The art of writing biographical dictionaries, technically called Tadhkirah-writing, is one which has been very popular throughout the Indo-Pak sub-continent during the period that Persian language flourished as the court language and almost the sole cultural medium right from the time of the Ghaznavids to the pre-British period in this region. The first Tadhkirah in Persian, Lubab al-Albâb, was written by Muhammad Awfi, the author of yet another famous Persian book of anecdotes, Jawāmi’ al-Ḥikāyāt, in Sind in about 618 A.H./1221 C.E. and dedicated to ‘Ayn al-Mulk Fakhr al-Din al-Ḥusayn al-Ash’ari, vīzīr of Nāṣir al-Dīn Qâbâchah, the well known ruler of Sind. This was followed by about one hundred other Tadhkirahs written in this sub-continent on the life and works of the Persian poets. (For details see: Tadhkirah-Writing in India & Pakistan (Persian) by the reviewer, Tehran, 1964). This shows the popularity of the art of Tadhkirah-writing in this part of the world.

The book under review is one of the Tadhkirahs written during the reign of Emperor Jehangir, and contains the notices of 150 poets from India as well as from other Persian speaking countries, who lived contemporaneously with Emperors Humayun, Akbar and Jehangîr. The biographical notices are followed by selections from their poetry. The original work consisted of three parts, of which the first two no longer exist. The third and last, of which the last few pages are missing, is preserved in the Ouseley Collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and forms the basis of the present edition.

The author has among its main sources the Tadhkīrat al-Shu‘ā’râ’ of Daulatshah of Samarqand and the Na‘īs al-Ma‘āthir of Mir ‘Ala’ al-Daulah of Qazwin, particularly the latter from which the author has so extensively derived his material that some of the notices seem to be sheer reproductions from that work. Nevertheless, in case of a number of poets the sole source is still the present work. Moreover, a number of events which have been narrated in this book of which the author has himself been an eye-witness add to the historical value of this book. Such detailed information is seldom found in bio-

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graphical dictionaries. Nevertheless, there are a number of historical and factual errors in the book. Besides, the biographical information supplied by the author about the poets is quite sketchy and insufficient. Except for the date of the death of Shaykh Rūzbihān-i-Baqli there is hardly any other date throughout the work, which shows the lack of importance of such historical data in the eyes of the author. The author also lacks critical acumen as is evident from the fact that the words of compliments and praise showered on the various poets are nothing but mere word-play, mostly lacking any real sense or intention, as such phrases may be applied to any poet without any distinction. The book is, thus, fraught with hackneyed phrases, mostly devoid of any intentional or distinctive opinion, which some times makes the reading tiresome.

As regards the editing, it is a perfect example of modern critical editing, and the learned editor has taken pains in supplying necessary footnotes, where he has compared the statement of the author with the information given in other sources and has on many occasions pointed out the errors of the author as well as the writers of other books on historical and factual details. For this purpose, the able editor who happens to hold a double Doctorate in history, one from Tehran and other from Canberra, has consulted and compared almost all the available material on the subject. He, therefore, deserves special commendation for such a laudable and rare enterprise. In the end, we recommend the book for all those who are interested in history of Persian literature particularly relating to the Mughul period in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. We also hope to see more of such research achievements from the young editor who by editing this work has proved that he possesses a special knack and capability for research and critical editing which in these days is becoming quite rare.

ALI RAZA NAQVI