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# Exploring the Depths of the Psyche: A Psychoanalytic Study of Faiz Ahmad Faiz's Poem *Dasht-e tanhā.ī*

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**Abstract.** Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911-1984) one of the most revered poets of the 20th century, crafted his poetry with a profound sensitivity to the human condition and a deep engagement with social and political issues. He is the most popular poet on both sides of the border, in Pakistan and India, and a courageous public intellectual whose political vision was vast. His works are notable for their progressive and humanistic thoughts, as well as their revolutionary spirit. Faiz's poetry is distinguished by its strong, evocative language and its capacity to communicate complex emotions and ideas in an accessible way. His poetry addresses issues such as power dynamics, freedom of expression, unrequited love, nostalgia, sorrow, and existential reflections. It has been translated into multiple languages. The present study aims to understand the hidden motives, emotional conflicts, and societal factors that shape Faiz's artistic creations. The analysis seeks to contribute to a deeper comprehension of the intricate interplay between poetry and the human psyche, highlighting the enduring relevance of Faiz's poem "*Dasht-e tanhā.ī*" in the realm of psychoanalytic literary studies.

**Keywords.** poetry, psychoanalysis, longing, despair, solitude

The last decade of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century saw the emergence of many path breaking theoretical aspects, and psychoanalysis is one of them. Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious, dreams, and the Oedipus complex influenced many poets and critics. In this

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regard, literature serves as a profound mirror reflecting the intricacies of the human psyche and providing a unique opportunity to delve into the depths of emotions, thoughts, and desires, and Freud asserted that poetry can reveal hidden desires and conflicts within the psyche (Freud, 1900). Poetry and psychoanalysis share a strong connection since they both explore the complexities of the human mind, emotions, and unconscious feelings. Psychoanalysis, particularly by means of the theories developed by Sigmund Freud, provides a framework for understanding how poetry can be used to express and reveal repressed emotions and hidden aspects of the human psyche. Saleem Akhtar explains psychoanalysis in his *Nafsiyāt-i Tanqīd* as follows:

لا شعور کی مانند تحلیل نفسی کا استعمال بھی بعض اوقات اس کے اصل مفہوم سے ہٹ کر کیا جاتا ہے اس لیے اس کی حدود کا تعین لازم ہے۔ تحلیل نفسی کی حدود پر نگاہ رکھتی اس لیے بھی ضروری ہے کہ بعض اوقات تمام نفسیات کو تحلیل نفسی کے مساوی قرار دے دیا جاتا ہے جس سے علمی سطح پر بہت سی الجھنیں رونما ہوتی ہیں۔ سیدھے سادے الفاظ میں تحلیل نفسی اس طریق علاج کا نام ہے جسے اعصابی مریضوں کے علاج کے لیے فرائڈ نے وضع کیا تھا جس کی اساس لا شعور اور اس کے مختلف مظاہر جیسے خواب وغیرہ کی تشریح و تفہیم پر استوار ہے اور جس میں جنس اور اس کے متنوع مظاہر اہم ترین کردار ادا کرتے ہیں (53)۔

Like the subconscious mind, the use of psychoanalysis is sometimes used outside of its original meaning, so it is necessary to determine its limits. It is also important to keep an eye on the limits of psychoanalysis because sometimes all psychology is considered equal with psychoanalysis, due to which many confusions occur at the literary level. In simple words, psychoanalysis is the name of the method of treatment which was devised by Freud for the treatment of neurotic patients, which is based on the interpretation and understanding of the unconscious and its various manifestations such as dreams, and in which sex and its diverse phenomena play the most important role (our trans.),

Carl Jung's concept of the collective unconscious and archetypes offered another dimension, suggesting that poetry taps into universal symbols and motifs that resonate with the human psyche on the deep level. T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, the modernist poets furthered the exploration of the psyche, experimented with the fragmented structures and stream-of-consciousness techniques, reflecting the chaotic and fragmented nature of modern life. Ali Naqi and et.al observes, "The significance of inner feelings and the subjectivity which are the hallmark features of the poets of Romantic Movement are closely related to Psychoanalysis" (2). The psyche explored by the modernist poets reflected the post-war alienation and existential angst of the individual in the rapidly changing world. The postmodernist poets continued this exploration but often with a sense of scepticism and irony, questioning the stability of meaning and the reliability of the psyche itself.

