

## **Obituary**

### **Mrs Hamida Akhtar Husain Raipuri**

*Syed Munir Wasti\**

Mrs. Hamida Akhtar Husain Raipuri [20.11.1918 – 20.4.2009] was a distinguished author and reputed name in the intellectual circles of literature and language. She was the wife of the noted scholar and historian, Dr Akhtar Husain Raipuri, one of the eminent men-of-letters in Pakistan.

The tribute I am going to pay is a personal one. For the interaction I had with her was begun a decade before her death and the memory of which is so fresh and so invigorating that it will never fade away. I recall a brief encounter with her noted husband who I introduced to a gentleman from Radio Pakistan who wished him to record a program for the Hindi Service which was then located in the Karachi Station. This was Syed Sohrab Ali 'Kamil', the Head of the Hindi Service. Dr. Akhtar Husain lived in Block II, PECHS, in his house No 153-L which was two streets off our house located at 155-K, Block II, PECHS. Unfortunately, I could not extend my acquaintance with Dr Raipuri whose health was declining and he eventually passed away in.... shortly after receiving an honorary D.Litt. from the University of Karachi.

It was afterwards – when I had passed through certain personal tribulations and had shifted to the Karachi University Campus that I renewed my contact with Mrs. Raipuri who was a friend of my mother and used to visit our house at the above location. In her youth, as far as one can judge, she was a very handsome woman and noted for her elegance in attire and fashion. In her widowhood, much of that unique beauty had faded but much lingered on. Her head, which was covered by a thick crop of long and attractive hair, had turned white and her body exhibited the stresses of advanced age. When I introduced myself, she very kindly and graciously

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\* Ex-Chairman. Department of English, University of Karachi

received me and extended her hospitality to me. She was unhappy to learn of the death of her old friend, my mother.

Mrs. Raipuri was a versatile personality and took to writing as a means of occupying herself. Her memoir of her husband, *Humsafar*, is a very enlightening and accurate account of her life with her illustrious husband. She personally gave me a copy and inscribed it in her own hand. Her book, *Nayab hain hum*, is a collection of sketches of eminent persons she had encountered in the course of her active life such as Moulvi Abdul Haq and Halide Edib, the prominent Turkish writer whom she befriended in Paris during the latter's exile from her native Turkey. On my visits to her house, I saw the vast and excellent library of Dr Akhtar Husain lining the walls of his house that was bereft of his lively presence. This was later donated to Hamdard University at Madina al-Hikmah in Karachi. The vexed question of the disposal of important libraries of deceased bibliophiles has yet to be resolved.

It was some months before her demise that I went to Sufi Street [where her house was located] and had the great pleasure of spending some hours in her company and recalling the memories of friends and writers that were no more. I had the feeling that she was feeling the stress of loneliness although she was her cheerful self and talked about various books that she had written for children.

It was through the newspapers that I learnt of her death and and her solem to be held at her house. I dutifully went but with a heavy heart knowing that I had lost a wonderful personality whose company was a source of joy and calm. As I was sitting in the lawn of her house in the Quran khwani, I felt that the doors leading to her room would open and that she would emerge smiling and welcome me inside. But that was never more to be.

**Obituary****Shamshad Fakir : an original but forgotten poet [an obituary]:**

It may be rather unusual to call Shamshad Fakir a ‘forgotten’ poet of Urdu but there is no doubt that he deserves the appellative ‘original’ in full measure. I say ‘forgotten’ in the sense that he was never remembered as such for his originality of thought, his concern for popular problems and his vision of the destiny of man. He lived alone and died alone as he himself says in the preface to his poetry collection, *Ankahi*, he does not expect any favorable assessment from his critics till some time in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century when all traces of his writing will be irretrievably lost.

Shamshad Husain Siddiqui was born in the area near Lucknow [U.P.] in 1917 and belonged to the *ashraf* i.e. the ‘noble’ and educated classes. His father was a police officer of high rank at the time when locals were restricted in government employment. He was also the author of a charming autobiography [written after his retirement] bewailing the decision to join the police and other traumas that he faced while in ‘government service’. His father lived in a large and comfortable mansion, called Ashfaq Manzil, with his many children when the independence of the subcontinent took place. His father continued living in his ‘manzil’ while the rest of his adult children migrated to Pakistan where they initially faced a life of hardship. Shamshad Fakir became a teacher in a school and devoted his efforts to the education of the new generations born in Pakistan. His one brother completed his MA in English from Karachi University in the 1960s and worked for over 20 years in Nigeria. Abdul Haq [the brother] also published his late brother’s poems posthumously and added some poems of his own. He was also the writer of a number of poems called *Janwaristan*. Abdul Haq’s son, Kamal Siddiqui, is a well-known journalist of Karachi having studied in Karachi University and also in Australia. One other brother, Muhammad Ishaq Siddiqui, studied theology and became a mufti in the famous Jamia Binnoria in Karachi. Indifferent to the revolutions in time and space, Shamshad Fakir continued his literary activities composing rather than publishing his unique ‘criticism of life.’ Many a time his poems were lost and the painful work of restoring all the poems was undertaken by him.

