NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION

1. A Scotswoman who knew him in Afghanistan wrote in fictional form an admiring account of his efforts to establish order: see Lillias Hamilton, A Vizier’s Daughter (London, 1900).

2. He is therefore, in full, Faiz Ahmad ‘Faiz’. His own name, religious like nearly all Muslim names, would mean ‘Bounty of the Highly Praised One’—the Prophet. (He writes himself ‘Ahmed’, not ‘Ahmad’.)

3. The Observer (London), March 11, 1951, in an article at the time of Faiz’s first arrest.

4. In an article on ‘Faiz and his Poetry’ (in New Age, Delhi, April 1956) Sajjad Zahir wrote: ‘The writer of these lines was a co-accused with Faiz in this case . . . and he can testify to the high morale, the patriotic fervour, the serenity and the undaunted courage and faith in the high destiny of his beloved people which Faiz exemplified during this whole period.’

5. It is due to the late administration of President Ayyub Khan to state that Faiz’s Zindān-Nāma (‘Prison Thoughts’) was written before its term of office; and that although he was known to be not in sympathy with this administration, the sponsoring of the present volume by Unesco was authorized by it, in recognition of his position as one of the country’s most eminent writers.

6. Miss Achla Chib (now Mrs Eccles).

7. This is the view of Mr M. Usman, lecturer in Urdu at Government College, Lahore, who gave me much light on this and many other subjects when I was living in the College in 1963.

8. R. K. Yadav, The Indian Language Problem (Delhi, ? 1967), discusses the position of Urdu in Pakistan as well as in India.

9. Faiz expresses a degree of scepticism about the generalizations in this paragraph.

10. Faiz points out that the kā-e-malāmat might connote the worldly or the Pharisee, as well as the seeker of illicit pleasure.


12. My friend and former colleague Mr Kishan Singh, of the Panjabi College at Delhi, has given me valuable information about this folk-poetry, of which he has been a lifelong student.

13. Much Elizabethan sonneteering has a similar character. Cf. Professor Arberry’s remark in his English edition of Iqbal’s long poem Javid-Nama (p. 13) that ‘Persian is a language almost ideally suited to deliberate vagueness’.


15. A number of Iqbal’s ghazals will be found in my Poems from Iqbal.
NOTES ON THE POEMS

(The numbers below are those of poems in this collection; numbers in brackets refer to lines, in the original text and transliteration.)

Naqsh-e-Faryādī. This untranslatable title comes from the opening of Ghalib's Urdu poems, where instead of the conventional expression of gratitude to God the poet says that all created things are protesting against their creator.

8 (6) The 'alien dust' is an oblique allusion to the withering touch of imperialism; cf. the recurrence of the word ajnabi (alien), with a more overtly political reference, in line 14 of the next poem.

9 This was a favourite poem at college muskadīras; to student audiences its blend of patriotic and romantic had a special appeal. The verse translation is in approximately the metre of the original.

10 The opening couplet parodies that of a poem of Iqbal, 'The Prayer of Tariq'—the Muslim conqueror of Spain. Iqbal's warriors of the faith are endowed with zeal for religion (zaq-e-khadā'i), Faiz's mongrels with zeal for cadging (zaq-e-gadā'i).

11 This poem made a great impression by its extreme simplicity and directness, though its style has seldom been reproduced since, either by imitators or by Faiz himself. The metre and rhyme-scheme of the verse translation are close to those of the original.

12 The situation referred to is that of the August rising of 1942 in India, though more than once interpretation is possible. The sonnet-form used in the translation seems not inappropriate. I once pointed out to Faiz that several of his poems were in fourteen lines, and asked whether they had been influenced by the sonnet; he said this might have happened without his being conscious of it, but fourteen lines happened to suit several of his rhyme-patterns.

15 (4) Pardas-e-sāz is a musical term, for note or key, so that there is a kind of double meaning here.

Dast-e-Šabā. Šabā is any light breeze, particularly of early morning; it recurs frequently in these poems, and may be said to symbolize both a prisoner's tenuous contact with the free world outside, and mankind's hopes of liberation.

17 One of several poems that Faiz composed in solitary confinement, when deprived of writing materials, and was only able to write down several months later.

Lauh-o-gulam is an instance of a religious memory woven into a new context, as not infrequently with Faiz. Traditionally the phrase relates to the Book of Destiny where all that was to happen was written down before the creation of the world. For Faiz, who uses it several times in poems of this
period (it forms the title of no. 20), it seems to symbolize
the artist’s endowment and his responsibility to his fellow-
men.

The verse translation follows the ghazal form of the original,
and its metre, except that its four feet (of five syllables
each) are reduced to three.

Faiz says that this line relates to recollections of youthful
hope, with frustration and fulfilment alternating. But the
whole poem is enigmatic and elusive.

The antithesis of rind and muhtasib, raker and official censor
of morals, is traditional, with a frequent insinuation that
the latter is a hypocrite, no better in reality than the
former. Possibly this couplet is linked to the previous ones
by an implied suggestion that sinner and puritan are equally
fascinated by the lady with whom the poet is in
love.

