



**'Life is feelings, life is love, life is pain too':
A Progressive Reimagination of Lyrical Modernity
in the Select Non-Film Works of Sahir Ludhianvi**

Soumyadip Ghosh, PhD

Assistant Professor

Department of English,

North Bengal St. Xavier's College, West Bengal, India.

Email: sdg92.slg@gmail.com

Abstract

Starting in the mid-1930s in India and essentially marked by its propensity to rebel against different agents of oppression, the Progressive Writers' Movement produced writings that were simultaneously humane and disdainful depending on the context. Influenced by Marxism, the literature offered by the movement was, thus, an interweaving of the despair of the oppressed and a critique of the oppressor(s). The movement found its strongest literary manifestation in poetry, and hence, Sahir Ludhianvi, an eminent practitioner of Progressive verses, appears as a voice that intensely presents the void of freedom and the vainness of partition in India. Besides expressing the art of protest, Sahir's lyrics are also an ardent romantic expression of anguish, resignation, and contempt. Sahir's poems are, therefore, a direct commentary on the bitterness of human relationships and an emptiness that pervades the relationships. Sahir presents the disturbed narration of modernity with a voice that is concurrently passionate and penetrative. Hence, the present paper is an attempt to explore the intrinsic ideals of Sahir's poems that remain a proclamation of the Progressive ideology and lyrical modernity.



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Abhi na jaao chhod kar ke dil abhi bhara nabin...

(Please do not leave now; my heart is not full yet... my trans.), Sahir Ludhianvi, *Hum Dono* (1961).

Introduction

The Progressive Writers' Movement, an insurgent development that pronounced its emergence with the publication of the controversial *Angaree* (Embers) (1932), a collection of short stories, sought to overturn the contemporary dominant discourses that, as the members of the movement believed, produced a pervasive despair among humanity in general due to their oppressive and hegemonic standards. The movement, led by Sajjad Zaheer, attempted to render expression to the transformations taking place in the then Indian life, while its chief objective was to rescue Indian literature, which, with its escapist propensity, was suffering from "a rigid formalism and a banal and perverse ideology" (as cited in Mir and Mir, 2006, p. 5). In its first manifesto of 1936 published in *Left Review*, the movement expressed its objective, in which the major drift was to change the aesthetics of existing Indian literature: "We believe that the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today-the problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjugation..." (p. 5) and Munshi Premchand, the writer of the Hindi literature, believed that "any more sleep can only be a precursor of death" (Zaheer, 2006, p. 65). The tone of the manifesto remained deeply modernist and anti-fascist while the movement found its best manifestation in the writings of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), an offshoot of the movement. Using simple language and quotidian subject matters, the writers of the PWA redefined art as a social praxis that produced a body of literature that was based on anti-imperialism, social realism, and dialectic materialism. Although the PWA had many representative literary artists across languages, its profound incarnation might be seen in the Urdu poetry that had already witnessed varied epistemic shifts in its own history. Therefore, the partisanship of poets such as Sibte Hasan, Ali Sardar Jafri, Israr-ul-Haq Majaz, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, to name a few, actually set the stage for the PWA to deal with issues, including anticolonial struggle, destitution and trauma due to the Second World War and partition, the Telengana mutiny, and the failure of the formation of a new nation. The PWA, thus, turned out to be the "strongest and proximate shaping force to the extent that it defined the parameters of the broad social agenda and cultural consensus among the generality of Urdu writers" (Ahmed, 1993, p. 28). Within this profuse tapestry, the emergence of Abdul Hayee, popularly known as Sahir Ludhianvi (1921-1980), marks a significant moment in the development of Urdu poetry. Estimating Sahir's contribution, Rakhshanda Jalil remarks, "Sahir's poetry has proved to be the most popular, longer lasting, and with greater recall-value than his comrades'; it is still sung, broadcast, and remembered by more Indians than any of the other Urdu heavy-weights" (Jalil, 2014, p. 297).

