

Book Reviews

***Pakistan at Knife's Edge*, by M.B. Naqvi, New Delhi: Roli Books Pvt. Ltd., 2010, pages: 264, price: Indian Rupees 350.**

M.B. Naqvi was Pakistan's one of the most brilliant and astute journalists, who analyzed the national and international affairs for more than fifty years in the most influential newspapers and periodicals of the country. Contributing, in various phases of his career, for papers like *The Indus Times*, *The Observer*, *Gulf News*, *Dawn*, *Times of India* and *Daily Star*, and periodicals like *Newsline*, *Globe*, *Herald*, etc. Naqvi kept a peculiar identity of his own. He had always been thoroughly equipped with the knowledge of the subject he was dealing with and was highly objective despite being some one who had his own bent of mind and preferences. He was by his own admission a supporter of the liberal causes but he never let his persuasions interfere with the portrayal of a given situation even if it did not subscribe to his own personal views. In his last few years he wanted to write a book which could bring to light the essence of his life-long research and analysis about the state and society in Pakistan. He also wanted his study to be helpful in identifying the future course that Pakistan could possibly take. The present book is the outcome of that effort, yet while going through the pages of the book, one wonders if this actually is that definitive work that he aspired to produce. While reading it, it appears that the author ventures into drawing from historical events, conclusions about the persistent crises of the Pakistani state and society, the historical weaknesses of the state and the gap that existed between the realities of the country and the ambitions of its elite, to explain the contemporary malaise the country finds itself in. The book was designed in the last few years of General Pervaiz Musharraf; it was finished by the time he was removed from power and a civilian regime was restored. So the terrain of the book is rather imbalanced as historical issues get only brief mention and explanation, while Musharraf regime, particularly the post-9/11 period,

get a major portion of the space. Then, the author also tries to bring in a South Asian perspective given his concern for peace in the region. Though, as a whole the work seems to lack a well-knitted theme running from past to the present and leading to the future, yet one may not find it difficult to identify the basic assertions and the major arguments of the author. Most of these assertions are convincing and quite objective, too.

Naqvi begins by identifying the major contradictions of the Pakistani society, the first being the dichotomy between the state and the people. The state dominated by the military has over the years acquired the status of a national security state rather than a public-welfare one. The civilian regimes also worked within the parameters of national security which was given preference over social development. This character of the state was consolidated under American support and patronage which was acquired by fulfilling American geo-strategic needs in the region. The consequent military build-up alienated the state from the people who progressively became pessimistic about the country and their own place in it.

The second fault-line was provided by the ethnic divisions which have defined the country's politics for the major part of its history. To add to the vulnerability, the ideological crisis weakened the concept of the nation state in Pakistan. The ruling elite's assumption that invoking the religious sentiments would help bring people together, miserably failed. On the contrary, the more the emphasis was given to the Islamic ideology the more it divided the people along sectarian lines.

The social and economic disparities also widened with the passage of time. With its weak infrastructure, limited resources and a political economy of dependence on the donor agencies, Pakistan could hardly feed millions of its poor.

As if this was not sufficient to make the country vulnerable and inherently weak, the state institutions also gradually developed their own differences so much so that hitherto pliable judiciary came to a head-on collision with the chief executive, a military ruler, General Musharraf. The lawyers' movement came as a very refreshing development and it is due to it that the regime began to lose its credibility, if there was any, and hold on power. A weakened Musharraf was not of any use for the Americans who had all along supported him for his 'enlightened moderation', and later due to his role in the region after the 9/11 incident.

The 2008 elections did bring a civilian regime in power but this alone could not change the basic character of the Pakistani state, nor was it in a position to change the major policy framework of the state. One may also argue that perhaps it also did not have the capacity to do so, hence, according to the author the crisis remained there and this is not a

usual crisis Pakistan has faced many a time. It is a crisis of paramount importance on the resolution of which rests the fate of the country. The author presents three expected scenarios for the future: The first scenario is that the Pakistani social elite with a civilian government would work as they have worked so far under American dictates. By doing so they would not achieve anything rather would further alienate themselves from the public. The second scenario would be that the US would punish 'Pakistan *ala* the Cambodian model'. The dangerous consequences of this would be further Talibanization of the country.

