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Dastan-e Amir Hamza in colonial India

Abstract

This paper explores how several factors coupled with the development of printing press in India in the nineteenth century that led to its boom in the Indian subcontinent. Besides the colonial pursuits of the British, the nineteenth century was the age of emergence of Urdu prose mostly centred around religion and ethics. Urdu literature was more poetry-centred than prose. The prose of Urdu literature was mainly restricted to the ancient form of long-epic stories called *dastan* which stood close to narrative genres in South Asian literatures such as Persian *masnawi*, Punjabi *qissa*, Sindhi *waqayati bait*, etc. *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza* is considered the most important Indo-Islamic prose epic. Besides *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, there are several other prominent *dastans* in Urdu. They represent contaminations of wandering and adventure motifs borrowed from the folklore of the Middle East, central Asia and northern India. These include *Bostan-e-Khayal*, *Bagh-o-Bahar* by Mir Amman, *Mazhab-i-Ishq* by Nihalchand Lahori, *Araish-i-Mahfil* by Hyderbakhsh Hyderi, *Gulzar-i-Chin* by Khalil Ali Khan Ashq, and other offspring of *dastans*.

Keywords: *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*, colonial India, Urdu prose, Urdu poetry, Urdu literature, Persian *masnawi*, Punjabi *qissa*, Sindhi *waqayati bait*.

***Dastan-e Amir Hamza* in colonial India by Shaheen Saba**

The coming of *dastan*¹ or *qissa* in India was not an abrupt one. There were many manuscripts of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* but it was not available to all. As it was also a performative art (*dastangoi*), the common man preferred listening to it than reading it. Several factors coupled with the development of printing press in India in the nineteenth century that led to its boom in the Indian subcontinent. Besides the colonial pursuits of the British, the nineteenth century was the age of emergence of Urdu prose mostly centred around religion and ethics. Urdu literature was more poetry-centred than prose. The prose of Urdu literature was mainly restricted to the ancient form of long-epic stories called *dastan* which stood close to narrative genres in South Asian literatures such as Persian *masnawi*, Punjabi *qissa*, Sindhi *waqayati bait*, etc. *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza* is considered the most important Indo-Islamic prose epic. Besides *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, there are several other prominent *dastans* in Urdu. They

¹ Basically the words mean a story. They are often used interchangeably. Frances Pritchett draws a differentiation among them by using *qissas* for the short narratives and *dastans* for the longer narrative.

represent contaminations of wandering and adventure motifs borrowed from the folklore of the Middle East, central Asia and northern India². These include *Bostan-e-*

² Richard Bauman shares some seminal lines on folklore, “The discipline of folklore (and to an extent, anthropology as well), has tended throughout its history to define itself in terms of a principal focus on the traditional remnants of earlier periods, still to be found in those sectors of society that have been outdistanced by the dominant culture. To this extent, folklore has been largely the study of what Raymond Williams has recently termed “residual culture,” those “experiences, meanings and values which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, [but] are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue-cultural as well as social-of some previous social formation” (Williams 1973:IO-11). If the subject matter of the discipline is restricted to the residue of a specific cultural or historical period, then folklore anticipates its own demise, for when the traditions are fully gone, the discipline. At best, though, folklore as the discipline of residual culture looks backward to the past for its frame of reference, disqualifying itself from the study of the creations of contemporary culture until they too may become residual. Contrasted with residual culture in Williams’ provocative formulation is “emergent culture,” in which “new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences are continually being created”. Emergent culture, though a basic element in human social life, has always lain outside the charter of folklore, perhaps in part for lack of a unified point of departure or frame of reference able to comprehend residual forms and items, contemporary practice, and emergent structures. Performance, we would offer, constitutes just such a point of departure, the nexus of tradition, practice, and emergence in verbal art. Performance may thus be the cornerstone of a new folkloristics, liberated from its backward-facing perspective, and able to comprehend much more of

Khayal, *Bagh-o Bahar* by Mir Amman, *Mazhab-i-Ishq* by Nihalchand Lahori, *Araish-i-Mahfil* by Hyderbakhsh Hyderi, *Gulzar-i-Chin* by Khalil Ali Khan Ashq, and other offspring of *dastans*. They can be called offspring because none of them are equal in brevity, language and do not have a cycle like *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*.