The present study takes a psychoanalytic approach, using Sigmund Freud's theoretical framework, to reveal the latent layers of Faiz's psyche embedded in his select poem *Dasht-e tanhā.ī*. M.H. Abrahms and Geoffrey Harpham mentions that: "Freud had developed the dynamic form of psychology that he called "psychoanalysis" as a procedure for the analysis and therapy of neuroses, but soon expanded it to account for many developments and practices in the history of civilization" (320). Freud's structural theory of the mind proposes three main components: the id, the ego, and the superego, each of these plays a unique function in defining human behaviour and personality. The id is the primordial and instinctual element of the psyche, containing our innate drives and impulses like hunger, thirst, and sexual desires. The ego and superego collaborate to regulate and rule human behaviour, aiming to strike a balance between innate desires and societal expectations. In an article Huges explores:

The most striking form of madness in the normal psyche is the unconscious. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud laid out the rules by which the unconscious operates. These rules describe the very essence of madness – thoughts are depicted in the form of images, our minds jump from one seemingly random thought to another linked by unconscious association; time has no meaning so events from past and present are presented at the same time; every image in a dream can have multiple meanings, and thoughts and feelings are often replaced with their opposite (4).

It depicts the complex nature of mental processes during dreaming as seen via Freud's psychoanalytic lens. Our mind follows a different set of laws in dreams than they do in everyday consciousness.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911-1984) had a significant impact in shaping the South Asia's literary landscape in the mid-20th century. Gopi Chand Narang compliments Faiz as: "Faiz Ahmad Faiz is the most significant poet of Urdu, and an understanding of contemporary Urdu poetry is not complete without a recognition of the importance of his work" (23). His writings are praised for their revolutionary spirit, social consciousness, and profound understanding of the human condition. Faiz has endured a great deal of hardships and ups and downs throughout his life. His poetry covers a wide range of themes and issues, encompassing love and beauty, contemporary social disillusionments, political discontents, revolutionary ideas, existential conceptions, and more. He adds new dimensions to conventional metaphors and images. One of the most striking features of Faiz's poetry is his skilful use of metaphors and images to convey profound concepts and feelings. Rather than speaking directly, Faiz skilfully portrays complex themes of freedom, struggle, and enlightenment by employing traditional symbols and motifs like the beloved (محبوب), longing (دصال), morning (صبح), and night (شب). These metaphors, which have their origins in the poetic traditions of Persian and

Urdu literature, take new meanings in Faiz's poetry and function as allegories for the collective aspirations and struggles of oppressed people. In this regard Ahsanul Haq explores these examples in his article as:

Beloved (*Mehboob*) becomes the long-pending freedom; longing (*visā*) is seen as the long struggle for freedom and, if we quote other examples, morning and dawn become the symbols of both union and freedom of people. Similarly, night (*shām*) is seen as the reflection of darkness not only of unrequited love but the ignorance of people. So, we can see Faiz, at its core, as a broken lover (*majnoon*) who struggles for union with Laila. He is transposed from personal ambition to the collective dream of oppressed people and the light (*roshni*) which will break through the darkness (*andherā*) (5).

In his poem, "راحتیں اور / اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا" Faiz says "مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت مری محبوب نہ مانگ" (*Nuskha Hāi Wafā* 61) which has been translated by Shiv K. Kumar as: "There are other sorrows other than heartache/joys other than lovers rapture" (20). This couplet demonstrates his ability to transform his personal feelings and emotions into a broader engagement with social realities. He suggests to his beloved that he can no longer provide her with the same level of love and affection that she had once experienced from him in the past. There are other things more essential to him that needs his attention now. Vijay Krishna says that "Faiz Ahmad not only talks about the agony of the people, he also provokes the thought of revolutionary action through his poems" (25). Faiz inspired people to stand up against tyranny and injustice with poetic passion; "Speak up, for your lips are not sealed/and your words are still your own" (Kumar 38). In essence, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poetry represents a powerful fusion of form and content, where poetic expression becomes a potent tool for social and political change or transformation. His enduring legacy continues to inspire generations to engage critically with the injustices of their time and to envision a future founded on the principles of equality, justice, and human dignity. In this context, the present study will focus on to capture the depths of the psyche in Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem *Dasht-e tanhā.ī*. Faiz, noted for his revolutionary and romantic poetry, frequently explores themes of love, loss, and resistance, which can be examined through a Freudian perspective to uncover deeper psychological undercurrents.

