

PIR HASAMUDDIN RASHDI –A DEDICATED HISTORIAN

BY
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I knew Hassamuddin since mid-forties. I was below twenty and he was over thirty five. My interest besides engineering was history. His interest as I could feel then was Sindhi literature and Sindhi poetry – especially of Shah (Abdul Latif of Bhit). That he was a poet, I did not know until after his death. We met each other on a few occasions in mid 40s, but developed closer contacts from 1964. He sent me a word to carry some Sindhi books for a Russian lady – a Moscow Radio announcer in Sindhi of news. Presented him my book ‘GROUND WATER IN SINDH’ and told him, that it was the history of changing courses of Indus. He read a few pages and asked me to give 20 more copies to be mailed to his friends which I did.

Then we met often and I found him a totally changed man, mature in his approach to history and opinions on other historians. He had edited a number of Persian works of poets and historians of Sindh and was working on others.

My book ‘GROUND WATER’ was a 12 year study of changing courses of the Indus based on historical works in Persian and English, Archaeological survey of India’s Reports on various sites in Sindh, geology and geography of Sindh, specially of Thar and Kohistan and also some study of the 20 major deserts of the World.

I had started collecting material for my book “SOURCE MATERIAL ON SINDH”. He had a library indispensable for this work. He won’t lend books, but at least I could know the titles and procure them from elsewhere. He taught me not to loan books.

Since 1970 we met a couple of times a week. I was working on “CHRONOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF SINDH” and he was keenly interested in the project. He himself loves chronology of Sindh. Many students of history overlook chronology and most readers do not bother about it.

Hassamuddin always kept “Conversion-tables of Hijra calendar into Gregorian” on his table. I also found that as he lacked adequate training in arithmetic, he found it difficult to convert the exact dates and months from one calendar to the other. I did this for him for TUHFATUL-KIRAM.

I was interested in knowing the influences that matured him in the 20 years since I first met him. I have been influenced by hundreds of persons and many thousands of books on various subjects, other than engineering and so tried to find out the persons who helped him to mature. I shall write separately on the personalities who had left some impression on a person of the stature of Hassamuddin Rashdi – an accomplished scholar.

The present subject under discussion is Hassamuddin Rashdi as a historian. The examination of appendices I, II and III reveal a lot about his thoughts and depth of his writings.

The Persian texts edited by Hassamuddin given in appendix I, were all written between 1539 and 1700 AD, except two, the books “TUHFAT-UL-KIRAM” and “MANSOORUL WASIAT” which were written in 1753 and around 1776. The scope of historical studies in all these books is limited to 1500-1700 AD, only “TUHFAT-UL-KIRAM’s” history extends beyond 1700 to Moghal Governors of Thatta up to 1736 AD, and Kalhora’s up to 1776 AD. MANSOORAL WASIAT, the will of Noor Mohammad Kalhora, an advice of this ruler, to his sons, in view of depressed conditions, caused by Nadir Shah Durrani’s invasion of Sindh, from five original rare Persian histories of Nadir Shah Durrani by different authors. Since printing of his work 30 years ago, I have been able to lay hands on two other Persian Histories of Nadir Shah, printed from Moscow and India, Hassamuddin’s compiling the information of five versions of Nadir Shah Durrani’s invasion, at one place, reflects in a convincing manner the chaotic conditions created by his invasion of Sindh and, therefore, the texts help in understanding Noor Mohammad Kalhora’s mind leading to writing of his will. TUHFAT-UL-KIRAM is only historical text edited by Hassamuddin going some 40 years beyond Mughal period. Thus Hassamuddin is an important historian of Sindh for the period between 1500-1753 AD which embraces:

- ❖ Fall of Sammas.
- ❖ Rise and fall of Arghoons and Tarkhans.
- ❖ Mughal conquest of Sindh and its rule.
- ❖ Decline of Mughal power in Sindh.
- ❖ Nadir Shah’s blow to Kalhora’s future in Sindh.

As a historian, he has limited himself to the Persian histories only. He has taken great pain to collect information on Arghoons, Tarkhans and Mughals from the contemporary Persian histories, written in India as well as Central Asia. He built genealogy of Tarkhans from Central Asian sources and while Rauztus-Salatin was almost completely printed he had this version replaced by a new and more complete text obtained from USSR.

He has taken pains to collect inscriptions on the noble-men of Thatta from BIAZ NAMA of Kudad Khan (probably only copy available in Sindh) and reproduced most of it in MAKLI NAMA. He has been particular to incorporate any information he had been able to get on the Governors of Mughal rulers and noblemen from any of Persian histories hitherto printed. He also put in all efforts to reproduce architecturally important photographs of various places in Sindh, for his publications.

