

BOOK REVIEW

AMIR KHUSRAU: Publications Division, GOI, New Delhi; Pp 208; Rs. 15.

Amir Khusrau has been admired by various historians and authors as "a strange phenomenon for all times, a gem of the mine of beliefs and a river of gnosis, a man of such colourful personality and comprehensive ability as even the fertile soil of Persia has not produced in a thousand years, an extra-ordinary genius for poetry with an almost supernatural energy and indefatigable capacity for work, a scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge and inventive talent, a true disciple of Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, an able companion for a number of rulers at the same time beloved of the common man, skilful musician of enviable calibre who introduced many innovations in Indian music, a great patriot with an inborn love for his motherland, India, and everything Indian."

The poetic and musical compositions of this versatile genius have held sway over the minds of scholars and commoners alike for seven centuries now. "His Persian ghazals are sung all over central Asia while his verses in Hindavi combining the rhythm and rhyme of the classics with the charm and cadence of folk songs are recited and sung by men, women and children all over the northern part of India as a part of the lore of the people."

While the common people love him as a poet who composed poems on their daily life the classical musicians extol him as an inventor of many new musical modes and the creator of some of the most popular musical instruments. The devotees of Hazrat Nizamuddin hold him in veneration as best loved by the saint and whose Qawwalis resound in the shrine to this day. In the absence of any critical study of his life and works many legends have become popular about Amir Khusrau making it difficult to sift the grain from the chaff.

The recently concluded Amir Khusrau Seventh Centenary Celebrations have inspired scholars of different disciplines to contribute a lot of valuable material for a critical appreciation of the works of Khusrau. The Memorial Volume under review is a collection of papers by eminent scholars covering various facets of Khusrau's life and his contributions.

The papers included in this volume deal with 'Importance of Amir Khusrau,' 'Amir Khusrau and India', 'A harbinger of Hindu-Muslim Culture', 'A great Indian Patriot', 'Musical genius of Amir Khusrau', 'A Persian Poet par excellence', 'Persian love poetry and Amir Khusrau', 'Amir Khusrau's Hindi poetry', 'An accomplished critic,' 'The historian in Khusrau' etc. In addition to this the book also contains a useful Chronological Table on the life and works of Amir Khusrau.

The papers included in this book will greatly help towards a critical appreciation of Khusrau in the socio-political milieu of his time. A special mention may be made to the paper on the 'Musical genius of Amir Khusrau' as a most welcome contribution. Probably for the first time we have a detailed study on this subject. The paper on 'Amir Khusrau's Hindi poetry', is rather casual. I wish a more serious treatment had been given to it especially in view of the fact that a detailed study on this subject was published by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha more than 50 years ago.

Finally, I would agree with the publishers that "to assess this great Indian's multi-faceted personality is indeed a difficult task" as "Khusrau is so many persons rolled into one — poet, musician, historian, linguist and above all a messenger of secularism and national unity." Nevertheless, this book brings to the reader some aspects of Khusrau's personality. It is indeed a valuable addition to the available literature on Khusrau.

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