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An Analysis of Muhammad Hussain Khan's (1883-1960) Works on Afghanistan

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Abstract

Indian Muslims played their role in the intellectual development and enlightenment of Afghanistan. Besides Pashto and Dari/Persian languages, many of them wrote in Urdu and English languages. In Afghan historiography, particularly Urdu writings of Indian Muslims are ignored for some reasons. This research paper attempts to catalogue Muhammad Hussain Khan's works written in Pashto, Dari/Persian, Urdu and English languages about Afghanistan. He was a prolific writer. His seventy one books have been introduced in this article. He is the pioneer of new literary genres in Afghanistan such as drama and novel. His works remained in oblivion for a long time owing to unknown reasons. A cursory look at the subjects and themes of his works, gives an impression that he was an enlightened, moderate and precursor to development in Afghanistan. His works and ideas seem still very relevant to the current troubled situation in Afghanistan. Muhammad Hussain Khan, belonged to Urmarh tribe. His family was settled in Jallandhar. He had obtained Bachelor of Arts Degree from Muslim Aligarh University and was well versed in English, Urdu, Dari, Persian, Arabic and Pashto languages. He served as teacher of History and Geography in Habibia School, Kabul in 1907. He joined the constitutionalism movement and arrested in that connection in 1909 at the age of 26 years and imprisoned in Arg (Palace) at Kabul and remained in prison almost for one decade. Finally he was released by Amanullah Khan. He also served as Director Primary Schools in the Ministry of Education in 1926. He has remained the editor of the Magazine Habib-ul-Islam in 1928 by Habib Ullah Khan Alias Bacha-i-Saqao (1891-1929). He escaped to British India after some time and returned in 1929 to Kabul.

Key Words: Muhammad Hussain Khan, Afghanistan, Habibia School, Pashto, Literature, Constitutionalism, Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar, Novel, Urdu works on Afghanistan.

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Muhammad Hussain Khan's Life

Muhammad Hussain Khan¹ was born in Jallander (Currently Indian Punjab) in 1883. His ancestors belonged to Umar tribe.² He obtained his bachelor degree from Muslim Aligarh University. He was well versed in English, Urdu, Dari, Arabic and Pashto languages. He was appointed as a teacher of Geography and history at Habibia³ School Kabul in 1907. Habibia School was founded by Habibullah Khan (1872-1919) in 1903. He taught at the premier modern educational institute of Afghanistan. In the year 1909, at the age of twenty six years he was arrested and imprisoned for more than a decade for his role in the constitutionalist movement advocating limits to powers of the Amir. He was released by Amir Amanullah Khan (1892-1960) after his enthronement in 1919 (Yunas, 2002, p. 577). He was appointed Director Primary Schools in the Ministry of Education in 1926. He escaped to India after some time and returned back to Kabul after it was captured by Muhammad Nader Khan (Yunas, 2002, p. 577). He also served as a Calligrapher in *Tulo-e-Afghan* (Khan, 2014, p.135). After the fall of Amanullah Khan, he served as Editor of the magazine named *Habib-Ul-Islam* in the reign of Habibullah alias Bacha-e-Saqao (Khan, 2014, p.135). He also worked in *Ittehad* and *Anees* newspapers (Khan, 2014, p.135). He wrote seventy-five books works in Dari⁴ Urdu English and Pashto including thirteen school textbooks.

Muhammad Hussain Khan's Works

Muhammad Hussain Khan has written in his book that he has written seventy five books (Hussain, 1931, p. 287). He himself has categorized these books into four categories. According to this categorization he has placed eighteen books in the first category whom he has dedicated to Amanullah Khan but actually there are seventeen books in this list. Name of the book on serial number fifteen is missing