Urdu and Persian Tussle

The large number of verses quoted in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* is in Persian. The presence of foreign words add ornamentation to Urdu which as Paul R. Brass says is very normal because “In its original form, it was nothing more grammatically than the spoken Hindustani of north India, particularly the *Khari boli* of the Delhi area, with an infusion of Persian, Arabic and Turkish vocabulary”. In fact, the Muslim rulers of North India chose to write Urdu in the Persian script with which they were familiar rather than the Devanagri script. With time, the Persian script came into wide use not only for “administrative purposes but for literary purposes as well. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially, a large and vital body of literature was written in Urdu in Persian script, frequently drawing heavily on Persian also for vocabulary and literary

the totality of human experience”.
onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/aa.1975.77.2.02a00030/pdf>Web. 12 Oct, 2015.

symbols”.³ The text concerned in this paper is the 1871 Ghalib Lakhnavi and Abdullah Bilgrami version translated to English as *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi. Ghalib Lakhnavi-the translator of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* into Urdu claims to have translated from a Persian version. The Persian words scattered here and there could be a result of foreignization by Ghalib Lakhnavi. 1837 witnessed the replacement of Persian with local languages like Bengali, Gujrati, Telgu etc in the lower courts. Urdu was adopted as a language for the North Eastern provinces.

Verses by Urdu and Persian writers like Nasikh, Saadi, Sabir, Sehr, Mir Hasan, Ghalib etcetera in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* may appear obscure to the modern readers. Musharraf Ali Farooqi elaborates on the Persian influence and shows that the later day *dastan* like *Tilism-e Hoshruha*, the fifth book of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* was expurgated of Persian influence and Urduised for the nineteenth century readers. Ali Jawad Zaidi marks out the precursors of *dastan*, offering us a brief glimpse of the shaping of *dastan* in India and the language debate that prompted many scholars to speculate on later as Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and Hindi were equally prevalent at that time:

³ Brass, Paul R. “Muslim Seperatism in the United Provinces”. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House pvt ltd, 1974. Print.

...Mir Mohammad Husain Ata Khan Tahseen of Etawah (U.P) wrote his famous Nau Tarz-e Morassa around 1775 basing it on the story of the Four Dervishes. ..With its roots in the latter day Indian Persian, the style was considered a mark of scholarship and literariness and was the fashion of the day. (123)⁴

Frances Pritchett vests the development of Urdu prose parallel with *qissas* to the Deccan:

From the sixteenth century to the eighteenth centuries, an important change was gradually taking place, first in the Deccan and then in North India: Urdu was developing as a literary language. It was equipping its Indic grammar with an extensive overlay of sophisticated Persian words, expressions and idiom. It was also appropriating every Persian genre it could possibly use. Both Urdu poetry and prose seem to have developed initially in the Deccan, then gradually migrated northwards. The various genres of poetry, led by the ghazal (ghazal), made the transition quickly and easily. ⁵

She further says that the Deccan produced allegorical prose romance akin to *qissah* for instance *Sab ras* (1635) and *Khavar namah* (1649) that was influenced by *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* and dealt with battles undertaken by Hazrat Ali –the prophet’s son-in law who combated with tigers, dragons, *devs* (demons), *paris* (fairies) and ghosts. There exists a version of Amir Hamza in late Dakkani prose called

4Zaidi, Ali Jawad. A History of Urdu Literature. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993. Print.

5 Pritchett, Frances. “The Hamzah Romance in Urdu”.<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/>. Web.12 January, 2014.

Qissah-e jang-e amir Hamzah (Qissah of the War of Amir Hamzah), 1784. This is a translation from a Persian source and there is ambiguity regarding its background.

Commenting on the scenario a century earlier (eighteenth century), Ralph Russell offers a contrary view that *dastans* germinated during a period of political turmoil and these *dastans* provided a respite to the anxious souls. It had nothing to do with the development of Urdu prose or literature at that time:

It is noteworthy that the dastans flowered in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Mughal empire was in headlong decline and where every principle of conduct in the medieval code was everywhere and everyday being violated. Men who knew no other code including those who were daily offending against it, could escape from the sordid reality around them into the world of the dastans where everything was splendidly seen and where the true Muslim warrior not only behaved unfailingly as a true Muslim should, but by doing so achieve the most eminently satisfactory results.⁶

Besides being a means of escape like the Keatsian nightingale by the nineteenth century, Urdu was a major language in North India and the Christian missionaries seeing the popularity of Urdu attempted to translate the Bible into Urdu. The earlier translation of the Bible by Schulz was unsuccessful and Mirza Mohammad Firat was persuaded to revise it twice once with Hunter in 1805 and

⁶ Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. p.89. Print.

then with Martin in 1814. He also translated the New Testament. It was finally retranslated by Hyadri which conformed to the modern idiom. Besides missionary pursuits the Europeans were traders too and they wanted their officers to be familiar with the popular Urdu prose of that time.

