

**A Study on
A Document of Oppression up to Mass Uprising of 1969:
Helal Hafiz's Poem 'The Hawker'**

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Abstract: From August 14, 1947 to March 26, 1971 the people of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh struggled against the tyranny and suppression of the Pakistani rulers. The rulers first attacked our mother tongue to reconstruct our identity, but the conscious people protested against the conspiracy of West Pakistan and sacrificed huge blood on 21 february, 1952 for the their mother language and succeed in 1956 to establish Bangla as the two of the state languges of Pakistan. After that, the rulers changed their strategy to torture the East Pakistani people. As a result, politicians, doctors, farmers, writers and other working classes contributed their level best to drive away the autocrats. Helal Hafiz is one of them who contributed a lot to unite the youth. His 'Forbidden Editorial' and 'The Hawker' were recited now and then to influence the young to raise their voice in the Mass Uprising of 1969. It is remarked that 'The Hawker' still now influences the suppressed people to be united to fight against all the suppressors of the world. Analysing the structure and the words of the poem, the paper aims to show how the poem documents Pakistani suppression of the Mass Uprising of 1969.

Keywords: Mass Uprising of 1969, symbols, suppression and unity.

Introduction

Helal Hafiz, born in Netrokona on 7 October, 1948, a modern Bengali poet, renders "his feelings about a world torn by war, deception and exploitation. Moving into the heart's deepest core he brings out the love in a different perspective"[1].

The suppression of Pakistani rulers stirred him much. In 1969, his wonderful writing 'Forbidden Editorial' "influenced the political activists to be united against the Pakistani tyranny"[2]. Every activist uttered "Now who is in youth/ It is the best time for one to go to the procession" [3]. It seems to be the echo of J. M.Synge, who in Riders to the Sea says, "It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea" [4]. Even after two decades when the independent country was in trouble because of the military autocratic ruler, the political leaders got their inspiration reciting the verses of Helal Hafiz.

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Helal Hafiz belongs to that genre of poets who have never dissociated themselves from the people. He is particularly known for the poems that instilled in his readers an irresistible urge to bring about a change from the decrepit status and to fight against social and political repression. Helal Hafiz is “full of verve and vigour and has carved out a niche for himself as a socially and politically conscious poet like some of his contemporaries”[5]. His struggle against all kinds of social discrepancies is still ongoing. He has written a few poems, but all the poems are very powerful to shake human minds. ‘The Hawker’ is one of them and it is one of the most popular poems in Bangla for its appeal. The paper aims at finding how the poem provokes the youth to raise their voice against the tyrannical Pakistani rulers during the mass uprising of 1969.

Limitations of the Study

This paper has some specific limitations. Firstly, this is the maiden research work on Helal Hafiz’s poem. As a result, the paper cannot compare this writing with those of others, i.e. there is no literary review section where the paper can find out the research gap. Secondly, the poet himself has not come to the public place for a long time. So, he is known little, though his writings are mostly recited in Bangladesh. Thirdly, books are not available on his works either in Bengali or in English, though a number of books on the history of Bangladesh from 1947 to 1969 have been found.

Purpose of the Study

This paper aims to analyse how the used words reveal the uproar of the suppressed people and how the appeal of the poem tells the agony of every man of the world and at the same time, it will show how the literary techniques hint of the incidences of the Pakistani tyranny from 1947 to 1969. These findings will help to know how a literary piece (a poem) can be a social or historical document.

Methodology

The study presented in this paper is an exploratory one based on the secondary sources of information. The secondary sources include published books, journals (printed and PDF), periodicals, newspapers (printed and on-line), and different online links. The information has been collected carefully and meticulously. For doing that, we have read the poetic nature of Helal Hafiz’s poems and then we have gone through the history books on the Mass Uprising of 1969. Finally, we have set the historical events and the words or phrases of the poem side by side to fulfil the purpose.

Historical Background of the Mass Uprising of 1969

In the 1940s, the political situation of undivided India unexpectedly changed and because of the Lahore Resolution, the people became divided and decided to form India, the Hindu majority country and Pakistan, the Muslim majority country, though Muslims of undivided India might have been confused about their fate. As a result, they could not rely on Hindus leaders and Muslims leaders were provoked then. Interestingly, Pakistan became a peculiar country for three reasons. “First, it was founded upon religious nationalism. . . Second, Pakistan was a state administering two discrete territories, separated from each other by about 15000 kms of Indian terrain. Third, Pakistan did not become heir to any of the colony’s central state institutions”[6]. Moreover, West Pakistan leaders started ruling the whole Pakistan. As a result, they discriminated between East and West Pakistan. For ensuring their

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domination over East Pakistan, they appointed "only one member of the former Indian Civil Service who belongs to that region. Six others were hastily promoted from the Provincial Civil Service" [7]. Thus, "the civil service of East Pakistan was largely non-local, and decision-making was in the hands of officials with little knowledge of East Pakistan's needs" [6]. So, all decisions went in favour of West Pakistan and the gap was enlarged day by day in every sector.