In the second category five those books are included which he has written or translated for Dar-al-talif. According to Muhammad Hussain Khan the third category contains thirteen text books included in schools curriculum but the actual number of these books are ten. There is one book titled Aman-al-niswan having four volumes in this category. If these four volumes are considered four separate books then the total number becomes thirteen. The fourth category having thirty nine books which at that time have not been published and he had kept the manuscripts with himself (Hussain, 1931, p. 287). Details of these four categories are given below. The list of publications published in this book is not complete because a books titled “Afghan Badshah A’la Hazrat Ghazi Amanullah Khan ki Azim-al-shan Chashamdid Dastan” published prior to this book in 1931 is not included in this list (Khan, 1927). In the book “Afghan Badshah” he has praised Amanullah Khan and later on in his another book “Afghanistan mi meri Ekkis Bars” he has badly criticized Amanullah Khan. That may be the reason that later on he did not include that book in his publications list.

First Category

In the first category of books there are books having interesting accounts of the history of old cities of Afghanistan. They are not usually known. These places have been observed to know their relevance to the places in the past and how they look like today.

1. Ghazani, 2. Balkh, 3. Bamiyan, 4. Qandahar, 5. Jalal Abad

In the above mentioned books four have been written in Dari language and the only one titled *Qandahar* is written in Pashto language.

A brief accounts of some of the European countries have also been written. In these brief accounts of European countries he has focused on the political and intellectual developments, prominent figures and some extraordinary historical

events. He has written about the following countries.

1. Italy 2. France 3. Germany 4. Belgium 5. England 6. Russia

A few other non-European countries have also been discussed in other books such as Turkey and Central Asia. Besides, some literary and grammatical works are also included in this category.

1. Selected events of the Kingdom of Turkey including the merits and demerits of Kings
2. The amazing stories of the Russian expansion in Central Asia.
3. Selection from the Gulestan and Bostan
4. The Sayings and Poetry of Saints (in accordance with the contemporary situation)
5. Gulchini az Hikmat-e-Chini: (Chinese wisdom)
6. A Brief Syntactical and Morphological Grammar of Urdu

Muhammad Hussain has written that there are eighteen books in this category which he has presented to Amanullah Khan but the list shows that there are seventeen books in this category.

Second Category

Here starts the second category of his publications. There are five books in this category. He has written that the manuscripts of these book were available in Dar-al-Talif. Details of these books are given below.

1. Qabayel-e-Afghani: (It is translation of H.W. Bellow's book). It also contains the rejection of his misinterpretation.
2. Tarikh-e-Afghanistan: It is the translation of the Col. Meleson's book with annotations and disagreements.
3. Tadbir-e-Manzal: It is also a translated work. It is written for the girls' school.

4. Tarikh-e-Ta'leem Japan: It is a translated book written for ministry of education. As reflected from its title. It is about the education system of Japan.
5. Nukat-e-Nabath: The principles of Botany with references to Quranic verses.

Third Category

As already stated that in this category he has included thirteen text books which he had written for schools.

1. Aman-al-Mudrrisin: It is a manual for directors, teachers and students. It contains executives, intellectual and ethical instructions. It is based on his experience and is in accordance to his observations of the developed countries.
 2. Aman-al- Mamoreen: It has useful and important guidelines for rulers, judges and government officials. It is an extremely essential book for Afghanistan.
 3. Isharat-e-Akhlaqia wa Hidayat-e-Majazat: It is written for school management.
 4. Masayel-e-Yomiya Talim-o-Tarbia: It is translated for teacher training institute.
 5. Aman-al-Naswan: It is written in four volumes. It contains biographies of prominent Muslim women. Some non-Muslim women have also been included in this book.
 6. Brief History of Islam: It was a textbook. It was taught in girls and boys schools.
 7. Geography of Afghanistan (Brief and detailed): It is a text book and contains two volumes.
 8. Kalid-e-Tajweed: It is written for both the students and teachers to easily learn rules of pronunciation and recitation of the holy Quran.
 9. Aghraz-e-Namaz: It contains translation of the prayer.
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10. Falsfa-e-Jabar: It is translation of a book titled Kitab-al-Nafas with explanation and annotations.

Actually four volumes of Aman-al-Naswan have been considered as separate books. That is why total number of books in this category reach to thirteen otherwise total number is ten in this category of books.