The third scenario is that 'Pakistani leadership, army, new president and various governments stick together and decide to resist Islamic zealotry by extending as much modernization, democratic rights and fruits of economic development as they possibly can.' (p. 259). The author thinks that this third scenario is difficult and less likely to be realized yet this is the only possible means of the country's survival.

The major framework of the author's thesis cannot be contested as the history and political economy of the country both are well taken care of while analyzing the causes of the country's persistent crises and its vulnerability. As lately Pakistan's fate as a nation state is being debated, the present book certainly helps understand why we reached where we are today and how can we rescue ourselves from this situation.

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***Revisiting Student Politics in Pakistan*, by Iqbal Haider Butt, Gujranwala: BARGAD, 2009. Pages, 180, Price not mentioned.**

Student politics has almost always remained a contentious issue in Pakistan. Successive governments, particularly the military regimes – which have governed the country for almost half of its history – have tended to discourage students' taking to political means for the assertion of their rights and demands. Perturbed by student activism, these governments held, and tried to convince, that the students' prime concern should be their studies and their taking to political course would hamper their development. So much so, that in the early 1980s, the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq imposed a ban on the student unions in the educational institutions. The ban was also upheld by the Supreme Court later. Since then, unions have not operated in the universities and colleges of Pakistan, and despite the announcement of the lifting of ban by the present government, the announcement has not been realized

though the government is in office for over three years. Perhaps it would not be wrong to assume that the state still finds student politics unnecessary and even harmful for its objectives and continuation of its policies.

Contrary to the perception of the state and various governments the opposition politics not only encourages students' involvement in political matters but in certain cases relies heavily on it. Political parties belonging to different shades of opinion, ranging from extreme right to extreme left, have always pursued their goals through the involvement of the youth and the students. It is interesting that many of these parties, after coming to power, look upon student activism in an unfavourable way. As to what extent politics in Pakistan has owed to student activism, one may go back to look into the Bengali language movement spearheaded by the students in East Bengal in 1952. The passion ignited by the movement culminated years later in the separation of East Pakistan, though, to put the record straight, the language issue was just one, though a more important, issue among a host of reasons which compelled the Bengalis to revolt against the centralized Pakistani state. The Sindhi, Baloch, Pakhtun, and other nationalist movements also drew immense strength from the induction of students into their folds.

The religio-political organizations of Pakistan – parties like Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e Islam (JUI) and Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e Pakistan (JUP), have also had their student wings which served their purposes well.

The banning of student unions did affect the environment in the educational institutions where the constructive and healthy activities like debates, colloquiums, *musha'iras*, sports, and other co-curricular activities came to a halt. But the reason for which the unions were banned, that is, the violence which had engulfed the institutions at the time of the imposition of the ban, continued as before. As the ban was not imposed on student organizations and the students' wings of the political parties, those of them which had taken to violent means in the past, were now free to operate as before, and in cases, with additional emphasis on violent means. Thus, as a whole, the imposition of ban, on the one hand depoliticized the institutions, and, on the other, weaponized them. As since General Zia's regime Pakistani society, progressively became depoliticized, the depoliticization of educational institutions strengthened the wider depoliticization. An apparent shift in this situation appeared in 2007 when the lawyers' movement was launched against the regime of General Pervaiz Musharraf, whose decision to fire the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, ignited a protest movement of the lawyers, whose ranks were soon joined by

students, civil society organizations and the public at large. The successive movement which eventually helped remove Musharraf from the seat of power, encouraged a few to revisit the role of students in politics after almost quarter of a century of a ban on their unions. The present book is a venture in that direction.