Conventionally what lends the world vitality is love, or—
virtually identical with it—the pain of love. The poet will
keep inspiring men with the things (ashâb) that cause or
constitute love and prevent the world from withering into
a desert.

An example of old symbols adapted to new meanings. The
tavern and its wine stand for genuine religious feeling, the
haram or shrine for formal, perfunctory belief; here they
suggest political idealism in contrast with soulless bureaucra-
cy, and the sanam of line 12—idol, or mistress—is the
People.

The poem was originally entitled ‘Two Voices’. The metre
of the verse translation is close to that of the Urdu, which
except in the third stanza is in rhymed couplets like the
translation.

Nuq, ‘mind’, might also be rendered as ‘the faculty of
speech’.

Kai: Khosrau, the ancient Persian king.

Written in solitary confinement in the spring of 1951, when
Faiz was awaiting trial and there was reason to fear the
worst.

faqr and ikhâyiyr have the theological sense of necessity
and free will; in this context they imply the alternative of
slavish submission or revolt.

Cool cloudy days and moonlit nights are the two times
poetically regarded as appropriate to convivial parties, and
therefore must awaken painful memories of friends one is
cut off from.

Some revision of this poem has been made by Faiz for the
present edition. It should be taken in a general sense, not
as referring to any particular place or time.

The verse translation follows the ghazal form of the original.
putting one's hand in another's, but if the hand is trapped under a rock instead, no choice is left.

30 Impressions of a night at Urumchi in Sinkiang. The poem has a companion-piece called 'Peking'.

40 Written in April 1937.

41 A prison poem of 1936.

41 (5) I give the meaning as explained by Faiz, but the image, taken straightforwardly, is a curious one.

41 (6) The sacred marks on the forehead, and the smearing with ashes, belong to a Hindu holy man; and the closing lines evoke the morning ritual of a Hindu temple, with conch-shells blown to summon worshippers.

42 A poem in defence of patriots subjected to slander and misrepresentation.

44 (17-18) The wording is unusual; I give the meaning as explained by Faiz.

46 This and the next poem are coupled as 'Two Elogies' (Do Mard-i-gah): they were written in memory of a young progressive who perished in prison. He is imagined to be speaking in his own person. Mutāqī — meeting, interview, visit — became a prisoners' term for a vistitor allowed to see them.

47 (8) The madman peited with stones by streeturchins is a common poetical image.

47 (12-13) A quotation from Ghalib.

48 Written at Moscow, August 1963.

48 (4) Khān-i-jīgar hone tak is a phrase from Ghalib. The liver is associated with a more tender, affectionate kind of love than the heart.

49 Written at Moscow in 1963.

49 (12-13) There is an echo here, as so often, of Ghalib.

50 Written at Moscow in 1964. The recurrent word āhista usually means 'slowly', but may also mean 'softly': here, as Faiz pointed out to me, the two senses run into each other.

52 (10) Yād-e-beṣā: a phrase used of the miraculous shining of Moses' hand in the presence of Pharaoh.

52 (14) The wording is obscure; Faiz says it means: 'till the river finds its banks' — that is, I suppose, when the floodwater subsides and the banks re-emerge.

52 (16) Fānā, 'death' or 'destruction', was a term of the Sufi mystics for the total submergence of the conscious self in the infinite.

54 Hām, 'praise', often signifies a hymn, or praise of God.

54 (19) There is an echo here of the last line but one of Iqbal's poem Jābril o Iblīs ('Gabriel and Satan'), in Bāl-e-Jābril, but with a transposition of meaning.

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

At last half-promise of a spring has come—

At times, at times, in remembrance faintly old scenes reviving,

Before you came, all things were what they are—

Be near me—

Bury me, oh my country, under your pavements,

Cut them all down, these crippled plants,

Darkness an ever-deepening flood,

Do not ask how much I have longed for you

Far on the horizon a tremor of light flickered.

Fresh yet in memory,

God never send a time when you too mourn—

If I could know for certain, my fellow-man, my friend—

If ink and pen are snatched from me, shall I

I have caught the madness of your drum,

In my barred window is hung many a cross,

In the mind's hall, holding each his dead lamp,

In the sky, while evening's star burns out among twilight embers,

I shall not cease to feed this pen, but still

It is as if each tree

It was still dark, when standing by my pillow

Last night your faded memory filled my heart

Listless and wan, green patch by patch, noonday dries up;

Long years those hands, unfriended and unfree,

Love, do not ask me for that love again.

Midnight, moon, oblivion—

Night at this season comes on like flowing wine;

No more now shall the drum sound, and no more

No spur left now for endeavour; gone, ambition of soaring; we have done

Not enough the tear-stained eye, the storm-tossed life,

Once more a Day of Wrath's loud din

On every pathway broods this hour of waiting,

On gate and roof a crushing load of silence—

Only a few days, dear one, a few days more.

Round you my memories of that fair one twine

286 287
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