The poem "*Dasht-e tanhā.ī*" or "*yād*" is particularly noteworthy because it stands out as a poignant reflection of the speaker's inner world and captures the feelings of loss, longing, and existential despair. To truly appreciate the multiple layers of this poem, one can resort to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories, which provide a lens through which to understand the subconscious impulses and symbolic meanings of the poem. "*Dasht-e tanhā.ī*" was published as part of a collection of poems written in prison (*Dast-e Saba* 1952), which encapsulates Faiz's

poetic brilliance, presenting a narrative that transcends beyond the superficial and reaches into the collective subconscious. Mara Ahmed says that, “*Dasht-e tanhā.ī*” is a poem about separation and longing, about sensory memory and its permanent aching imprint on the heart.” (2022) Further, he comments that “it’s a love poem brimming with scents, sounds, landscapes, and textures. It speaks to movement and physical phenomena to disconnection and union”. (2022) The speaker in the poem is physically separated from the beloved, and this causes a strong sense of loneliness and disconnection. However, the speaker’s emotional and spiritual connection is not diminished by this physical absence. Memories of union, times of togetherness remain alive and vivid in the speaker’s consciousness. *Dasht-e tanhā.ī* is a poem about love that beautifully describes the sensory experiences of scents, sounds, landscapes, and textures. The reader is drawn into the speaker’s world by Faiz’s vivid language, where an intimate environment is created by the smell of flowers and the tactile remembrance of a loved one’s touch. Freudian concepts such as the id, ego, and superego, along with the exploration of unconscious desires and repressed emotions, will serve as tools to unravel the underlying psychological dimensions of this poem. By applying these concepts, this paper aims to unveil the hidden motivations, conflicts, and symbolic representations within the verses of *Dasht-e tanhā.ī*. The poem begins as:

دشت تنہائی میں اے جان جہاں لرزاں ہیں  
تیری آواز کے سائے ترے ہونٹوں کے سراب  
دشت تنہائی میں دوری کے خس و خاک تلے  
کھل رہے ہیں ترے پہلو کے سمن اور گلاب

(*Nuskha Hāi Wafā* 184)

Shiv K. Kumar translates this as:

In the wilderness of my heart, O love,  
waver  
the shadows of your voice  
the mirages of your lips.  
In the desert of loneliness--  
there, under the remote dust and straw of separation--  
are unfolding the jasmines and roses of your lap. (*The Best of Faiz*, 86)

The opening line sets the tone of the poem and evokes a profound sense of longing, nostalgia, love and solitude. The speaker compares his heart to a wilderness (دشت)—a wide, desert place that is lost and uncontrolled. The

echoes of his beloved's voice cast shadows over this interior wilderness, creating a weird and elusive presence. Jaffer Ali Khan while analysing these lines in *Faiz Fehmi* (2011) observes:

محبوب سے جدائی کی حالت میں تنہائی کو دشت کہنا اور دشت کی مناسبت سے محبوب کی موسیقی سے لبریز آواز کو  
دوری کے عالم میں آواز کا سایہ اور اس کے ہونٹوں کی خفیف تبسم آمیز جنبش کو ہونٹوں کا سراب کہنا لطیف شاعرانہ  
احساس کے شواہد ہیں۔ اس کے بعد تخیل محبوب کا مجسمہ اس طرح تیار کرتا ہے کہ دُوری کے خس و خاک یا غبار سے  
سمن اور گلاب اگ رہے ہیں، پہلوؤں کو سمن اور گلاب کہنے میں بڑی معنویت ہے (۱۸۳)۔

Calling loneliness as desert, in the state of separation from the beloved, and calling the beloved's voice full of music, the shadow of the voice in the distance, and the slight smiling movement of his lips as the mirage of the lips, are evidences of subtle poetic feeling. After that, the imagination creates the statue of the beloved in such a way that from a distance the dust and straw, roses and jasmines are growing, calling the aspects of roses and jasmine had a great meaning (our trans.).