He has also come out with the rare sources of information on Sammas, especially for the period 1352-1368 AD. Dr. Riazul-Islam (a close friend of his) for his PhD thesis had done work on MAKHDOOM JEHANIA OF UCH and his tactical role to bring about Banbhiniyo Samma to surrender before Feroze Shah Tughlaq. Hassamuddin had access to this information as well as original sources to cover the period. Another friend of his Dr. Shaikh Rashid had a copy of MUNSHA-E-MAHRU (Mahru was the governor of Multan's letters). These letters too are the only sources which Hassamuddin Rashdi used and reproduced these letters in original Persian in Makli Nama. (MANSHA-E-MAHRU) was printed in 1965, but MAKLI NAMA'S photograph and binding was delayed until 1967. Barring these few instances, of work on pre-1500 and post 1736 AD, period Hassamuddin's historical researches are limited to period 1500-1736 AD, i.e., fall of Sammas and Arghoons, Tarkhans and Mughals rule of Sindh. Nadir Shah's invasion as well as Noor Mohammad Kalhora's will is also relevant to this period, as Mughals had conceded the Western Sindh to Nadir Shah and theoretically Kalhora's were ruling on behalf of Mughals of Delhi.

There is a criticism of his works, that he did not use contemporary information left by European travelers in Sindh and India, histories written in English, Portuguese, French and Dutch etc., pertaining to this period and their trade records, economic and commercial activities, analysis of fine arts of Sindh of the period and etc. This criticism is totally unjustified; as he was an oriental historian specializing in works only in written Persian and therefore he limited himself within that boundary, avoiding to dilute his works, with non-Persian sources, as well as poetical works. To his credit also goes the editing of a number of Persian poetical works, with exhaustive notes on his own, above all he did not lose sight of chronology, which shows his consciousness of time and space the two essentials for any scientific historian.

As an editor his level is no less than that of the editor BIBLIOTHECA INDICA'S PERSIAN TEXTS, published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He specialized in Persian history of 1500-1753 AD, on Sindh and not socio-economic history of the above period.

His Urdu history of Mirza Ghazi Beg Tarkhan (Appendix-III) covers not only the latter's life (1555-1610 AD), but also Arghoon, Tarkhan and Mughal period from 1500-1750 AD, the exception being biographic works of Akhund Mohammad Bachal and Munshi Rai Azad and collections of official seals of Talpur rulers.

The second quarter of twentieth century is an age of specialization. Hassamuddin did an excellent job of picking up important readily available Persian sources, covering the period 1500-1753 AD, and thus winning recognition as specialist, for which work even some foreign orient lists became his personal long life friends.

Appendix-I **PERSIAN HISTORIES AND POETICAL WORKS PERTAINING TO SINDH EDITED BY HASSAMUDDIN RASHDI.**

Author	Year printed	Name of book	Text written (w) or the period during which author lived years, or when the author died (d) in AD.	Historical period covered in the text of the book in years AD.
Ali Sher Qani.	1967	Makli Namah.	1778	1508-1760
Idraki Beglari.	1956	Chanesar Namah.	d. 1601	Factionary
Jehangir Hashmi.	1956	Masnavi Mazaharul Aasar.	w. 1539	1525-1539
Ibrahim Khalil.	1958	Taqamil Maqaalat-i-Shuira.	d. 1824	70% pertains to 1550-1750
Ali Sher Qani.	1957	Maqaalat-i-Shuira Qani.	1760/61	90% pertains to 1550-1760.
Ali Sher Qani.	1961	Masniat wa Qasaid.	d. 1727	
Yousif Mirak.	1962	Mazahar Shah Jehani.	1634	1500-1634
Muhsan.	1963	Diwan Muhsin Thattavi.	d. 1749	1709-1740
Noor Muhammad Kalhoro.	1964	Source on life of Shah Inayat Shaheed.		1700-1718
Noor Muhammad Kalhoro.	1964	Manshhoral Wasiat-wa-Dastur-al-Hukumat.	1740 received 1753	1740-1753
Syed Jamaluddin Shirazi.	1966	Diwan Bihram Khan.	d. 1561	1500-1560
Abdul Halim Atta.	1968	Muhubullah Sindhi.		1590
Harvi.	1970	Razaatul-Salatin.	d. 1561	1497-1561

Appendix-II **SINDHI BOOKS AND ARTICLES OF HASSAMUDDIN RASHDI
PERTAINING TO THE HISTORY OF SINDH.**

Author	Year printed	Name of book	Text written (w) or the period during which author lived years, or when the author died (d) in AD.	Historical period covered in the text of the book in years AD.
		Thatti meen Taslif wa Taliq jo Jaizo.		1500-1900
		Talpuran joon Muhroon.		1783-1843
		Masura ji Tarikh jo Hik Bab.		9 th century.
		Tazkira-i-Amir Khani.		1600-1650
		Mir Mail je Biaz meen Sindh Ji Tarikh.	b. 1748	Kalhora Talpur period.
		Munshi Sahib Rai Azad.	1761-1824	As above.
		Akhund Muhammad Bachal.	d. 1808	As above.
		Mir Maasool Bakhri.		1537-1605
		Maulana Muhubullah Sindhi.	d. 1590	1550-1590
		Daheen Sadi Ji Sindh.	w. 1560?	1553-1555

**URDU WORKS OF HASSAMUDDIN RASHDI RETAIN TO
THE HISTORY OF SINDH.**

Author	Year printed	Name of book	Text written (w) or the period during which author lived years, or when the author died (d) in AD.	Historical period covered in the text of the book in years AD.
		Mirza Ghazi Beg Tarkhan.		1555-1610
		Sindh Ke Tarikh Ke Makhiz.		80% book written between 1500-1760.

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