

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, esteemed delegates, Ladies and gentlemen:

I am grateful to the members of the All India Persian Scholars Association for having elected me the president of this Congress being held at Kashmir university, Srinagar known to the Persian-speaking world as Iran-e-Saghir (miniature Iran) and Firdaus Bar Ru-e-Zamin (paradise on earth).

Some years back Persian Scholars Association was formed with a view to revive the glories of Persian language, literature and culture in India and strive to sustain them. The association, to begin with, has so far organized a number of national and international seminars and encouraged Persian scholars and students to get the results of the findings of their research in the field of Oriental studies, published. From the very inception of the association, a large number of Persian scholars have dedicatedly endeavoured to revitalize the Persian studies in the changed situation in India. For encouraging consultations and interaction to chalk out programmes for the promotion of Persian studies in India, this association provides an open forum for the Persian scholars, teachers and orientalists in India. I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the active participation of the Iranian, Afghan and Tajik and Uzbek scholars in reinforcing, strengthening, and diversifying our commitment to enhance Persian studies in India. To achieve our cherished goal, the

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Culture House in Delhi are actively collaborating with us;

All the historians have recognized the immense contribution of India to Persian language and literature has recognized by all the historians. Similarly, its literary, historical and academic worth has also been appreciated by every discerning critic.

Persian language and literature, as formally established beings in the Indian subcontinent from the eleventh century when Abdul Faraj-e-Runi (d. 1091 A.D.) adorned the court of the latter Ghaznavids at Lahore. It rather ends with Allama Iqbal (d. 1938 A.D.) the illustrious sons of this soil in the middle of the 20th century. During this span of more than eight hundred years, Persian language gradually established itself as a medium of expression by our poets and writers irrespective of their cast and creed. Liberal patronage of the rulers attracted hoards of scholars, poets, thinkers and other men of letters to their courts from the Persian-speaking lands of Iran and Transoxiana. This trend almost continued up to the middle of the 19th century. As a result, during the last eight centuries enormous literature bearing on the life and condition of the people of Hindustan has been produced in Persian. Works on history, culture, biography of poets, saints, calligraphers, writers, nobles, poetical compositions, works on mathematics, astronomy, art of administration, art of war, medicine, Islamic Sciences etc. have been produced in Persian in our subcontinent. Moreover, the administration of the country had been carried out for centuries in Persian language. As large number of the official correspondence – Akhbarat, farmans, parwanas etc. – preserved in the Archives throughout India are a testimony to the important place Persian occupied in the administration of the country.

In addition to it, Persian language has played a leading role in the transmission of Indian historical heritage and classical

literature to the outside world. For instance, it was through Dara Skikuli's Persian translation that Europe came to know of the Upanishads.

We should be justly proud of the fact that the earliest work on Tasawwuf in Persian Kashf-ul Mahjub was written in this subcontinent by Ali-e-Hujwairi and the first Tazkira of Persian poets Lubab-ul Albab was compiled by Muhammad Afi here. The Adab-ul Harb wal-Shuja'at of Fakhr-e-Mudabbir is probably the earliest work in Persian on the Science of Warfare and it was written in Hindustan to be dedicated to Iltutmush, the second Mamluk ruler. Ain-e-Akbari of Abdul Fazl has a unique place in the field of historical writings. Abdul Fazl's statistical study is remarkable and in a way is the earliest attempt at compilation of Gazatteers. Lexicography, Insha, story writing etc. are some other literary forms more enthusiastically enriched by the Indian scholars of Persian.

The rich contribution of Kashmir to Persian language and literature is too enormous to be dealt with in this short presentation. The Sufi saints who came to this place from different Persian-speaking regions, culturally changed the face of this land. Sayyed Sharfuddin lovingly called Bulbul Shah, Sayyed Ali Hamadani, Shamsuddin from Talish etc. were not only missionaries of Islam but were also zealous propagandists of Persian language and its culture. Persian has flourished in Kashmir with the blessings of these saints. Secondly, the two hundred fifty years rule of the Sultans also provided the required impetus for the development of Persian and its literature. Apart from it, with the spread of Islam in Kashmir, a good number of scholars embarked on visiting the centers of Muslim Culture like Herat, Merv, Samaarqand and Bukhara etc. to learn Islamic Sciences. These cities were also the great centers of Persian language, literature and culture. When back in Kashmir, they were well versed both in Islamic Sciences and Persian language and

literature drowned deep in Persian culture. The lavish patronage of the Sultans attracted a large number of Persian-speaking people to Kashmir. Similarly the traders from the same regions also played an active role in popularizing Persian in Kashmir. These historical events lead to the spread of Islam and its culture through Persian language and its literature in Kashmir. It is essential to refer to Sultan Zain ul Abedin (1420 – 1470) popularly known as Bad Shah for the greatest contribution he made to the development of Persian in this region during his fifty years benevolent rule. Though Kashmiri was his mother tongue, he made Persian as state language and achieved proficiency in this language. With Qutb as his Takhallus (pen-name), he composed poetry. He has also left two works in Persian prose. A standard work in medicine *Kifayah-e Muhahediya* by a renowned physician Mansur b. Muhammad was written for him. He established a translation bureau and got *Kathasarit Sagar*, *Panchatantra*, *Mahabharat* and *Rajatarangini* translated into Persian. Khaliqdad Abbasi at the instance of Akbar the great revised two of these translations i.e., *Panchatantra* and *Kathasarit Sagar*. Bad Shah's successors followed his example and patronized learning by establishing schools and colleges where scholars from different parts of India, Persia, and Central Asia were engaged in academic pursuits. Actually speaking, most of the Sultans were not only fond of Persian poetry, but were poets themselves. Poets of Persian and Kashmiri origin like Mir Ali, Mulla Nami, Baba Talib Isfahani, Mohammad Amin Mustaghni, Mirzaq Ali Khan and others adorned their courts.

