CONCLUSION

Poetry is not just a world of escape as some might deem it to be. It is a key element in the progress of mankind. It is not only about pining over unrequited love or exploring the subconscious, but it also challenges the system and inspires a sense of rebellion. Poetry is one of the higher art forms: it requires a sense of discipline in composition; its profundity lies in it being a fountain of life and life experiences. Hence, it becomes instrumental in spearheading social change. Poetry, (especially in oriental culture) has stood on the side of ordinary people and has endeavoured to awaken people to their true identities (as human beings first) without being swayed by national, ethnic, religious and linguistic identities.

Urdu poetry (area of my research) has primarily been medieval in spirit rather than modern. It is a literature that is markedly aristocratic in its value. Another important aspect of Urdu poetry is that it is largely of oral tradition. It is composed to be spoken, and only afterwards to be written down and read. The cultural movement started by the progressive poets is a collective effort to change the passage of Urdu literature. The birth of such Avant-garde movement is inevitable as old values start becoming meaningless and new possibilities start to emerge.

It is with the advent of progressive poets that literary scene in Urdu language undergoes a complete transformation. The progressive writers change the hitherto romantic tendencies of Urdu poetry and make it a weapon of social realism. They also reject the idea of art for the sake of art. This is an influence derived from Russian social realism that emphasise that artists should rebel against the out-dated modes of society and they should work for political and economic freedom. The writers of the Progressive Movement in their writings often protest about different problems of the times. They believe that words have the power to portray the structure of social reality. This belief is in many ways inspired by the Russian revolution, Soviet communism and international marxism. It urges the need to respond critically to repression and the feeling of frustration.

Prior to the Mutiny of 1857, Urdu literature lacks an instructive function. However, led by this event many reform movements materialise which believe in socio-religious reforms that aim at reclaiming people’s ancient heritages. After 1857, literature is perceived as a medium of
writing that solves social and an aesthetic purpose. The content of new writing that emerge shifts its focus from being about the elite class to being about the masses.

Wherefore, the poetic gatherings (mushairas) serve the purpose of awakening the masses by spreading the message of justice and resistance that serves as the conscience of progressive thought. These gatherings in different times have provided the resource for political resistance against tyrannies in different parts of the world. The passion of most of the poets is fanned by the desire to use their pen as an instrument for transformation and social change. Their works are part of the quest for a world with a more humane face. It is with similar understanding that literature becomes a medium of not only self-expression but also a platform for social dialogue. In the hands of able artists like the select poets of our study, words decline to cower to the dictates of capital. Instead, literature starts to place the collective dignity, interests and aspirations of the people before narrow materialistic individual gains.

Progressive poetry has been voice of dissent all over the sub-continent. It has been spokesperson of anti-colonialism, racism, casteism, corruption, fundamentalism and other maladies that are making the country hollow. The progressive poets have always taken a principled stand, critiquing all the avatars of disillusionment from to ultra-nationalism to neo-colonialism with the trenchant weapon of their poetry. It is the popularity of the poets that makes their poems anthems of resistance. Despite the fact that in hey days of these poets, country faces appallingly low literacy rate, the poets still remain popular and become instrumental in disseminating the message of equality and justice.

Progressive poetry conveys a piercing sensation of beauty and depth. In this pursuit, traversing multiple discourses of religion, marxism and nationalism, it becomes a voice of the subaltern that entails postcolonial emancipation to the third world. It represents a profound attempt to un hitch literary production from the cultural projects of postcolonial state in order to make visible meanings that have still not been entirely reified and subsumed within the cultural logic of the nation-state system. Progressive poetry can be viewed in post-colonial perspective as “intellectual history of post-colonial theory is marked by dialectic between Marxism, on the one hand, and post structuralism/post modernism, on the other” (Gandhi viii). It addresses the issues
of imperialism, subalternity, gender and neo-colonialism in the colonial and postcolonial era. It has exposed various facets of marginalization (economic, social and psychological) prevalent in the society. One of the unique contributions of the Progressive Writers Movement to the Urdu literary tradition in the subcontinent is its evocation of social problems, an aspect of life that is rarely discussed otherwise in such a serious and grave manner in Urdu literature.

