

## OBITUARY

### Shabbir Ahmad Khan Ghori

Maulana S.A. Khan Ghori, a well known historian of Islamic science and philosophy was born in Aligarh on March 15, 1911, and breathed his last also in Aligarh, on March 15, 2002. His father, **Ghiyāthuddīn Khān Ghori** was a business man. Ghori Sahib, as he was fondly called, had been a student of the famous Madrasah Luṭft (Aligarh), from which he got his first degree (*Ālim Faḍīl*) in *Dars-i Nizāmi* with distinction. He completed also his *Munshi Faḍīl* (in Persian). Even during his Madrasah education, he was very much interested in the Islamic Sciences, that is, the sciences as developed in Arab peninsula, Iran and other Central Asian countries. He told me that he used to take private lessons in Arabic recension of Euclid geometry by Naṣīruddīn Ṭūsī al-Chaghmīnī's original treatise. After leaving the Madrasah, he joined the then Muslim University at Aligarh, and completed his triple M.A. in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, in due course of time and also the degree of LL.B. He joined thereafter M.A. (Mathematics) during the tenure of Vice-chancellor, Sir Ziauddin Ahmad.



**Shabbir Ahmad Khan Ghori** (1911-2002)

After completing his education, he secured several positions: Lecturer in the Muslim University for a short period; his major post of Inspector-Head of Board of Arabic and Persian Examinations (Allahabad) during 1945-66, from where he retired; Lecturer in the Department of Urdu (Delhi University) during 1966-72; and Senior Research Officer in the Literary Research Unit of Tibbiya College (Aligarh Muslim University) during 1972-77. Since he was almost the only Arabic and Persian scholar with an expertise in history of exact science, I had the privilege of having him as a colleague, precisely speaking as Senior Research Officer, in two of my projects: "*Jai Singh Astronomical Instruments*", and the "*Critical Edition of Jai Singh's Astronomical Tables: Zij-i Muhammad Shāhī*", respectively during 1980-83 and 1984-87. Both these projects were sponsored by Indian National Science Academy (New Delhi). He had also a project of his own on "*The*

*Development of Islamic Science in India*", sponsored by Indian Council of Historical Research (New Delhi).

Apart from the above, Ghori Sahib had been very actively engaged in diverse studies pertaining to Islamic history and culture, and history of Islamic science and philosophy. He published a few hundred articles in Urdu in well known periodicals, for instance, in *Ma'arif* (Azamgarh), *Burhān* (New Delhi), *Mujallah-i Islami* (the Journal of the Dept. of Islamic Studies, AMU, Aligarh), also in *Indian Journal of History of Science* (New Delhi), to name just a few. His expertise and scholarship in both Arabic and Persian was recognised on national level, when he was awarded President of India Award for Arabic in 1991, and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad Ghalib Award by Ghalib Institute (New Delhi) in 1992.

Noteworthy is, that with the untiring efforts of Abid Raza Bedar (Formerly Director; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, Patna) and of his successor, Habibur Rahman Chighani, quite a substantial part of Ghori Sahib's research publications has been collected under the general title: *Ghori Research Studies*, 8 volumes of which have been published by Khuda Bakhsh Library (Patna) during 1997-98. Here, I list only the title of each volume.

1. *Rational Sciences in Medieval India*, pp. 248, 1997.
2. *Philosophy and Scholasticism (Kalam) in Muslim India*, pp. 389, 1997.
3. *Islamic Logic and Philosophy—A Review*, pp. 446, 1988.
4. *Muslim Astronomy—An Assessment*, pp. 388, 1998.
5. *Development of Scientific Thinking ('Ilm wa Hikmat) in Islam*, pp. 262, 1998.
6. *Muslim Contribution to Mathematics*, pp. 431, 1998.
7. *Iqbal Studies*, pp. 182, 1998.
8. *Islamic Culture*, pp. 203, 1998.

This series comprising over 2449 pages in Urdu is spread over only 63 most significant articles of Ghori Sahib. The title of each volume is a clear indicator of its contents and also of the diverse facets of Ghori Sahib's scholarship. Undoubtedly, Urdu language has been enriched enormously by Ghori Sahib's contribution. To note is also another major study of Ghori Sahib, namely, his article: "*Development of Zlj-Literature in India*", published

in *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 20 (1985) 20–48. Evidently, this article in English is not included in the above-mentioned volumes.

It may, however, be mentioned that most of the articles deal with the historical side of the *problématique*, whereas the technical side of the exact sciences was almost not treated. Ghori Sahib had to opt for the former style, for the simple reason that Urdu periodical literature, even today, is devoid of mathematical formulae, astronomical or philosophical technicalities. It is a pity that one of the very few Indian historians of Islamic science of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, S.A. Khan Ghori, could not present his comprehensive knowledge and expertise, specifically in the field of history of sciences of Medieval Indian period, due to linguistic limitation or tradition.

Working together with him on any primary scientific source was a sheer delight. He inspired every one by his in-depth knowledge, devotion and commitment to the scholarship. By his demise the community of Arabic and Persian scholars have lost a doyen of Islamic learning in the present scenario of diminishing rigorous scholarship. I feel a great personal void after his passing away. May God rest his soul in peace.

**S.M. Razaullah Ansari**