Contrary to the observation of a flap-writer of the book, it does not provide 'a comprehensive historic and analytical account of student politics'. The author himself does not make any claim of the sort. The book, spread over four chapters, has a simple scheme. Written in a form that suits a report rather than a book, the book begins with an executive summary to be followed by introduction in which the background of the project at hand, the research goals, strategic objectives and methodology and scope have been outlined. The second chapter 'Mapping the Literature' is supposed to indicate the earlier works done on the subject. The third chapter discusses the background of student politics and analyzes the current phase of academic and higher education institutions and their propensity of involving in politics. All these chapters together form not more than sixty pages which is too small a space to divulge in any in-depth and detailed historical or/and analytical study. The fourth chapter, covering something like eighty pages, reproduces interviews of twenty-four former student leaders and activists belonging to various shades of opinion.

The basic assertion of the book seems to suggest that in the past students belonging to different ideological camps played important role in politics but after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the ideological contest has also come to an end. In the globalized world the nature of student politics witnessed in the past would have no place. Instead, activism would have its orientation in new realities of the globalized world and it would also invent quite new means of registering protest. In the new environment, apart from the print and electronic media, information and communication technologies, that is, social media would play the pivotal role. Student politics would now be based on issues rather than ideologies. The author finds a useful expression of his formulation in the lawyers' movement in which some of the high-profile, and also, in cases, elitist institutions' students played active role. The book was written two years back. Had it been written now, in 2011, the author must not have missed to refer to the recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. Tahreer Square has emerged as a symbol of protest in an age of social media.

Attractive and impressive it may be, the argument may not be taken on its face value. In fact, a whole range of questions comes to mind. Was ideological politics a product of only the Cold War. Did

politics have nothing to do with ideology before the advent of the Soviet Union. What is issue-oriented politics. Would not a cluster of issues having the potential to put people on the path of protest, not accompany the creation of an ideology as ideologies are not pre-ordained but are created as part of a political project. Would not a mere issue-oriented uprising come to an end with the resolution of the issue without impacting the system in any significant manner. Moreover, this also needs to be considered as to how many youth in poor countries like Pakistan have access to social media. Not only this, can the social media replace the organized political platforms and also fill the space created by the supposed end of ideology. These questions do merit answers which one may not find at least in the book under review.

While highlighting the background of student movements in Pakistan, the author refers to four phases or what he describes as 'milestone movements'. The first is the Pakistan movement; the second is the uprising of 1968-69; the third is the Afghan war; and the fourth is the movement against imposition of emergency by General Musharraf. As for the last, the emergency was imposed on 3 November 2007, but the lawyers' movement and the students' involvement in it had started soon after the removal of the Chief Justice on 7 March of that year. However, it is not important when this movement started; there is no denying the fact that students of some of the prominent institutions like LUMS were quite active in this movement. What may be more questionable is the reference to a students' movement built along the Afghan war. The author holds that 'with the advent of Afghan jihad, the militant groups [became] active as mass mobilizers and recruiting agencies of youth for this jihad' (p.25). The author further holds that 'Afghan jihad period gives us stark examples of students' role in national politics. This however mixes both procedural and illegitimate activism as compared to other milestone movements whose apparent purpose was peaceful and within the domains of law.' (p.28) The induction of a few youngsters in the Afghan jihad made possible by the channels of political parties like Jamaat-e Islami was in fact an isolated happening which had nothing to do with the overall student politics geared towards rights and fulfillment of demands. Moreover, the recruitment of students hailing from primarily its own student's wing, Islami Jamiat-e-Taliba by the Jamaat-e-Islami was being done as part of the overall policy of the Zia-ul-Haq regime, which on its part was playing a role in the American strategy against Soviet Union. This recruitment of students by a religio-political party in no way can be considered as Pakistani students' movement. One wonders how this became a part of the study presented in the present book.

The author has quite successfully identified some of the interesting features of contemporary higher education environment in Pakistan. Its emphasis on the 2007 movement as being an 'urban, more receptive to mixed gender interactions, non-affiliated with political parties and [its] extensively using virtual space, web-blogging, electronic messaging and contemporary tools of communication', is worth-noting. The observation is important, and useful; it may also be relevant for subsequent movements, if they come, but this may not be taken uncritically. Students' involvement in politics is important and useful, and it is all the more significant in the case of a country like Pakistan where rights are acquired through struggle and are not simply showered as gifts. But for the attainment of these rights and the realization of meaningful and progressive activism it is imperative that the middle, the lower-middle and the poor class students should not be excluded and a movement of only the privileged youth should not be taken as a movement which could correct the distortions inherent in our education system and overall social system.

