



COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF STEPHEN GILL'S WORKS (A Selection)

*Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Stephen Gill by Hamadan Darwesh

Faiz Ahmed Faiz is the second top Urdu poet after Ghalib. Stephen Gill and Faiz Ahmed Faiz are two poetic sons of Sialkot that was a region of the Panjab of India before the partition in 1947 and became a region of the Panjab of Pakistan after the partition. The purpose of this comparative study is not to lower or excel one poet over the other because every flower has its own uniqueness. Considering this fact and also that comparisons may not be easy and tasteful for everyone this evaluation is directed to dissect similarities and dissimilarities for a better understanding and enjoyment of Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Stephen Gill.

Faiz is a poet of beauty and love. These elements are evident not only in his diction but also in the subject matter of his poetry. He is also remembered as a poet of revolution. Dictionaries explain that a revolution refers to change in the political system through force. That is the credo of the Marxists and Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a Marxist. He was imprisoned because of his involvement in a plot to overthrow the government of Zia-ul-Haq through a military coupe. Faiz is also referred to as a poet of the masses, although the fact is that only a handful of his poems about love and beauty are understandable by the masses. These handful of poems have been sung by famous singers who can be credited for bringing him popularity among the common people.

On the other hand, Stephen Gill writes to bring peace through peaceful means. He is a poet of universal peace, love and human rights. He "urges abolition of racial, religious, political and economic prejudices and seeks equal opportunities and privileges for men and women, adoption of a world code of human rights and responsibilities, and creation of a world federal

government to heal the dissensions that divide people. His poetry is graceful and easy to understand.

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***The Prophet by Khalil Jibran and The Flame by Stephen Gill (comparison) by Dr. Sudhir Arora**

Khalil Gibran, who came to be noted as “the Bard of Washington Street”, wrote his masterpiece *The Prophet* which took him more than eleven years to write and perfect. *The Prophet* is “widely acclaimed as one of the most spiritual books ever written” (Cover). Stephen Gill, who is better known as “the Bard of Peace” for promoting the values of tolerance, understanding and co-existence in the world where there will be justice, love, harmony and brotherhood, has penned *The Flame* which is the result of the eight years labour. *The Flame* is heralded as Stephen Gill’s masterpiece on terrorism, a contemporary problem which has taken the world in its embrace. It is a long poem about the destruction caused by maniac messiahs. Like *The Prophet*, it has devotional and spiritual touches. Gill has not inserted illustrations like Gibran but he has created the picturesque landscapes through his words. He invokes the Flame, depicts the havoc and destructive scenes, calculates the loss, studies the maniac messiahs psychologically peeping into their hearts and finally offers his stand of pursuing his odyssey. His tone is inbuilt didactic. Gibran’s *The Prophet* is didactic as Almitra asks Almustafa for some moral precepts.

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***Stephen Gill and Jayanta Mahapatra by Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi**

Jayanta Mahapatra, one of the top poets of India, is a Christian, living in a Hindu society-- a society which pays maximum homage to Lord Jagannatha, the presiding deity of Orissa, India. There is always a sense of insecurity and alienation in his poetry. He perpetuates his quest for identity and is keen on the assertion of his self-emanating from a veritable part of his holy land and its rich socio-religious traditions. Contrary to this, the poetry of Stephen Gill is a different metaphor for identity. “As an ethnic writer and poet, Stephen Gill enriches the mosaic-tapestry of Canadian culture and values with his Indian background. The immigrant sensibility of the novelist Gill extends into the poet Gill, whose creative negotiation absorbs the conflict of cultures without being bitter.