Although heavily influenced by the works of Muhammad Iqbal, Firaq Gorakhpuri, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Majaz Lakhnavi, Sahir's initial poetry never engaged with the staunch Progressive ideals, but it was more indicative of an anguish of unrequited romance, leading to despondency, despair, and disillusionment. Akshay Manwani remarked, "Poetry became a matter of cathartic release for him" (Manwani, 2013, p. 15). Although the initial poetry of Sahir might smack of the linguistic dexterity of Faiz and Majaz, Sahir could not remain blind to the pressing issues of the time, and his scruples, woven by the vulnerable human conditions, in fact, led him to come up with a firebrand of poetry, which was distinctive and bore the strong testimony of

the declared Progressive agenda. Carrying a similar thought to B. R. Chopra, who found that contemporary film producers “were wasting their time with comedies and mythologies, dancing and songs, thus avoiding dealing with any serious social issues” (Dwyer, 2002, p. 29), the fleeting romantic temperament in Sahir’s poems was eventually replaced by a bold and caustic voice, which questioned and critiqued the society, nation-state, and capitalism, expressing an alternative worldview he envisaged through his Marxist leanings. The plight of the plebeians stimulated the humanist Sahir to be a voice for his people to withstand the tenacity that brought despair. The vision of a utopian state through communism remained a recurrent motif in Sahir as well as in other poets belonging to the Progressive Writers’ Association. In one of his poems, Sahir openly expressed his fascination for the ideology when he wrote, “Those factories in which this unjust government takes pride / From there shall arise the soldiers of tomorrow / Red flags sprout across the milieu” (as cited in Manwani, 2013, p. 52), but Sahir was never rigid about the vortex of communism and literature of the Progressive, as he proclaimed, “I do not believe that without being a communist it is not possible to produce Progressive literature. If any poet details today’s circumstances with honesty, there is nothing that can stop him from writing Progressive literature” (Manwani, 2013, p. 52). Therefore, beginning with *Talkhiyaan* (Bitterness) in 1944, a fusion of romantic, insurgent, and emotional poems narrated in colloquial language, Sahir’s poetry, especially his nazms, scathingly critiqued any form of venal structures, including capitalism, bourgeois nationalism, mercenary imperialism, political persecution, religious imposture, and even enraptured paramours that remained inimical to humanity in general. Unlike preceding or contemporary lyrics, many of Sahir’s nazms, which were “modern revolutionary poetry in Urdu” (Zaheer, 1956/2006, p. 251), present love not as a romantic motif but articulate its pitfalls that galvanised his readers but his unrestrained poetic voice always showed different emotions involved in a romantic relationship, some of which were unmistakably his own. Ali Sardar Jafri points out, “Sahir deploys a lover’s arrogance, egotism, and self-indulgence that was last seen in Ghalib’s poetry” (as cited in Deol, 2019, p. xxviii).

Romanticism and Collective Despair

The romantic temperament of traditional Urdu lyrics, especially as may be found in Ghazals, undergoes a radical change in Sahir’s poetic oeuvre, in which the voice of the lovelorn poet-speaker is not confined only to the limits of subjective experiences. In all his poems, the voice of the speaker, representing Sahir’s own temperament, succinctly politicises and thereby transforms the romantic agony and existential despair into a poetic labyrinth where personal anguish and collective social maladies are most realistically juxtaposed. As a result, many of his poems become a regenerative space of personal despondency, abrasion of irrevocable loss, precarity caused by historical materialism, and deflection of subjective anguish to a rebellious collective consciousness. The debasement of the poet-speaker into an abyss of ontological despondency promulgates Sahir to postulate that the romantic desire must be objectively negotiated and, if needed, be discarded to survive against the irreducible aspects of life. His nazm, beginning with “The struggle and strains of life...,” presents the collapse of the speaker into a vast existential despair that further portrays how the volitional anguish changes him into a stoic nihilist, who says, “From today, I will complain against none” (Salil, 2016, p. 31). Although Sahir writes that the speaker’s struggle will move him towards self-reliance, the remnant of romance, albeit morbid, makes the speaker succumb to a tragic attachment, wherein the speaker’s derelicted state will be endorsed by the beloved’s glance: “If ever we meet again ... I will like to know my