Fourth Category

As compared to the previous three categories, this category contains more books which are given below.

1. *Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar*: Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar is the first novel written in Afghanistan (Hussain, 1931, p. 291). He is the author of the first novel ever published in Dari /Persian, *Jihad Akbar wa Asghar*. Its first part printed in serial form in the journal *Mu'arif marif* (Introduction to education) between 1919 and 1921 but the second part was never published (Sadat, 2008, p.296). According to the author this novel contains two volumes and only the first volume is published in serial in the journal *Mu'arif marif*. The author himself said that this is the first novel on Afghanistan written in Persian language. It depicts the struggle of the Afghans against British invaders. In a vivid and rather conversational language the author relates the story of Dost Muhammed Khan's son Wazir Muhammed Akbar Khan, who traditionally is regarded as the hero of the first Anglo-Afghan war. He was the legendary hero and victor of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42). The role of Prince Wazir Muhammad Akbar Khan⁵ has been appreciated and recognized by many Afghans. It is generally believed that Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1793-1863) got rid of his son Wazir Akbar Khan, who opposed Amir's pro-British policies, by poisoning him. This novel also contains common situation and customs of different people of Afghanistan. It was written during the imprisonment period of the author. It also had information

about politics and royal family. Therefore, the author thought it appropriate to get permission for its publication from Amanullah Khan. He handed over it to Sardar Muhammad Kabir Khan for review and he wrote adverse remarks on it (Khan, 1931, p. 28). Later on it was presented for exhibition during celebration of Esteqlal and it was highly appreciated by the intellectuals (Khan, 1931, p. 33). According to Bezhan (2006) this is the second novel in Afghanistan.

2. Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar Vol: II.

3. *Sarf wa Nahw wa Uruz-e-Arabi*: (Arabic Grammer and phonics). It is written in Urdu. Examples for explanation have been taken from the holy Quran.

4. Pashto ki Sarf wa Nahwa ma' isharat wa muhawerat wa hekayat-e-Afaghena: according to the author all of the mistakes that were available in the previously written grammars have been corrected in this book.

5. Afghani Farsi: This book include one thousand Turki and Hindi words that were in used in Kabul. These words also accompanied by specific idioms, verses and proverbs.

6. Nasab-e-Afghani: It is written in Pashto. It is genealogical history of Afghans.

7. Punjabi Dihāt ke Iqtisadi Halat: This book is about the economic conditions of rural Punjab. It is written in English language. This original book was not found and the author has given its title in Urdu language while according to him the book in in English language.

8. Karb wa bala-e-karbala: It is written in Urdu. Martyrdom of the Imams have been described in a very simple language in this book.

9. Ayat wa ahadis muta'lliq-e-ghaza: It is an essential book for military school and army so that they may have their spiritual desire in following rules of daily life.