But just after the independence of Pakistan, when East Pakistan demanded some facilities, the West Pakistani rulers replied, "We had very poor accommodation: at Headquarters there was no table, no chair, no stationery" [8]. On the other hand, in Karachi and Lahore they established luxurious buildings to maintain the official task. Whereas, our situation was worse than our thought because "we had virtually nothing at all; not even any maps of East Pakistan"[9].

Only three months after independence the crisis between East and West erupted clearly over the question of the national language when "The Pakistan Educational Conference of November 1947 proposed Urdu as the national language, a suggestion that was opposed by representatives from East Pakistan"[6]. But, more than twelve languages were spoken in Pakistan and "Urdu was spoken by only 3 percent of them. Bengali was very clearly the principal language of the country: it was spoken by 56 percent of all Pakistanis"[10]. The flame of anti Urdu protest was sparked when Mohammad Ali Jinnah visited Dhaka in March, 1948 and declared "anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. . . Pakistan's language shall be Urdu"[11]. But this time Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did believe "if we fail to establish Bengali as a national language, we must be enchained forever"[12].

In favour of establishing Urdu as the national language, Liaquat Ali Khan averred "Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in this subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu. . . It is necessary for a nation to have one language and that language can only be Urdu and no other language"[13]. As a result, the tension increased and then "The language issue stood for a more general cultural and political divide within the fledgling"[6].

Without understanding the reality, West Pakistani leaders decided to impose Urdu over the majority Bengali speaking people. Then, they deceived people saying that Pakistan is going to be Islamized. So, there is no option to accept Bengali as the state language, because "Many in West Pakistan knew very little about the Bengali language, but thought of it as in need of 'purification' from Hindu influences"[6] [14]. And even they started telling Bengali is "un-or anti-Islamic"[6]. After that, they discriminated everywhere and stepped up efforts to impose Urdu by preferring Urdu-speaking candidate for jobs in the state bureaucracy [15]. The events of 1952 are critically important to know the brutality of West Pakistan because on 21 February they fired and killed few innocent students for demonstrating for their rights; thus, exposing the brutal nature of the state's leadership. "Through the sacrifices of blood of Salam, Rafiq, Safiul, Barkat and others, East Pakistan realized that they should be united"[16]. As a result, "The elections of 1954 were also the elections ever in Bangal-delta on the basis of a universal adult franchise"[17].

The Muslim League defeated shamelessly in the province election in 1954 against the East Pakistan United Front because “The United Front’s election manifesto consisted of twenty one points. Four of these had to do with language questions; others dealt with autonomy, citizens’ rights and economic emancipation”[6]. “After the 1954’s victory, the Bengali Middle class became powerful. . .”[18]. Then, the East Pakistani people started suffering much by the West Pakistani military rulers and it was more than previous [18].

But with a shrewd conspiracy of West Pakistan and internal non-cooperation and disbelief of the alliance of United Front broke and the Military Junta Ayub Khan took the power and then, the total political situation became changed in 1956. “To this end they abolished parliamentary democracy, locked up so-called troublesome politicians, curtailed the judiciary, muzzled the press, suspended citizen’s rights and introduced martial law”[6].

In a survey of Shahid Javed Burki, we find In 1959-60 the per capita income in West Pakistan was 32 percent higher than in the East. Over the next ten years the annual rate of growth of income in West Pakistan was 6.2 percent, while it was only 4.2 percent in East Pakistan. . . Thus, in ten years of Ayub’s rule, the income gap had doubled in percentage terms[19].

To prolong Ayub’s power, he changed the strategy and took steps to change the constitution which wished to control East Pakistan politics, but it was full of hypocrisy because he “introduced a quasi-constitutional and civil regime. A Constitution was “granted”, it was not made by the people’s representatives”[20].

At the same time he introduced “the Basic Democracy System”. Ayub tried to build up his base of support in the rural areas by his scheme of Basic Democracy and the rural development works done through the Basic Democrats. But he was not “successful in acquiring a solid base in rural areas; as a substitute for the urban elite, it was not strong or effective”[20].

