

# This Winter Had The Sharpest Teeth



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**T**HOUGH NOT considered as good as summer, but winter in Kashmir has got its own significance. Its attractive aspects from touristic point of view and the strong attachment of native people with the traditional life in Kashmir linked with winters describe its goodness very well. Like summer, winter also radiates its beauty by, covering the valley with snow clad mountains, decorating the branches of trees with snow white finish then making them to bow a little in a beautiful way and covering the meadows, plain with snowy stainless white carpet, in this way turning the valley into a complete "white house" by adding to the scenic beauty of Kashmir which fascinates the people a lot.

The native people embrace it by recalling the past customs in winter. "like wearing winter costumes and all that" and then try to repeat them to exhibit their affection with ancestors and their traditional life. That is its another prettiest thing attracting the people who eagerly wait for winter and enjoy the first snow fall with utmost happiness.

Winter the feeding season to the glaciers "which are otherwise melting with a very high rate in summer due to global warming" reserve the water resources at upper reaches in Kashmir which are important in the way that they in turn feed hundreds of irrigating canals in summer necessary for indigenous flora. Besides that snow covered glaciers attract more tourists in summer season.

Though the onset of winter in Kashmir leads to very cold climatic conditions of chilly period of colder months locally known as Chillai-Kalan, but the locals have adopted themselves in such a way that they face the cold wave of Chillai-Kalan very happily, with ease, by making arrangements for it prior to its onset. Like preparation of charcoal for Kangries, "the fireports used for warmth in winter", preparation of sun-dried vegetables in villages to use them in winter when the people face non-availability of fresh vegetables, people who live near upper reaches make fire wood reserve, to use it in winter for heating and cooking purposes, people also keep a good stock of warm clothes ready for winter etc, to face its challenge with out any difficulty.

However, from a couple of past years climatic change has resulted with extremely cold winters with heavy and more snowfalls as compared to the years before. This year the winter played a good inning like never before, altogether very different from previous years, winter has this time shown the sharpest side of its teeth. Usually winter makes its way to Kashmir in the mid-December when people are supposed to have all prepared themselves to face its challenge in terms of their arrangements for it. But this time it came all of sudden, and brought an unprecedented first snowfall in November 5, that too a heavy one, which left the people unprepared like it happened last year. That snowfall was too heavy to cheer up



the people of Kashmir, because the majority of people who belong to horticulture sector were badly affected. The untimely snowfall caused a huge damage to the apple orchards. Some people were still harvesting the fruits, suddenly this natural calamity occurred. Instead of enjoying it, most of the people got distressed by the damage it caused.

Even the trees of those orchards where fruit harvesting had been completed, also were yet unpruned and were yet to shed off their leaves, due to which huge load of snow accumulated on those trees resulting with, either partial or complete damage to them.

Like its beginning, winter continued to remain as such, throughout its length, by bringing several consecutive heavy snowfalls one after other like first one leaving the gaps of not more than three to four days in between. This was out of the expectations of people, who were not in a position to prepare for it before or in between. Along with them the snowfalls brought a severe cold wave which gripped the people the way perhaps not experienced before as the temperature dropped to its lowest. Everything froze and made the valley a complete frigid zone.

The snowbound roads got blocked, the taps froze, the power supply disrupted many times and created a situation of inaccessibility of rural areas, drinking water crisis and power supply crisis respectively in the valley for weeks together. Besides causing complications of various respiratory diseases like common cold etc. The patients in villages with critical conditions in referral cases faced various difficulties to reach district hospitals due to uncleared roads during snowing days.

People couldn't roam around, and were stuck to indoors to avoid biting cold. The children in Kashmir fond of games who every year enjoy winter vacations by playing various outdoor games in winter mostly cricket, couldn't get a single chance to play due to continuous wetness of ground by frequent precipitations.

However those who managed to leave valley to spend migratory life, over the months of winter, outside valley to get rid of chill landed in the safer zone. Pertinently a good percentage of population in valley, who are well off spent winter outside to escape the harsh chill of winter.

During all those difficult times of this year's harsh winter, the much essential service of power supply which works as a life line especially during winters, because lighting and heating are essential, remained almost disrupted due to often damages in transmission lines. Whenever restored also played hide and seek there by made the people suffer more. In those boredom days internet would have proven boredom reliever was also completely shut.

In the backdrop of this year's winter, authorities and the native people have to introspect their mistakes and need to rectify the previous mistakes in future in terms of necessary arrangements like round the clock power supply and water supply, availability of road clearance machines, availability of emergency medical facilities in rural areas, the necessary arrangements by common people etc. Besides all that those people who belong to horticulture sector should be compensated to some extent for the damage caused to their orchards by snow.

## Why the Controversy Around Faiz's 'Hum Dekhenge' Is So Fatuous

Part of the poem uses traditional Islamic imagery, but it is used to attack Zia's dictatorship and restore democracy, not for establishing orthodox Islam.

MARKANDEY KATJU

**T**he Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur has set up a panel to consider whether the poem 'Hum Dekhenge' by the famous Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz is "anti-Hindu". This followed the recitation of the poem by students on December 17, 2019 on the IIT Kanpur campus during their gathering in support of the students of Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi who were assaulted by the police during their anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act agitation.

I need not go into the inanity of such a step by the IIT authorities, who seem to have no understanding of Urdu poetry or of this particular poem. However, I am taking this opportunity to say something about Urdu poetry and Faiz.

