**Thank you, Uncle Sargam**

[**Muhammad Omar Iftikhar**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/muhammad-omar-iftikhar)

May 23, 2021

The puppet called Uncle Sargam became an instant celebrity in Pakistan when it first appeared on the country’s state-run television in the 1980s. During that time, the country was under military rule. It was a challenge—and at times next to impossible—to discuss issues about society and democracy. Uncle Sargam was born during such testing times to become the voice of the people.

The man, the legend behind Uncle Sargam is no more with us. Farooq Qaiser left this world on May 14, 2021. He was 75. While puppeteers have the opportunity and the authority to create a puppet as they wish, Farooq Qaiser conceived Uncle Sargam as a Pakistani adult who was not shy of speaking his heart out. Masi Musibtay and Bonga Bakheel among others were also his creations that gained mass popularity across Pakistan.

If one can imagine, Uncle Sargam was akin to the Uncle whom we met at a family gathering, in a bus, at the roadside dhaba—who would discuss matters of social and political interest with joy, humour and adding satire when needed. In reality, Farooq Qaiser was an institution in himself. He used his puppets to educate the people—young and old alike.

[Malian military arrests interim president, premier: Media](https://nation.com.pk/25-May-2021/malian-military-arrests-interim-president-premier-media)

A recipient of Sitara-i-Imtiaz (2021) and the Pride of Performance (1993) from the government of Pakistan, Farooq Qaisar pursued several professions that exemplified his communication skills and creative prowess. He was a puppeteer, voice-over artist, scriptwriter, newspaper columnist and TV show director. He authored several books including ‘Kaalam Galoch’, ‘Hor Puchho’, ‘Meray Piyaray Allah Mian’ and Meethay Karelay.

Farooq Qaiser knew the art of communication. His puppets’ physical appearance and persona resonated with the friendliness and openness that he possessed. His puppets—having an existence of their own—effectively spread the message during a time when those at the helm of affairs were scrutinising every word being televised.

Qaiser’s scripts resonated with positivity, happiness, humor and satire. Whether a monologue by Uncle Sargam, poetry by Bonga Bakheel, or the heated debate Masi Musibtay had with other puppet characters, Qaiser’s show discussed the pertaining social issues of his era.

[Biden sends top diplomat to Middle East amid Gaza ceasefire](https://nation.com.pk/25-May-2021/biden-sends-top-diplomat-to-middle-east-amid-gaza-ceasefire)

His other popular TV programmes included ‘Putli Tamasha’, ‘Sargam Time’, ‘Daak Time’ and ‘Khab Sitaray’ among others.

As a scriptwriter, Qaiser chose words for his script with diligence. Watching his shows today would make you realise that each word, phrase, statement, or catchphrase had a reason to be added into the script. Furthermore, the predicaments faced by the middle class of Pakistan were discussed through prose and poetry without hurting anyone’s sentiments.

A recipient of the Life Achievement Award from PTV (2010) and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts Award (2012), he was also honoured by UNICEF in 1997. Farooq Qaiser served as a faculty member at Fatima Jinnah Women’s University and the National College of the Arts Theatre programme (2007-2010).

However, he taught the best lessons to Pakistani audiences through his puppets. He shared the message of peace, love and friendship. At a subconscious level, he advised the audiences to speak the truth from the heart—just as Uncle Sargam did.