

Milestones of Guidance by Prof. SAH Abidi

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Prof. SAH Abidi (1921-2010) was a versatile scholar of Persian studies with international reputation for his scholarly works. His vision to bring forth the history of Indo-Persian Literature in Indian sub-continent can be gleaned in the papers presented in this volume. The variety of the subjects, he deals with shows that he had his own compartmentalization of the study program. He was whirling scholar and ever ready to be a student, eliciting information from masses about society, culture and civilization and then craving out the material in the rich texts of Persian and Urdu manuscripts. He worked as an architect as well as an interior decorator. Through introduction of various unknown poets and writers and their respective works –which were lying untouched in various libraries and museum in the subcontinent in the form of manuscripts- he opened the doors of research on new personalities and by bringing new information about the works on the master poets and writers of Persian he again put the wheels of research in motion for those who thought everything has been done in regard of a particular poet or writer. The analytical study of the works or the philological study of the variety of texts – poetry and prose both – guides the researcher literary environmental studies of Persian especially Indo-Persian language and literature.

Persians are known for their poetic skills and this in their genes as the toll figure of Persian poets in one region in every period reveals but Indian subcontinent surpasses in the prose especially in story telling and writings which have flown and floated in other parts of asia since the time unknown as the literature of non-indian writings shows the deep influence of it. Prof. Abidi very profoundly pondered upon these influences and craved out manuscripts dealing with variety of stories of Indian origin or bearing signs of Indian environment or even those written in Indian Persian lying hidden in Manuscripts in various libraries and museums. In fact, he initiated a project with scholars like Prof. Tara Chand to present Indic culture in Persian sources. Their joint works on *Yogvashishtha* and *Daryae Asmar* were part of this project. Likewise, his essays presented some lesser known stories of Indian origin like romantic tale of Raja Chatarmukh and Rani Chandra kiran composed by three Persian Poets in different versions. Reconstruction of *Sati* (self-sacrifice) tradition exhibited in various Persian texts written in various periods not only portrays the poetic skills of the Persian poets to show their curiosity on this subject but also reflects how they have reacted to the event of *Sati* held before their naked eyes. On the Poetic outpouring of various Persian poets especially who landed from alien lands, Prof. Abidi reconstructs their observation in his essay to showcase this kind of happening available in Persian poetry. One may find interesting data on this aspect on this heart touching issue which attracted the attention of many a poets ranging Amir Khusrau in 13-14th c. to Anand Ram Mukhlis in 18th c and many more in the following centuries.

With the infusion of Persianate culture, Persian language turned into lingua-franca too especially for official and literary circles as well a source of earning bread irrespective of caste, religion and

region. It made deep inroads into various south asian languages and when the speakers of this confluence language landed in other lands in masses –like in Mauritius – their language also saw the influence of Persian. From cultural exposures to the linguistic studies, Prof. Abidi,s papers also All these provides leads to the scholars of Philological studies in South Asian culture especially Indic-Persianate culture which is getting momentum in the present literary studies in various universities in India and especially in western and American Universities. The true representative of the Confluence of culture which also seems to be an emergence of a new mix multiple culture spread over in the four or more almost unending directions in the south asian region. Rapid infusion of persianate culture into Indian multiple culture with the expansion of Islamic forces onwards 12th c. was in fact a resurrection or resurfacing the abandoned path of Ancient Indo-Iranian cultural exchanges-both politically and culturally.

Impact and interaction of Persian language with the Indian languages has been a major area of linguistic studies. Development and process of amalgamation of Persian with the Indian languages has been an area in which Prof. Abidi pondered upon. In a recent, perhaps the last article of Prof. Abidi (published by Cambridge University press, 2010 with co-author Prof. Ravinder Gargesh) on this subject, he discussed upon the ways Persian language saw its overall development. Through the textual study of various works produced in different periods and various regions and also penned by the writers and poets belonging to different religions, regions and cultures various shades of the languages can be gleamed. Influence of Persian, after Urdu (till it remained a single unit with the name of Hindwi or Hindostani), on Hindi, many monographs have been published. Prof. Hardev Bahari's work is amongst the pioneer works on this subject. But looking at Hindi through the lens of Persian sources, especially through the translation sources of 19-20th c. is essential to make an indepth study. Prof. Abidi's paper on this issue provides certain basic parameters to make a further study.

Amongst the fine arts, Hindustani Music is a discipline (not a subject) which can not be studied and demonstrated without the knowledge of Persian. Persian literature is a treasure House for the study of Music which seems to be an backbone of the confluence of culture, apart from architecture. Like Prof Nazir Ahmed who introduced Nau Ras of Zahuri to the Musicologist, Prof. Abidi too brought into light many aspects of Hindustani Music. On his guidance, his pupil, (Late) Prof. NH Ansari (along with Prof Shukla) edited Raag Darpan and Prof. SBF Husaini Lahjate-e-Sikander Shahi. The orientation provided by Prof Abidi to his pupil led them to indulge consistently in the variety of research works based on Persian sources. The present volume which comprises articles on the various vistas of Persian language and literature, especially the Indo-Persian, will be, hopefully, milestones for many researchers, especially the younger ones. Thanks