I met Shamshad Fakir at his house-clinic in Gulshan-i-Iqbal after reading an essay by Kamal Siddiqui titled 'The Poet-philosopher of Gulshan-i-Iqbal.' This was in the newspaper *Dawn*. I asked Kamal [then my student] as to who the person who figured in the essay was. He told me that the said Shamshad Fakir was his uncle. After learning his address, I went to pay him a visit in a flat in Gulshan where he practiced homoeopathic medicine. It was an intellectually stimulating meeting and the first of many that I was to pay over the years. He also had initiated a Shamshad Fakir Trust for assisting destitutes. When his poetry collection, *Ankahi*, was printed he gave me a number of copies to distribute to various persons. I was able to get a review printed in *Dawn* by the well-known editor, Akhtar Payami. He was preparing for his next poetry collection when after a lifetime of struggle against indifference of an unfeeling and unappreciative world, he passed away in 1998. May his soul rest in peace! After his death, I continued my fruitful association with his younger brother, Abdul Haq Siddiqui, who had studied in the English Department where I was a teacher. But that shall be recorded some other time.

#### **My Comments:**

1. collection, *Ankahi*, he does not expect any→ Put a semicolon after *Ankahi*;
2. He was also the author of a charming autobiography [written after his retirement]→ Put in the name of this autobiography
3. His one brother → Either this should be his only or sole brother OR one of his brothers [depending on the number of brothers]
4. Abdul Haq [the brother] also published his late brother's poems posthumously→instead of his late brother's poems write Shamshad Fakir's poems as the sentence is otherwise confusing
5. His son. Kamal Siddiqui, is a well-known journalist of Karachi→Remove the full stop after son; it would appear that Kamal is Abdul Haq's son
6. One other brother, Muhammad Ishaq Siddiqui, studied→change this to A brother of Kamal Siddiqui, Muhammad Ishaq,
7. and the painful work of restoring all the poems was undertaken.→presumably by Shamshad Fakir himself?
8. when after a lifetime of struggle against indifference of an unfeeling and unappreciated world,→ when, after a lifetime of struggle against the indifference of an unfeeling and unappreciative world,
9. former Chairman, Department of English→ I would prefer that formerly Chairman be used

**Obituary****A Tribute to Karim Baksh Khalid**

Karim Baksh Khalid [15.12.1828 – 17.3.2003] was the Head of the Publicity & Publications Department, Government of Sindh. He was a scholar and thinker and a great student of Islamic languages and literatures. Author of many books in Urdu, English and Sindhi, he obtained the first prize for the best book written in Sindhi on Sirat-un-Nabi, He was thoroughly familiar, by virtue of his profession which also became his interest, with the intellectual scene as it prevailed in his lifetime. Sindh, in the 1980s and 1990s, was the scene of much violence, political disturbance and ethnic tension. Karim Baksh Khalid was a witness to all this and no doubt all this pained him and others who were loyal and patriotic Pakistanis. He was also a witness to, and participant in, the freedom struggle led by the Quaid-e-Azam for the salvation of the Muslims of South Asia. Indeed, his essay entitled '*Quaid-e-Azam ki hub al-watani*' in his collection, *Aik Qari ki sarguzath* [1989], contains many unknown facets of Mr Jinnah that were revealed for the first time. His other book, *Asaar wa afkaar* [[1989] contains a study of Karachi, Sindh, Society and a section on noted personalities such as Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, Syed Muhammad 'Gesu Daraz' ['the long-haired'], Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung and Rahman Baba.

I first met Khalid Sahib at his office which was then located on Strachen Road in the old Freemason's Lodge. He rose and greeted me courteously and in the course of our conversation, he told me that he had been a pupil of my late father, Prof. S.M. Jamil Wasti [d. 1981]. He was the embodiment of all those old-world courtesies that are dying out and hardly seen any more. It was a delight to chat with him and to learn from him. Later on, I was happy to receive Khalid Sahib at my house on the Campus of Karachi University and he very generously presented me with an ajrak. Khalid Sahib was also a friend of another friend of mine named Sherali Alidina [advocate] who was also a Sindhi who belonged to the Aga Khani sect. Khalid sahib had little patience with sectarians.

