

PREFACE

I feel it my prestigious pride and proud privilege to present the first Journal of the nascent Arabic and Persian Research Institute Tonk, before the scholarly community. With elated ecstasy and acclaim, I can say that the Journal of the Institute has been styled as Prof. Mahmud Shirani Commemorative Volume after the name of a great bibliophile and orientalist who was born for books, lived for books and died for books.

Prof. Mahmud Shirani was a living institute personified by himself. This institute is replete with rare and invaluable works and codices par excellence while Prof. Shirani is also known by the rare collection he boasted to own. He had himself an unrivalled repository of books, manuscripts, calligraphic and paleographic masterpieces alongwith numismatic and museological assets forming a historical heritage of Islamic and Oriental Studies of various disciplines and intrinsic and artistic values. It is preserved in the Punjab University, Library Lahore and designated as Shirani Collection.

It is deemed plausibly appropriate that the first Research Journal of this Institute should be dedicated to Prof. Shirani who has bestridden every Institute like an intellectual colossus. His glimpses can be noticed and gleaned from each and every codex and treatise where he still survives even after his demise. He is like a glorified title and ornate frontispiece to each manuscript. That is why he is a living memory and is read and represented through innumerable books and manuscripts. A man devotedly dedicated to books never dies and he is the man who even after his death, is alive in his writings, alive in his books, alive in his works of pre-eminence and alive in all the manuscripts adorning various institutes.

This Journal not only pays homage to Prof. Shirani but also presents an interesting theme to study a multifaceted man of titanic stature. It attempts to read Prof. Shirani through his works which are considered to be the masterpieces of the highest magnitude based on original sources. It also aims to paint Prof. Shirani as a great researcher, palaeographer and orientalist in true colours; what he had extracted from the original sources, he used to represent it with tenor, ardour and with all calculated caution and care. His masterly cultivated talent had always been within the writings and within the interlinear spaces of the texts he studied. He had got hold of writer's pen, his tongue and his quill, moving and running. From the strokes and ligatures of pen, he determined eras and epochs by studying peculiarities and characteristics of palaeography and calligraphy of different eras. All the scriptures and scripts though obsolete or defunct, were at his tips.

His masterly cultivated writings and stilted way of presenting facts give fillip to the undiscovered things disclosed before the scholarly community with authenticity and accuracy. By reading his discussions and deliberations presented analytically, one can feel with considerable amount of certainty as if Prof. Shirani were himself existing in the epochs and periods dealt with. For Prof. Shirani was an accomplished and applauded man of letters endowed with penetrating perception, intellectual acumen and cultivated aptitude of analysing and examining genuine facts for presenting hypotheses and syntheses.

He was not only an orientalist but a versatile litterateur, veteran historian, doyen critic and multifaceted genius of the highest calibre, India has ever produced. He has widened the outlets to the oriental research and historical criticism and reoriented historiography with a bias of original sources and textual rendition. He was not only an exalted historian and distinguished philologist but an unrivalled critic also who first came forward in teaching the scholarly community through the medium of original sources.

Born and schooled at Tonk he also got his further education in Lahore. After accomplishing his Persian education, his learned father Munshi Ismail Khan, sent his promising son Mahmud Khan Shirani for

doing Bar-at law in England; but on account of pecuniary difficulties and domestic affairs caused by his father's demise in 1906, he could not complete his coveted career embarked upon. He had battled hard in prosecuting his education there. Luzac and Company London appointed him as an adviser for dealing with antiquities, coins, inscriptions and manuscripts. He was also awarded Sir Ouseley Scholarship for learning Arabic under the seasoned supervision of Prof. Arnold. During his historical stay at England, he founded Pan Islamic Society and an oriental library. In 1913 Mahmud Shirani returned to his mother land but could not leave for England on account of the first World War. He then began to write critical and literary articles and also some remarkable poems in the reputed Urdu Journals, which earned applause and acclaim from the scholarly circles. His masterpiece "Punjab main Urdu" which appeared in the "Urdu Quarterly" in instalments reoriented the theory of linguistics altogether, which was released in 1928, put landmarks in the Urdu and Persian Studies.

His consecutive research papers, books renditions, recensions and critically edited reviews and other masterly propounded theses and monographs admitted him in an academy of highly exalted professors and doyen litterateurs. He regularly contributed research papers and critical articles to the Oriental College Magazine. Among these universally applauded articles, he often exposed the historical fallacies, defunct myths and anecdotes gleaned from internal evidences with a strong bias of original sources.

