

# The Role of Urdu Poetry in India's Freedom Struggle: Contributions of Hasrat Mohani, Allama Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi, and Faiz Ahmad Faiz

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## Abstract

*In India's fight for independence, Urdu poetry—a ray of tenacity and resistance—was essential, reflecting the aspirations of the country as a whole. The contributions of a few Urdu poets whose poetry inspired revolutionary fervour and a sense of solidarity against colonial tyranny are examined in this essay. This research explores the intersection of literature and nationalism through the passionate poetry of Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the defiant poems of Allama Iqbal, the soul-stirring couplets of Josh Malihabadi, and the steadfast voice of Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Their poetry, which intertwined themes of sacrifice, defiance, and the goal of an independent India, was not only an artistic expression but also a forceful call to action. Through an analysis of significant poetic works, this study clarifies how their words became anthems of the struggle and left the literary domain. The study emphasises the lasting impact these poets had on the minds of a people longing for independence by placing their poetry within the sociopolitical context of colonial India. In the end, this study confirms Urdu poetry's longstanding record as a force for transformation, demonstrating the ability of words to influence history and motivate future generations.*

**Keywords:** Urdu Poetry, Indian Freedom Struggle, Hasrat Mohani, Allama Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Nationalism, Resistance Literature

## Introduction

Literature, especially Urdu poetry, became a powerful instrument of resistance during the Indian freedom movement, which was more than just a political campaign but a cultural revolution. Deeply entwined with popular sentiment, the lyrical tradition evolved into a vehicle for protesting colonial authority. People were inspired to imagine and fight for an independent India by the revolutionary fervour that Hasrat Mohani, Allama Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi, and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, among others, injected into their verses.

These four poets' contributions are examined in this essay, which also analyses their poetry in light of resistance, nationalism, and sociopolitical upheaval. It examines how their poetry inspired the masses, stoked the fight for independence, and made a lasting impression on India's literary and historical landscape.

This paper examines the contributions of these four poets, analyzing their poetry in the context of nationalism, resistance, and sociopolitical upheaval. It explores the manner in which their poetry mobilized the masses, fueled the freedom movement, and left an indelible mark on the historical and literary landscape of India.

### Research Gap

While extensive research exists on individual poets and their contributions to Urdu literature, there remains a gap in studies that collectively analyze the impact of Hasrat Mohani, Allama Iqbal, Josh Malihabadi, and Faiz Ahmad Faiz within the framework of the Indian independence movement. This paper seeks to fill this void by providing a comparative analysis of their works, highlighting common themes and their collective influence on the national consciousness.

### Review of Literature

Several scholars have examined the impact of Urdu poetry on India's nationalistic movements. Ralph Russell's *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* discusses the broader tradition of Urdu poetry, while Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* delves into the linguistic and socio-political dimensions of Urdu literary expression. Works by Gopi Chand Narang and Frances Pritchett provide insightful analyses of individual poets like Iqbal and Faiz. However, a comprehensive examination of the poetic contributions of these four authors in the context of the freedom struggle remains scarce, making this study a valuable contribution to existing literature.

### Methodology

This research employs a qualitative and analytical approach, drawing from primary sources, including original poetry collections and historical documents, as well as secondary sources such as critical essays and literary analyses. By examining selected poetic compositions, this study contextualizes the poets' works within the larger framework of the freedom movement. Comparative literary analysis is used to explore the thematic intersections among the poets, and historical interpretation is employed to understand the real-world implications of their poetry.

### Hasrat Mohani: The Revolutionary Idealist

In India's fight for independence, Urdu poetry was essential because it was a potent tool for igniting patriotism, inspiring resistance, and bringing people together against British colonial control. Poets utilised their verses to convey the hopes of an oppressed nation, demanding justice, equality, and self-rule, from the early 19th century until the country's independence in 1947. Urdu poetry was a vital component of the independence movement since it not only documented the suffering of colonial subjugation but also encouraged the masses to envision a free India through ghazals, nazms, and marsiyas.

The Indian freedom movement was characterised by the active involvement of writers and poets who inspired resistance to British colonial rule through their literature. A special place is occupied by Maulana Hasrat Mohani (1875–1951) among these revolutionary poets. In addition to being an ardent independence fighter, he was a renowned Urdu poet who combined nationalism and classical romanticism. His writings and efforts to the independence fight are still honoured today as evidence of his unwavering character.