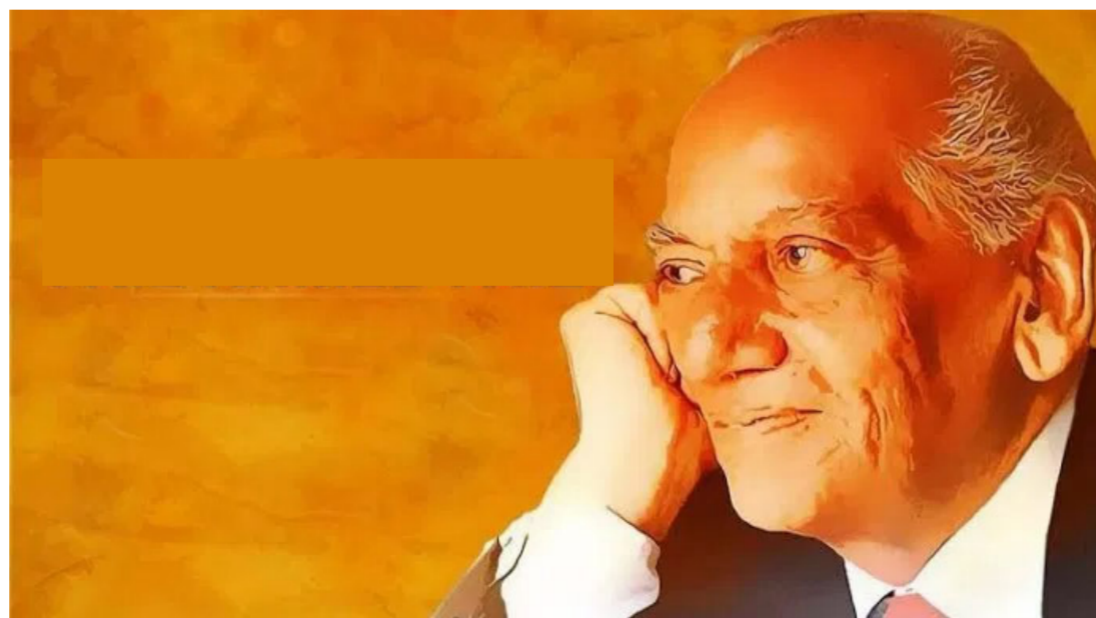
Every language has its poetic tradition but in my opinion, Urdu poetry expresses the voice of the human heart in an especially powerful yet elegant manner (andaaz-e-bayaan).

I regard Mirza Ghalib as the greatest Urdu poet of all times, and Faiz the greatest Urdu poet of the 20th century. I saw Faiz only once when he visited my home town, Allahabad, in 1981 and was honoured at a massive function on the Allahabad University lawns.

Now before coming to Faiz's 'Hum Dekhenge', which has sparked off a fatuous controversy, I would like to say something about Urdu poetry.

Urdu poets often express their thoughts not in direct language but indirectly, by hints and allusions. Urdu ashaar (couplets) often have a literal, superficial meaning, but also a deeper, real meaning which is conveyed by indication, insinuation, suggestion and metaphor. It is this deeper, real meaning which the poet is seeking to convey, but to understand it one has to ponder deeply. This is particularly done by poets in times when it may be dangerous to talk directly, such as during martial law (when this poem was written).

Take for instance Faiz's famous sher:  
**Gulon mein rang bhare  
baad-e-naubaahar chale**



**Chale bhi ao ki  
Gulshan ka kaarobaar chale.**

Now the literal meaning of this verse is:

*Among the flowers, a coloured breeze of the new spring is blowing  
Come, so that the work of the garden can be done.*

But that is only the ostensible, superficial meaning. The word 'gulshan' literally means garden, but here it means the country. So the real meaning of the sher which the poet is conveying is this:

The objective conditions in the country are ripe, Come forward patriots, the country needs you (for a revolution).

Similarly, when we read Urdu poetry, we must

sometimes wrack our brains and try to understand what it is really that the poet is seeking to convey.

Coming now to Faiz's poem 'Hum Dekhenge', one must remember it was written during General Zia-ul-Haq's oppressive martial law regime, when it was dangerous to talk too directly. So part of the poem uses traditional Islamic imagery, but it is used to attack Zia's dictatorship and restore democracy, not for establishing orthodox Islam. The poem was sung by Iqbal Bano, deliberately wearing a sari (regarded by some as an Indian and unIslamic dress for Pakistani women), despite a ban on the public recitation of Faiz's poems at that time.

The lines of the poem which an "expert panel" of IIT Kanpur is now investigating for being "anti-Hindu" are:

**Jab arz-e-khuda ke kaabe se**

**sab but uthwaaye jaayenge  
Hum ahl-e-safa mardoode-e-haram masnad par bait-haye jaayenge.**

Which means:

*When from the abode of God (Kaaba) all idols will be removed  
Then we the faithful, who were debarred from sacred places  
Will be placed on the royal seat.*

It is alleged that these lines are anti-Hindu as Hindus worship idols, and these lines are clearly against idol worship. But this is only a superficial understanding. Faiz was a lifelong communist, and he could hardly have meant that he wanted Islamisation of society. In fact, it was his antagonist General Zia who wanted this.

To understand these lines, we must see the context, and also see the lines preceding and succeeding these lines.

Before these lines, the verses in the poem are:

**Jab zulm-e-sitam ke koh-e-giraan,  
rui ke tarah udh jaayenge  
Hum mehkoomon ke paanon tale,  
yeh dharti dhad dhad dhadkegi.**

And the succeeding lines are:

**Sab taaj uchaale jaayenge,  
Sab takht giraaye jaayenge.**

It is obvious from this that there is nothing "anti-Hindu" in this poem, and it is nothing but stupidity to regard it so. It is a poem powerfully attacking the oppressors of the people, and expressing a conviction that one day the oppressed will become the rulers of their own destiny.

The administration of IIT Kanpur, which is otherwise a reputed institution, have made themselves a laughing stock before the whole country.