



**DEDICATION**

The present issue of the *Indo-Iranica* is dedicated to the memory of Professor Syed Amir Hasan Abidi, who passed away in Delhi on May 4, 2011.

Professor Abidi was the last of the great scholars of Persian in India during the twentieth century, and his death has left a void which is difficult to be filled in. The obituary on him, published in this issue, will give some idea of his greatness.

Professor Abidi had been associated with the Iran Society and its journal, the *Indo-Iranica*, for more than four decades, during which the Society and the journal were benefitted by his active participation.

Twenty-eight articles of Professor Abidi- 13 in English and 15 in Persian- were published in the *Indo-Iranica* between 1960 and 2004. Of these articles, the first one, which was published in 1960, was in English, dealing with the influence of Hindi on Indo-Persian literature, while the last one, which was published in 2004, was in Persian, on a 16th-century Persian poet of Herat, Mayli Haravi. Both these articles are reproduced in the present issue of the journal as a tribute to the late Professor.

**Board of Editors**

## *Indo-Iranica*

MARCH & JUNE 2011, VOL. 64 NO. 1 & 2

### **PROFESSOR SYED AMIR HASAN ABIDI**

(1921 ♦ 2011)

**P**rofessor Syed Amir Hasan Abidi, fondly called Baba-e-Farsi, passed away at a Hospital near his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday, the 4th May, 2011, leaving behind his widow, two sons, a daughter and innumerable friends, admirers, students and well-wishers to mourn his loss. Prof. Abidi was a doyen of Persian Language and Literature and his death gave a terrible jolt to the cause of Persian in this Sub-Continent.

Amir Hasan Abidi, son of Syed Shabbir Hasan, was born in a noble and cultured family on July 1, 1921 at Ganguli, a village in the district of Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh (India). He started his study in a local Madrasah from where he shifted to Chashma-i-Rahmat School at Ghazipur. After completing his primary education there he went to Benaras, Lucknow and Firangi Mahal, where he studied Arabic and Persian Languages, Jurisprudence and Religious Doctrines under great teachers of that time. He thereafter joined the St. John's College in Agra where he obtained first class Master's Degree in Persian from the University of Agra in 1943. In 1947 he secured the degree of Ph.D. from the same University.

Mr. Abidi started his academic career at the St. Stephen's College, Delhi as a lecturer in Persian and Urdu in 1945. While still working there, he was selected for higher studies in Iran. He went to Iran on this scholarship and returned successfully with the degree of D.Litt. in Persian language and literature from the Tehran University in 1956. After his return he joined the Deptt. Of Persian of the University of Delhi in 1957 where he was later promoted to the post of Reader in 1959. In 1969 a post of Professor of Persian was created in the University of Delhi and Dr. Abidi was the first occupant of that post. Concurrently he held the post of Head of the Deptt. of Arabic and Persian. In 1973 he was appointed the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the same University. In 1984 he was honoured with the prestigious post of National Professor by the All India University Commission. In 1986 he retired from the University service with great distinction. The University of Delhi thereafter honoured him by appointing him Professor Emeritus of Persian.

Prof. Abidi had made acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination the motto of his life and nothing could stop him from achieving this goal. After his formal education in madrasahs, schools and colleges he made it a point to seek knowledge from whatever source he could. He utilized the libraries and institutions within the country for this purpose and even travelled to far off places like Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakistan, Turkistan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, China, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia besides Pakistan and Bangladesh, nearer his home, with the same object. These visits to different places, researches in libraries and institutions there and interactions with the scholars and other persons helped him to amass much knowledge which he later disseminated to other seekers of knowledge.

Prof. Abidi was an accomplished scholar of Arabic and Persian but chose Persian as the main field of his literary activities. He taught Persian in the St. Stephens College and the Delhi University for long years where he imparted to his students the result of the rich gleanings of knowledge that he had amassed. This helped in many well-known scholars and teachers coming up among his students. Some of these students, under his guidance, completed a project on the History of Indo-Persian Literature which was indeed a great achievement.

