

Faiz on the 'Faiz Report'

Ahmad Salim elicits Faiz Ahmad Faiz's views on the Pakistan National Council of the Arts



Illustration by Abro Khuda Bux

Violating the restriction imposed on his speech (by his physician), Faiz Sahib had been talking to me for an hour now. He was to proceed soon for his medical treatment and I wanted to cover as many subjects as possible concerning as many issues as I could during our meeting. Sitting in Begum Majeed Malik's drawing room, where Alys Faiz had peeped in twice, I was becoming more convinced that she was not happy with the situation as was plainly evident from her expression. But she said nothing to deter or impede the conversation.

Ignorant

After exhausting certain aspects of the subjects related to literature and the domestic film industry I sought his views on the cultural affairs of the 'Idara-e-Saqa fate Pakistan' known as the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (P.N.C.A) Faiz Sahib was affiliated with it in the beginning.

'I am absolutely ignorant with regard to its condition now,' said Faiz Sahib in a tired, sinking voice. He was speaking very slowly.

The P.N.C.A was established on the basis of the famous 'Faiz Report,' compiled during the Ayub Regime and its implementation came into effect during Mr. Bhutto's government.

In spite of its immense popularity this report is still confined to the official circles, people at large are ignorant of its contents.

Only recently some private circles in Lahore published parts of this report, as a booklet, but that too, is not freely available. With this in mind, I asked him...

"What, according to your report were the objectives the P.N.C.A was to fulfill?"

"Its main purpose was on one hand to endow ideological guidance, to certain arts keeping in view their ethnic background, and to provide them with a positive direction and guidance. Also to provide them with abundant resources."

"You were the chairman of the Council, were you successful in the attainment of some positive results with regard to your objectives?", I asked.

"There wasn't enough time for this—before our plans, ideas, and objective materialized—we had to leave the Council. This always happens here," said Faiz Sahib commiseratively. He went on: "Like I told you, the Council was assigned the task of coordinating at some level with the existing local cultural organizations in the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and the N.W.F.P to facilitate maximum utilization of talent, of resources, to provide them with facilities which they lack and which are impeding their advancement and alongside, to develop and highlight and strengthen the cultural bonds with other countries. To learn from them and project justly, what we have."

Identity

"In order to enrich the contents of our heritage all these things were supposed to be done but were not! We provided them with a base. I don't know what's happening there now. But I should like to think that some work at a modest level is being done. All this is incorporated in the report I had written."

"Which Government accepted this report?" I asked.

"It was neither accepted nor rejected by any regime. They accepted the parts which suited them and rejected the rest," he replied.

There is lot of talk with regard to Pakistani culture. But after all is said and done nobody spells out exactly what the national policy is regarding culture. "If as a nation, we have a cultural identity or not?" I asked Faiz.

Faiz Sahib was just about to lend articulation to his thoughts when Alys Faiz looked in for the third time- this time she entered the room said something to Faiz Sahib. I couldn't bring myself to look in her direction after she left the room. Faiz Sahib said: "I am afraid that so far we have not been able to ascertain or formulate or even regulate a policy for

culture and arts. In fact, we have not even been able to formulate a political policy as yet, so a demand for a cultural policy is very ambitious and because of this confused and distressing situation- nothing has crystallized”.

Perish

“The National Council of the Arts was also assigned to safeguard and preserve the Folk Heritage, and had appointed me to propagate and preserve the folk heritage in the Punjab. But this department due to some clever manipulation by Uxi Mufti in collaboration with Mr. Abdul Hafeez Pirzada (who was then the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs) established a separate council. I became aware of the fact that an attempt was being made to preserve the old structure or the feudal set-up in the name of preserving the old folk heritage.”

“In my report concerning the preservation of the puppet theatre in Punjab to the Ministry of Culture- I had stated that without an actual change in our means of production and the political set-up- the television has taken the place of the puppeteer in the land-lord’s sitting room”.

I wanted to ask Faiz Sahib, whether the Faiz Report contained any such idea or suggestion which could later on be used to guard the Jagirdari (feudal) System?

To this Faiz Sahib replied that he was not aware as to how things were being conducted now. But the said report had in front of it the objective to project, safeguard and rejuvenate the arts which were slowly dying.

“Many of our traditional arts, for instance, music, folk artisanship have rapidly decayed because of their commercialization, and there is an impending danger that they might completely perish if caution is not exercised—the process has already started”.

Political

“Why did you aim at? Was there a political motive or aim behind your recommendations?” I asked.

“First to provide regular support to the artisans—second to guarantee some sort of continuation of their art, skill and talent. Third (this was to some extent political) to establish firmly that our popular culture is actually the very basis of our national culture. The structure of the national culture can be erected on these foundations. .. In this way the road to national integrity could be paved.”

My question: “Wasn’t it essential to establish a mutual political understanding before this?”

His reply: "To achieve this purpose it is essential to strengthen the roots of our cultural ties. And all these things I desired- these were the stressed points. And these were my main objectives. But then I left and I don't know what's been happening now."

Hum Dekhenge
Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Hum dekhenge
Lazim hai ke hum bhi dekhenge
Wo din ke jis ka wada hai
Jo lauh-e-azl mein likha hai

Jab zulm-o-sitam ke koh-e-garan
Rooi ki tarah ur jaenge
Hum mehkoomon ke paaon tale
Ye dharti dhar dhar dharkegi
Aur ahl-e-hakam ke sar oopar
Jab bijli kar kar karkegi

Jab arz-e-Khuda ke kaabe se
Sab but uthwae jaenge
Hum ahl-e-safa mardood-e-harm
Masnad pe bethae jaenge
Sab taaj uchale jaenge
Sab takht girae jaenge

Bas naam rahega Allah ka
Jo ghayab bhi hai hazir bhi
Jo manzar bhi hai nazir bhi
Utthega an-al-haq ka nara
Jo mai bhi hoon tum bhi ho
Aur raaj karegi Khalq-e-Khuda
Jo mai bhi hoon aur tum bhi ho

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/faiz-on-the-faiz-report.html>

Viewpoint

Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the ones who think differently