In 1962, the central government of Pakistan attempted to ruin East Pakistan’s culture, norms, values and long historical heritage by changing the medium of education. To do it, they formed Sharif Commission, which proposed that the education medium should be either Urdu or English. After a short silence, East Pakistan students became fierce against this resolution and some sacrificed their lives, so that they could resist their heinous steps [21].

In early 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented a list of demands known as the Six-Point Programme in which he demanded “East Pakistan would be in complete control of its own taxation, financial management, earnings from foreign trade, trade agreements with foreign countries and paramilitary forces. It could also have its own currency”[6]. In presenting these Six Points Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other leaders were captured. But the capture gave new dimension to politics because “For the first time workers played a very prominent part in the movement and this led to more confrontational tactics”[6]. Kaledur Rahma Sagor claims that “In the Uprising of 1969 the workers of East Pakistan became a festive mood as they very first time protested against the oppressor and succeeded”[22]. He presented this in Lahore and then again in Dhaka. There was a time gap between his presentation and arrest. The Hartal that Bangabandhu called following his articulation of Six Points witnessed the participation of workers. It took almost three years between his declaration and the Mass Uprising to erupt in 1969. Please cover this historical period attentively.

In 1968, Sheikh Mujib and another thirty six civilian and non-civilian people were shown as “the culprits of Agartala Conspiracy”[23], but “It built up Sheikh Mujibur Rajman’s public image, in particular”[6][20].

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Building up the image of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, for the very first time an alliance of East Pakistani student organizations was formed and the alliance "took the initiative to form a united front that adopted an Eleven-Point manifesto. This included the Sheikh Mujib's Six Points but also social demands to attract leftists: lower taxes on farmers, higher wages for workers and the nationalization of big industries and banks"[6]. With the leadership of DUCSU, the Students' Action Committee (SAC) was formed. Please go back to a good history book to cover this rearticulate this section. As the expenditure of East Pakistan was more than income and the political situation was completely uncontrollable, prices of necessity commodities became higher in East Pakistan. Besides, "Mujib and others involved in the case among the Bengalis demonstrated clearly that Bengali sub-nationalism was now a fully-fledged national movement for a separate state of the Bengalis"[20]. Moreover, the critical political situation of East Pakistan made the people understand that in an underdeveloped country, an effective political leader might be successful in developing a broader sense of cohesion in a society characterized by ethnic, linguistic and cultural pluralism. Now people felt seeking their individual identity because "Identity is an essential component of a nation, but it remains an essentially contested concept within political theory. So, Language, religion, culture, shared history, ethnicity or citizenship has each been variously upheld to provide the foundation that gives rise to the feeling of nationhood"[24].

In order to file the Agartala Conspiracy Case, on 16 December 1967, President Ayub Khan visited East Pakistan. Then he called "[The] East Pakistani politicians the enemy of Pakistan" [18], and then he stepped to arrest few leaders and filed a case against them which is called Agartala Conspiracy Case. The Case had three specific targets: underestimating the East Pakistan political leaders and weakening their movement; making the people believe that Bengal Army are traitor and they are trying to enhance the instability in Pakistan & finally, to make a wall between East and West Pakistan[18].

In the Second Phase of Ayub's rule, a collaborator of West Pakistan named Saidur Rahman used to torture Dhaka University student leaders brutally, but in October 1968 leftist students' unions decided to hold arms against the collaborator and they "formed a five members armed team to kill Saidur Rahman. In November of the year, Saidur was killed and that inspired East Pakistan students' unions to think to hold arms against the oppressors. This is the first step of East Pakistan students to think doing something different in future"[18].

Though "In 1968, the movement started within a very little scale in Pakistan"[18], all professionals of East Pakistan under the leadership of Mowlana Bashani became united, and "Nationalism has spread through the movement" [23], and "The movement of 1968-69 was the dress rehearsal of the Liberation War of 1971"[25]. On 20 January 1969, when students gathered in a meeting in the Dhaka University premises, without any notice Pakistani Police fired to the meeting and killed a student leader named Asad. After that, the situation became more severe and the movement turned to its final stage. "In March 1969, after bloody rioting and protest in both wings brought about the collapse of the ten-year strong-arm reign of Mohammad Ayub Khan"[14], and "the commander-in-chief of the Pakistan army, General Yahya Khan, took his place. Yahya represented the same military-bureaucratic alliance as his predecessor and he immediately declared martial law with a view to protecting that

alliance's position"[6]. The Killing of a Rajshahi University Professor Joha was an important factor in this movement. There was simultaneous movement in West Pakistan as well. So, from the brief history of East Pakistan now Bangladesh until 1969, we see during every step of West Pakistan is full of hypocrisy and torture. Every torture gave different experience which was unbearable.