It was during this period that every aspect of Kashmiri life was influenced by Persian culture. An influx of Persian words into Sanskrit, the language of men of letters of Kashmir, is reported during this period. Arts and crafts, shawl industry, metal work, painting and calligraphy, architecture, food, dress, music are the fields that show marked influence of Persian culture. Consequently, Kashmir is rightly called *Iran-e-Saghir*.

While referring to the development of calligraphy in Kashmir, one has to name a master calligrapher Mohammad Hussam of Kashmir who later joined the service of Akbar. He exhibited such a grade, beauty and symmetry in his art that the Mughal ruler conferred on him the title of Zarrin Qalam.

With the inception of the Mughal rule in Kashmir, Persian influence was rather further strengthened. An important factor that contributed to the development of Persian language and literature during this period was the immigration of Iranian poets and scholars on an unprecedented scale. The social and political conditions of the subcontinent gave a distinct colour to Persian language and literature as a whole that is described as Sabk-e-Hindi (Indian style). Urfi, Talib Amuli, Naziri, Kalim Kashani, Saib, Ghani Kashmiri, Fani Kashmiri and Bedil are the representative poets of this style.

Mulla Mohammad Tahir Ghani from Kashmir is considered a major poet of the seventeenth century A.D. During his life time and immediately afterwards, he enjoyed great prestige because of the conventional nature and popular style of his poetry. Some of the great poets of India such as Saib, Kalim and Qudsi were his friends and imitated his style. The depth and variety of his experience contained in his verses stimulates the feelings of a keen reader. He says:

O Ghani! Look at the block days of the old man of Can'an,
the light of his eyes is brightening the eyes of Zulekha.

O Ghani! The illustrious meaning is like (a drop of) water;
it is transmuted into a pearl, if dressed up gracefully.

While referring to the contribution of Kashmir to Persian literature, one cannot ignore the important works on the history of Kashmir compiled in Persian. Some more celebrated of them are:

Tarikh-e-Kashmir of Haider Malik, Tarikh-e-Kashmir by Sayyhed Ali, Waqaat-e-Kashmir by Mohammad Azam, Tarikh-e-Hassan by Pir Hasan Shah and Shah Nameh-e-Kashmir by Mulla Abdul Wahab Shaiq in verse form.

It should also be recalled here that almost all the major Indian languages have readily accepted the influence of Persian in varying degrees. Kashmiri language is not an exception in this regard. Persian influence on Kashmiri is not merely of lexical nature Kashmiri grammar is influenced by that of Persian. Persian Izafat is freely used in Kashmiri. Rules of word formation are almost the same in both the languages. Persian proverbs and idioms are abundantly used and one would find occasional use of Persian prepositions and conjunctions and even adverbs in Kashmiri. But the most significant impact is witnessed on Kashmiri literature. The forms of poetry have been borrowed from Persian. Similarly Persian allusions, references, symbols and rules of Persian prosody have been adopted in Kashmiri poetry. The Kashmiri ghazal and mathnavi resemble their counterparts in Persian in respect of form, theme and subject matter. In this respect Persian impact on Kashmiri is much greater than on any other language except Urdu, the official language of Kashmir.

In short Persian culture and its representative literature steeped in Islamic traditions, have played a vital role in shaping kashmiriyat that basically denotes accommodation and not confrontation in every sphere of life.

I am very happy and proud to acknowledge the endeavors of the Post Graduate Department of Persian of this great university that from its inception is sincerely dedicated to promote Persian studies in Kashmir. My learned colleagues in the department have published a number of important works of historical, cultural, and literary value. I am sure that this useful work will be persuaded

more vigorously in future and the vast Persian literature produced in Kashmir would see the light of the day to present a complete picture of Persian literature in Kashmir.

To conclude, I express my gratitude, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind cooperation extended to the organizers of this Congress. We also thank the learned Vice-Chancellor of this university and his team, the local secretary of this Congress, Prof. Mohammad Munawwar Masoodi, a known Persian scholar from Kashmir, his colleagues for making the excellent arrangements for holding this Congress. I do hope that all the learned delegates, while returning after the three day celebrations of the Congress, would appreciate what Pundit Brij Narain Chakbast has claimed in this verse.

ذره ذره ہے میرے کشمیر کا مہمان نواز
راہ میں پتھر کے ٹکڑوں نے دیا پانی مجھے

Professor S.H. Qasimi
President [AJPSA]