrades of the progressive societies. Quite contrary to the imperialistic role of United States in current scenario, the poet seeks recuperation of Whitman's past America which believed in prosperity through hard work. In the Canto "Let the Woodcutter Awaken" the poet calls upon US citizens to call forth the spirit of their forefathers who pioneered the struggle for prosperity, social justice and love for the land. He glorifies the heroic struggle of Lincoln against slavery in his land and depicts it as a foil to the hegemonic designs of the modern capitalistic America. The poet uses the strings of images of the earth, woods, stones, roots to recover North's past heritage in contrast to the modern technological advancement which is used to promote culture of exploitation and merchandise. Neruda is extremely critical of the interventionist policies of modern USA. He castigates American government and its State Department for its interference in the internal affairs of Latin American countries under the pretence of action against violation of human rights and civil liberties.

The poet warns America not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Latin American states and the socialistic countries like Bulgaria, Romania and China because US will face unprecedented resistance over there. In this way, the poet creates close affinities between Abraham's America and the socialistic regimes including Stalin's Russia. America's State Department dandies and the manufacturers of steel and weaponry are no longer the part

of Neruda's brotherhood. His audience is the US citizens who earn their livelihood through hard work. The Latin American Juan, the US John and the Soviet comrade belong to the poet's brotherhood because they are not the manufacturers of hatred. The third poem of the Canto verifies this fraternity in the following lines:

My brother Juan sells shoes
Like your brother John
My sister Juana peels potatoes,
Like your cousin Jane,
And my blood's miner and mariner
Like your blood, Peter. (tr. Schmitt, p. 266)

5.4 Dialectical Value of Neruda's Poetry

Neruda's poetry is the poetry of resistance against bourgeois system. He wrote at a time when the world was politically divided into two blocs: each having its distinct socio-economic and cultural patterns of behavior. Today's world is a uni-polar planet with neo-imperialism having its monopoly over the materialistic and the spiritual domains alike. While all the ideological, administrative and technological apparatuses are internalizing the bourgeois parameters of economy and culture, the role of dialectical thinking has increased manifold. Neruda's diatribe which is directed at the cultural, legal, religious and intellectual circles of his continent has not become dated. These organs of bourgeois super-structure might have assumed different names but their objective of the profit principle remains unaltered. So, Neruda's dialectical criticism which decenters the myths of immutability and inevitability of capitalistic culture and economy retains its appeal and has the potential and vision to motivate the masses to struggle for their rights and identity.

To sum up the analysis, it is established that Pablo Neruda's dialectical realism is entrenched in dialectics in nature. The poet views reality from three angles: his subjective self, the immediate historical context and the contemporary world. In terms of temporal process, the poet historicises existing bourgeois culture as the result of conflict between classes for dominance over means of production. He glorifies pre-Columbian America as an exploitation free society, a past utopia marked for collectivity. The poet visualizes rediscovery of this socialistic order in future through proletariat struggle against existing dystopia of injustice.

6. Comparative Study of Dialectical Method in the Poetry of Faiz and Neruda

Rejecting bourgeois vision of aesthetics and politics, Faiz and Neruda affirm social dialectics. The two poets, who uphold the principle of constant flux in nature and society, historicise present as a part of temporal process and analyse the process of evolution which has transformed pluralistic societies of the pre-imperial, pre-feudal past into the existing monopoly capitalism and suggest possible ways of future regenerations. Their realism is dialectical realism which incorporates past, present and future as integral units of temporality. Faiz and Neruda acknowledge three concentric circles of the personality of the artist. These three concentric circles of the artistic being are his personal self, his nation and country and the contemporary world to which he belongs. It means that a genuine artist experiences and apprehends past, present and future from the perspective of his self, his community and the entire human society of his age. Both the poets emphasise that in post-colonial societies where there is continuation of imperialistic exploitative system, it is obligatory upon the writers to view and interpret existing culture in terms of three integral units of

temporality and in terms of three concentric circles of the being of the artist in order to promote critical consciousness among the masses regarding history, culture and politics.

Social dialectics of Faiz and Neruda seeks inspiration from praxis in the natural world. Both the poets emphasise upon irrevocable relationship between the man and the matter. The consistent use of the theme of cyclic change in nature (from decay to regeneration) symbolized in autumn and spring and the recurrence of the binarity of night and day in the poetry of Faiz establish constancy of change and rationalize the proletariat struggle for socio-political change. Neruda's *Canto General* which is acknowledged as one of the greatest political poems of our age is conspicuous for its extensive treatment and description of physical environment. In his poetry, Neruda meditates upon physical objects, landscape and animal world encompassing their origin, decay and rebirth which liberates the poet and the reader from his sense of alienation from the physical environment and helps integrate nature and society: the macrocosm and the microcosm.