This imagery suggests that even within the speaker's heart, the beloved exists as a haunting and intangible presence. Further, the metaphor shifts to a desert, emphasizing the desolation and isolation felt by the speaker. In this emotional desert, obscured by the distant dust and straw of separation, the flowers of the beloved's lap are blossoming. This imagery conveys a sense of hope and beauty emerging from the barren landscape of loneliness, symbolized by the blossoming jasmines and roses. The lap of the beloved becomes a source of comfort and rejuvenation in the midst of emotional aridity. Overall, these couplets capture the emotional landscape of the speaker's heart and the desolate terrain of loneliness. The use of natural imagery, such as, سمن اور گلاب (dust and straw) خس و خاک (mirages) سراب (shadows) سائے (jasmines and roses) are used to infuse the verses with rich and poignant symbolism. These elements of nature serve as metaphors describing the speaker's internal landscape, reflecting emotions of longing, illusion, and transience. سمن اور گلاب symbolize the lingering presence of memories and the elusive nature of the past, while سراب evoke the illusory and unattainable aspects of the beloved and the hope for reunion. خس و خاک represents the desolation and fragility of the present moment, contrasting with the lush and fragrant سمن اور گلاب that signify beauty, love, and the cherished memories of union. This natural imagery not only enhances the emotional depth of the poem but also creates a vivid, sensory experience that resonates with the reader, capturing the complex interplay between presence and absence, hope and despair, and the enduring power of love and memory. Further in the next couplets, Faiz Says:

اٹھ رہی ہے کہیں قربت سے تری سانس کی آنج

اپنی خوشبو میں سلگتی ہوئی مدھم مدھم  
دور افق پار چمکتی ہوئی قطرہ قطرہ  
گر رہی ہے تری دل دار نظر کی شبنم

*Nuskha Hāi Wafā* 184)

Shiv K. Kumar translates this as:

There rises, from close by, the flame of your breath  
glowing softly in its own heady fragrance.  
And there, beyond the horizon, falls  
drop by drop, the effulgent dew  
of your alluring glance (86).

The beloved's breath is described by the speaker as آج (flame) that rises from nearby. This metaphorical flame represents the intimate warmth and spirit of the beloved that the speaker dreams out. The adjective خوشبو gives the impression that the breath smells rich and intoxicating, suggesting that it has a strong and possibly overwhelming fragrance. So, the breath becomes a metaphorical flame, which symbolizes the intensity and passion associated with the presence of the beloved. Jaffer Ali khan says:

سانس کی آج کو اپنی ہی خوشبو میں دھیرے دھیرے سلگتے ہوئے کہ کر سانس کو بخورات عود و عنبر میں مبدل کر دیا۔  
نظر کو شبنم کہنے میں یہ لطیف استعارہ ہے کہ معشوق کی آنکھیں بھی اپنے عاشق صادق کے فراق میں نم ناک ہیں۔ اس  
یاد سے تنہائی و مفارقت کے شدائد میں تخفیف ہو جاتی ہے، گویا محبوبہ نے اس ہجر اور نصیب عاشق کی تسکین کے لیے  
دل پر دست نازک رکھ دیا اور ایسا محسوس ہونے لگا کہ صبح فراق ختم ہوئی اور شام وصال آگئی (184)۔

The flame of the breath, softly and slowly rises and smouldering in its own fragrance, turning the breath into incense, *oud* and *amber*. There is a subtle metaphor in saying the sight as dew that the eyes of the beloved are also wet with tears in the separation from the true lover. This remembrance reduces the severity of loneliness and separation, it is as if the beloved, in separation from the lover, puts a delicate hand on the heart for consolation, and it starts to feel like the morning of separation has ended and the night of union has arrived (our trans.).

