

'Tazkiratush Shuara': A Solitary codex of "Mukhlis"

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ABSTRACT

The paper is a description of a rare manuscript - 'Tazkiratush Shurah' housed at Tonk Arabic and Persian Research Institute (Rajasthan) and authored by Annad Ram 'Mukhlis'- with a brief introductory account of Persian literature in India. After introducing the author of the manuscript and his contributions, it annotates the manuscript, especially its literary significance and shares his experience of editing the manuscript as a part of present author's Ph.D thesis.

KEYWORDS

Persian Literature, Persian Poetry, Manuscript Editing

INTRODUCTION

The history of Persian literature is inter-woven to the history of India. Its origin can be traced with the advent of Muslim adventurers, caravans of traders and Muslim rulers. Long before Muhammad b. Qasim's conquest of Sindh in 12th Century A.D., the exchange of commodities (indigenous and foreign) through the persistent process of Arab travelers via Afghanistan and Persia, paved way for the origin, evaluation and encouragement of Arabic and Persian in India. Basic works, commentaries on holy Quran and treatises on holy Traditions were propounded with commentaries, super commentaries and glosses. Thus Indo-Arabic and Indo-Persian literature was compiled and litterateurs and poets like Hasan Nizami, Amir Khusrau, Amir Sijzi, As-Saghani and others contributed a lot in the advancement and furtherance of Arabic and Persian in India. The

continuous conquests of Mahmud of Ghaznah and the advent of Muhammad Ghorī and the establishment of Turkish Empire in India (slave dynasty) accelerated the pace of popularization particularly of Persian as it continued to serve as the official language from 1206 to 1857 A.D. Innumerable codices, commentaries and treatises were composed. Masud Salman, Hasan Nizami, Badra Chach, Minhaj Siraj, Amir Khusrau, Hasan Sijzi, Siraj Afif, Abul Fazl, Faizi, Urfi, Chandra Bhan, Mirza Manohar Das Tausani, Lachchmi Narayan Shafiqe, Bhagwan Das etc are only a few names among the illustrated galaxy of poets, scholars and litterateurs. Histories, autobiographies, biographies, literary masterpieces and collectanea and compendia were propounded to the enrichment of Indo-Persian Literature. The first known Tazkirah 'Lubab ul-Albab' was basically compiled in India in 12th Century A.D. Besides, along list of Tazkirahs of Persian poets exists which were prepared in India.

The Manuscript: An Introduction

Among these Tazkirahs (bio-bibliographical works) '*Tazkiratush-shuara'* of Mukhlis b. Raja Hirdi Ram Khatri Lahauri (d. 1164/1751), is ostensibly an autograph of the writer. It comprises 180 folios each of 33x13 cm. size comprising 15 lines. Its script is Nasta'liq with an impact of Shikasta, with occasional marginal notes, corrections, collations and addenda and errata also written somewhere in cursive hand. The manuscript is the only known transcript in the world. The manuscript, once adorned Maharajas Public Library, Jaipur, was transferred to A.P.R.I, Tonk. Its original accession No. is JPR 3319, S.No. 304 (**Khan, n. p**).

Anand Ram Mukhalis

The author, Anand Ram Mukhlis, son of Raja Hirdi Ram Kayastha born at Sodhra District, Sialkot, Lahore (**Storey, n.p**) was a wakil (Political Agent) of Itimad ud-Daulah - the Minister of the Emperor

Muhammad Shah (**Storey, n.p**). He was also wakil of Abus Samad Khan, Nazim Subah, Lahore in 1133 A.H./1720 A.D (**Storey, n.p**) and was conferred upon an enviable title of Rai Rayan (**Reiu, n.p**). *Mukhlis* had cultivated a great deal of knowledge in Persian literature and started composing poetry first under the tutelage of *Bedil* and subsequently *Siraj ud Din Khan 'Arzu'* a fast friend. His house in Delhi was frequented by many men of letters and poets. He died in 1164/1751 and left besides his Persian Diwan (Rekhta poetry) (**Ethe, 1707**). *Mukhlis* is towering and titanic figure of the age on account of his profound and seasoned knowledge of Persian Literature and discerning intellect and superb ingenuity. He is universally applauded scholar of highest calibre, and is considered to be a patron of art and literature. Among his contemporaries, he is recognized as a lighthouse (**Abdullah, n.p**)

Every Tazkira has lavishly eulogized and has placed him in flying colours. Sayyid Ghulam Ali Nasim called him "Sihpiri Sakhun war" (*Fakhar-i, Urfi wa Anwari*) and the crowning glory of 'Urfi and Anwari" (**Nashtar-i-Ishq, n.p**).