In the section on literature review, the author refers to a few publications which deal with student activism but such works are too few. In the first place not much original research has been done on the subject while some of the notable published sources have also been missed a reference here. Dr Sarfraz Mirza's work on Muslim Students' Federation's role in the Pakistan movement and Professor Salma Zaman's work on the 1968-69 student movement as well as Tariq Ali's book, *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power*, covering, apart from other things, the same period of 1968-69 could have enriched the study. The conclusions deduced by the author are quite useful particularly those dealing with the interaction between the political parties and the student politics. The author is right in observing that the political parties relied in the past on the student organisations because these parties faced repressive laws disqualifying or discouraging them from taking part in the political process. This is true because in many a case political parties were left with the work of their student wings while the mother parties stood dissolved as in the case of JI in 1963 and National Awami Party in 1975. But this may not be the sole explanation for the close interaction between the parties and their student wings. The major reason perhaps has been the recruitment of cadre by the parties from their student wings. Almost the entire leadership of today's JI, Muttahida Qaumi Movement and the National Party (primarily a Baloch organisation) comes from the student organizations. As all these parties are primarily middle-class organizations, one may also argue that student activism had been, so far, the only means through which the middle class in Pakistan entered into

the mainstream national politics, otherwise dominated by landed aristocracy, capitalists, clergy, and the retired military and civil officers.

Finally, a few words about the last chapter based on interviews. Though the interviews were not conducted in a structured manner nor does one find a balance between the space given to different interviewees, this is the best part of the book. It is full of information flowing from those who had been in politics in their youthful days. While some shed light on the intricate details of their activities, others reveal a lot about their interaction with their mother political parties. Some of the revelations are of historical nature and would be made use of by researchers in their serious works. A glimpse of this would help understand what is being said here. Mr. Saeed Saleemi, a senior member and office-bearer of JI reveals a lot about Afghan jihad which, according to him, poured money into the Jamat's coffers. To a question whether the Afghan war also brought funds for the students of the Jamiat, he said, 'Yes they did, but in my view this had a lot of bad effects, too. Before so much money came in, Jamiat was committed to simplicity in everything... we couldn't dream of the luxury that came with the Afghan war, not that I know of pilferage but it did spoil the austere habit of ideological people. We couldn't even dream of entering places like Pearl Continental Hotel but when Gulbadin Hekmatyar was being feted, we held the reception in the PC. When arms, cars, and money poured in, it affected all of us. Not everyone has a character as strong as Qazi Hussain Ahmed. And the Afghans were not sincere, I feel. First they exploited the Soviet Union, now they use the Americans. They carry satellite telephone and deal in dollars' (p. 131). The section on interviews, carries a number of such revealing statements. As a whole the present book, though not complete and exhaustive on its theme, is a useful work and should not be missed by any one endeavouring to produce a substantive work on student politics in Pakistan.

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***Sociological Perspectives on Poverty*, edited by Nazrul Islam, Bangladesh Sociological Society, Ankur Prakashani, Dhaka, 2010, pp.380, price, Tk. 400.**

Poverty is a multifaceted social reality which has been largely relegated to the economic scholarship and analysis. Though sociologists of the past have deliberated on this issue yet with the emphasis upon data, quantitative methods and perhaps with the advancement of global

economic institutions, poverty was divested of its social features, thus it was limited to the ministries of economic affairs, largely manipulated by the political elite of the society. So poverty became an issue of political parties' manifestos as well, such as *roti, kapra aur makan* (food, clothes and shelter) in Pakistan. Due to the underdevelopment of social sciences, except economics, this glaring reality of over half of the under-fed, under-clothed and poorly sheltered populace has been distorted. Its solutions were also sought by the economists and political scientists, who were largely ill-informed or ignorant especially due to lack of qualitative data. Furthermore, the 'elite' class of the developing countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other countries in the South Asian region, has consciously maintained its social and mental distance from the down-trodden. Who needs to know about the obvious hatred even atrocities of the landed class on the tenants in rural Pakistan. This is no more a forlorn reality; it persists even today. Bonded labour, private jails, maltreatment of women through the institutions of *jirga*, *panchayat*, or ancient customs of *karo-kari*, killing in honour killing, *wani*, *swara*, etc., all allude to the fact that poverty is much more a sociological issue, deserving a thorough analysis by the sociologists, along side the economists. This is the fact which makes the book under review very much relevant for the Pakistani society whereas the ideas expressed in it have a universal application for all the poor who live on the face of globe be it the global North or global South.