Faiz and Neruda reject bourgeois meta-narrative of enlightenment and progress and present history as a perpetual conflict between classes for monopoly over means of production. Both the writers endorse Marxist version of historical materialism and affirm that the earliest stage of mankind was essentially a communist society where men lived in complete harmony with nature and worked in collectivity to satisfy their genuine human and social needs. It was a society where goods were produced for their use-value, not for their capital-value. Subsequently, this utopian order was replaced by the culture of personal enterprise and power politics first by the feudals and later on by the capitalists. As far as Faiz is concerned,

he locates utopia of justice in the pre-lapsarian era of man's history as enunciated in Islamic scripture through the myth of vice-regency of man on the earth. In terms of history-proper of his land, the poet identifies this utopia in pre-imperial, pre-feudal, pluralistic culture of the sub-continent which is preserved in the folk literature of the mystic tradition of India. This past cultural heritage rejects bourgeois social elitism, dogmatism and economic-cum-political absolutism. Rewriting the political, cultural and geographical history of Latin-American continent, Neruda locates this past communist utopia in pre-Columbian America and its pluralistic culture. At present, he finds its manifestations in socialistic regimes in various parts of the world. In *Canto General*, the poet narrates how did this utopia of justice was replaced by the dystopia of injustice after Spanish invasion of his land. The poet establishes that the history of colonization of Latin-American continent is the narrative of plunder, genocide, oppression and suppression of indigenous cultures. The two poets anticipate Marxist political apocalypse through proletariat intervention. It will be a day of retribution and reward where oppressors will be punished and the insulted will be raised to the place of honour. Restoration of broken promises will also take place through Marxist millennium. This prophecy of future utopia is of course rooted in dialectical thinking of the two poets as a logical sequence of the defeat of capitalism. But, they also take inspiration from the Doomsday enshrined in their Holy Scriptures. Neruda equates his Marxist millennium with Biblical apocalypse and repudiates Catholic Church's interpretation of dogma. Similarly, Faiz's future utopia is deeply entrenched in his Islamic socialistic vision. He equates his political apocalypse with the Day of Judgment as enshrined in the Holy Quran. This day will herald the fall of the idols of oppression.

Marxist utopia and political idealism of Faiz and Neruda does not refer to the search for the impossibility. Futuristic vision of the two poets does not anticipate a world order free of all imperfections, hardships and labour. It also does not preach distraction from the socio-political obligations of the present. It actually envisions a future society free of exploitation, reification and commodification of the individual via people's struggle. Furthermore, past and future utopias of the two poets are rooted in history, geography, culture and religion. In historical terms, past utopias of Faiz and Neruda are earthly utopias having known-geographies and known-people. Similarly, their future utopias which are in reality the regenerations of the pluralistic societies of the past are not a search for the inauthentic and the fanciful. The visions of future socialistic world orders of the two poets do not find their origins only in people's miseries under bourgeois culture but also in the collective strength displayed in the earliest communist societies. What is actually utopian and mythical is the treatment and the poetic glorification of the means and the ends of utopias. Both the poets believe that mythical and fanciful presentation of past and future societies is essential to drag the masses out of their inaction under exploitative culture.

The comparative study of the dialectical realism in the poetry of Faiz and Neruda establishes close ideological and intellectual affinities in the dialectical method of the two poets. It also verifies the influence of the historical, religious and cultural traditions of the particular frames of reference in which the works of the two poets are produced.

Notes:

- 1- Sultan Baho: Sultan Baho is acknowledged as the first great mystic poet of the Sub-continent during the 17th century. He belonged to Jhang, Punjab (Pakistan). He preached love, tolerance and meditation to the masses and was known for the use of rustic imagery which the illiterate people could easily understand.
- 2- Waris Shah: He was a renowned the 18th century Punjabi mystic poet. He is popular for his folklore 'Heer Ranjha.'
- 3- SachalSar Mast: SachalSar Mast was a versatile Sindhi mystic of the 18th century. He used to express his feelings fearlessly. He is acknowledged as the "poet of seven languages" due to his poetic works in Sindhi, Saraiki, Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu, Persian and Balochi language. He based his folk tales on female heroines like Sassi, Sohni, Marvi and Noori of the tales of his predecessors. His famous themes are loyalty and fidelity.
- 4- Bulleh Shah: Bulleh Shah of the 18th century is acknowledged as the greatest mystical poet of Punjab (India). Like his contemporaries, Shah Waliullah, Mir Dard, Shah Abdul Latif in Sindh, he saw the political crises of the subcontinent after the death of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. He found peace in the inner world of love. He sang mystical songs to console himself and his friends in these times of socio-political afflictions. He is surnamed the Rumi of the Punjab due to the highest quality of his poetry.
- 5- Shah Latif: Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai was a mystic poet of Sindh. He was a predecessor of Sachal Sar Mast.