Maulana Hasrat Mohani was a renowned academic, journalist, and politician who was born in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, as Syed Fazlul Hasan. His poetry, which spoke to the hopes of the Indian people, reflected his revolutionary views. Mohani was one of the first proponents of total independence (“Purna Swaraj”) from British control, in contrast to many of his peers. In support of an independent and sovereign India free from colonial oppression, he was a key figure in the Indian National Congress and later in the All India Muslim League.

In addition to his political activism, Hasrat Mohani’s poetry was instrumental in igniting a sense of patriotism. Although he is most known for his beautiful ghazals that extol beauty and love, his nationalist poetry also sparked public awareness. His verses showed his indignation against injustice and his aspiration of a liberated India. His well-known couplet, “Ghayr ke haath ka mehmaan na ho jo chaahe, Apni dastaar bhi apni hai, amaanat bhi apni,” expresses his unshakeable dedication to justice and truth.

In conclusion, Maulana Hasrat Mohani was not just a poet but a revolutionary who wove the ideals of freedom, justice, and nationalism into his verse and political actions. His poetry provided both solace and strength to those fighting against British imperialism, making him an unforgettable figure in the annals of India’s independence movement.

### **Allama Iqbal: The Visionary Poet of Awakening**

Poets and intellectuals who inspired the masses to rebel against British rule through their literary skills had a major impact on the Indian freedom movement. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) holds a special position among them. Iqbal was a philosopher, poet, and politician. His poetry was a potent force in igniting Indians’ political consciousness and encouraging a spirit of resistance. His ideas on justice, freedom, and self-identity were crucial in forming the independence movement’s intellectual rhetoric.

Although Iqbal is frequently linked to the idea of a separate Muslim state, his earlier works emphasised Hindu-Muslim unity and resistance against British imperialism. He actively participated in political discourse and was a member of the All India Muslim League, where he advocated for self-rule and the upliftment of the oppressed. Iqbal’s poetry was deeply nationalistic and aimed at uniting the diverse Indian populace against colonial rule. His famous patriotic poem “Sare Jahan Se Achha Hindustan Hamara” became an anthem of unity and love for the motherland, fostering nationalist sentiments across religious and cultural boundaries. His presidential address at the League’s session in 1930 laid the foundation for political thought that eventually led to the formation of Pakistan, but his poetry continued to resonate with broader anti-colonial struggles.

Even though Iqbal’s political views changed over time, his poetry continued to inspire freedom warriors. His teachings on fortitude, self-discovery, and resistance to persecution inspired individuals to fight against oppression and strive for a free country. His philosophical and literary works still influence the subcontinent’s intellectual climate.

### **Josh Malihabadi: The Fiery Voice of Revolution**

Poets played a crucial role in the Indian freedom movement because they used their words as a potent tool to encourage resistance and develop a sense of patriotism in the general populace. Josh Malihabadi (1898–1982), known as the “Shair-e-Inquilab” (Poet of Revolution), was one such notable poet. His poetry was filled with revolutionary fervour, flaming energy, and a strong dedication to the cause of independence. He boldly opposed British imperialism and exhorted people to rise up and resist oppression.

Josh Malihabadi was a master of Urdu poetry, especially in the forms of nazm and ghazal, and was born in Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh. He was a well-known writer of his century because

of his command of language and his ability to convey passion in his poetry. Josh's poetry was straightforward, audacious, and thought-provoking in contrast to poets who employed nuanced metaphors. His poetry inspired people to rebel against colonial enslavement and sparked a revolution. Josh's poetry was not confined to the realm of romanticism; it became a voice of defiance against tyranny. His famous couplet reflects his rebellious spirit:

“Uthaye ja unke sitam aur jiye ja, Yahi azmat hai zindagi ki, piye ja.”

*(Endure their tyranny and live on; this is the greatness of life, drink it all.)*

His fervent appeal for revolution in his poetry collection, which highlighted the necessity of escaping the bonds of British domination, is among his most significant works. He urged people to embrace unity, self-respect, and steadfast resolve. His poetry frequently struck a chord with the beliefs of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, reaffirming the need for sacrifice and struggle in order to achieve national freedom.