The book comprises eleven selected article published in the *Bangladesh Journal of Sociology*. The journal was started in 2004, and it published its special issue on poverty as Volume 1, Number 2 in 2004. The articles in this issue and the following ones, dealt with various aspects of poverty. Not only that the book is published, but the journal is regularly available online for free download, hence the utility of the articles becomes manifold. The faces painted in it largely belong to the soil of Bangladesh, but Bangladesh itself has been a test case for having the horrible history of poverty and commendable efforts to overcome it, too. This book is also a celebration of this accomplishment as well. In a disaster-prone country, where famine, wars, external invasions, colonization, and anti-colonial struggle have set records in history, the effort of the nation to struggle with poverty is documented in this book. It is also a document of southern perspective on poverty, which is bound to be different from the northern one.

The main focus of the book has been on three aspects: (a) conceptualizing poverty from sociological point of view; (b) new theorizing on poverty; and (c) the domestic and international politics of poverty. The contributors have focused on a variety of aspects, such as:

socio-demographic correlates of rural poverty, household strategies to cope with poverty, consensual poverty, normative deprivation in urban Bangladesh, and socio-spatial differentials of political behaviour'. The volume has extensively covered urbanization and rural-urban dimension of poverty. The inevitable linkage of poverty with environment, women, and unrelenting efforts of humanity to get rid of it, is also discussed. Nazrul Islam exposes the 'poverty of World Bank data', by asserting that the 'current sets of WB data are flawed on so many counts that they do not only distort reality, their use amounts to a cruel joke perpetrated on the poor of the world.' (p. 205). The book, though relying very much on data of Bangladesh, has significantly recorded the seminal reality of poverty hence it can be useful for those interested in alleviating poverty anywhere, particularly the developing countries.

The introduction speaks of the juggling of figures by World Bank, its monopoly over generating poverty data used by academia, re-drawing of 'poverty lines', fictitious claims to reduce poverty, and contradiction in Bank's own statements,. The editor asserts: 'Fortunately there have been other and more successful attempts at understanding poverty, often by excluding rather than using World Bank data. Most national level data are far superior to the World Bank data and are more tuned to the realities of each country and region'.(p.16).

S. Aminul Islam points out that though sociology started from its studies into poverty, but later, the middle class bias crept in, distorted its focus, thus it lost its claim on poverty studies, which were taken up by other disciplines. The central point of view of the book is that poverty is a major institution, having its own norms, values and practices, providing business and earning opportunities to the host of academics, NGOs, organizations including World Bank, politicians, while the poor themselves remain hungry, unemployed, and nameless. To overcome this fiasco, the book suggests a new appropriate agency, which can ensure 'a transformation of attitudes and values conducive to increase human capability and efficiency'.¹ (p.373) Aminul Islam has reviewed the theories dealing with poverty beginning with the impression that no sociology of poverty existed around 1972. Two broad traditions available in the 1990s were: Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition and continental mercantilist tradition. Four other types of theories dealing with poverty are Social Darwinian Theory of Poverty, Culture of Poverty, Situational Theory of Poverty, and Structural Theory of Poverty. The social

¹ S. Aminul Islam, 'Overcoming Poverty in Bangladesh: Search for a New Paradigm', in Nazrul Islam (ed.), *Sociological Perspectives on Poverty*, Bangladesh Sociological Society, Ankur Prakashani: Dhaka, 2010, p.373.