One peculiar habit of Khalid Sahib was that occasionally he used to telephone me generally in the hot afternoon. When he heard my voice saying, 'hullo' on the phone, he used to say with great seriousness, 'I am

Karim Baksh Khalid. I just wanted to hear your voice and will not take your time.’ Before I could reply to this proclamation, he put down the phone. He was a very considerate person who valued his time and those of others. He would never waste his time and those of others in idle chatter. He used all his free time in reading books from his vast library and in pursuing research into those areas that interested him. What became of his library I do not know but I hope it has not met the fate of other libraries that belonged to other scholars . These were sold on the footpaths in Saddar on Sundays. There must be a central institution that should receive the libraries by bequest after their owners have passed away so that with each bequest the library becomes richer and more books are available to readers and researchers. This will also counter the negative trend of the avoidance of reading. Many a time, in the hot afternoons when my phone rings, I rush to pick up the receiver thinking that it is Khalid sahib who will say his usual sentence and put the phone down. But the realization dawns that Khalid Sahib has gone to his eternal home. May his soul rest in peace!

**Obituary****Allama Shams Brelvi**

Shams-ul-Hasan Siddiqui[d. 1997], later known as Allama Shams Brelvi was a great scholar of Islam, a competent translator from Arabic and Persian into Urdu and an excellent orator on Islamic topics. He was an active member and collaborator of the Anjuman founded to celebrate the life and achievements of Ahmad Riza Khan [Fadil al-Brelvi] – the founder of the Brelvi movement. A commemorative volume intended to celebrate his achievements was issued in 1992 and gives information about his life and career. This was titled *Jahan-i-Shams*.

Allama Shams had a long and productive association with the Madina Publishing House, MA Jinnah Road, who were the publishers of almost all his books and research treatises apart from his translations that were prefaced by erudite analyses and studies. Shams Sahib used to visit us at No. 7 Fikree Mansion No. 1, Grieg Road, Karachi, when he was associated with Prof. SM Jamil Wasti, my father, during the 1950s when they were producing textbooks for schools in the newly-independent state of Pakistan. Prof. Wasti also wrote the introduction to a textbook by Shams sahib titled, *Nafsiyat ke zawiye*. This academic association continued for many years until we shifted to P.E.C.H.Society.

After many years, I was referred to Allama Shams by my colleague in Karachi University, Prof. Dr. Majidullah Qadri and I visited him at his home in Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Block 1, which was the home of his son-in-law, Sartaj Ahmad Khan. As long as he stayed in Gulshan, I was a frequent visitor to his house and benefitted from his erudite discourses. I also took Hakim Mahmud Barkati to his house and also Prof. Dr. Abu'l Khair Kashfi. The courteous interaction between the *buzurgs* was a sight to see. When I took Kashfi sahib to meet Allama Shams, the latter composed a verse on the occasion immediately thus: *Saath mein hain janab-i-Kashfi//Tasveer kamal-i-ilm-o-fun ki//Ehsan hai Munir Wasti ka//Hai wasta ilm dosti ka*. Today, there is neither Allama Shams or Dr Kashfi; only my memories remain.

Allama Shams had received his education in the traditional madressahs of British India. Whatever their defects, these colleges gave a firm grounding

to the students in the classical languages of Islam viz., Arabic and Persian. Allama Shams was a versatile translator of many great Islamic classics as well as the author of books on Islamic topics. All of these constitute a veritable canon in the history of literature and translation. Among the many books he translated are:

*Ghunniyat al-Talibin* by Abdu'l Qadir al-Gaylani

*Awarif al-ma'arif* by Shaykh Shihabu'ddin Suhrwardy

*Gulistan & Bostan* by Sa'adi

*Tarikh al-khulafa* by Jalalu'ddin Seyuti

*Nafhat al-Uns* by Jami

*Fawa'id al-fawad* [the *malfuzat* of Nizamu'ddin Auliya

*Ruqqa'at -Alamgiri* [letters of Emperor Aurengzebe]

His book on *seerat-i-rasul* in Urdu won the first Seerat award for this category in Pakistan. This a study of the eloquence of the Holy Prophet [PBUH] titled *Sarwar-i-Koneyn ki fasahat*.

Apart from these books, a number of scholarly studies were duly produced by his pen. These included the examens of the Persian, Arabic and Urdu poetry of Ahmad Riza Khan Brelvi, books on Urdu poets and textbooks for various classes. All his translations had scholarly prefaces attached to them and gave references to other books as well.

Allama Shams' daughter was employed in the Political Science Department, University of Karachi and she has earlier studied in the same Department securing a First Class with the First Position.

Allama Shams shifted to Defence Housing Authority where I took my brother Tanvir to meet him, as he recollected the Allama's visits to our house in the 1950s. It was a memorable occasion and the pictures I took of the Allama were indeed his last photographs. I little knew that my next visit to the same place would be on the occasion of his Quran *khwani*. To Allah we belong and to Him we return!