Despite facing censorship and persecution for his radical views, Josh remained steadfast in his commitment to truth and justice. He believed that a poet's duty extended beyond aesthetics—it was to awaken, inspire, and revolutionize thought. His couplet:

“Sach kehne ki aadat ne mujhe zalil kiya,

Jhooth kehne ke faayde hain, magar main kya karoon.”

*(My habit of speaking the truth has humiliated me; lies have benefits, but what can I do?)*

illustrates his unwavering commitment to honesty and social justice, even at great personal cost.

To sum up, Josh Malihabadi was more than just a poet; he was a champion of justice who utilised his poetry to oppose colonial authority and arouse nationalist feelings. His poetry served as a tool of resistance, a cry to action, and a ray of hope. He made a priceless contribution to the fight for independence, demonstrating the ability of words to spark revolutions and influence the path of history.

### **Faiz Ahmad Faiz: The Poet of Hope and Struggle**

Poets and thinkers who motivated Indians to fight against colonial oppression and stoked revolutionary fervour had a significant impact on the Indian freedom movement. One of the most significant Urdu poets of the 20th century among these authors is Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984). His poetry encapsulated the spirit of resistance, justice, and liberty, despite the fact that he rose to fame during the last years of British rule and after independence. His poetry struck a chord with the downtrodden, giving them courage and hope to oppose oppression and injustice.

Classical Persian and Urdu literature had a significant impact on Faiz, who was born in Sialkot, British India (now in Pakistan). He blended progressive concepts of social justice and political struggle with the conventional themes of beauty and love. Faiz's poetry, in contrast to that of many of his peers, was a potent indictment of tyranny as well as a work of love expression.

### **His Famous Couplet Reflects his Ability to Merge Aesthetics with Resistance**

“Bol, ke lab azad hain tere, Bol, zubaan ab tak teri hai.”

*(Speak, for your lips are free; speak, for your tongue is still your own.)*

This verse became an anthem of freedom, urging people to raise their voices against injustice and suppression. Faiz's poetry played a crucial role in shaping anti-colonial sentiments and later in post-independence struggles against dictatorship and inequality.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a part of progressive forces that aimed to overthrow colonial rule and establish a just society during the Indian liberation fight. He actively participated in the Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM), which promoted social change and revolution via literature. His writings, including *Dast-e-Saba* and *Naqsh-e-Faryadi*, captured the suffering of the downtrodden and the necessity of a mass rebellion against imperial control.

Faiz's poetry was heavily influenced by humanism and Marxist ideas. He saw poetry as a way to awaken society's conscience and believed in the power of the masses.

His lines:

“Hum dekhain ge, lazim hai ke hum bhi dekhenge, Woh din ke jiska wada hai, jo lauh-e-azl pe likha hai.”

*(We shall see, it is certain that we shall see, the day that has been promised, written in eternity.)*

became synonymous with movements for justice and equality, inspiring generations of revolutionaries and activist beyond the subcontinent.

To sum up, Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a visionary as well as a poet who inspired resistance to injustice via his creative prowess. His poetry is still relevant to anyone who want freedom and justice, demonstrating the ability of words to overthrow oppression and spark revolutions. His legacy is still a living example of how literature may influence social change and political consciousness.

### **Comparative Evaluation: Typical Topics and Differences**

Despite having different poetical approaches, these four poets have many things in common:

1. Nationalism and patriotism :Their poems evoked a sense of patriotism and a call to action.
2. Struggle and Sacrifice: Their poetry paid tribute to the costs incurred in the fight for freedom.
3. Defiance and Revolution: They publicly opposed colonial control by the British.
4. Philosophical and Social Awakening: Faiz's humanistic perspective and Iqbal's notion of Khudi gave their political statements more substance.

Iqbal's poetry tended towards philosophical awakening, while Hasrat Mohani and Josh Malihabadi had a more overtly revolutionary posture. Faiz's lines, on the other hand, had a mournful yet hopeful tone.

### **In Conclusion**

During India's freedom struggle, Urdu poetry was more than just a form of artistic expression; it was a force that inspired, motivated, and influenced history. The fight against British rule was fuelled by the radicalism of Hasrat Mohani, the idealistic nationalism of Iqbal, the fiery passion of Josh, and the tragic perseverance of Faiz. Their poetry, which is ingrained in the public consciousness, continues to serve as evidence of the timeless value of words in the struggle for liberty and justice.

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