exclusion approach of poverty is, however, found more favorable, since it can link up macro and micro processes, and offers a 'multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary view of poverty'. (p.32) Furthermore, this 'perspective allows for the development of a sociologically grounded analysis of poverty. It makes it possible to look into the causes, processes and consequences of poverty as well as the way the discourse of poverty is constructed and deprived people react in a variety of ways to the existing situation of their life.' (p.32). Monirul Islam Khan criticizes the caloric intake method of measuring poverty. The sociological perspectives, according to him, have to focus upon the concepts having core importance in the discipline of sociology – culture or social structure for instance. As poverty is a process, it cannot be treated as merely a condition like deprivation of food, or less income, or even lack of power or of human dignity. To obtain a complete profile of poverty it is suggested to start from the concept of a citizen, as it entails rights, aspirations, and the end of discrimination as a desired condition. Khan has suggested outline for a matrix on sociological profile of poverty defined in terms of agency poor and resources poor. He suggests non-material aspects of poverty as including dependence on own income; membership in a right-based group; and person's being critical about unequal social status. He has included the material aspects of not owning valuable aspects as well. Shahadat Hossain has critically assessed the social theories on poverty and marginality. More importantly he has reviewed the theory of subsistence, theory of relative deprivation and theory of entitlement. He has emphasized the need to develop an integrated theoretical framework for studying urban poverty since he finds the theories of urban poverty and marginality competing with each other.

Coming to the methodology of measuring poverty sociologically, the correlates of consensual poverty used by Mahbubuddin Ahmed include occupation, education, and age as the key determinants, followed by residence and income in decreasing order of significance, whereas he finds gender as the least influential in the construction of social necessity. (p. 129). David Everatt asserts that the failure to define poverty properly is not merely an academic issue, but it affects the delivery mechanism to the poor. The definition determines the focus of policies, i.e. the rationale behind and selection of the services; the target population, and other modalities of delivery as well as of evaluation of the program. He holds that 'long-term and vigorously pursued redistributive strategies and policy frameworks' are needed to eradicate poverty and inequality. (P. 233) Shahadat Hossain in another article has emphasized political participation of the urban poor to ensure

their fair representation, while this is very much needed. He dispels the notion that the urban poor are not interested in politics rather he finds them desperate to end their marginalization through political means (p. 251).

The environmental dimension of poverty and development is dealt with in the article which emphasizes that the commonly referred data of poverty in Bangladesh is not as much relevant as is the issue of floods, cyclones, droughts, and other natural disasters. This article explains the issues of development, poverty reduction, gender, and environmental degradation, to conclude that the adoption of western approaches in this regard proved a failure. The major factors responsible for this failure are identified as: 'lack of good governance and political institution, corruption, western development model, unplanned use of natural resources, defective industrialization and urbanization process, social disparity, exploitation, inequality etc.' (p. 314) Such conclusions endorse the fact that the major features of approaches to deal with poverty and major reasons behind its failure are found invariably in most of the poor and under-developed societies. The alternate model of process of poverty reduction proposed by Aminul Islam (p. 367) can be tested in future efforts of the stakeholders. He, however, finds that 'the greatest barrier to poverty reduction is politics'. (p.369). While elaborating this he points out three elements: the neo-patrimonial state and dysfunctional political culture; fatalistic syndrome of governance; and elites surrendering policy making to the ever-changing fads of international experts. In this sense, he has concluded the argument presented in the book as to at what end the whole exercise of conceptualizing, theorizing, planning, and selecting methodologies or modalities, turns into a failure. There is a lot in it for thinking by the South Asian nations, especially Pakistan, which has been suffering with endemic poverty perpetually and the challenges are growing stronger and stronger with the rise of militancy, changing geo-strategic realities and the very obvious flaws of the system of governance. It is not sufficient to blame only the poor, or to assign the World Bank to suggest solutions, but each and every component of the society has to take part in the process of poverty alleviation. This is true very much for Bangladesh, and, even truer for Pakistan.

