

Book Review

Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel, Approaches to the Studies in Socio-Cultural Muslim South Asia and the World, Sang-e-Meel Publications, 25, Shahrah-e-Pakistan, Lower Mall, Lahore, Pakistan, ISBN-10: 969-35-3408-5, ISBN-13: 978-969-35-3408-5, Pages 277. 2022, Price: Rs.1400/-

History is more than the path left by the past. If a nation wants its history would shape its future, its people should stop, think and see their past. Upon looking back, they will certainly find themselves at a diverged path, having two emerging roads to the past. As they are not one traveler, they would not need to look down every road, as far as they could, to find the better claim of their choice. So, they are free in their selection. The first road leads to joy and pleasure of the past. This road is taken by most of the people of a nation. Such people study, write and describe their past keeping themselves in their comfort zone. For example, Mirza Ghalib has been described in a very different way by Prof. Yousuf Hussain Khan – the head of the Department of History in Osmania University, than what is explained by Sheikh Muhammad Ikram based on his analysis of Ghalib, supported by the Allama Iqbal's poetry.

The road not taken by majority of people of a nation is the pathway that demands research and wants wear. Travelers of this pathway take this road to shape the future of the nation where in leaves, no step has trodden black. The readers of *Approaches to the Studies in Socio-Cultural Muslim South Asia and the World* by Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel will see in the book the road not taken by most of the present Urdu researchers and writers to shape the future of the nation.

It is worthy to mention that the two roads are interchangeable. If you select your past just to distillate joy and pleasure, the nation cannot

be built up. But for nation building, Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel has taken the road of research and criticism for which we can certainly claim that:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

(*The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost)

The aforementioned masterpiece of Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel includes his selected publications; the first one which got my attention was #19 and #20. These two writings should be read as one article. It is a character certificate to whom it may concern for the suitability of Mr. Moazzam Ali - the store keeper in the office of *The Comrade*. Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel lives in the town; namely Gulistan-e-Jauhar in Karachi – an area named after Mohammad Ali Jauhar. The image of the real certificate has been provided as two pages at the end of #20, written and issued from the desk of Mohammed Ali Jauhar. It is worthy to note that Mohammed Ali Jauhar had been facing lack of clerks in Delhi, but he shifted the office of *The Comrade* to Delhi, as reflected from this certificate. Although it seems a miracle that an honest and vigilant worker Mr. Moazzam Ali himself met Mohammed Ali Jauhar in Delhi in 1912 and offered his night-and-day working to *The Comrade*, yet this meeting and working of Mr. Moazzam Ali may be researched in political perspective as Mr. Moazzam Ali also bears a position of an external watchdog to *The Comrade* who “filled practically every post in the manager’s office” as written in the letter. In addition to this, it is also worthy to note that Mr. Moazzam Ali asked for this character certificate in 1921, i.e., seven years after the closure of *The Comrade* in 1914; this late asking gives a clue that 1921 might not be the year of issuance of the certificate, but the page number of the letterhead. If this would be the year of issuance of the letter, why was Mr. Moazzam Ali in need of this certificate in 1921? This reality is still in the dark but can open new doors to the watchdog on *The Comrade*. There is no moral of this certificate but it reveals a socio-political shift in post 1921-Delhi.

Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel has also added in this masterpiece various beautiful tapestries on his research wall for researchers on Colonial South Asia, two kinds of *Ulama* (Muslim religious scholars) during the struggle

for Pakistan, *Sufis* (Muslim saints) of South Asia, Urdu Poetry, Linguistics, Iqbal, Root Causes of Separatism of British India, Princely States of India, and Japan. Short notes are all treasures to future research; the aforementioned character certificate is also one of the short notes by Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel.

Although the article of length 20-pages: *Islam and Pakistan: An Overview of Affinity and Challenges* is a summary, it has some debatable points as underlined below, like on pg#218:

- (i) *Currently, Islam being the only exponent of the state is not facing any harsh debate.*
- (ii) *Islamic Democracy has gained tremendous importance. The basic of Islam are deeply rooted in the laws and constitution of a state as Islam cannot be isolated from them and any big step or decision cannot change this mutual relations unless any revolution come.*
- (iii) *98% majority of the people will not accept a change in any way where Islam is minus and no such change will be tolerated.*
- (iv) *Visits to mosques are frequented especially by young Muslims. The use of hijab or performing parda among girls is increasing day by day.*

This masterpiece opens new pathways to further research and debates on Islam, Pakistan and History of South Asia.

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