condition from your looks askance” (p. 31). This crisis is also evident in “Escapist,” which is Sahir’s self-loathing recount of a deflating story filled with imagination and futile aspirations. The poem’s seeming romantic trope presented through the building of “castles in the air” (p. 97) at once becomes the poet’s anguished moaning as he says, “And a nameless misery is what I got / By way of reward for my efforts and hope” (p. 97). The contemptuous voice of Sahir, expressed with perturbing questions, can be heard when he describes his beloved’s eyes as smashed, proclaiming, “Let me say that I never loved her” (p. 99). While the title of the poem refers to the poet’s wish to avoid the failed past and the lady in question remains his aggrieved subject, Sahir’s uncompromised character is distinctive when he says, “Let me say that I can live jolly well without her / I may be a failure in love but not a failure in life really” (p. 99). Sahir’s “Sometime,” later adopted in Yash Chopra’s *Kabhi Kabhi* (Sometime) (1976), is a contemplation on life without the burden of the reality of romance. The initial ardent language, presented in phrases such as “cool shade of your tresses” (p. 51) and “realms of your beauty” (p. 51), gradually becomes a melancholic articulation of a nihilistic life created by the absence of the beloved: “My life is passing through empty spaces / And in these spaces one day I will sink” (p. 55). In his poetry, Sahir also tries to seek relief from an overarching emptiness that surrounds him. “I feel” articulates his attempt to find emotional liberation by completely rejecting the notion of longing. Dealing with the paradoxical nature of love, which is both a source of happiness and a futile fixation, Sahir repulsively presents love with its crude imperatives. However, Sahir’s arduous self-mastery can also be contrasted with his escapist tenacity for seeking a momentary solace from the ravages of time “in the goblet and the bottle” (p. 33).

Personal Defeatism and Transient Intimacy

With his staunch Progressive ideology, Sahir also presents the issue of the destructive impact of choral rift and social suppression that turns human relationships not just into a site of fleeting grief but also a prolonged moment of predestined catastrophe. His nazm “Shadows,” an invocation to romantic idealisation written during the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956, offers a carnal engagement with an image of celestial light: “That milky spread over the bosom of the night so young” (Salil, 2016, p. 35), personifies trees as an onlooker of the lovers’ affair, depicts romantic love as sensitive and precious, describes the coyness of the beloved as her magnetic attractive power, and portrays the culmination of the relationship through a romantic yielding. However, the penetrating limitation shown in the refrain, “The shadows of imagination well up” (p. 39), strips all such passion and defines everything as a depressive illusion contrived by scopophobia, “Fearful of the sounds of your own footsteps” (p. 39). This psychological impediment finds another manifestation in a depressing poem, “Defeat,” where the speaker, emotionally ruined by separation, refutes any regretful return as he says, “I have in every manner ruined my heart” (p. 45). Pervaded by despair, the speaker resists any revived love or “repentant beauty” (p. 47). Carrying off the flair its title offers, the monologue shows the lover’s resistance as a careful strategy to preserve his dilapidated self from being further emotionally exploited anymore: “Now your cheeks and silken tresses / Cannot lift my sad, sad heart” (p. 47). The personal despair resulting from a forbidden romantic relationship constructs the thrust of the nazm, “Somebody else’s wealth.” For the speaker, their bonding has now become an agonised tale, making his survival an insufferable impediment, while his beloved is compared to a flower, which is “meant to deck somebody else’s apparel” (p. 81). The contrapuntal description of the beloved by the speaker as a disloyal yet an epitome of abnegation, her presence as a dream, the speaker’s

inability to decide about the continuation of their relationship, the trace of the residual passion in comparing her cheeks with flowers, and the speaker's innate desire to take her in his arms on a chilled night suddenly change the mood of Sahir, who apprehends the transformation of the reality into a fantasy. Like a modernist poet, Sahir is here uncertain about the future of their bonding and skeptical about his own destiny: "... the lovely message from your lovely eyes / Should become a messenger of my death" (p. 81). The romantic temperament, however, does not diminish as he finally surrenders his fate to his beloved, being unaware of whether his "today will see its tomorrow or not" (p. 81). Sahir's "Your voice," ringing with Pablo Neruda's romantic sonnets, presents the extenuating power of the beloved's voice. The memory of her voice breaks the speaker's loneliness, but the poem ends on a note of defiance. Her voice, cosmically as well as romantically idealised, appears to the speaker "like a spring gushing out of a rock" (p. 69) and drives out his "unbearable loneliness" (p. 71). The idealisation of the beloved is manifested when Sahir calls her voice 'intoxicating' (p. 71) with "simple silent eyes," "winsome gait," and "delicate physical frame" (p. 73). The longing for an imaginative intimacy is distinctive: "Your breath kissed my body as it passed" (p. 73). However, the imagination is transitory, as the compulsive reality compels Sahir to assert, "I will not look forward to meeting you" (p. 73) and with his confidence in his enduring artistic capability, he concludes with a wistful longing: "And my soul which is ever yearning for you / Will become a song on your lips" (p. 73). If the motif of ephemerality is shown in the imagination in "Your voice," it finds a different silhouette in "A Poet of the Moment," where Sahir remorselessly admits, "I too am a story of the moment" (Deol, 2019, p. 29), accepting that the emergence of new poetry, new wave, and new dreams is ineluctable. Therefore, he remains obliged to the beloved for listening to him in that particular moment. Sahir does not swither to show the reality, however bitter it is, and this finds an outlet in "A Beautiful Turn," which describes an onerous moment of transformation from lovers to strangers because Sahir believes, "If a relationship becomes a burden, / it is better to break it" (p. 43).