***Khayāban-i-Āfrīnīsh wa Mahāmid-i-Khātaman Nabiyīn [na'tiya kalām]* by Amīr Mīnāi, Karachi, Paramount Publishing Enterprise, 2010, pp.320, price Rs. 645, hardcover.**

This book contains much of the hitherto unpublished poetry of Amir Minai [none of the people concerned with the publication of this book viz. editor, Isra'il Ahmad Minai, Dr. Aslam Farrukhi who wrote the introduction, as well as two other persons – Khwaja Razi Haider and Tahir Sultani (who authored prefatory essays) – saw the need to mention the dates of the poet's birth and death – so the uninformed reader must just hazard a guess about it].

The first (and shorter) part titled *Khayābān-i-Āfrīnīsh* is a prose essay on the birth [*mevlīd/maulūd*] of the Holy Prophet (SAW). There is an extensive prose account of the events leading up to the birth of the Holy Prophet interspersed with Urdu and Persian verses (the latter from Jāmi). Then the actual birth and subsequent events (*mī'rāj, hijrah*) with quotations from the *Qasīda Burdah* are presented. The last is an account of the *hilya sharīf* [external appearance] of the Holy Prophet in all its exquisite details ending on a *munājāt* [prayer/invocation].

The second section, *Mahāmid-i-Khātaman Nabiyīn* is in Urdu verse with the inclusion of several unpublished *ghazals, qasīdas, manqabats, mutla's* leading up to the *dīvān* with its alphabetic order of *radīf* starting from *alif* and ending in *yā*. As is usual with *dīvāns*, there are many quatrains [*rubāīyāt*], *tarjī' bands*, five-line stanzas [*mukhammas*], adaptations [*tazmīns*] and verses with Arabic lines woven into the larger [Urdu] texts. As none of the poems have been previously printed, this is a remarkable achievement for which the credit goes to Isra'il Ahmad Minai (a grandson of Amir Minai) who has done his duty devotedly to his learned grandfather.

Amir Minai is famous for his poetic panegyrics in praise of the Holy Prophet and the availability of a large corpus of new material will facilitate the scholars of Urdu literature in studying the new dimensions of Amir Minai's genius now open to them. And this is not the entire corpus of Amir Minai's poetry. There is a vast stock of unpublished MSS, verses, *dīvāns* and random material preserved with Isra'il Ahmad Minai which urgently awaits editorial examination for the purposes of study and research. We hope all this valuable material will also be printed soon and made available to the admirers, critics and students of Urdu literature and especially of Amir Minai. His versatile genius not only covered his poetry on his beloved Prophet but also encompassed lexicography, prose, music, history, metaphors, letters, annotations, translations and expositions. The entire area of his compositions in these

and allied areas has yet to be mapped. Only then can a fully rounded and comprehensive picture of Amir Minai appear in all its aspects.

Isra'il Ahmad Minai and Paramount Publishing Enterprise are to be congratulated for presenting a well-printed volume of attractive format and technical superiority being almost error-free as a result of painstaking proofreading.

Also praiseworthy is Isra'il Ahmad Minai's generosity in thoughtfully making available to the public, researchers and students rare MSS (*makhtūtāt*) of Amir Minai via an Internet website though the project is far from complete.

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***To God belong the Names Most Beautiful* by Neyyar Ehsan Rashid, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad and Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Washington, D.C., USA, 200 pp., US\$ 99.**

Neyyar Ehsan Rashid is the widow of Prof. Dr. Ehsan Rashid, ex-Vice-Chancellor, Karachi University, and an exceptional artist and outstanding calligrapher in her own right.

The volume under review is a reproduction of her paintings depicting [in Arabic] the 99 Names of Allah derived from the Holy Quran. Each *ism* [Name] covers one complete page and is reproduced in colour. Apart from the attachment the painter has to her religion, these pictures are also important for being a modern milestone in the revival of classic Islamic calligraphy that has been evident over the centuries in mosques, palaces and gardens throughout the Islamic world. The use of bold colours and geometrical design impart to the viewer the sense of symmetry and harmony in the universe – all of Divine origin. The calligraphy is direct and marked and is in a style that is the painter's own invention and innovation. Apart from this, an Arabic prayer is placed on the opposite page which is in context to the meaning of the *ism* [Name] depicted and its Arabic translation is also given. The Arabic calligraphy is reflective of the great ornamental Qurans that were in vogue after the 2nd century AH.