They believe that reality is the product of social actions and art cannot be divorced from class struggles. This is the same idea propagated by Karl Marx. Marx did not believe in alienated forms of literature, history and philosophy. In Marx’s view, alienated form is a form which does not account for the material conditions that shape the society. Therefore, the progressive writers follow Marx’s view when they depict the social realities in the societies around them, in their works. These intellectuals mainly drew idealistic picture of socialism and contrasted it with the existing poles of the rich and the poor in their country. Moreover, they analysed social relations in terms of marxist concepts-economic determinism and class struggle. On the other hand they discuss economic and political struggle and propose solutions to it. This shows the far reaching and long lasting impact that some writers of the progressive writers movement have had, due to the strength, authenticity and beauty of their writings even when they are publicly disgraced and even when their cause is declined.

Urdu poets have been and will continue to be felt in the heartbeat of the two nations: India and Pakistan. Despite the diminishing popularity of poetry in the global market (owing to lack of readership and dearth of time), one sees the importance of project like this as it tries to give an after-life to dead canon of poetry. Urdu progressive poetry is not simple protest poetry but is a defining cultural feature of our country. The influence of progressive poetry is so monumental on Urdu literature that most of the times Urdu poetry becomes synonymous to the pen of progressive poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ali Sardar Jafri, Sahir Ludhianvi and Kaifi Azmi.

Their poetry grapples with themes that are not taken seriously in Indian literature. These themes touch human lives as they speak of emotional realities and are not intended merely to entertain readers. The poems move and unsettle the readers, and cultivate their thought processes. These novelists and poets write not just to make personal gains but also to contribute to Indian
intellectualism and political activism. This is a significant departure from the Indian literary traditions of the 1930s when poets and writers did not care to write about caste discrimination, exploitation of the poor, superstitions, or callous administrations.

In the able hands of the select poets, poetry becomes a site of resistance which engages discourses that are beyond the narrow cultural concepts like religion and nationalism. The three select poets of our study have sympathies with the poor and downtrodden but are not one of them. They walk on the tightrope of ideology and good taste, art and propaganda, secularism and sectarianism. They use classical imagery for political themes, and evolve a trope of metaphors and symbols that make radical comments by making use of otherwise highly aristocratic repertoire of Urdu poetic tradition. The select poets treat the familiar discourses of nationalism and marxism in unfamiliar ways. Nationalism, malady of present times transgresses narrow and restrictive premise of borders, boundaries and language. The poets show a new insight into nationalism which extends to pave way for international solidarity and peaceful co-existence. Their poetry resounds with universal human suffering and become hymns for subaltern of the third world.

While tracing the trajectory of development of nationalism, we come across how language (used by a community of Muslims) can become the language of Islam and of Muslim identity in a specific time period and region. With the advent of modernity, Urdu, a language of North Indian origin, becomes laden with political, social, educational, economic and cultural meanings. It becomes a symbol of the Muslim political identity next only to Islam itself during the struggle for the creation of Pakistan out of British India. But for the progressive poets, language is a means, not an end; a stage, not the journeys end. Its purpose is to mould their thoughts and emotions and to give them the right direction. It brings to fore different types of oppression and discrimination (linguistic, regional, caste and religious) prevalent in India and other contemporary realities and enables us to see nationalism which is not a Western construct.

Urdu progressive poets can be seen as critics of nationalism as nationalism failed promise of liberty and equality for all. They are nationalist as they critique colonialism and give primacy to goals of freedom and emancipation of all. For them, time and history is important and there is no
room for metaphysics and transcendentalism. Even religion is used to create egalitarian and just nations. Their attitude towards nationalism is complex being Muslim poets. Ali Sardar Jafri’s translation of Hindu saints can also be a way of proving fidelity to India that was becoming intolerant and sectarian. Faiz’ silence over 1971 war when the Pakistani army and Islamist groups massacred Bangladeshi students and intellectuals, including revolutionaries and admirers of Faiz himself is perplexing and gives occasion to his critics of accusing him of becoming a nationalist.