With a mastery over palaeography, epigraphy, sigillography, prosody, museology etc. coupled with a highly cultivated expertise in manuscripts, paper, pen and ink, he made sensational discoveries in the history of Persian literature while criticising Allamah Shibli's monumental work entitled Shi'rul-Ajam. He also attempted to expose mythical approaches to historiography shrouded in spurious facts. His sarcastic and scathing criticism on Maulana Abdul Ghani's Literary History of Persian and Prof. Habib's rendition of Amir Khusrau's Khazain ul-Futuh

made him recognised in the scholarly hemisphere. His further works of pre-eminence such, as *Prithiviraj Rasa*, *Firdausi per Char Maqale*, *Khaliq Bari* and criticism over *Diwan-i Zauq* and *Ab-i Hayat*, *Urwat ul-Wusqa*, *Qur'an-i Karim ki Ek Qadeem Tafsir*, *Majmu'a-i-Naghz* and many other works comprising critical reviews, annotations, bibliographical notices, analytical approaches of historiographical and palaeographical importance are the masterpieces of his systematic and sophisticated research of the highest magnitude.

To our sheer setback all such pioneering and scholastic works, having been consigned in oblivion and obscurity, became out of print.

He was the titanic orientalist who revived and reoriented the research in historiography by deducting epoch-making and historical achievements, but it was only his promising grandson Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani who revived the exhilarating achievements of his scholar grand-father Prof. Shirani. Dr. Mazhar Mahmud after compiling all the writings of his grand-father very scholarly edited and brought out *Maqalat-i Shirani* in eight volumes alongwith a voluminous work of his *Makatib*. He has really rendered a great service in cultivating and promoting potential values of oriental research.

With a view to pay homage to Prof. Shirani we have endeavoured hard in bringing out a Shirani commemorative volume on the eve of his centenary celebrations in four languages viz Urdu, Persian, Hindi and English. Dr. Mazhar Mahmud Shirani an illustrious grandson of a scholarly accomplished grand-father, Professor, Govt. College Shaikhupura, Pakistan, Prof. S. A. H. Abidi, Head of Persian Department, Delhi University Prof. Nazeer Ahmed of Aligarh Muslim University, Mr. Banki Bihari Lal a promising disciple of Prof. Shirani, Maulana Manzoor ul-Hasan Barakati of Dar ul-Uloom Khalilia, Tonk, Maulana Hakim Muhammad Imran Khan of Tonk, Shaukat Ali Khan (the editor), Sahibzadah Saeed Ahmad Khan of Tonk, Nawwabzadah Khalil Ahmad Khan of Jaipur, Sahibzadah Hamid Saeed Khan Sahil, Azizullah Khan Shirani and Miss

Anwarunnisa Nadira are the writers who contributed their papers for the Urdu section while Amjad Ali Khan and Azizullah Shirani contributed their valuable articles in Hindi section.

We are fortunate enough in including a very scholarly paper of Dr. Haider Shehryar Naqawi of Isfahan University Iran, for the Persian section. The erudite Persian scholar has lavishly eulogized Prof. Shirani's contribution by highlighting his research pursuits in oriental studies.

In English section, we have only one erudite paper of Dr. Bhagwat Saroop a talented student of Prof. Shirani. His illuminating paper depicting reminiscences of his revered teacher, has invariably added lustre and dignity to the Journal. His analytical and critical study on Firdausi's Shahnamah is really remarkable, the essence of which has very scholarly been presented in this paper. By reading this paper one can easily understand that Prof. Bhagwat Saroop has thoroughly studied Prof. Shirani who had deeply studied Shahnamah. The stilted way of highlighting his teacher's scholarly attainments and research contributions, Dr. Saroop has successfully treated of multifaceted faculties of a highly exalted scholar, critic and historian combined in one—Prof. Mahmud Shirani, for which his efforts commendably deserve applause and acclaim.

Last but not the least I feel extremely grateful to esteemed K. K. Bhatnagar, whose erudite foreword written with marked interest, is like an invaluable and ornate frontispiece to this festchrift. He has not only profusely eulogized the contributions of Prof. Shirani but also lavishly highlighted the achievements of the Institute. In this sense, his foreword is of immense value and worth.

Shaukat Ali

'AX-I TAHRĪR
Prof. Maḥmud Shirani

Handwritten text in Persian script, likely a manuscript or a page from a book. The text is dense and covers most of the page. At the top right, there is a small, faint stamp or signature. The handwriting is cursive and typical of the early 20th century. The page is aged and shows some wear and discoloration.