Apart from his classroom teaching and guidance to research scholars, Dr. Abidi disseminated knowledge through his lectures and discussions at Seminars, Symposiums and Conferences mostly related to Persian studies, held in India or outside India. He could speak with equal ease in English, Persian and Urdu. This helped him reach and impress audiences having different languages. Being an outstanding scholar and a distinguished teacher of Persian language and literature he would often receive request to attend Seminar, Symposium and Conference on and related to Oriental, specially Persian studies, from different quarters and he would try to oblige them as best as he could.

Dr. Abidi presided over the Arabic and Persian Section of the All India Oriental Conference held at Gauhati (Assam) in 1965 and the same year he travelled to Afghanistan on an invitation from the University of Kabul. In 1969 he travelled to Iran as a guest of the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Iran. In 1971 he again visited Iran to attend the World Conference of Iranologists held at Shiraz. In 1974 he travelled to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon in his literary pursuit when he had occasions to address at different Universities and Institutions. In 1975 he attended a Congress on Amir Khusrau held at Kabul while the same year he participated in the Celebrations for Firdausi in Tus and for Daqiqi in Mashaad. In 1976 he was given the responsibility of arranging an International Seminar on Amir Khusrau in New Delhi by the Government of India which he did very successfully thereby proving his eminence as an Organiser besides as a Scholar. His one great contribution is the formation in 1977 of the All India Persian Teachers' Association in Delhi with the co-operation of Dr. Nazir Ahmed and other teachers of Persian. He was elected President for six consecutive annual conferences of the Association from 1980 to 1985.

Besides these literary activities, Prof. Abidi has left behind many published works for the benefit of posterity. He was a prolific writer in Persian, Urdu and English on his pet subject of Persian language and literature with stress on bringing to light the unknown writings in prose and poetry of some writers and poets of the past. He also did the great service of editing the Sanskrit works which were translated in Persian earlier and had been lying neglected. He has two original research works "Abu Talib Kalim Kashani" and "Irfan-o-Tasawwuf Dar Hind" to his credit besides many edited works including Vikram Urvashi, Probodh Chandra, Yoga Vashista, Gulzar-i-Hal, Soozo Godaz, Muntakhab-al Lataif, Dastane Padmavat, Tarikhe Salateen-e-Safaviya, Panchakhyana, Bahrul Asmar, Zamima-e-Tughlaq Name, Ismat Nama ya Qissae Mina wa Lurak.

The list of services to knowledge of Prof. Abidi is long which cannot be encompassed in an obituary. Much more is required to be written and shall be written in future to highlight them. But even during his lifetime the valuable services of Prof. Abidi did not go unnoticed and unrewarded. The Lalit Kala Parishad, Sahitya Academy, Ghalib Academy, Indo-Iran Society, Mafakhir-e-Farhangiye Iran honoured him with their awards for his valuable services to the cause of Oriental Studies. The President of India awarded him in 1972 the prestigious Certificate of Honour for his scholarship in and service to Persian studies. The Govt. of India also offered him the prestigious title of Padma Shri.

Indo-Iranica induced the Society to appoint him as its Corresponding Editor which he continued to be till his death. In 1973 he was elected an Honorary Member of the Society which bond also continued throughout his life. He delivered the prestigious Dr. M. Ishaque Memorial Lecture and the Dr. Hiralal Chopra Memorial Lecture at the Society. His death indeed constitutes a great loss to the Iran Society.

Prof. Abidi was a great scholar, a devoted teacher and an ardent well-wisher of Oriental & Persian studies. But above all he was a man par excellence full of sense for selfless service, love and kindness for fellow beings of whatever hue and colour. The death of such an ideal man is indeed a great loss to humanity. But to be sure such persons never die. They live for ever in the hearts of people.

هرگز نمیرد آنکه دلش زنده شد به عشق  
ثبت است بر جریده عالم دوام ما

*May Almighty Allah bestow upon him, His choicest blessings, and may the light of knowledge lit by him be the beacon light for others to follow.*

**M. A. Majid**