Arzu has depicted him as one of the unrivalled personages of the age (Majmaun-Nafais P. 835 as referred to S. Abdulla), *Walah Daghistani* in his monumental work *Nishtari Ishq* has very ably eulogised (Nishtari Ishq Ms. preserved in Arabic Persian Research Instiute, Tonk). Similarly *Ghulam Ali Azad* in his erudite *Tazkira Khizani Amira*, has commended him greatly (**Azad, n.p**)

Mukhlis is not only an erudite pedagogue and a masterly practised prose writer as well as a seasoned scholar of multifaceted faculties. No history of Persian Literature can ever ignore his conspicuous contribution to the cultivation of Persian studies. He is not only a prominent poet but a prolific writer who has authored innumerable works among them the following are extant:

- (i) '*Diwan-i Mukhlis*'- Comprising lyrical poems and verses.
- (ii) '*Pari Khanah*'- An album of calligraphic specimens and

- drawings with an introduction on the fine art.
- (iii) '*Ruqqat-i Mukhlis*' - a collection of his own letters redacted in 1149/1736 (see Oriental College Magazine Vol. 4, 1930).
 - (iv) '*Kharitah-i Tawil*' - a detailed letter written by the royal order of Muhammad Shah to a Safavid King of Iran on his accession.
 - (v) '*Chamanistan*' - written in 1159/1746 - a collection of anecdotes, accounts of some contemporaries description of trees, flowers and fruits, admonitions, witty sayings and maxims etc. It was edited at Lucknow in 1877.
 - (vi) '*Hangamah-i Ishq*'- written in 1152/1739 - the romantic story of Kunwar Sundr Sen of Karnatak and Rani Chand Parbha (Ms. Bankipur, Patna)
 - (vii) '*Karnamah-i Ishq*'- written in 1144/1731-2, - the love story of prince Gauhar of China and princess Mamlakat (illustrated) (Bankipur, Patna).
 - (viii) '*Intikhab Tuhfah-i Sami*'- an abridgment of Sam Mirza's Tazkirah (Ms. India office, London 718)
 - (ix) '*Tazkirah-i Anand Ram*'- a history of the war of Muhammad Shah with Nadir Shah, (See Irvine Later Mughals II P. 380) 22 pages were translated by Lt. Perkins : Elliot and Dowson, History of India Vol. VIII.
 - (x) '*Safar Namah*'- An account of a journey from Delhi to Muktesar in 1150/1737 : Ethe 2724, Rampur (See Nadhir Ahmad 61)
 - (xi) '*Mirat ul- Istilah*' - a lexicon of poetical phrases and proverbial sentences. He has given incidentally the historical notices relating to Delhi court and to the celebrated contemporaries (Completed in 1157/1744) (Rieu III pp 997 b.) It is a store house of the practices and administrative terminology in vogue which can not be found else where such as titles, kinds of Jagirs, Dustur,

salary chak (called Brat), Dafteri, Tankhah captioned as Dafteri Tan, Balapaush Mir Tauzak Awwal, Mir Tauzak Duam, Sar-Nashin, Qafilah, Tannab Qauraq, Qarqawal, so were the social and cultural terms and matrimonial practices and terms.

TAZKIRATUSH SHU'ARA: AN ANNOTATION

Tazkirat ush-Shu'ara is the unique codex of eminence which has not been located elsewhere in the world. Even **Storey** has not referred to this invaluable *Tazkirah* comprising the biographical descriptions of 402 Persian poets arranged alphabetically along with specimens of their poetical compositions. It is composed and transcribed by the author himself who has referred to him as "In Mukhlis Hich Madan." While quoting his verses he has also referred himself "*Raqim-i-Sutur Faqir Mukhlis*." In dealing with poets in the category "*Mim*", he has also dealt with himself as "*Raqimi Sutur Faqir Mukhlis*," meaning "the writer of these lines humble "Mukhlis" while treating of his teacher Mirza Baidil (**Khan, n. p a**). **Storey** has mentioned only ten works among them this important *Tazkirah* has not been referred to because of the fact that this autograph remained inaccessible having been the only unique work.