Progressive Consciousness

Having a remarkable command over language and different forms of Urdu poetics, such as ghazal and nazm, Sahir Ludhianvi, a trained Urdu poet, also grasps Hindi with equal persistence for his Bollywood lyrics. Javed Akhtar contends, "As an Urdu poet, Sahir had developed such a fine sense of phonetics that when he wrote in Hindi, he applied the same sensitivity" (Kabir, 1999, p. 128). Yet the same Sahir purposefully disrupts the romantic spectrum in many of his poems to include different contemporary social concerns. These concerns, ranging from hierarchy to historical materialism, strengthen his poetic corpus and offer him the space to express the art of protest, a strong Progressive agenda. This is perfectly evident in his poem "Madam," which is an outlet of Sahir's anguish over class humiliation and his abomination of the corrosive impact of poverty on human dignity. As an interlocutor, Sahir mostly presents different situations, ranging from failed love to inexorable critique of bourgeoisie culture, in his poetry, and Hafeez Ludhianvi comments that Sahir's poems "are written in response to some personal tragedy or romantic liaison" (as cited in Deol, 2019, p. 134). In this context, it must be noted that Sahir never had dreamy childhood days because of the depraved nature of his father, Chaudhri Fazi Mohammed, and due to this, Sahir was brought up single-handedly by his mother, Sardar Begum, with whom Sahir had shared perhaps his most precious relationship. Khushwant Singh describes, "Sahir developed a strong mother-fixation and loathing for his father: the

relationship was an example of the Greek Oedipus complex, which made him incapable of consummating the few love affairs he had in the short life of 59 years” (Singh, 2004, para. 5). Nevertheless, Sahir had developed a few fleeting romantic relationships and he possibly had shared the most profound and intimate liaison with the Punjabi poet, Amrita Pritam. A forever bachelor that he was, the relationship between Sahir and Amrita was mostly defined by silence, as after her divorce from her husband, Pritam Singh, Amrita started living with Imroz. Recounting Amrita’s feelings for Sahir, Uma Trilok says, “... there was one kind of love like that of the sky, and there was another, which was like a roof over one’s head. Sahir Ludhianvi was ‘like the sky’ for her” (Trilok, 2006, p. 18). In fact, Sahir’s “Madam” had been “triggered by a casual remark by Amrita Pritam about the shabbiness of Sahir’s friends in Lahore” (Deol, 2019, p. 84). The way the poem’s speaker loathes the beloved’s imputation of him for being discourteous and the propelling of dialectical materialism through the determination of consciousness by the class truly places Sahir in the parlance of Progressive literature. The following lines not only show Sahir’s communist leanings but also present him more as a voice for humanity: “Poverty indeed wipes out all delicate feelings / And a hungry person no manners knows” (Salil, 2016, p. 41).