Fort William College

The endeavours of Fort William College in the development of Urdu prose and promotion of Indian languages have been flagged valourly in history but this contention is not universally acceptable. Below is a quote from Mohammed Zakir's translation of *Bagh-o Bahar* where he recognizes the *dastans* with 'polished literary presentation'. This polish was lost in the pursuits of Fort William College:

Early prose in Urdu, as in many other languages, has been more akin to the literature of oral transmission. As such, it needs little introduction. It is the creation of imagination bordering on fancy and is essentially romantic in nature. In Urdu, this genre, known as dastan, has been distinguished more by polished literary presentation than by lofty literary aims and ideals. It does not pretend to serve any moral purpose, though it has a moral framework and may give as guidelines of good conduct, good government, or virtuous living. In the accounts of the fanciful acts

of chivalry and romance, individual responsibility may also have its play in the form of proselytizing zeal. (viii)⁷

Zakir further vests due credit to the Fort William College for unearthing and introducing direct prose in fiction:

Most of the known prose literature in Urdu, as later traced down from the fourteenth century onwards in the Deccan or in northern India, consisted of tracts, treatises, pamphlets and translations invariably religious in character. The fictional part of it was generally marked by the tendency to use involved sentences and rhyming words. Use of simple, direct prose in fiction, except in a few works which have been unearthed by later researchers, was generally the work of the writers of the Fort William College, Calcutta, established in AD 1800 to acquaint the officers of the English East India Company with the people of India. (vii)⁸

Sadiq-ur-Rahman Kidwai in his research on Gilchrist observes that from 1800 to 1804 as many as sixty Urdu books were compiled, written or edited by thirty authors belonging to the college. Gilchrist himself composed thirteen books in four years. Kidwai marks these achievements as an outcome of the devotion of the scholars, especially Gilchrist. The body of work by Fort William College had an impact “not only on the literary scene in India, but also on the thinking of the English intellectuals”. It made them aware of the fact that the country that they assume to be barbarous and uncivilized

⁷Zakir, Mohammed, trans. *A tale of four dervishes*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1994. Print.

⁸Ibid. p.vii.

has such a rich history of literature. He applauds the service of the college to the British governance and oriental studies through translation and editing of Oriental classics and developing the “best of Indian literary tradition which was till then unknown and obscure, it changed the whole literary landscape of India”.

Muhammad Sadiq clarifies on the buzz created around the pursuits of Fort William College and the prejudice held so far regarding its role in the development of Urdu prose:

Fort William literature has aroused a great deal of attention on account of the services it is believed to have rendered to the cause of Urdu. That, in a way, it marks the beginning of modern Urdu prose may be conceded. But it is important to understand that it stands outside the main current of Urdu prose and as such has no place in its evolution. (291)⁹

Sadiq also challenges the claim made by Graham Bailey who upheld that Gilchrist brought a revival of interest in Urdu literature. He comments “As far as I can judge there is no evidence, historical or literary to support this statement...To sum up, Fort William literature did not enter as a formative development of Urdu prose.”(291)¹⁰ Also the body of work produced by Fort William College is full of translations and adaptations which are alien from

⁹ Sadiq, Muhammad. *A History of Urdu Literature*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: OUP, 1984. 290-291. Print.

¹⁰ Ibid. 291

the “intricacies and figurative apparatus of literature which was incompatible with the college’s aim”.