'The field of Islamic calligraphy is almost inexhaustible, given the various types of Arabic script and the extension of Islamic culture', writes the well-known Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel in her authoritative work, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* [New York, 1984]. A taste of this extensive area of just one example [calligraphy] in a

harmonious mix of colours is given in this book. This is a source of pride for all Pakistanis – that there are capable persons still working hard and selflessly for the preservation and transmission of the Islamic classical cultural heritage.

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***Hayāt-i-Wahīduzzamān* by Moulvi Mohammad Abdul Haleem Chishti, revised by Neyyar Ehsan Rashid, Karachi, n.d. [2005], pp.320**

Prof. Dr. Ehsan Rashid was Vice-Chancellor, Karachi University and an academic of long standing familiar to those associated with learning and education. His widow, Neyyar Ehsan Rashid, has revised and updated the biography of her learned grandfather ‘Allama Wahiduzzaman [1850–1920]. The biography was originally written some 50 years ago by ‘Abdul-Haleem Chishti [still alive]. During the passage of these five decades, a number of new facts have emerged that were not incorporated in the earlier version. So Neyyar Ehsan Rashid felt it her duty to include these new findings and use the opportunity to also record her personal tribute to her illustrious grandfather. The intimate memories that Neyyar Ehsan Rashid shares with her readers opens the window to an enchanted world full of richness in culture, depth of learning and sincerity towards Islam that has now passed away. These first-hand accounts are perhaps the most valuable part of the book interwoven as they are with the text of the biography penned by an outsider who remains impersonal and detached although appreciative. The core of the book is a fragment of autobiography from the pen of the ‘Allama himself over which the accompanying narrative has been woven.

‘Allama Wahiduzzaman was an extraordinary ‘*aalim* in the classical Islamic tradition. He was well-versed in the literature of Islam [Quran and Hadith] and its associated disciplines [*tafsīr al-Qurān*, *naqd al-Hadīth*, *sīrat*, *tārīkh* and *fiqh*]. He had inherited this great corpus of knowledge from the greatest scholars of the day. He also stayed in Mecca and Medina for several years at different times of his life thus benefitting academically and spiritually by the proximity of the holy places of Islam. This immense collection of MSS and books acquired from far-off places testifies to his eminent status in the world of Islamic scholarship. He himself composed several dozen learned original works apart from translations and commentaries on the Quran and the six

canonical works of Hadith [*sihāh sittah*] and the massive *Lughat al-Hadīth* in 28 large volumes which remain an undisputed testimony to his great erudition and service to Islam. His writings related to the State of Hyderabad [Deccan] are also of historical importance. A detailed account of the available publication and their contents is given in this book [Chapter 7]. King ‘Abdul’ Aziz was so impressed by his scholarship in Arabic and Islamic sciences that he asked him to found the Islamic University of Medina and work as its Rector.

The first chapter gives an account of the Allama’s ancestors, his birth, his initial studies and his *bai‘at* to the great sufi, Fazlur Rahman Ganj Muradabadi ending with his leaving his birthplace Lucknow and departing for the Deccan.

In the second and third chapters, the account is given of his first Hajj, his studies in Medina, his marriage, his second Hajj, the death of his father and son ending with his employment in Hyderabad Deccan.

In the next chapter, the Allama’s attachment to books, his intelligence and his composition of Arabic poetry and expertise in Islamic law is given with examples in each case.

The next chapter gives an account of the Allama’s personal habits and qualities. The most outstanding of these is his regulated timetable for daily work. The account of his retirement, his stay in Medina and his death and burial in Hyderabad is narrated. The detailed description of his available compositions covering the broad spectrum of the Islamic sciences is given.

In conclusion, we may state that the *Hayāt-i-Wahīduzzamān* is a valuable addition to that branch of Islamic literature that covers *sawanih* [biography]. The subject justly belongs to the *tabaqāt al-‘ulemā* [categories of scholars]. Apart from this, it is an emotional tribute of a granddaughter to her beloved grandfather and bespeaks of the ideal reverence that Muslims should have for their elders especially for those who are distinguished for services to Islam.

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