Critical Analysis of 'The Hawker'

'The Hawker' starts suddenly and in the poem, the speaker offers us pain. Here the speaker hawks, "Will you have pain/ I have pain of many kinds/ will you have." [3]. Interestingly, no pain is similar to the other. This is the first time we have heard that one can hawk pain, and the pain has different colours as Jibananda Das introduces the eyes of a beautiful lady named Banalata Sen with a bird's nest [26]. Why he has offered pain to be purchased is not ambiguous at all because every moment West Pakistan rulers suppressed East Pakistani people. Thus, people could never feel happy for a single moment. That's why, he uses the unusual images as no man's treatment can be compared with West Pakistan autocrats. Moreover, every pain reminds each and every historical event of East Pakistan between 1947 and 1969.

After that, he offers multi-coloured pain like 'red', 'blue', 'green' and so on. The pain becomes 'red', 'blue', 'green', 'yellow', 'white' and other colours because of "grass pressed by stone", "pain of black in light". Even the poem tells that she collects the pain from 'eyes', 'nails', 'hearts', "pass of a man washed in silent", 'love', "hate", "wrong mistress", "two jokers in hydrogen", 'days', 'nights', 'paths', 'legs' and so on. The different colours symbolize the different torture of Pakistani tyrannical rulers between 1947 and 1969. It is known "a symbol is a word that stands for, or points to, a reality beyond itself" [27]. And also "a symbol is an object that represents, stands for, or suggests an idea, visual image, belief, action, or material entity. Symbols take the form of words, sounds, gestures, or visual images and are used to convey ideas and beliefs" [28]. Here red symbolizes "the life sacrifices of Rafiq, Salam, Barkat, and Safiul in the Language Movement of 1952; Asad and Matiur of 1969 in the Mass Uprising" [29]. Here the 'red' here symbolizes the sacrifice of Professor Dr. Joha, who was shot when he declared without killing him Pakistani Junta could not shoot any students of Rajshahi University. In literature, 'blue' and 'yellow' always symbolize destruction or ruin or death. Here the speaker urges East Pakistan to be united against tyranny; otherwise, they would be ruined and lost their identity forever. For awakening the silent and oppressed people, Hafiz reminds them of the different kinds of torture of the West Pakistan, i.e. cultural aggression, political aggression and their impacts on basic the human rights of East Pakistan for which the tormented people vigorously were being ruined by the autocratic ruler.

After independence of Pakistan from British colony in 1947 "East Pakistan people were suppressed everywhere now and then, and the West Pakistani rulers treated the East Pakistani people as slave" [20]. In the poem, the speaker notices every corner of a Bengali's pain. To touch the pain, he says, "Pain of home pain of unrelated, pain of birds and leaves/ pain of beard/ pain of eyes of hearth of nails,/ pain of a man wasted in silence/ will you have pain" [3].

The speaker of the poem finds unbearable pains everywhere and the pain even enters into the heart of rivals and lovers. And the pain increases day by day because of "meeting of wrong leaders" [3].

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When he finds some leaders' fruitless thought which increases the pain of us, he claims that "Who will except I/ give lovely real pain"[3]. Helal Hafiz is not the first man who blames the political leaders for lengthening the relation with the oppressors. Farrukh Ahmed in his poem 'The Navigator' directly calls the political leaders merchants as they deceive the mass peoples with their activities. He says, "We have caused distress among the merchants/ We hear watching from every door"[30]. Few like Helal Hafiz could realize the hypocrisy of Pakistan at the very early stage. That's why, it took time near about twenty four years to drive them away from our sacred land. Farrukh Ahmed was a poet of Islamic Renaissance. He, having discarded the radical humanism of Manabendra Roy, had fought for Pakistan had sympathy for Pakistan. He might simply denigrate the politicians of Bangladesh without holding the spirits of independence of Bangladesh in acvhanged political contyext of 1971.

If the poem is analysed word for word, we can get the same connotation. In addition, there are a number of alterations in the poem and alliteration means "the repetition of a consonantal sound"[27], and it is used to give the musical sound in a poem. For example, in "Pain of home pain of unrelated, pain of birds and leaves"[3]; here 'p' is used thrice and 's' is used twice. Through the repetition, the speaker reminds the readers the extreme sufferings of East Pakistan as well as the pain of all deprived people of the world because of autocratic rulers.

