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Point of View

A tribute to Dabir

A **REMARKABLE** scholar with three newly compiled volumes of Mirza Dabir arrived last week in Lahore. The well-known well-read and well-travelled Sir Ghulam Ahmad was the guest of honor at the inauguration of these volumes. The next day he proceeded to Lucknow via Delhi for the purpose of the research in hand.

This was his second visit after a lapse of almost one year. The three volumes he had brought with him to the last visit was the first instalment of the long series of Dabir's volumes he has planned to bring out.

The scholar is head Taqi Ahdi, who professionally is a medical practitioner, living in Canada and is busy in his research work on Dabir. His deep involvement in the work of research may well be read as a sign of hope for Dabir, who never long was consigned to oblivion. To be more explicit, should we not expect a revival of Dabir? Perhaps yes. Perhaps the present may begin.

The history of literature offers instances of poets, who after remaining for long in oblivion attracted attention of some author associated with a significant era. The

and re-interpreted them in accordance with the sensibility of his times. And he, the poet stands restored. Perhaps Dabir in his recession to oblivion was waiting for some such scholar. He has at last found one such soul!

But how did Dabir emerge from oblivion? He at one time dominated the scene of marriage and was held in high esteem as a great man in the field of marriage writing. He was at his peak, as a marriage writer when Mir Anis made his appearance. His marriage rise in the field soon seemed posing a challenge to Dabir's authority in marriage writing.

The two poets were polite enough to restrain themselves from challenging each other openly. But their dogmatism and devotion lacked that kind of civility. They soon were divided into two camps known as 'Dabirists' and 'Anisists', each ready to fight with each and set in the claimed superior position of his master.

As a later stage, Maulana

Dabir imparted a literary dimension to this fight. Maulana, though not a Lucknowi, behaved on this occasion typically like Lucknowis, who had been very fond of cock-fighting. His comparative study of the two poets gives the impression of being a cock-fight.

But we should not be oblivious to the positive contribution made by Shibli's *Mansura*. It imparted a literary respectability to marriage, which hitherto was treated as the kind of verse meant to serve solely the purposes of *Majlis-e-Ain*. By discussing it according to the laws laid down for judging poetry, Shibli got it released from the confines of *mansura* and elevated it to the level where it is reckoned among accepted forms of poetry. But unfortunately he did it at the cost of Dabir.

Indeed *Mansura* did not go unchallenged. Dabir did have his defenders but they were hardly a match to Madhus Shibli who was an acknowledged scholar and a literary authority. Hardly any of the

defenders had the ability to make a critical study of Dabir's *mansura* and determine their literary worth. In the absence of such a study, Shibli's judgments on Dabir were readily accepted in the literary circles. What added to this situation was the non-availability of Dabir's works. Syed Taqi Ahdi holds his relative and disciples responsible for this as none of them cared for the publication of his works. Consequently, Dabir gradually receded into oblivion.

It is only in recent years that some scholars interested in marriage have paid attention to Dabir. Foremost among them is Syed Taqi Ahdi, who is engaged more seriously in his research on Dabir. He in fact had started with his research on Mir Anis. He concentrated his research on one of his *mansura* and presented it along with his research in a deluxe volume. But after that he solely devoted himself to the research on Dabir. As stated above, the three volumes published last year were the first instalment of the pro-

posed long series consisting of Dabir's writings. The three volumes brought out now are the second instalment. These three volumes are:

• *Mansuriyat-i-Dabir*

• *Abwabul Masab*

• *Mushaf-i-Farsi*

All these three volumes, like the previous ones, consist of Dabir's miscellaneous writings other than *mansura*, which have been dug out after much research. The first is a collection of his newly discovered *mansura* written on different religious themes. On the basis of these *mansura* Dabir, claims Ahdi, deserves to be counted among distinguished *mansuri* writers of Urdu.

The next volume *Abwabul Masab* is a prose writing of Dabir, which has been unearthed after much research. Here, is a narration of the tragic events of Kartala under the title quoted above.

The third is a collection of his verses in Persian.

These volumes will be followed by a series of volumes consisting of *mansura*, which, according to the research of Taqi Ahdi, are 675 in number. This number also includes his unpublished *mansura*.



Mirza Dabir