

***A TIMELY TRIBUTE TO THE DOCTORS EXPOSED TO LIFE-RISKS
DURING COVID-19***

By Manzar Imam

In the ongoing global pandemic in which the novel coronavirus has been wreaking havoc with medical professionals being exposed to the highest risks, the special issue of *Andaz-e-Bayan-3*, edited by renowned Urdu critic and author, Haqqani Al-Qasmi, is a timely tribute to the doctors and, is a valuable addition to Urdu's growth and potential of growth in those subjects and domains of knowledge in which the language, can, but has not yet set its foot noticeably, writes

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I have long been saying that knowledge of critical themes and important subjects have not been transferred to Urdu. This has caught the protagonists of Urdu only readers and writers in sort of a self-deception about hundreds of uncharted and not-talked-about topics in the otherwise vast literature of Urdu. It does not in any way mean that Urdu does not have the potential. If anything at all, it is, in fact, the lack of enthusiasm and deficiency of training and exposure to other domains of knowledge and command of other languages.

But it brought me a great sense of relief and I saw hope and happiness while reading the latest issue of *Andaz-e-Bayan*, dedicated to the literary achievement of some medical doctors. This is the third of the book series edited by famous Urdu litterateur Haqqani Al-Qasmi. The previous issue was about the creative facet of the police, while the inaugural issue (May-July 2016) was based on biographies of women writers and was well received. My dual sense of relief and hope

came by reading the journal and finding the vast new topics covered in it which to my knowledge has been either absent or scarcely represented in Urdu language.

Haqqani's pen is mighty but mightier even is his unique approach to different issues and, the power of imagination which in fact is the core of any literary genius. Haqqani's thoughts flow from multiple directions as he thinks through the everyday happenings both in his surrounding and outside his physical environment and immediate geographical landscape. His vigilant mind keeps surveying the human society and nature at large which is reflected in his thoughts and elaborately spread in his writings.

The third issue of *Andaz-e-Bayan* is divided over 12 sections which has 44 carefully written write-ups about 24 medical professionals besides two interviews. But each write-up includes a number of references of other medical professionals who have contributed in different ways to different issues. The issue has one article by the editor himself besides a 58-page long introductory essay titled "Dast-e-Masiha'i" which not only sheds light on the larger theme of the journal but is a painstakingly written treatise on the history and literary feats of medical doctors. The author finds "deep connection between literature and medicine because both treat human conditions...while literature tries to point out the problems by feeling the pulse of the society medicine tries to diagnose the diseases and treat them."(p.10 onwards) Haqqani goes on to find more parallels to connect the dots and create a confluence. Whether or not he succeeds in his pursuit is left to readers to find out.

My sense of relief that I referred to previously, came especially from the section dedicated to BulandIqbal which, although has only two write-ups, was quite revealing. BulandIqbal, according to Musharraf AlamZauqi, has stepped in Urdu equipped both in medicine and psychology. It is probably for this that Iqbal talks about subjects which have largely remained un-talked of in Urdu. Iqbal has mastered short-story writing and, the power of his stories lies in the fact about which Zauqi writes, that "He [Iqbal] is trying to pick up some precious pearls in

modern science, technology and new civilization (to use) in his stories, whose beneficiary will somehow or the other, be our poor Urdu language.”(p.325)

Although Zauqi’s writing is lucid, not much can be understood about Iqbal from his small article other than an oblique reference indicating to his dexterity. However, the other article titled ‘BulandIqbalaurFarishtekeAansu’ in the same section by DrHumayun Ashraf gives a somewhat detailed account of Iqbal’s literary oeuvre. Iqbal’s first collection was “FarishtekeAansu” i.e. Tears of the Angels in Urdu which has 36 short stories. Each story covers either a contemporary or a socially relevant topic. Titles like Cartoon, AdhuraKafir, Fourth Dimension, Khudaka But, IkisweenSadikiMaut, BiwiDusre Ki, Pledge of Allegiance, Baby Care Centre, Mutation, AadhaMard, Emptiness Syndrome, Teddy Bear, etc represent the 21st century mood and mode of thinking and acting of society. For example, Cartoon is a story of conversing with self and shows man’s dual face or what in psychology is termed as split-personality, something commonly found in people with bi-polar disorder. According to Ashraf, the writer tries in the story to show human beings using even their religious rituals for gaining mundane benefits (p.331)...which indicates that such rituals do not change human life but social and moral decline certainly change the forms of rituals themselves. (p.332)

Although the current issue of *Andaz-e-Bayan* does not fit in well in the single-theme definition as suggested in the title, it certainly is a gem coming from practitioners of a single profession whose lives revolve around issues of disease, health and treatment of patients. The medical profession has of late been accused of certain serious malpractices like overcharging for services and running private clinics to mint more money, there is no denying the fact that a huge number of doctors not only in India but across the world have risked their own lives to safeguard and protect others’ lives. In the ongoing global pandemic in which the enigmatic coronavirus has been wreaking havoc with medical professionals being exposed to the highest risk, this issue of *Andaz-e-Bayan*, edited by the incredible Urdu critic, author and writer, Haqqani Al-Qasmi, is a timely tribute to the doctors and, is a precious addition to Urdu’s growth and potential of growth

in those subjects and domains of knowledge in which the language, can, but has not yet set its foot conspicuously.

By bringing together the writings and references of a number of medical professionals Haqqani has made the work of future writers easy. Apart from the specific authors about whom different writers have contributed papers, with the references made of a number of medical professionals who are either writers or have supported literary causes, the journal has become of prototypical nature. Five Arab poets also find place in it. But, to my happiness, there are four write-ups on DrHanifTarin who passed away recently and whose poetry has always been thought-provoking. I had chanced to read HanifTarin's "AbabileinNahinAayin" (Isteara Publications, 2003) and the English translation of some of his select poems titled "The Truth of Terrorism" (Manak, 2008), in which poems O My God!, Oh Palestine!, Media Do Not Sooth Wounds and the section "Agony of Iraq" left lasting impressions. Finally, the editor has dedicated the last 15 pages of the journal to his daughter Aniqah who passed away on Monday, 2 September, 2019 which had sent a pall of gloom across spectrum.

Andaz-e-Bayan-3 is a valuable addition to Urdu literature and deserves to be read widely. Priced RS 500, the beautifully designed journal can be availed at 9891726444.

Bio

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