Gyan Chand Jain also asserts that owing to the sheer magnificence and style of *dastans* the role played by Fort William College was minimal because nothing could replicate the original *dastan*.¹¹ Sadiq-ur Rahman also brings this to light. He quotes Abdullah Yusuf Ali who has been quoted by the scholars of Urdu prose claiming that the literary output of college had not exerted any influence on the future of Urdu prose and that the college was merely an “island”:

It is frequently claimed that Urdu prose began with the Fort William College. This claim is correct only to some extent. People like Mir Amman of Delhi who had lost everything in the Capital of the Moghal Empire were happy that they got employment at Calcutta; ...But the new form that was given to literature for the young civil officers and which was taught to them, gave a new basis to the literature among the munshis and those who had contact and communication with the official circles...Mir Amman himself in the preface of his book Bagh-o -Bahar has apologised for his new idiom by two arguments; firstly that he was writing for the teaching of the foreigners and secondly, that ruining of Delhi had scattered its inhabitants in far off places and this mixed up their original language. No learned man had ever read Bagh-o-Bahar or other text-books of the Fort William College. (27-28)¹²

¹¹Jain, Gyan Chand. *Urdu ki Nasri Dastane*. Anjuman-e Tarraqi Urdu: Karachi, 1969. 110-117. Print.

¹² Kidwai, Sadiq-ur-Rahman. *Gilchrist and the 'Language of Hindoostan'*. New Delhi: Rachna Prakashan, 1972. 27-28. Print.

It is held that Gilchrist was responsible for creating Hindi for Hindus and Urdu for Muslims. This polarization led to long-term effects in both the language usage and the communities that came to be associated with it; he heralded the divide-and-rule policy in the real sense. Jyotirindra Das Gupta continued to attribute the rift between Urdu and Hindi to Fort William College:

During the early years of the foundation of British rule, Dr. J. B. Gilchrist, of Fort William at Calcutta engaged a group of writers to write Hindustani prose. This form of prose was channelled into two distinctly different styles: Hindi, purged as far as possible of Persian words, and Urdu, remaining as close as possible to a Persianized style. From this time onward, the difference between Hindi and Urdu became increasingly sharper.¹³

However, we can give *dastans* the acknowledgement in the process of budding of prose fiction in Urdu which appears more rational in light of the quote below:

The contribution of dastan in developing prose fiction and prose style in general is considerable. Dastans grew in size with the passage of time and the most popular among them ran into as many as ten to eleven large volumes, for instance Bostan-e Kheyal and Tilism-e-Hosh Ruba series. These cyclic supernatural stories of hair-raising adventure with terrible fiends and sorcerers to win the hand of the beloved at its successful conclusion are instances of

¹³<http://www.urdustudies.com/pdf/28/04SafadiFortWilliam.pdf>.
15 June, 2015.

Web.

*imagination running riot. The characters are tossed about by the stormy waves of unpredictable events in a jerky sequence. (124)*¹⁴

Kidwai raises the questions of Fort William's success and role as a path maker. He chooses to answer it in the negative if the "...purpose is to find out a direct relationship between the preceding and succeeding periods of literary history. But do we inherit our traditions from the past in such a mechanical way?" Like Eliot's tradition he speculates whether such waves have to be the torch bearers of literary history that has to be passed from one generation to another.

Another node associated with *dastans* was the celebration of birthday of Prophet Muhammad, which was commemorated with recitals from stories of the prophet's life. These are prose works interwoven with verse. It is still widely prevalent today known as Maulad Sharif or Milad Namah. These *sirat* (biography) became quite popular towards the mid-nineteenth century. Literary surveys recognize Syed Hidayat Ali Shikohabadi's *Risalah - e Maulad Sharif* (1850) and Ghulam Imam Shahid's *Maulad-e Sharif*. The life of all the prophets beginning from Adam to Mohammad was presented in a two-volume work *Tafarro-ul-Azkiya-fi-Ahwal-e-Anbiya* (1808-1884) by Molvi Shah Abul Hasan Baksh Kakorvi. Some writers also worked on the tragedy of Karbala based on the pattern of Persian *Rauzah*

¹⁴ Zaidi, Ali Jawad. *A History of Urdu Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993. Print.

for instance Hyder Baksh Hyadri's *Gul-e-Maghferat* (1802), Mazhar Ali Vela's *Dah Majlis* (1804)¹⁵, Nasrullah Khan Vesal's *Dah-Makhzan* (1834-1835), Kalbe Husain Khan Nadir's *Fazayel-ush-Shohada* (1850) and Shahid's *Ramz-ul-Shahadatayn*.¹⁶ This led to the gradual precipitation of fiction in the form of *dastans*. This was a period when new colleges were established and witnessed the commencement of journalism and the setting of the press. Epshita Halder in an article on the Karbala narratives talks about the content and the role played by print in disseminating these narratives of martyrdom. *Ambiya Bani* (1757), "the handwritten manuscript on the lives of Islamic prophets by Heyat Mamud, was printed on cheap paper in 1874, 50 years within the death of the author" it was available at a very affordable price catering to a wider readership. Post 1830 these kinds of books swept the market in Bengal. These, "didactic and entertaining texts in cheap print flooded the market as an intense response to print technology that became the defined ways for pleasure and piety".¹⁷