Romance and Progressive Ethos

The artistic genius of Sahir Ludhianvi also lies in his unique treatment of romance that is not always about the sheer aestheticisation of the beloved as usually seen in the Urdu tradition of ghazals and nazms. Instead, Sahir never hesitates to address its pitfalls if those are detrimental to humanity at large. For instance, in “Masterpiece,” he simply requests the painter to deflate the overdose of glamour and beauty of the beloved lying in a painting because he believes that the portrait must reflect the reality of suffering, too. His instructions, “Make the juicy lips dry and withered” (Salil, 2016, p. 49) and “Make the swelling breasts sinking low” (p. 49), concurrently show his desire to make art an expression of reality and to lampoon a materialist woman who would love a possession like car over the poet. While the treatment of the beloved with utter approbation remains a hallmark of traditional Urdu poetry, Sahir swerves from it, insistently imploring the beloved: “If you have the courage, pick up the flag of rebellion. / Otherwise, get married to whoever your parents / choose for you” (Deol, 2019, p. 31). Sahir also occasionally seems to be critical of social institutions like marriage. His anguish pervades the nazm, “Setting up home,” in which he presents marriage as a metaphor of betrayal: “Love weeps and culture smiles ... This marriage will destroy a house, my brother dear / So I cannot congratulate...” (Salil, 2016, p. 85). Another Progressive quality of Sahir can also be noticed when he realises that the righteousness of emotional space is compromised by the economic constraint. He dolefully says, “The songs of love that I wrote for you / Today I have brought them for sale in the marketplace” (p. 87). His aversion towards capitalism is easily seen when he admits that, compelled by impoverishment, he transforms his poems into mere products where his personal words for the beloved will be reserved for others. The humanist image of Sahir emerges when he rejects the personal romantic failure for the sake of the collective suffering of the world: “See the multitudes dying under tyranny / Let me not hear the litany of your defeated desires” (p. 63). Sahir’s humanist impulse can also be found in his anti-war poems, where war is treated as the destroyer of social fabric, shatterer of romantic dreams, and inimical to human dignity as it peddles the lovers’ intimacy, a mother’s affection, and a sister’s youth. His “O Civil Humans,” written against the backdrop of the Tashkent treaty of 1970, looks at war as the generator of fire,

blood, hunger, and poverty. Unlike Faiz's rueful admonition, Sahir's critique of the nation is much contemptuous, as evident in "26th January": "If the wealth of the nation has increased, why this growing poverty?" (Mir and Mir, 2006, p. 163).

Critiquing Disillusionment

Sahir's preference to express a diatribe of the social exploitations over a self-indulgent lamentation of romance indeed underscores his fidelity to social realism, which has been a hallmark of Progressive literature. His pangs of agony are also presented in "On the same crossroads," which initially states that the speaker has forsaken entering the mansions, symbols of material wealth, and writing romantic songs as his failed love makes him disconcerted. Sahir's artistic brilliance cannot be overlooked when he connects "the crossroads of riches and poverty" (p. 103) with the beloved's repeated unfaithfulness in a capitalist setting. The image of crossroads, precisely a mentalscape, presents romance as an ill-fated victim. Moreover, the beloved's striking a balance with insatiability also makes the poet despair in "A picture of colours," where her passionate love is finally incarcerated, and her "delicate wings" (p. 105) are laden with wealth. The speaker, thus, becomes acrid when he realises that the beloved's covetousness overshadows her conscience and thereby her smile becomes feigned, devoid of any passion. Sahir's portrayal of romance never undermines the dignity of his speaker. While the speaker's indulgence in alcohol is an attempt to set aside the trauma he experiences in love, the tribulation in love has completely disillusioned him, eradicating any further desire: "My tragedy in love was so heartbreaking / That after that, I had no desire for anything" (p. 149). The self-reflective character of the speaker can also be seen in "An Incident," where he deserts the past to respond to the future, which "with its moving hands" (Deol, 2016, p. 59) calls him endlessly. Some of Sahir's poems are also an expression of an acute sense of vulnerability and melancholia that even repudiates the speaker's capacity to love. Feeling a perennial abandonment, the speaker in "Helplessness" expresses his inability to smile or sing a song anymore. Written in a mode of confessional poetry, the poem's speaker, torn between a romantic desire and its immediate abnegation, finds his defeated predicament "in the darkness of despair" (Salil, 2019, p. 113). Hence, the poem's speaker, like Sahir, remains open to "a universal, inevitable, enduring aspect of the human condition that must be at the heart of our concept of social and state responsibility" (Fineman, 2008, p. 9).

Autobiographical Strain and Collective Vulnerability

It can be said that Sahir's poems bear an autobiographical stamp, as the moments faced by the poet-speaker are the moments Sahir faced in his real life. For instance, the speaker in "Before the suicide," akin to his creator, thinks about suicide as a possible escape from the harsh reality, "I will break away from daily death-in-life" (Salil, 2019, p. 119). The poem's underlying romantic note is a rumination on life and death that smacks of Pablo Neruda's enumeration of death coming to a moribund in "Nothing but Death": "Death arrives among all that sound ... / Nevertheless its steps can be heard / and its clothing makes a hushed sound, like a tree" (as cited in Hirsch, 1999, p. 37). However, Sahir's commitment to social realism never allows him to be carried away from his Progressive stance, and hence, a moment of personal romantic defeatism is straightway connected to a collective misery as he says, "Nobody knows when the fortunes of oppressed humanity will change" (Salil, 2016, p. 119). Ganesh Anantharaman notes, "Sahir's poetry was unvarnished, hitting you straight with its cynicism. He never believed in sublimating his emotions or in pleasing the powers that be ... He may have been cynical of politics, but Sahir