- 6- Ameer Khusroo: He was a 12th century musicologist, mystic, writer and philosopher during Mughal Empire.
- 7- Shabbir: is the title of Hazrat Imam Hussain (a.s), the younger grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Imam Hussain defied Yazid, the monarch of the day and was slain along with his followers and family members in Karbala, a desert in Iraq.
- 8- Mansoor Al Hallaj: Mansoor al Hallaj was an Arab mystic who belonged to Iraq. He was executed by the Muslim clerics of the day on the charge of possessing heretic views.
- 9- Cortes: Herman Cortes was the 16th century Spanish coloniser of Latin America. He captured Aztec empire and large parts of Mexico. Cortes belonged to the class of Spanish colonisers who launched the first phase of the Spanish occupation of the Americas.
- 10- Alvarado: Petro de Alvarado was Cortes' second-in-command during his expeditions of Aztec empire and Mexico. A brave soldier, Alvarado was known for his cruelty towards the colonised. He indulged in the mass murders of the native population of Mexico in the name of subjugation.
- 11- Balboa: Balboa was a Spanish explorer, conqueror and governor. He is best known for having crossed the [Isthmus of Panama](#) to the [Pacific Ocean](#) in 1513, becoming the first European to lead an expedition to have seen or reached the Pacific from the [New World](#).
- 12- Quesada: Ximenez De Quesada was a 16th century Spanish explorer. He conquered Columbia and was known for his obsession with the jewels of the Latin American continent. He executed Zipa – the ruler

of Columbia. He is considered to be a possible model of Spanish novelist Cervantes' Don Quixote.

- 13- Almagro: Almagro was the conqueror of Peru. He torched its population and plundered its resources.
- 14- Valdivia: Pedro Valdivia was a Spanish conqueror. He was the first royal governor of Chile. He led Spanish expedition of Chile in 1540. He founded Santiago and Valdivia – the two cities of Chile.
- 15- Dr Francia: Dr Francia ruled Paraguay from 1814 to 1840. While the country suffered from plague and pestilence, he sat on the easy chair. He would not waste bullet to execute his victims. Execution took place through rifle butts. Dr Francia, who was an agnostic, banned higher education to spend money on military equipment. He was averse to marriage and dispossessed Catholic Church of its endowment. He nationalized lands to bring them under the direct use of Army.
- 16- Rosas: Rosas – the dictator of Argentina – ruled the country from 1829 to 1849. He was notorious for his blood and iron policy. He has been highly controversial figure in the political history of the continent.
- 17- Garcia Moreno: Garcia Moreno was the dictator of Ecuador. He professed to be a staunch supporter of Catholicism and established a theocratic system. Neruda exposes his villainy under the garb of Christian piety. He was ruthless and despotic and slaughtered Indian population whom he considered a threat to his hegemonic designs.

- 18- Estrada: Estrada was the 19th century dictator of Guatemala. Diminutive in size, he was notorious for cruelty and indifference towards the miseries of his people.
- 19- Gomez: Gomez was the 19th century dictator of Venezuela (Central America). He was known for unscrupulous methods of torture and killing of his opponents. He used to manage the murders of his opponents at night time.
- 20- Jorge Ubico: He was the military dictator of Guatemala from 1931 to 1944. He idealized French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte and was nicknamed as the little Napoleon of the tropics. He was a close associate of USA. During his rule, United Fruit Co. of America flourished its business in Guatemala.
- 21- Machado: Machado was Cuban dictator of the 19th century. He was a close ally of USA who kept his country under subjugation with the help of American manufactured weapons. He harboured hegemonic designs towards Mexico and mortgaged the resources of his country with USA.
- 22- Melgarejo: Mariano Melgarejo was the dictator of Bolivia from 1864 to 1871. He suppressed opposition and usurped the traditional rights of the native population. He promoted the commercial interests of Bolivian mining elites.
- 23- Martinez: Martinez was the 20th century dictator of El Salvador. He was the closest ally of USA. He executed 20000 peasants of his country in order to promote the commercial interests of US backed business corporations in the region.

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