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Poems by Faiz

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by
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انتساب

بیگم ایس فیض کے نام

TO
ALYS FAIZ AHMED

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FOREWORD

This volume is an expansion of a set of verse translations from Faiz which were begun in a forest rest-house on the banks of Woolar Lake in Kashmir in the summer of 1945, continued at intervals over the next dozen years, and published in 1958 at Delhi (later reprinted at Lahore). These translations have now been revised throughout, and also brought into line with the latest editions of the originals: Faiz is a reviser and polisher, as careful literary craftsmen have often been, and has made various alterations over the years. Sixteen poems are added, from his last published collection and from some recent verses that have not yet appeared in book form. All these, like most of the former set, were chosen by Faiz himself, and all the translations have been discussed with him.

In addition, this volume contains the Urdu text of each poem, with a romanized transliteration and a literal prose rendering. This apparatus is designed to assist Western students of the language, who are beginning to be rather less few than they used to be; it is hoped that it may be of service also to some East Pakistanis and Indians desirous of acquainting themselves with the Urdu literature of West Pakistan. Even to readers not concerned with the language it may be hoped that the Urdu text will make an artistic appeal. It has been written by Syed Saqlain Zaidi, reputed by many to be one of the finest copyists now working in Pakistan of the *nasta'liq* form of the Arabic script, which developed in Persia by the fifteenth century and went through a further evolution in Indo-Pakistan.

An experiment at turning this script into roman letters may not be without interest for Urdu-speakers familiar with English, besides its practical value for learners of Urdu. It must I think be admitted that while the Persian-Arabic script can be exquisitely ornamental, it is far less well adapted to the requirements of a utilitarian age. Even as calligraphy it is already, according to many connoisseurs in Pakistan, a declining art in which a *kātib* such as Syed Saqlain Zaidi is likely to have few successors. Like the Chinese characters, it grew in a society where writing was confined to a few; both, possibly, may have a better chance of keeping their artistic quality if their more modern and mundane duties are handed over to the workaday alphabet that has already been adopted in Turkey and debated in China and India. Faiz's poems, it may be remarked, are circulating in India not only in Urdu script but also in the less decorative but far

more scientific Nagari script of Hindi, without losing much by the change except in the eyes of lovers of *nasta'liq* whose loyalty to it, aesthetic or sentimental, can only be respected.

I am grateful to the People's Publishing House of Delhi for readily acceding to the re-issue of the translations published by it; and to Mr Altaf Gauhar, a senior civil servant at Rawalpindi, for lending his good offices towards securing the approval of the Government of Pakistan for the preparation of this volume under the auspices of Unesco. I owe many thanks to Syed Saqlain Zaidi for the patience and skill with which he adapted himself to the exceptional demands made on him by the plan of this edition; also to Syed Babar Ali, once a pupil of mine in the Aitchison College at Lahore and now managing director of the firm of Packages Ltd there, for generously lending the services of this distinguished *kātib*, who has been in his firm's employment. With regard to the rest of the work, my own knowledge of the language and its literary complexities is very far from sufficient to have enabled me to get on without a great deal of aid and counsel. 'Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but as you would say a cobbler.' In an undertaking beset with so many linguistic and technical problems I cannot hope in the end to have avoided all errors, and for whatever errors may remain I must blame myself and not my counsellors. Among these Vazir ul-Hasan Abedi, Reader in Persian at the Oriental College of the University of the Panjab at Lahore, has been very helpful on nice points both of text and of translation. Mr R. Russell, Reader in Urdu at the London School of Oriental Studies, gave me the benefit of his knowledge of systems of transliteration from Urdu; and he was kind enough to read and point out lapses in the first draft of the Introduction, as was also Faiz's and my old friend of Lahore days, Mr Som Nath Chib. Faiz himself, besides supplying many elucidations of meaning, and other information, likewise read this draft, and made a number of criticisms which I have been happy to avail myself of, even if I cannot feel sure that even now everything in it would meet with his agreement. His wife has been invaluable in expediting correspondence on all these matters.

I owe it to two others to say that without their help and encouragement, continued over a good many years, the work could not have been carried out at all. Sardar Malik Khayyam d'Ashkelon, of the Arts and Letters Division of Unesco at Paris, has been indefatigable in smoothing away the numerous obstacles that have cropped up, at the cost of having to write enough letters to fill another tome. With such representatives Unesco can worthily play its part as patron of letters, modern successor to Harun al-Rashid or Lorenzo

the Magnificent. In thanking once again one of my oldest friends, Dr Nazir Ahmad, lately Principal of Government College, Lahore, I have to repeat what I have written elsewhere, that my translations from both Faiz and Iqbal would have been impossible without the benefit of his literary knowledge and judgment and his unlimited generosity in bestowing them, and his time and labour, on others. For the present edition he took on himself the further and onerous duty of preparing the Urdu text. But I should exhaust myself in what to anyone unacquainted with him would appear hyperbole, if I tried to do justice to the qualities for which Dr Nazir Ahmad is known in his own country to a host of admirers in every walk of life.

V. G. KIERNAN