

FAIZ AHMED FAIZ

THE DAWN OF FREEDOM (AUGUST 1947)

These tarnished rays, this night-smudged light—
This is not that Dawn for which, ravished with freedom,
we had set out in sheer longing,
so sure that somewhere in its desert the sky harbored
a final haven for the stars, and we would find it.
We had no doubt that night's vagrant wave would stray
 towards the shore,
that the heart rocked with sorrow would at last reach its port.

Friends, our blood shaped its own mysterious roads.
When hands tugged at our sleeves, enticing us to stay,
and from wondrous chambers Sirens cried out
with their beguiling arms, with their bare bodies,
our eyes remained fixed on that beckoning Dawn,
forever vivid in her muslins of transparent light.
Our blood was young—what could hold us back?

Now listen to the terrible rampant lie:
Light has forever been severed from the Dark;
our feet, it is heard, are now one with their goal.
See our leaders polish their manner clean of our suffering;
Indeed, we must confess only to bliss;
we must surrender any utterance for the Beloved—all yearning
 is outlawed.

But the heart, the eye, the yet deeper heart—
Still ablaze for the Beloved, their turmoil shines.
In the lantern by the road the flame is stalled for news:
Did the morning breeze ever come? Where has it gone?
Night weighs us down, it still weighs us down.
Friends, come away from this false light. Come, we must
 search for that promised Dawn.

—*Translated by Agha Shahid*