

Central Idea:

The poem “Speak Up” written by Faiz Ahmad Faiz is a beautiful expression of the poet to defy oppression. It is a poem of profound meaning and courage that intends to give voice to the voiceless. It encourages the reader to speak boldly and clearly what he thinks and believes in. He wants the reader to speak up for those who are confronting injustice and cruelties by tyrants. He wants to make the reader realize that time is ticking away and before he would run out of it, he (the reader) must speak up against the cruelties perpetrated by the tyrants. He wants the reader to speak up before he (the reader) dies. He wants him to speak up about what he thinks is right because “Truth prevails against falsehood”.

Paraphrase:

Line (1- 4): The poet encourages, prepares the reader to speak up clearly and boldly without being hesitant about what he thinks and believes in. He wants the reader to raise the voice against the cruelties by tyrants. He wants to tell the reader about the freedom of speech which he (the reader) has got. He (the reader) must express his feelings fearlessly and courageously. He has moral, intellectual energy within and thus, he should speak up boldly and courageously.

Line (5-8): The poet wants /asks the reader to look inside the shop of smithy (Blacksmith's/Shop). The oven inside the shop has become red owing to burning and the fire thus produced is burning with brighter flames. In these flames the metallic locks and shackles are being made for the people who've raised their voices against the cruelties and injustice being perpetrated on them by tyrants. The poet further says that every metallic shackle, fetter or chain is skirted around by blacksmith himself or it itself skirts around in the red, violent flames. And, it is with these shackles and metallic locks that they would be stopped from going ahead in their movement of resistance against the injustice and cruelties which they've been suffering for long.

Line (9-13): The poet wants/asks the reader to speak up the truth. Time is ticking away/running out. Before death (which is inevitable) puts an end to all our activities, the reader must speak for those who're suffering cruelties and injustice. We must not delay in acting, in raising our voice because our body and mind is bound to fade away. We must speak courageously because “truth prevails against falsehood.” The time span provided to us is no doubt very short but we must not keep mum while seeing the cruelties being perpetrated in front of us. We must muster up the courage to speak up and express our thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.

Line (5 – 8):

In this stanza, the poet talks in a language that is plainly symbolic. The symbols used by the poet are smithy, oven, flames, padlocks and fetters. It is not hard to understand the meaning of these symbols. The smithy is symbolic of the struggle going on for India's freedom. The oven symbolizes the heat generated by the death of the various martyrs. The flames are the voices of protest that have begun to rise everywhere. Slavery is clearly symbolized by padlocks and fetters. These padlocks and fetters are waiting to be melted in the smithy of freedom fighters.

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