never lost faith in the collective power of people” (Anantharaman, 2008, p. 114). As an autobiographical poem, Sahir’s “Failure” represents the failure of his personal life, especially when he had to move to Lahore from Ludhiana. Engrossed in a web that leads him from one fiasco to another, Sahir lugubriously postulates, “I am a failure / and my effort to do anything good / is also a failure” (Deol 2019, p. 66). The note of fatalism and desolation also marks “On seeing somebody sad,” a narration of the journey of love from personal desire to steadfast suffering, where the speaker has to bear the beloved’s coldness. However, the speaker’s finding of paradoxical pleasure in this grief takes the poem to a different realm. Considering the beloved as his only hope, he accepts the separation with a promise to keep her in his imagination. The speaker’s assertion that he will remove happiness from his heart and that he cannot see her misery is again counterpoised by his empathy for the common people suffering in poverty and his awareness of capitalist despotism, a Progressive writer’s propensity already mastered by Faiz: “The iron into shape in the factories everywhere / Burying the joys of millions underneath its noise” (Salil, 2016, p. 179). Sahir’s aversion to bourgeois culture and majestic opulence is also evident in “My songs,” which defines Sahir’s idea of love as protest and not as embellished aesthetics. Although he is not belligerent to art, as he is a poet, he cannot compromise with the rapaciousness that brings human precarity, making Sahir assert: “I do not trust my own love too” (p. 151). This idea is further advanced with Sahir’s nazm, “I have said good-bye to love,” the title of which generates a profound stoicism and romantic exhaustion. Experiencing futile hopes and enduring torments caused by personal anguish stemming from romantic failure, the speaker embraces the suicide pill - a site of gnawing despondency. Sahir’s poetry also occasionally portrays a dimming note of dejection emanating from the impossibility of the arrival of love. The sombre setting of “Wait” that presents the “world wrapped in slumber” (p. 185) shows the fidgetiness of the speaker in asking the beloved to come to him before his “love is no longer young” (p. 185). The wretched longing shows that the appeal involves less vehemence and more an intimate moment of togetherness before life comes to an end: “Sleep at least tonight” (p. 187).

Conclusion

Unrestrained by the classical norms of Urdu poetry, Sahir’s poetry, especially his nazms, exhibits a clear juxtaposition of candid vocabulary and visionary ideals. His genius possibly lies in articulating a discerning idea in simple terms, such as in a nazm titled “My songs belong to you,” he says, “I don’t mind if people don’t consider me as an artist from today / Those who trade in poetry, do not accept me as a poet” (Salil, 2016, p. 183). However, what distinguishes Sahir as an ideal Progressive is “Taj Mahal,” which is not an ode to love but a poetic statement on oppressive social exploitation. Here, Sahir’s censure for the extravaganza of an emperor, who “...on the strength of his wealth and riches / Has made fun of the poor lovers like us” (p. 29) establishes his solicitude for the poor workers who were instrumental behind the architect but were never valued or perhaps strategically removed from having any recognition. With an emotional detachment, here the poet asserts the ubiquity of the primal emotion of love against the backdrop of the Taj Mahal, pronouncing social contradictions. Hence, he asks the beloved to meet somewhere else. Sahir Ludhianvi’s poems are, thus, a powerful critique of capitalism, decadent ideals of religion and artistry, elite nationalism, mercenary colonialism, and inebriated romance that gives us “reservoirs of capabilities, advantages, or coping mechanisms that cushion us when we are facing misfortunes, disaster and violence...” (Fineman, 2013, p. 22). He

deliberately chooses his poetry to be a manifesto that would be vehemently powerful, rebelliously scornful, and enormously humane. Sahir's poetry undoubtedly confirms that "poetic creation is one of the forms of ideological creation" (Bukharin, n.d., para. 5). The connection between song and poetry is well noted by Christopher Claudwell: "... poetry is characteristically song, and song is characteristically something which, because of its rhythm, is sung in unison, and is capable of being the expression of a collective emotion" (Claudwell, 1955, p. 68) and Sahir marks no exception in it, as his works, both poetic and lyrical, serve to be the mouthpiece of the social conscience, articulating firm protest against the ruthless social structures. His poetry, thus, remains "... a reminder of art in shaping the world around us" (Sani, 2024, p. 22).

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