The imperfection of human memory and the compression of written discourse in record of *dastans* are quite

¹⁵*Dah Majlis* (1804) contains ten discourses for the ten days of the Arabic month of Moharram when the tragedy of Karbala was perpetrated.

¹⁶ *Ramz-ul-Shahadatayn* deals with the twin martyrdoms of Imams Hasan and Husain.

¹⁷< <http://www.clai.in/07Epshita%20Halder.pdf>>. Web. 19 June, 2016.

pertinent from the fact that there are multiple versions of the same master story. Taking this a step ahead, Claude Lévi-Strauss finds writing to be a strange thing and considers it as a form of “artificial memory”. As a means of communication, its primary role is the facilitation of enslavement of other human beings as they can keep a larger body of knowledge than the others. It is an important criterion to distinguish civilization from barbarism. Strauss makes this observation in the context of Nambikwara tribes but what strikes him is the “artificial memory” which resonates the imperfection of human memory.¹⁸

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi calls the *dastans* beyond J. K. Rowling and a “priceless treasure of Urdu prose”, it was a seminal piece of literature which if unnoticed would have created a vast vacuum in Urdu literature. He is the sole person to possess the entire forty-six volumes of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* which he collected for the past twenty years from libraries, friends, bookshops and other sources. The credit goes to Munshi Naval Kishore for producing them in print; its popularity was so much that the February 1969 edition sold 3000 copies which is an achievement. This was the tenth edition brought out by Munshi Tej Bhargaw — the successor of Naval Kishore Press. The records of Munshi Naval Kishore Press as evaluated by Gyan Chand

¹⁸Web. 23 Aug, 2014. <<http://www.english.illinois.edu/-people/faculty/debaron/482/482readings/levystrausswriting.htm>>

Jain hold that real Persian *dastan* had eight books from which the translation of the Urdu version has been done, earlier Ghalib Lakhnavi had claimed the Persian source to be in fourteen books, hence this confusion about the mother text of *dastan* will always remain a matter of speculation:

During 1883–1909 (except for one volume that was published in 1917), Munshi Naval Kishore, an enterprising and discriminating publisher in Lucknow, printed in 46 volumes the Urdu version of the Dastan-e Amir Hamza, as known to three or four of its leading local reciters. Covering more than 42 000 closely written pages and containing around 25 million words, the corpus is perhaps the largest written–oral romance in the world. Today it is a priceless treasure of Urdu prose and poetry of all possible hues and styles. Persian poetry (by both Iranian and Indian poets) also occurs, although less than the Urdu. There is a smattering of poetry and dialogue from other Indian languages like Awadhi. A unique panoply of words, and technical terms of medieval warfare, jewellery, implements and things of everyday use, it is also a vast showcase of narrative styles and strategies. Many of its stories and episodes anticipate modern science fiction and spy story. Its resplendence and inventive verve display a fertility of imagination that our modern fictions, whether of Garcia Marquez or J.K. Rowling, cannot even begin to approach.¹⁹

Naval Kishore was a great patron of Urdu *dastan* and solely responsible for its publication in huge volumes which gradually led to the edition of the complete Amir

¹⁹Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman. Rev. of *Tilism-e Hoshruha*. *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 15.2 (2012). Web. 5 June, 2014. <[http://www.mafarooqi.com/reviews-hoshruba-I.htm](http://www.mafarooqi.com/reviews-hoshruha-I.htm)>

Hamzah cycle. He first brought out a preprint of Khalil Ali Khan Ashk's *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* in 1869 which had earlier been printed at Fort William College in 1801. Kishore soon came out with improved and updated versions. This was followed by the Bilgrami edition in 1871. But there were always editions and reprints to suit the readers. In 1887, the fifth edition of Bilgrami's version was revised by Naval Kishore Press's emendator Tasadduq Husain Rizvi. It sold very well and was in print at the Tej Kumar Press until the 1990s.