10. Haroof-e-muqatte'a: This books contains the explanation and tafsir of Haruf-e-Muqatte'at that are available in Quran such as Alif Laam Meem etc. According to the author, it was written during his imprisonment when Amir Habib ullah decided for his assassination/murder.
 11. Ba'z Ayat ki Jadeed Nukat: It is written in Urdu. It is helpful for the prosperity and heartily satisfaction of contemporary Muslims as stated by the author.
 12. Tarjuma Ayat-e-Akhlaqi wa Awamir wa Nawahi: This book contains translation of specific verses that were being taught to high officials and officers working in finance.
 13. Hafiz Asha'ar: It contains selected verses of Hafiz having wisdom.
 14. Baidal Asha'ar: It contains selected verses of Baidal having wisdom.
 15. Sayeb Asha'ar: It contains selected verses of Sayeb having wisdom.
 16. Masnavi Asha'ar: These verses were of significant importance in terms of the wisdom they have. These verses were included in curriculum as well as significant for extensive reading.
 17. Hikayat-e-Manzuma: This books was written for learning lessons from these stories as well as it aimed for didactic purposes.
 18. Tarikh-e-afghanan-e-Jhalander: This original book was not found. Although the title given by the author is in Urdu language but according to the author it is written in English. The author has stated that although the book is specific about the history of the Pashtuns in Jalandhar but equally half of the book is also productive for common Afghans.
 19. Islahat-e-Aligarh College: It is written Urdu and in English.
 20. Islahat-e-Aligarh College: It is written in English
 21. Drama Adal wa Daad: It is a story of a king which caused a disturbance
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22. during celebration of Istiqlal.
 23. Drama Mughal wa Pathan: It is a strange story of Saad ullah Khan Wazir Shahjehan.
 24. Shakespeare ki tamam dramo se hekmat wa lataef ka iqtibas: This book is based on the excerpts taken out from Shakespeare plays having relevance with the history and events of Afghanistan. A comparison of the idioms of Shakespeare and verses of Masnavi of Molvi have also been made in the book.
 25. Angrizi Udaba se Ilteqat-e-Nafae Nasar wa Nazam mi: This book is written in English and based on the quotations from poetry and prose of English writers.
 26. Akbar ke Zarifana awr Aurangzeb ke sufayana qise: It consists of comic stories of Akbar and mystic stories of Aurangzeb.
 27. Afghanistan ki Bara Zubani: This book discusses the twelve languages spoken in Afghanistan along with interesting stories of these languages.
 28. Tarikh-e-Mukhtasar Fatah-e-Sham: It describes stories of those conquerors who were the best generals of the world.
 29. Umayya, Abbasia awar digar Islami sultanato ki ibrat awr kahania: It contains exemplary stories of Ummid, Abbasaid and other Islamic empires that caused their destruction and downfall. It is written in Urdu language.
 30. Anbiya ki zaruri Halat: It contains historical accounts of prophets with authentic sources. It is written in Urdu.
 31. Khulafa-e-Arba'a ki sawanih umria: This book contains biographies of four caliphs. It is written in Urdu.
 32. Ashara Mubashara ki Sawanih Umria: It contains biographies of top ten companions of the Prophet PBUH. It is written in Urdu.
 33. Majlis-e-Jan nisan-e-Islam: It is about the sacrifices of the first council of
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34. reforms in the history of Afghanistan which caused eleven years imprisonment of its members including the author.
35. *Budh awr Islam*: It contains sources and evidences of Muslim intellectuals and poets in favour of Buddhism.
36. *Isha'at-e-Islam ki Sharayet wa Nasayeh*: It is based on the rules, regulations and conditions for the propagation of Islam. It is written in Urdu language.
37. *Nadir Urdu Qaeda*: It is a premier for easy and effective teaching and learning of Urdu. It is equally helpful for both teachers and students.
38. *Qawaed*: It is helpful for common people in learning writing and reading.
39. *Sahal Hasil Adwaya wa Aghziya ki Tasiri*: It is about the effects of medicine and diets. It also has modern and ancient instructions about food and medicine according to author. All these have been tested and written in prison. It is written in Urdu language.
40. *Mera Safar-e-Russ awr Wasti Asia Mae*: According to author it presents strange accounts of Bolsheviks and the sufferings of Muslims. It is written in English language.
41. *Afghani Inqilab awr uski natayej wa asbab*: The Afghani revolution: its causes and consequences. It presents the accounts of the companions of Bacha-e-Saqao. In addition it contains the reasons of the downfall of Amanullah Khan and the uplift of Nadir Khan. It is written in English language.