The manuscript being the solitary codex remained in oblivion from the vigilant eyes of the scholars and savants and from havoc and ravage of time it reached under the patronage of Maharajas of Jaipur - the patron of art, culture and literature. "From internal evidences, **Khan (n.p)** asserts in his valued catalogue," that it is an autograph (penned in by the author himself) as he has quoted himself at various places as "*Raqimi-Sutur*" (meaning the scribe of these lines) "*Faqir Mukhlis*" (meaning humble mukhlis) "*Mukhlis Hich Madan*" (meaning humble mukhlis) and "*Dakhil-i Tazkirah-i Khud Namud*" (meaning entered in his own *Tazkirah*) (**Khan, n. p b**). Some omissions and errors were corrected in the foot-notes. A clear note, on

the margin, appears to be penned in by the author himself, the fly-leaf of which bears the signatures of *Anand Ram Mukhlis*. Some mistakes and linguistic errors hints that it might have been transcribed by some scribe but the internal evidences with external witnesses prove that this is the autograph of the author himself.

This unique work of eminence deals with some of those poets which were not found available in other Tazkirahs. Some of the internal evidences throw a flood of light on the Hindi proverbs, particular phrases of typical Persian interspersed with local dialects. The manuscript also treats of some contemporary poets, personages, philanthropists, pedagogues and prince-pioneers. It is not only a store house of literary values and cultural heritage but also a historical document of socio-economic and historical trends during the last regime of Mughal India. Considering the importance and significance of this *Tazkirah* an attempt has been made to delve deep in the informatory mines of the text and thoroughly study external and internal evidences by collaborating the informatory source material gathered from contemporary and modern works; manuscripts and codices and have critically edited it with annotations and foot-notes in the Ph.D thesis submitted by *Salut Ahmad Khan (the author)* for award of Doctorate degree. That work so evolved is divided into an introduction and two sections further sub divided alphabetically.

The introduction highlights the significance of Tazkirahs in the context of historiography tracing the origin, evolution and history of compilation of Tazkirahs. Tazkirahs are divided into four sections (a) Tazkirahs of poets (b) Tazkirahs of Sufis and saints (c) Tazkirahs of celebrated scholars and (d) Historical biographies covering poets and scholars.

Important Tazkirahs have been dealt critically while furnishing bibliographical survey of one hundred Tazkirahs approximately. Efforts are made therein to give biographical notes like life,

achievements and works of *Anand Ram Mukhlis* from various works of eminence besides his contribution to Persian Literature, estimation, his Persian knowledge, style and diction with specimen of his verses. Besides his works, *Tazkiratush- Shu'ara* and its significance evaluating its internal and external evidences, the significance of marginal notes and addenda attempting to present its critical flavour. The first section aims at presenting a critical account of the works of Mukhlis with comparative study in the light of other contemporary *Tazkirahs*. The second section covers the critical and textual edition with foot-notes. An attempt was made to furnish textually edited version by deciphering text in the foot-notes. The present work is not immune from errors and omissions. The names of places, persons and poets are often wrongly written which may probably be by omission or slip of the pen. The textual study of the *Tazkirah* has specified the errors committed by the author with additional footnote.

Annotations on the important personages ranking in the *Tazkirah* are authentically furnished in the foot-notes. Few insignificant and anonymous poets still remain un-attempted. A bibliography of manuscripts is appended for consultation and printed works used for the study (thesis). An index of poets alphabetically arranged is furnished at the beginning of the edited work.

The work is edited with following Chapters

Introduction

- (I) Contribution of India to Persian Literature.
- (II) The importance of Tazkirahs.
 - (a) Literary heritage as gleaned from Tazkirahs.
 - (b) Historical and cultural glimpses gathered from the Tazkirahs.
 - (c) Life and works of the author.
 - (d) Importance and evaluation of the Tazkirah .

- (III) Comparative study of the Tazkirahs.
 - (a) Literary and cultural value.
 - (b) Historical perspective.
 - (c) Contemporary information pertaining to socio-economic and literary conditions of the age.
- (IV) A critical and textual edition of the Tazkirah with annotations and foot-notes.
- (V) Bibliography.

CONCLUSION

Editing of *Tazkirahs* is a tedious, time consuming but important task. A number of Tazkirahs in Persian literature are yet to be edited. Among them, *Tazkiratush-Shu'ara of Anand Ram Mukhlis* is a unique and significant. The editing of '*Tazkirat ush-Shu'ara*', an undeciphered and un-identified manuscript, has helped to explore and preserve critical and textual edition of the manuscript for the scholarly commonwealth and equally will prove an asset to the Indo-Persian Literature.

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