The speaker refers to the beloved's gaze as شبنم (dew) that falls in drops. When something is described as شبنم it suggests that it is brilliant and radiant, giving the beloved's glance brightness. The image of dew suggests gentle and refreshing quality, symbolizing the impact of the beloved's attractive and tender appearance. These words together paint a poetic image of the beloved's presence, employing metaphors such as flame, fragrance, and dew to portray the intense and captivating nature of the beloved's breath and gaze. Faiz, in an interview with Allen Jones, discusses the evolution of his

poetic themes over the course of his life. He says, “In the early days romantic themes were dominant in poetry and then a breakthrough came. New forms, patterns, themes – mainly political – began to appear” (141) the last part of the poem reads:

اس قدر پیار سے اے جان جہاں رکھا ہے  
دل کے رخسار پہ اس وقت تری یاد نے ہاتھ  
یوں گماں ہوتا ہے گرچہ ہے ابھی صبحِ فراق  
ڈھل گیا ہجر کا دن آ بھی گئی وصل کی رات

(*Nuskha Hāi Wafā* 184)

Shiv K. Kumar translates this as:

O my love, with such tenderness  
has your memory's hand caressed the cheeks  
of my heart that it appears, as if,  
although it is still the dawn of separation,  
the day of parting has faded away  
and the night of love's union has just arrived (86).

The speaker expresses affection for the beloved and appreciates the gentle and tender nature of their love. The metaphor یاد نے ہاتھ (memory's hand) implies that the beloved's impact is felt not only in the present, but also in the recall of past experiences. Another metaphor, دل کے رخسار (cheeks of my heart), represents the speaker's innermost emotions and their vulnerability. Now the poet changes the tone of the poem, and employs a contrasting image. صبحِ فراق (day of parting) is receding, implying that the emotional sorrow and sense of loss are diminishing. Simultaneously, the arrival of the وصل کی رات (night of the lover's union) represents a sense of renewed hope, possibly fuelled by the intensity of the recollections and the enduring quality of love. Despite the current separation, the speaker finds solace and a sense of unity in the emotional recall of past experiences, turning the dawn of separation into the expectation of a night of love's reunion. The poet masterfully captures the enduring strength of love and the ability of cherished recollections to overcome the difficulties of separation.

Freud's structural theory of the mind suggests three major components: the id, the ego, and the superego. Each of these components serves a distinct role in determining human behaviour and personality. In *Dasht-e tanhā.ī* the 'id' can be seen through the speaker's powerful and honest feelings. The image of the دشتِ تنہائی represents the vast, desolate emotional atmosphere driven by these powerful, instinctive desires. The poem portrays a strong sensation of longing and unfulfilled desire, which is essential to the id's



function. Faiz highlights the feeling of internal struggle that arises when the basic need for love and connection is not satisfied. The 'ego' in *Dasht-e tanhā.ī* is represented in the speaker's acknowledgment of their solitary positions and the reality of their situation. The 'ego' acknowledges the physical and emotional distance that characterises the speaker's present existence, while the Id drives the intense longing for the beloved. The reflective tone of the poem suggests the ego's attempt to balance these innate desires with the harsh reality of loneliness. The 'superego' is present in *Dasht-e tanhā.ī* through the layers of cultural and moral expectations that influence the speaker's reflections. The superego's influence is evident in the way the poem not only expresses personal emotions but also resonates with broader cultural themes of separation, loss, and the pursuit of idealized love. This internalized moral compass creates an inner conflict between the desire for immediate gratification (id) and the adherence to moral and cultural ideals (superego). Freud's theory emphasizes the significance of unconscious desires and repressed feelings, which are deeply rooted in Faiz's poetry. To relate Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetry to Freud's theory, one must examine the psychoanalytic aspects of his work, notably the interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind, the expression of repressed impulses, and the symbolic portrayal of internal tensions. Faiz, noted for his revolutionary and romantic poetry, frequently explores themes of love, loss, and resistance, which may be seen through a Freudian perspective to reveal deeper psychological undercurrents. The poem *Dasht-e tanhā.ī* can be seen as a reflection of the speaker's unconscious mind, expressing hidden anxieties, desires, and unresolved emotional conflicts. The poem's vivid imagery and symbolic language bring these suppressed emotions to the surface, allowing the speaker to express feelings of loss, longing, and isolation that are not easily accessible in everyday consciousness. Faiz dives into the complexity of the human psyche with this poetic expression, exploring the connection between conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions.

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