Drawing on marxism, the poets attack the existing political, religious and economical institutions. They convey the message that man is the creator of his own destiny and is capable of utilizing nature for his own benefit. Their writings focus on self-respect of every individual and at the same time address the class antagonisms present in the Indian society. Their writings are inspired by social realism because it tries to present a real picture of society. As stated in their manifesto, they address basic problems existent in the Indian society like hunger, poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. These problems appear to be very important in the marxist analysis of social conditions, which tries to offer solutions to eliminate these problems from society. So, its main problem is the subjugation of farmers, women and particularly of the lower strata of society, including labourers. Despite being influenced by Russian marxism, progressive writers and thinkers offer their own version of Russian marxism as unlike Russia, they do not focus on only on the problems of labourers. They spearhead homespun marxism which is situated in Indian social realities and problems. Progressive writers are committed to the cause of peasants and proletariat but they have no idea about how these two classes actually live. These writers debate this issue passionately and propose that their place in this social ladder is determined by the capitalist social order and they urge everyone to defy their social order. Alongside their desire to engage with the struggles of the dispossessed within their own society, the progressive writers become conscious of the international context and international issues like racism, anti-fascism. These issues become a part of their political identity as anti-imperialism and social radicalism.

In wake of the growth of spirit of rebellion in the country, both colonists and neo-colonists try to reconstruct their hegemony by building up new national bourgeoisie which are
backed by religious fanatics, in order to reinvigorate sectarianism and nationalism to divide and rule. The progressive poets bring out the secular colour of the two countries in their works.

Urdu ghazal has been a very important trope in spreading the message of secularism as it boasts of a tradition in which importance of Islam recedes and a strong flavour of lampooning the ruler and the priest takes over. Urdu ghazal is therefore far less attuned to the problems of spiritualism or sufism or any form of religious philosophy as the Persian ghazal. Sufi undertones are easy to detect in the very notion of unbounded love for the sweetheart, or of gam itself, reminiscent of the fundamental sufî notion of fana (self-annihilation and immersion in the beloved, i.e., God). But these operative categories of Urdu poetry transcend their immediate context and become a plea for freedom and emancipation. The discourse of Sufism takes a new leaf in the hands of the progressive poets as the lover self annihilates himself in love for the country and not always God.

As far as the select poets of our study are concerned, they too show varied understanding of Islam. Despite all three being Muslims, they never show allegiance to normative aspect of the religion. Instead they liberate and secularise the other pan-islamic symbols like Hussain and Karbala. They extend all the religious metaphors and symbols to meet revolutionary content of their poetry. They show divergence in their treatment of religion as Faiz is an atheist, Jafri a believer in sufism and Kaifi Azmi a skeptic who radically juxtaposes the sacred and the profane. The common thread that unites their divergent disposition is the emancipatory and secular treatment of religion and religious symbols. They liberate prescriptive religious codes of Islam and infuse them with secular content.

Progressive poetry has not been spared of criticism. It has been criticised for being controlled by communist’s wherefore the association has been accused of being a threat to the harmony of India as it creates anarchy and lawlessness in the country. Sajjad Zaheer, one of the founders was one of the well-known communist leaders, but it is wrong to say that this association is dominated only by marxists as non-communist writers like Munshi Prem Chand, Maulana Hasrat Muhani, Maulvi Abdul Haqq, Sarojini Naidu, and Doctor Abid Hussain, are also among the prominent patrons of the association. Progressive literature about communalism has
been criticised of being a propaganda and not literature. Progressive writers like Krishan Chander, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas are labeled as communalists wherefore the whole movement comes under scanner of propagating communalism. What is of utmost significance in face of these petty charges is that, progressive writers have and still continue to instill courage and hope in the hearts of people. Progressive writers (even after the demise of the Movement) and their teachings are echoed in present times in form of not only strike by workers or students but also in the mass protests that take the country by storm as a reaction to the injustices meted out to innocent people. The Progressive writers and their writings have ignited the spark of rebellion in us. As Faiz says: “Agar sharar hai to bhadke, jo phool hai to khile”. These embers of change are surely going to bring out the best in our society.