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***Tagore’s Gitanjali & Stephen Gill’s The Flame by Dr. Sudhir Arora**

Indo/Canadian Stephen Gill’s poetic volume *The Flame* opens the new avenues for a comparative study. It is a long poem that diagnoses the destruction caused by the maniac messiahs. It also suggests the cure through the peace therapy. *Gitanjali* for which Rabindranath Tagore from India got the Nobel Prize for literature is a collection of song offerings to the Creator focusing the Indian *bhakti*-cult with the message of peace—peace to the soul that ultimately liberates to make a union with God. The critics while going through *The Flame* trace out some points of similarities with Tagore’s *Gitanjali* in spite of the fact that both the texts—*Gitanjali* and *The Flame*-- are penned in different environments with the different motives. What makes them alike is the thread of peace. *Gitanjali* talks of peace through the union of soul with God or the Supreme Soul and, hence, favours for the liberation of soul from the worldly world while *The Flame* talks of peace through the harmonious relationship among men and, hence, favours the liberation from the tyranny of the maniac messiahs who rule the world through the religious robots. *Gitanjali* reflects Tagore’s spiritual vision of his yearning for merging with God who, for him, becomes the bridegroom, the master musician, the traveller, the sailor or the guest who visits unexpectedly. *The Flame* reflects Gill’s belief that “the eternal flame knows no

occupation, faith nor complexion and cannot be imprisoned within human bonds” (*The Flame* 28). It diagnosis the destruction caused by the maniac messiahs, yearns for the loss, extols the virtues and finally recommends to be devotional with the intention of spreading peace in the world.

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***Firaq Gorakhpuri and Stephen Gill as poets of peace by Srivastava**

Words and ideas rarely make ideal bedfellows. When they do, they give birth to excellent literary pieces. Poetry is the highest form of art that requires a rare quality of intellectual skills. In the pursuit of their Nirvana, poets are haunted by what haunted Kafka for long, wondering where his words would lead him. Poets are haunted, intermittently, by the unknown of their works. Their voyage and sojourn grapple with the inter linkages of ideas. They explore these inter linkages by employing the technique that philosopher Bosanquet describes as "penetrative" imagination. That penetrative imagination is the base of this comparative study between the poetry of Stephen Gill and Firaq Gorakhpuri, though comparisons are difficult, risky and often odious.

Firaq was born in Gorakhpur, a village in India and that is how he became known as Gorakhpuri that means one who belongs to Gorakhpur. A notable Urdu poet, Firaq wrote ghazals, non-ghazal poems and couplets, called rubayees. He was recognized for his collection *Gul-e-Naghams* with Jananpith Award. Stephen Gill, who was born in Pakistan and raised in India, is also a literary critic like Firaq. Both started writing poetry during their teens. Stephen Gill, writes occasionally in Urdu. His poetry reflects a vision of that intellectual wizard who lives to read, survey, interpret and convey his experiences through his pen.

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***Peace in Sahir Ludhianvi and Stephen Gill by Prabhat Kumar Sarwar Lakhnavi**

Both Sahir Ludhianvi and Stephen Gill were born in Panjab, shared the same language and culture, though they were born in different parts and in the families of different religious backgrounds. Sahir authored several collections of poems in Urdu. On the other hand, Stephen Gill writes usually in English and poetry in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi languages. He has authored novels, literary criticism and books of historical nature as well. In Sahir's poems there is emotional suffering that could be because of his consistent failures in love affairs. These failures could be the reason for remaining unmarried. His emotional suffering may also be because of his unhappy relations with his father, who threatened to kill Sahir when he was a child. The mother of Sahir Ludhianvi was his emotional shelter. His poetry is simple and lyrical. Stephen Gill also shares the same feature of simplicity without being romantic. Sahir is an angry poet-- a poet of social protests. His concerns of injustice are largely rooted in his father's treatment, and also the treatment of the fathers of his beloveds who refused to give consent to their daughters to marry a Muslim. As a poet of social protest, he became a representative of the concerns

of the people.

