

Contribution of Hindus to Islamic Studies

Zafarul Islam Islahi

This is a distinctive feature of Islamic Studies that this discipline attracts non-Muslims also. The interest of the Orientalists in Islamic studies and their edited and published works about the Quran, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Sirah*, Islamic history and mysticism are well-known. But it is a little-known fact that Hindus also contributed to Islamic Studies in different ways as the Urdu book *Darasaat-i- Islamiyah ke Farogh mein Hinduwon ki Khidmaat* of Prof. Shees Muhammad Ismail Azami shows. The learned author (son of Hakim Muhammad Ishaq, the famous physician of Azamgarh) passed away on 12th Nov.2012. He was former Chairman, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia (New Delhi).He was included among those scholars who benefited by both the streams (traditional and modern) of education, got excellence in Islamic sciences ((*Ulum-i- Islamiyah*) and oriental languages along with command over modern methodology of research and authorship. Securing basic education in the Quran, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, Arabic and Persian languages and literature from Madrasatul Islah(Sarai Mir, Azamgarh) and Nadwatul Ulema (Lucknow), he did M.A. in Arabic from Aligarh Muslim University and completed Ph.D in Islamic Studies from Jamia Millia Islamia. Before joining Jamia Millia Islamia as Professor of Islamic Studies in 1998, he had worked as Faculty member in the Department of Arabic, Sokoto University (North Nigeria) and the Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Hamdard (New Delhi). His Ph.D work is related to Islam in West Africa, but he also showed interest in the academic and cultural history of India during the Muslim rule. His another book about this period is entitled “*Ahd-i- Sultanate ke Fuqaha, Sufia aur Danishwaron ki Nazar mein Hindu ki Hathiyat*”.

Zafarul Islam Islahi is Professor in the Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Email : zafarul.islam@gmail.com

It goes to the credit of Prof. Shees Muhammad Ismail that he collected material about Hindus' contribution to Islamic Studies and compiled it in the book form which was published under the title "*Darasaat-i- Islamiyah ke Farogh mein Hinduwon ki Khidmaat*" from Kitabi Dunya(New Delhi) in 2002.This is the first Urdu book on the subject to the best of my knowledge. The author has taken into account the works of Hindu scholars on these subjects: Hindi translation of the Quran, *Sirah, Na'tgoi*, mysticism, biography of Sufis and poets, history of the period of Muslim rule in India, Persian lexicons, Persian and Urdu calligraphy, Urdu translations of Persian books and printing of Arabic, Persian and Urdu books about the Quran, *Hadith, Fiqh*, ethics and morals (*akhlaqiyat*). The book also contains some published Urdu articles of Hindu writers about socio-cultural, political and administrative history of medieval India without any comment or analysis. The learned author has also evaluated the works of the well- known scholar Malik Ram on different aspects of Islamic studies. The Hindu scholars whose works were introduced in this book belonged to medieval as well as modern period. In this way, the book provides very useful information about a number of Persian and Urdu books and articles of Hindu writers on Islamic and oriental studies.

The last part of the book contains necessary information about the Hindu proprietors/editors of Urdu newspapers and magazines. It also provides details about the printing press of Hindus which used to print Arabic, Persian and Urdu books of different subjects. Of them, Munshi Nawal Kishor (1836-1895) was the most famous. The learned author has given in detail the biographical account of this lover and great patron of oriental studies and that of the significant contribution of his press (Matba-i-Nawal Kishor) to print a large number of Arabic, Persian and Urdu books. The list of the publications of this press, given in a systematic way at the end of the present work, showed that the Matba Nawal Kishor had printed more than 500 Arabic, Persian and Urdu books on Quran,*Hadith,Fiqh, Usul-I Fiqh,Sirah*, ethics, mysticism, Arabic grammar and literature, lexicography, logic(*Mantiq*),philosophy,*Tibb-i-Unani*(medicine) and astronomy.

As regards the sources of the book, these included Arabic, Persian and Urdu works of the reputed authors. Among the Urdu sources, Dr. Sayyed Abdullah's book (*Adabiyat-i-Farsi mein Hinduwon ka Hissah*, published by Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu, New Delhi) has prime importance. This is a very comprehensive study of the contribution of Hindus to Persian literature with special reference to medieval India. The distinguished author gives a good account of the Persian works of the Hindu scholars on history, biography, literature, fine arts and natural sciences.

An interesting finding of the present study is that many Hindu authors of medieval India in the introductory and concluding parts of their books followed the same pattern that was adopted by Muslim authors, such as starting their writing with *Hamd* (praise of Allah Almighty) and *Salat* (*Darud* for the Prophet). This is also evident from the contents of the book that a number of Persian and Urdu authors and poets from among Hindus used Arabic/Persian/Urdu pen- names for them. These included: Shafiq, Anis, Mukhlis, Munis, Akhtar, Akmal, Ikhlas, Shadab, Khushgo, Derwesh, Guhar, Bahar etc.

Prof. Azami has rightly observed that the growing interest of the Hindu scholars in historiography during Muslim rule in India was also a new development which was rarely found earlier in their academic life. These developments were actually the results of close relationship between Muslims and Hindus in socio-cultural life or it may be interpreted as the influence of Islamic culture on Indian culture. In fact, the present work of Prof. Shees Muhammad Ismail Azami gives ample proof for the interest of Hindus in Islamic Studies and oriental languages, and on the other hand it further establishes the fact that Muslims always have been generous in transmission of knowledge without any reservation. Obviously, the Hindu scholars would have got excellence in Persian and Urdu languages with the assistance of Muslim scholars and would have also made themselves aware of Islamic learning through them. Moreover, the findings of the present study support the view that Muslim rulers of medieval India widened the concept and scope of education and provided opportunity to the people of different sections of society to develop their knowledge of various sciences (*ulum*).

