

Introduction

Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer need no introduction. The translation of their immortal marsias perhaps does. The Urdu-speaking Shias who have had the pleasure of reading and hearing Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's marsias can attest that nothing else can evoke with such clarity and such depth the memory, the emotion and the pathos of Karbala, as do these marsias. In Hyderabad, India where I grew up, Muharram and these marsias are synonymous. The recitation of the marsias there has reached an art form, passed on for generations, refined and evolving with every new reader.

The Shias owe much to Meer Anis and Mirza Dabeer who put into words for them, in a heart-wrenching, exquisitely human form, the Divine glory of Prophet's Muhammad's household, the tragedy of Karbala, the clash between good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good. A Majlis in the Urdu-speaking Shia community without the marsias of Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer is inconceivable.

Yet those of us who live in the West have been forced to accept the undeniable fact that our children will probably never experience the beauty of Meer Anis' or Mirza Dabeer's words. The thought is painful; the loss of significant proportions. Who, if not Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer, can bring Karbala to life for our children.? Who will tell the tale as well as they did? A tale told in a manner so as to evoke within us grief, pain, and above all, love for the Ahlul Bayt? I lamented at the thought that nobody can do all this as well as Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer. I continue to believe that this will remain true forever.

The idea of translating Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's marsias was born from this sense of loss; after all, if our children cannot understand the words of these memorable poets because they don't know Urdu, why not bring the words to them in the language that they do understand? This book is a humble attempt to accomplish this task

I must apologize to the reader, however, for the numerous deficiencies in my translation. while I have tried to adhere to Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's words as much as possible, in my attempt to maintain a rhythm in the verses, I have often lapsed in this effort. I also apologize for the mistakes, the incongruities, or the gaps with which the reader may find my translation to be riddled. Despite all this though, it is my hope that the translation gives the reader a sense, *albeit* slight, of the beauty of Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's memorable poetry

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