
The book in all gives the biographies of 178 'Ulamā' and, as is usual in such works suffers from imbalance and suppressio veri suggestio falsi. Its second defect is that it systematically excludes all those 'Ulamā' and scholars who do not subscribe to the teachings of the Barelawīs. Such great names as those of Shaykh al-Hind Māḥmūd Ḥasan, Ashrāf 'Alī al-Thānawī, Shabbīr Ahmad 'Uthmānī, Ḥusayn Ahmad al-Madāni do not find any place in this volume. The reason as given by the author is that the book only treats of
those ‘Ulamā’ who belonged to (West) Pakistan. (pp. 10-11). Granted that Maḥmūd Ḥasan hailed from Deoband and Ḥusayn Abūmad al-Madani originally belonged to Tāndā (Distt. Fayḍābād, U.P.), but Shabbir Abūmad ‘Uthmānī (the celebrated author of Fatḥ al-Mulhim, a commentary on the Ṣahīḥ al-Muslim and Faḍl al-Bārī (a detailed commentary on the Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī, in Urdu, now in the course of publication in Karachi) lies buried in Karachi. Similarly ‘Allāmā Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī, the world-famous co-author of the Strat al-Nabī of ‘Allāmā Shibli Nu’mānī does not find a place in the book although he also has his last resting-place in Karachi and had migrated to Pakistan in 1950. While Murtaḍā Abūmad Khān “Maykash” (ex-editor, the daily ‘Ehsān’, Lahore and the daily ‘Shāh-Bāz’, Lahore now both defunct) should not be denied a place in the niche of glory, the exclusion of the names of his better-known contemporaries like Ghulām Rastīl “Mihr” (ex-editor the daily ‘Zan‘īndār’, Lahore and the daily ‘Inqilāb’, Lahore and the author of Sayyid Abūmad Shahīd, Jamā‘ī-i Muḥāhidīn, Sargudhasht-i Muḥāhidīn, 1857, 1857 Ke Muḥāhid et al), Ṣafar ‘Alī Khān, ‘Aṭī Allāh Shāh Bukhārī, Choudhary Afzāl Ḥaqq cannot be justified on any account. ‘Abd Allāh Ghaznawi, Dā‘ūd Ghaznawi and Thānā’ Allāh Amritsārī also do not find a place in this book simply for the reason that they, like ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Sindhī, belonged to the rival School of thought i.e. Deoband. A biographer and a historian worth the name should never allow personal likes and dislikes to enter into his narrative otherwise his writings would be looked upon as prejudiced and coloured depicting only one side of the picture, thus detracting from its value.

It is painful to see that one or two names have been included among the ‘Ulamā’ of those persons who are not fit even to be called a munshī let alone dubbing them as Mawlu� and using the benedictory phrase ‘qur’lṣa sirrāḥ’ after their names. It is equally painful to find the use of the term ‘ān-jahān’ (of the other world) for a Muslim (p. 516, last line), which Muslim authors, as a rule, reserve for deceased non-Muslims.

We trust that if ever a second edition of the work under review is undertaken the author will see to it that the book becomes a representative biographical dictionary of all the akhbār (great men) among the followers of the Sunna irrespective of their personal views and opinions, likes and dislikes and that the term ‘ān-jahān’ wherever it has been used, quite unconsciously would be replaced by the conventional phrase ‘marhūm wa maghfīr’ as it is not a healthy or praiseworthy practice to speak ill of the dead or to show one’s spite to those who are no more.

The author, however, deserves our thanks for compiling and publishing a very useful work on the lives of some of the ‘Ulama’ of West Pakistan, mainly of the Punjāb, which will serve as a good source-book for a future historian of culture. Would that he also undertakes the task of compiling another work on the lives of those ‘Ulamā’ who flourished in the days gone by with the help of many works some of which, I understand, are still in manuscript and lie hidden in private collections or little-known libraries attached to certain Khāngāhs or religious institutions. A thorough and detailed search would yield, I am sure, rich dividends.

Karachi

A.S. Bazmee Ansari