Muhammad Sadiq draws upon Gyan Chand Jain and shares in his history of Urdu literature that *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* in India is much Lucknowised as it also served as a centre for *dastangos* which was followed by the publication:

...the action is laid in a remote wonderland and the actors, men and women bear strange poetic names. But remove their trappings and they turn out to be cent percent Lucknowites...The general life of the day is reproduced to the last detail. The dress, the popular entertainments, dance, music, firework, fair; the utensils and knicknacks; the fakirs swaggering young men and courteous and polished noblemen; the courtesans; the free and easy idiom of the vulgar spiced with slangs, word play and swear word; the fluent sparkling speech of women, all bespeak their origin in Lucknow. ..²⁰

Undoubtedly, in 1881 the most reputed *dastangos* of Lucknow- Sheikh Tassaduq Husain, Munshi Ahmad Husain

²⁰Sadiq, Muhammad. *A History of Urdu Literature*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: OUP, 1984. Appendix 625.

Qamar and Munshi Muhammad Husain Jah were hired like Bilgrami to recite their stories in the presence of scribes who wrote them down or some of the *dastangos* wrote it themselves. The forty-six volumes of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* were issued from the press between 1883 and 1917. From 1883-93, the first seven volumes of the fifth book i.e. *Tilism-e Hoshruha* were published. The Naval Kishore Press edition remained, as Pritchett has aptly put it, “both in its crowning glory and its *coup de grace*”.

As held by Ulrike Stark, Naval Kishore Press played a pivotal “role in upholding the position of Lucknow as the strong-hold of Persian publishing in the United Province”.²¹ The transition from Persian to Urdu was gradual as discussed. The literature of that period also witnessed such changes and at the behest of Naval Kishore Press many translators were hired to translate the Persian classics to Urdu.

Munshi Naval Kishore single-handily published multiple volumes of *Dastan-e Amir Hamza*. He is responsible for bringing the transition of the seminal piece of literature from oral to written. Lines from the “Statement of Newul Kishore Press” composed by Naval Kishore himself provide a first-hand account of literary and publishing scenario. Ulrike Stark has reproduced this piece in her seminal work *An Empire of Books*. Kishore affirms that he

²¹ Stark, Ulrike. *An Empire of Books*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2012. p. 307

established the Press in 1858 when the Province of Oudh was in turmoil. He came there under the patronage of Sir Robert Montgomery who favoured him by assigning him to print the vernacular and English documents associated to their establishments. Kishore played a pivotal role in compiling, publishing, editing and translating a vast corpus of literature in Urdu and Hindi. “Under the auspices of the Local Authorities, the policy pursued was that of translating and publishing the standard works of the well-known ancient authors of the country, the object being to prevent the effacement of their names” (257). He thanks the officers of the province for their help. And the fruits were visible as “no less than 500 different books of the most useful kind have been translated from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English and Nagari into the Vernacular and printed for the benefit of all classes of our country men”. This was possible because Naval Kishore had an aim and target of doing something innovative i.e., translating, compiling and publishing. Putting the scenario in words he writes, “Manuscripts of books of new authors and translations are pouring in from all quarters and as soon as those on the table are disposed of, fresh ones come in and demand fresh outlay and labour” (257). The Press also encouraged *Khoosh Nawisi* (Caligraphy) and *Nadqqashi* (Drawing) and many trained men have been employed for the same. This explains the ornate yet intertwining designs on the title page of the books and illustrated texts. “Steeped in the Persian tradition, the

early Lucknow printers had developed a particularly ornate style of title page decoration” (274).

He employed several experts for “mirror” or reverse writing (*maskusnigari*) and stone correction (*islah-e sang*) which recovered a “rare and waning calligraphic art”. However as Stark mentions that, “The perhaps most distinguishing feature in the NKP’s institutional setting was its department of Composition and Translation (*Shuba-e tasnif va Tarjuma*), itself a novelty in Indian commercial publishing. This literary workshop constituted the creative centre of the modern *karkhana*;(281). Stark gives the credit of these translations to the colonial encounter and resulted in the participation of NKP in seminal translations that marked the nineteenth century. “Translation from the English was germane to negotiating the terms of colonial modernity in India, while translation from the classical oriental languages was central to the dissemination of Indian religious and scientific knowledge and, ultimately, helped reassert Indian cultural identity in the face of colonial hegemonic claims” (283).

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