Conclusion

From the beginning of twentieth century, India's Muslim modernists began to run toward Afghanistan in response to the positive policies of Habibullah Khan. This caused major intellectual contribution of India's Muslims in different walks of life in Afghanistan. Mainly they contributed to schools, journals, scientific

development, and welfare societies. In this period Urdu sources are richer than Pashto and Dari and Afghanistan was known through the medium of Urdu. Urdu served in the transmission and exchange of ideas. For many reasons such as Afghan nationalism and distrust with Pakistan, Urdu sources have been ignored. A bird eye view of Muhammad Hussain Khan's works/books, and its contents, gives an idea that his audience are Muslim in general and Afghans in particular. He has written his books mainly in Persian/Dari followed by Urdu, English and Pashto languages. Main themes and contents found in his books are history, culture, geography, politics of Afghanistan, history of various European countries, selection from Persian and English literature, religion, grammars of Urdu, Pashto and Persian languages, Philosophy, medicines, Islamic history, novel, drama, travelogues and translation of literary and historical works. Manuals for administrative officers and for school management are also included in his works. He introduced new genres in Afghan literature such as novel and drama. The credit of writing first novel in Persian/Dari language on Afghanistan also goes to him. He also promoted the literary genre of drama in Afghanistan. Although written in other languages but many of his works titles are in Urdu. Some titles of his books are too long that contains a few lines. In the list of his publications, sometimes he counts different volumes of one book as separate books and sometimes different volumes as one book. This is the reason that exact number of his books varies in various sources. His Seventy one books have been briefly introduced in this article. All of his books needed to be explored and analyzed.

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¹ His name on his books is written as Muhammad Hussain Khan but some writers have written his name as Muhammad Hussain Punjabi and Maulvi Muhammad Hussain Punjabi (Yunas, 2002, p. 577) also see (Khan, 2014, p.134). Fida Yunas has also introduced another person named Muhammad Hussain Kabuli in his book immediately after Muhammad Hussain Khan. May be he has written epithets such as Maulvi or Punjabi to distinguish him from other writer of the same period.

² The Urmar, also called Burki a Pashtun tribe mainly living in Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan. Urmar is part of the Pashtun tribal system and identity with the Karlan confederacy of the region. The 16th century Pashto writer Pir Roshan belonged to the Urmar tribe.

³ In 1901, Habibullah Khan began to overturn many of his father's policies. According to Omar Sadr in his book *Negotiating Cultural Diversity* in Afghanistan, he founded a

college/school in Kabul called Habibia School to create a modern elite of intellectuals and civil servants in the monarchy. The idea of an Afghan nationalism began to emerge from Habibia. It called for complete sovereignty from British political influence, a constitutional monarchy and the modernization of economy and education. But it also propagated Pashto as the country's only national language. Afghanistan became a sovereign state in 1923, declared Afghanistan a constitutional monarchy. A plethora of literature was produced to historicise Afghan nationhood, as if it had existed long before the 19th century. Amanullah's reforms included emancipation of women (Including removing the veil) compulsory education, co-educational schools, separation of mosque and state, monogamy, and education of rural folk. The Afghan nationalist project was a curious mixture of modernization, monarchism, constitutionalism and secularism.

⁴ Some scholars believe that the word Dari as the name of the language was derived from the word *darbar* (royal court), signifying it as the language of the royal courts. Dari was the language not only spoken by most monarchs but also used in the royal court, laws, and poetry and by historians. Others believe Dari has been adapted from the word *dara* (valley) perhaps because the language developed in the valleys and mountains of the region located in the north eastern area of Afghanistan known as Badakhshan. In the eleventh century, the famous poet Hakim Abdul Qasim Ferdowsi wrote in the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) "*Befarmud tah Parsi-e-Dari, Nebeshtand wah kohtah shud dawari*(In a swift decision, they instructed that in Parsi-e-Dari be written). Most Afghan scholars believe it is from this Parsi-e Dari that Dari originally evolved

⁵ In 1838, the governor-general of British India, Lord Auckland declared war on Afghanistan, triggering the first Anglo-Afghan War. The East India Company, in tandem with the ruler of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, launched a two-pronged invasion of Afghanistan through the Khyber and Bolan Passes. In December 1841, the British envoy William Macaghten (or the *de facto* ruler of Afghanistan) was assassinated by Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan, who led the uprising in Kabul. Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan received his father Amir Dost Mohammad at Ali Masjid, and escorted him up the Khyber Pass to Kabul to assume his throne as the Afghan ruler