Several times the parallelism is used here. "It consists of phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other" [27]. Perhaps even more importantly, "parallelism can help a writer to highlight or emphasize information or make a powerful point. Without parallelism, writing can become clunky, awkward, and needlessly confusing. With it, reading can become easy to understand, pleasing to the ear, and even persuasive"[31]. As a result, in 'sound pattern' readers get a unity between 'the ideas of a poem'. For example, "Pain of days pain of nights/ pain of paths pain of legs"[3]. So, the used parallel sentences strongly point at the series of torture of Pakistani tyrant.

Helal Hafiz uses personification here frequently to make it interesting and powerful. Though days and nights are arbitrary concepts, they have pain which indicates the double atandard in attitudes of the Pakistani rulers. And, "Personification connects readers with the object that is personified. Personification can make descriptions of non-human entities more vivid, or can help readers understand, sympathize with, or react emotionally to non-human characters"[32].

Interestingly, he does not use any rhyme scheme here as the theme indicates the disorder of the humanity in East Pakistan before the liberation. And when the theme highlights any disorder and chaotic situation in a particular poem, the rhyme scheme is avoided to follow up the chaotic situation of that land. "Rhyme's ability to focus the meaning of a poem in an extension of the way it emphasizes certain words"[33]. In poetry- "a special way of using words- sounds are sometimes made to play a part in the meaning and impact of the poem" [33]. As Pope says in "An Eassy on Criticism":

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,

The sound must seem an Echo to the sense" [34].

Moreover, a number of visual images are used in the poem. As hawking is a common scenario of our country, hearing the verses, a real hawker walks in our mind. Besides,

the tone of a poem is very important because through the tone the poet gives his message to the reader. Moreover, "Tone is the writer or speaker's implied attitude toward the subject, material and/or audience. It is the emotional meaning or the emotional colouring of the poem"[27]. In order to interpret the tone of a poem, "the reader should focus on the kind of atmosphere or mood that the poem creates and the kind of words that the writer chooses, i.e. diction. The tone of the poem may be formal, serious, ironic, angry, humorous, etc." [27]. Here the tone seems to be sad or pathetic, but in the last stanza the tone of the poem is revolutionary.

At the same time, the last stanza reveals poet's autobiographical experiences which he has gathered since birth. As he was born just after the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and Pakistan had tortured us vigorously from beginning, he says, "whose fate has burnt since birth/ how many have destructed/ everything like me,/ who will give happy and well-fed pain as of mine"[3].

Here it is the 'pathetic fallacy' as pathetic fallacy "occurs when human feelings given to objects which cannot by their very nature have them." [27] In 'The Lotos Eaters' Tennyson says, "All round the coast the languid air did swoon,/ Breathing like one that hath a weary dream"[35]. 'Air' can't have feelings, but 'languid', 'swoon' and 'breathing' bestow them. Similarly, in 'The Hawker' Helal Hafiz says, "pain of paths pain of legs' and 'pain of nails"[3]. 'Pain of black in light' is a paradox as "a paradox is an apparent contradiction which says something strange yet true" [27].

Though John Keats says "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter. . ." [36], and it is very much ambiguity, but in 'The Hawker', Helal Hafiz does not use any ambiguity because his experience is stronger than Keats. Whereas, Keats waits for enjoying the 'unheard songs', Helal Hafiz has got all the pains of tyranny i.e. no pain is left by Pakistan for future. That's why; he declares, "pain of home pain of unrelated pain of birds and rivers", "pain of love and hate, of river and a woman/ tumultuous pain of slight and negligence", "pain of days pain of nights/ pain of paths and of legs" and "whose fate has burnt since birth"[3].

Findings of the Study

As the paper aims at finding how the West Pakistani rulers suppressed the East Pakistani now Bangladeshi people before 1969 and because of their suppression, how the East Pakistani people became united in the Mass Uprising of 1969, and how Helal Hafiz's poem 'The Hawker' influenced the mass people to protest the tyranny of Pakistan, through analysing each and every line, word and literary ornament like parallelism, tone, etc., it becomes clear. finally, it finds successfully how a timely literary piece could have such a scintillating effect on the minds of suppressed that they ended up being united.

Conclusion

The world has gathered experiences, in which the West Pakistani military were responsible of the sufferings of Bangladeshi before 1969. But the world is experiencing the same attitude of the rulers in every corner of the world in a different way nowadays. As a result, the feelings of the suppressed people are the same which we have seen in the poem 'The Hawker'. Moreover, every word or phrase and stanza of the poem is a hint of historical events in East Pakistan and a document of oppression until Mass Uprising 1969. Finally, the poem is really a worthy piece of literature and it succeeds to depict the sufferings of us and it exposes why three million people subsequently willingly sacrificed their lives in 1971.

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