What has happened to poetry after failure of Progressive Writers Movement (PWA)? Is it correct to say that protest poetry has died after the decline of Progressive Movement? The questions whether new poetry is different from progressive poetry and whether new poetry is ahead of progressive poetry are often beleaguering. The label ‘progressive’ undergoes change in present times. Every society and times are marked by their own set of problems and writers devise their own ways of dealing with them. The progressive tradition still continues in both the countries by literature produced by those who write without any prejudice and aim to awaken the best instincts in man.

Urdu poetry from the post-progressive era voices the feeling of disillusionment, irony and unease with the device of fusing the objective and the subjective which is very similar to each other. Interestingly, the new generation of Urdu poets maintain intentional distance from categories such as progressive as well as modernist poetry. They neither take the well-trodden path of ‘art for art's sake’ nor join the hope-generating chorus of the progressives. In their poetry, the socio-political concerns get interiorised. In their poetry the subjective and objective get fused. It remains essentially progressive in its content, but its form, texture and expression get transformed.

In India, poets like Shahryar, Nida Fazli, Balraj Komal and Mohammed Alvi belong to a generation of poets that emerge out of the remnants of the Progressive Movement characterised
by the disillusionment of the Nehruvian era. The disturbing aftermath of its dreams and hopes has culminated in a deep sense of loss in the new generation of poets and cultural practitioners. The works of the poets signify the alienation from the big dream of shining India. Their poetry is replete with a tinge of nostalgia and sadness for the past that once seemed so much full of promises of a new dawn, a resurgent democratic and egalitarian society.

The embryo of an organized left, which indicated vitality and creativity through its literary forum in the first decade of Pakistan's life, is destroyed in the late nineteen fifties. In Pakistan, an undeclared antipathy has existed against progressive literature. Amidst overwhelming fanaticism, religious bigotry and tyranny, it is with the efforts of poets like Kishwar Naheed, Ahmed Faraz, Fehmida Riaz, Rashed, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Parveen Shakir, Naheed and others that voice of dissidence can be heard in Pakistan.

Despite the continuation of cross cultural exchanges that take place between the two countries in form of Indo-Pakistan *mushairas*, the popularity of Urdu poetry in terms of listeners and spectators has diminished considerably. Is it because the zeal of progressive writers is missing or have the times changed when people busy in material pursuits have no penchant for such critical enquiries? The progressive poets walk with history and time for progress of human civilisation. Their vision extends beyond the pull of tradition, religious dictates and socio-political systems like feudalism, autocracy and imperialism. The importance of the study becomes even more paramount in today's time when colonialism and imperialism re-enter and establish themselves with economic privatisation and religious fundamentalism. Their poetry remains important for all those who desire change in the existing system. The cultural movement like the PWA introduces a moment in culture which acts a singular force that holds the potential of changing the dynamics of the society. Though the Movement has died out, yet it works as a manifest power in the construction and reconstruction of the present cultural configuration and as an immanent force which enters into relationship with other forces to change the world for better.

The progressive cultural movement must fight, in its own terrain, not only against the exploitative order presided over by the bourgeoisie, allied with the rich landed interests, but also against the ideological perceptions and cultural practices of the old order, against caste,
patriarchy, communalism and all forms of suppression of the individual by the so-called traditions of the old community. The latter struggle is a permanent struggle that stretches from the present until the establishment of the new order.

The contribution of progressive writers cannot be overlooked as they have reigned the minds and heart of the people of the two countries. The progressive poets must have died but their poetry is timeless and ageless. So, their poetry not only immortalises them but also spirit of revolution and activism which is amiss in present times. The conditions of late capitalism have blunted the possibilities of social anger which used to feed progressive urges to begin with.