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***Revamping Roles of Terrorism in *Ramcharitmanas* and *The Flame* by Dr. Anuradha Sharma**

Ramcharit Manas by Tulsi Das was written somewhere in the 16th century and *the Flame* by Stephen Gill came out in 2008 when terrorism was at its height. Both are of Indian origin though Tulsi Das wrote his book in India, and Stephen Gill in Canada. Terrorism, comparatively a new term, not a new activity, has its roots in mythology and history. Two texts are chosen from two different epochs to evaluate their dealings with terrorism. *Ramcharit Manas* is much longer than *The Flame*. At places both have the same scenes that are caused by terrorists who belong to no caste, creed, class and religion. Both the poets have their own enigmatic ways of presenting their views. Tulsi Das presents the blood bathed scenes in a language that is no ugly, while Stephen Gill according to his own tenets and time quibbles the rules of poetry to bring to the surface the ugliness of human nature. Both rhymesters have culled their material with fervor to bring out the situations of their times to condemn brutal minds and tongues. The study of human nature in both the texts appears to be a part of ethnology. Both have used zoomorphism to intensify their ideologies of terrorism. This takes physical form in *Ramchartmanas* while a psychological form in *The Flame*.

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***Comparative Study of Shelley's *Triumph of life* and Stephen Gill's *The Flame* by Dr. Gautam**

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***Concept of harmony in the Ojibways of Canada and poetry of Stephen Gill by Lino Leitao (Canada)...**

Canadian history starts normally with the French, who came first as fishermen and later as explorers in the sixteenth century and stayed to settle, though the Ojibway people have been in North America for centuries before them. The Ojibways are scattered now across Canada and the United States. They probably migrated from the East during the Ice Age, and have developed their own mythologies and culture. They believe that everything on earth is connected. In one of their mythologies, their elders had a good life when they lived in harmony with the plants, animals and all living beings. Bad days followed when they began to fight due to jealousy, hatred, fear and anger. They believe that all humans are one and they are separated only by tongues. In their prayer Ojibway people ask: *Sacred One/Teach love, compassion, and honor/That we may heal the earth/And heal each other*. This is a view that Stephen Gill explores in his poetry as well as in prose.

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***Niranjan Mohanty, India, and Stephen Gill (Indo/Canadian)...**

While studying Stephen Gill's *The Flame*, the other text that comes to my mind is Niranjan Mohanty's *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha*. Both the texts have come from different pens and are the product of different environments. But, they have some similarities which make them alike and also dissimilarities which differentiate them from each other making them distinctive texts in their own way. The very titles *The Flame* and *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha* reveal the religious connotations. People in the Vedic age used to worship fire and even today the Hindus continue to lit fire during worship. Niranjan Mohanty has dedicated *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha* to "the particles of dust that sleep on the twenty two steps". He loves Lord Jagannatha to the extent that he does not hesitate in chiding and abusing because he feels Him in him. For Mohanty and Gill, *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha* and *The Flame* are their magnum opus respectively. Their respective creators have high opinion about them. *Prayers* must have bagged at least the Sahitya Akademi prize while *The Flame* claims for the Nobel Prize like Tagore's *Gitanjali*. It not only studies the psychology of the maniac messiahs but also paves the way for peace. The theme is universal in nature. *Prayers to Lord Jagannatha* offers multiple interpretations and the reader can go through it in any manner that he likes. Names are given to the local habitation and scenes but the poet in Mohanty succeeds in his attempt to transcend the text from regional to universal.

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***Nature Poetry of WB Yeats and Stephen Gill By Dr. G.L. Gautam...**

Both W.B. Yeats from Ireland and Stephen Gill, Indo/Canadian, are not strangers to nature. Stephen Gill, an internationally known poet of Indian diaspora lives in Canada. He has several collections of poems to his credit. He has published short stories and novels. It is however his poetry that earns a worldwide recognition. It is mainly because of his epical poem *The Flame* that deals with the menace of terrorism. In India and abroad, doctoral theses are being done on Gill's poetry and book length studies have come out on his prose and poetry.

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