BOOK REVIEWS


Shaykh ‘Abd al-Haqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī (1551-1642) is one of the leading Muslim scholars of theology, hadith, biography and mysticism who lived in the 16-17th centuries A.H. in this sub-continent. He has to his credit a number of works, mainly on theology, and is known mainly for his Akhbar al-Akhyār, a biographical dictionary of leading Muslim scholars and ṣūfis, his Persian Commentary on Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ and Madārij al-Nubūwah, a work on the biography of the Holy Prophet. Some of his works, both in Persian and Arabic, have been published, while many of them are still in manuscript form lying in European and Asian libraries.

Risālah-i Nūriyyah-i Sultāniyyah, is a short treatise on the principles of government based on Islamic law and ethics containing some relevant anecdotes from the earlier rulers, Muslims and non-Muslims, borrowed mostly from Muslim history. As explained in his short introduction, the author has written the book for the guidance of the Mughal Emperor Jehangir (1605-1627). In this book, the Shaykh has laid down the objectives of an Islamic state and the basic principles according to which a Muslim ruler should conduct the business of the state with a view to facilitate the subjects to lead a virtuous and happy life.
Apart from its ethical importance, the book has a special value in so far as it incidentally also reflects the political conditions obtaining in this sub-continent during the 16-17th centuries A.H.

The treatise starts with an Introduction dealing mainly with the objective of the author in writing this book, and contains five brief chapters, each called a "Waql" (or "Faql"), in the following order.

Chap. I on the Pillars of the Government, Chap. II on the Manner of Achieving these Pillars, Chap. III on the etiquette to be adopted by the Kings, Chap. IV on some rules concerning the conduct of the affairs of the state, and Chap. V on anecdotes from the earlier Kings on pardon, clemency, munificence, generosity, justice, power and valour. The entire text of the treatise contains only 51 pages of the book, while the valuable explanatory notes added by the editor cover about 49 pages.

In writing this small treatise, the author has had the Qur'ān, ḥadīth as well as Strah Ibn Bishām, Tārikh-i Al-i Barmak, 'Awfi's Jawāmi' al-Ḥikayāt, Ḥamdullāh Mustawfī's Tārikh-i-Gusidāh, Sa'dī's Gulis-tān, Büstān and Naqšbat al-Mulūk, and Mūlā Ḥusayn Wā'īz Kāshfī's Akhlaq-i-Muḥāsinī as his main sources. Generally, while citing the material from these sources, the author has resorted to selection and abbreviation, wherever necessary, but he has not confirmed the validity and veracity of the statements and stories quoted by him. The editor has, however, as far as possible tried to find out the original sources of such citations, and at times pointed out the historical and other flaws in the quotations.

The editor's labour in editing and annotating this treatise is specially commendable. He has not only given a brief introduction on the life and works of Shaykh 'Abdul Ḥaq Muḥaddith Dihlawī and his relations with the contemporary kings and princes, but has also enhanced the value of the book by adding very valuable explanatory notes gleaned from about 91 Arabic, Persian and Urdu, and 10 English books, list
of which has been given at the end of the book. An index of names of persons, books and places has also been appended according to the modern system of editing.

In the end, we congratulate the editor and publishers of the book for publishing such an important treatise which is certainly of much value to the students of the history of the books written on Islamic ethical teachings and the advice to the rulers for the conduct of their functions of the state. We also look forward to seeing more of such scholarly works of the young and promising editor in the near future.

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