



FAYŽĪ, ABU'L-FAYŽ

FAYŽĪ, ABU'L-FAYŽ (b. Agra, 5 Ša'bān 954/24 September 1547 [*Dīvān*, f. 78b]; d. Lahore, 10 Šafar 1004/15 October 1595), Mughal court poet, also known as Fayži Fayyāži, who wrote mainly in Persian. His family was descended from a Yemeni who had settled in Sind in the 15th century; in the early 16th century Fayži's grandfather moved to Nagaur in Rajasthan, where the poet's father, Shaikh Mobārak (911-1001 /1505-93), was born. The latter had a strong inclination to spiritual pursuits, but his broad religious views brought him into conflict with orthodox clerics. Fayži received instruction from his father in such traditional subjects as religion, philosophy, grammar, science, and medicine. In about 975/1567 he entered the Mughal court through the intervention of Khan-e A'zam Mīrzā 'Azīz Kōkā (*Cat. Bankipore* II, p. 203; *No'mānī*, III, pp. 37-38), foster brother of Akbar (963-1014/1556-1605). He served as tutor to Akbar's three sons, Salīm (afterward Emperor Jahāngīr, 1014-37/1605-27), Morād, and Dānīāl. He also became a trusted companion of the emperor himself and was included in official deliberations and military expeditions. When Akbar decided to inaugurate a syncretistic religion (the *dīn-e elāhī* "divine faith") he appointed Fayži to its advisory council. Some critics have even alleged that the poet was a major influence in Akbar's religious evolution (*Ma'āṭer al-omarā'* [Calcutta] I, p. 333; *Nafīsī*, *Naẓm o naṭr* I, p. 363). In 997/1589 Fayži received the title *malek al-šo'arā'*. In 999/1591 he led an embassy to Borhānpūr in the Deccan to induce its ruler to accept Akbar's suzerainty. Although Fayži's official rank was lower than those of many court officials, his influence transcended theirs.



Fayzī was a man of generous habits and kind disposition. For example, he helped the poet 'Orfī, newly arrived from Persia, to gain access to Hakīm Abu'l-Faṭḥ Gīlānī (d. 997/1588-9), a prominent dignitary of Akbar's court and 'Orfī's first patron in India (Şafā, *Adabīyāt* V/2, p. 845). When the historian 'Abd-al-Qāder Badā'ūnī incurred Akbar's displeasure, Fayzī interceded on his behalf (Badā'ūnī, *Montakāb* III, pp. 418 ff.), despite Badā'ūnī's unfriendliness to him. Fayzī was influenced by mysticism and attracted to Sufī saints; he wrote two poems to the celebrated mystic Farīd-al-Dīn Ganj-e Šakar (q.v.; *Dīvān*, fols. 277b and 278a).

Fayzī's learning was extensive and varied. Beside Persian, his primary language, he knew Arabic and Sanskrit. His library is said to have contained 4,600 volumes (Badā'ūnī, *Montakāb* III, p. 421; 4,300 according to *Ma'āṭer al-omarā'*, tr. Beveridge, I, p. 517), which were transferred to the imperial library after his death; they included works on literature, philosophy, science, religion, and medicine. His interest in medicine went beyond intellectual curiosity; he also treated patients (*Ma'āṭer al-omarā'* [Calcutta] I, p. 514). He was a prolific writer and is said to have composed 101 works, of which only a few are known or extant. Apart from poetry, he wrote a work in Arabic on ethics (*Mawāred al-kalam* "Stages of words," distinguished by the absence of dotted letters in the text; an exegesis in Persian on the koran, completed in 1002/1594 (*Şawāṭe' al-elhām* "Rays of inspiration"; Lucknow, 1306/1888), also without dotted letters; and at Akbar's request a Persian translation of a Sanskrit treatise on arithmetic and geometry entitled *Līlāvatī* (*Noska-ye Līlāvatī*, Calcutta, 1242/1827). He left a large number of letters, which his nephew Nūr-al-Dīn Moḥammad 'Abd-Allāh compiled after his death under the title *Laṭīfa-ye Fayyāzī* "The wit of Fayyāzī" (Fayzī, 1973).

According to Badā'ūnī (*Montakāb*, p. 415), Fayzī's poetic career stretched over forty years, which would imply that he began when he was eight years old. Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that he was productive. Although estimates vary, his total extant output runs to several thousand verses.

Fayzī is said to have been a pupil of K̄vāja Ḥosayn of Marv (d. 979/1571-72), most likely in poetry-writing (Badā'ūnī, *Montakāb* III, p. 250). Around 994/1585 he put together a collection of his poems (presumably a selection) which he named *Ṭabāšīr-al-şobḥ* "Prelude to the dawn"; it contained some six thousand verses. Later manuscripts of his *Dīvān*, which are more complete, contain twice that number, including examples of all the main traditional forms of Persian poetry. Among them the *qaşīdas* (odes) and *ġazals* (lyrics) occupy a



central place. In the former the poet focused on didactic, biographical, and panegyric subjects; they are frequently long and sometimes pedantic, with a great deal of Arabic vocabulary, and can be difficult reading. One of the most important examples, *Našīd al-safar* “Song of the journey” (*Dīvān*, fols. 78a ff.), is an autobiographical work, covering the period until two years before his death. His panegyrics were often based upon personal or historical events, so that the praise seems almost incidental; in an outstanding example of this type Fayzī described his first audience with Akbar (*Dīvān*, fols. 35a ff.). In contrast the *gāzals* are refined and clearly written; their content varies from simple expression of feeling to more complex philosophical conceits. The imagery is sober and reflects a scrupulous choice of similes and metaphors. Fayzī composed elegies on the death of his mother and three-year old son (*Dīvān*, fols. 101b ff., 105b ff.), both distinguished by their pathos.

In addition to his *Dīvān*, Fayzī wrote two independent *maṭnawīs*, *Markaz-e adwār* “The center of circles” (994/1585; MS London, British Library, Add. 23,981), concerned with moral and mystical ideas, and *Nal o Daman* (1003/1594; ed. Tehran, 1335 Š./1956), based on an episode in the Sanskrit *Mahabhārāta*. He intended originally to compose five, on the model of Neẓāmī’s *Ķamsa*, but the remaining three, *Solaymān o Belqīs*, *Akbar-nāma*, and *Haft kešvar*, were left incomplete at his death. *Markaz-e adwār* remained in loose pages until Fayzī’s younger brother Abu’l-Faẓl ‘Allamī (q.v.), the famous Mughal chronicler, compiled them two years after the poet’s death.

Šebli No‘mānī ranked Fayzī together with Amir Ặosrow Dehlavī (q.v.; 651-725/1253-1325) as one of the two outstanding Persian poets born in India (No‘mānī, III, p. 28). Although Fayzī received little recognition in Persia, his work found a hospitable reception in Turkey, where it exercised considerable influence on Ottoman Turkish lyric poetry (Gibb, I, p. 129, III, pp. 247-48).

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