

Obituary

A Tribute to Professor Ali Mohsin Siddiqui

*Syed Munir Wasti**

A symbol of Eastern culture, Oriental learning and civilized Islamic values, Professor Ali Mohsin Siddiqui, M.A. in Islamic Studies, M.A. Arabic, M.A. Persian, was a long-time teacher of the Islamic sciences in the Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Karachi, who became Dean of the said Faculty and headed it with distinction.

After his retirement from service, Professor Ali Mohsin Siddiqui lived in his small but comfortable house in Federal B. Area, Karachi, and devoted himself entirely to the promotion of Islamic knowledge through his writings, essays and translations. He had collected a valuable library of source-material in those areas in which He intended to research further. During his career, he had already translated with full apparatus criticus, the Qasida Ka' b b. Zuheyr, an early Islamic poetic panegyric in honor of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Qasida Buseiri, another great Prophetic Panegyric famous in Arabic literature. Prof. Siddiqui authored, edited or translated more than 20 books of great value and importance in Islamic history. He was fortunate in having capable cooperate in his pupil, Dr. Nigar Sajjad Zaheer, who was instrumental in arranging the publication of his research from Qirtas, her publishing house based in Karachi. As he was free of logistical difficulties that prevent research, Prof. Siddiqui went ahead with his various research projects with renewed energy. A stickler for punctuality, Prof. Siddiqui would commence his studies and writings soon after breakfast. His books would be laid out as his works table previously. Then he would work without interruption till the time of the Zohar prayers. He was thus able to put in a total of 6-8 hours of solid work every single day. Visitors to the house would notice

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the pile of books, pages and files lying on his desk.

It was at his house in Federal B. area that I first had the great pleasure of meeting this devotee of learning and scholar of the Islamic disciplines. I informed him of my interest in his areas of specialization. He was responsive to my pleas for great knowledge and encouraged me to read the care sources of these areas. Whatever... I could find of his, I asked him to kindly inscribe his signature on them. He did as readily and I have all these reminders of his kindness in my library.

Whenever it was possible, I went over and spoke to his on subjects of interest and profited immensely. I gave him the couple of books I had written [on the Quran and Hadith] and he was appreciative of these humble efforts of mine. As prof. Siddiqui was doing the work he enjoyed, his health was unimpaired. However, as the years passed, his health began to decline but he continued his valuable research. He used to tell me, 'If I live on more, I intend to investigate these areas....' This resolution, his attachment to learning was most enviable. In my last meeting with him, he came to see me off to the door and before leaving. I bent in obeisance to this great scholar. He prevented me saying, 'you are a Syed and I am a Siddiqui. It is not for a Syed to humble himself before a Siddiqui.' I replied: 'It is vital for every ignorant person to bend before a learned personality.' Upon this, Prof. Siddiqui smiled in his memorable way.

I attended his funeral prayers in a masjid of Federal B. area. I was not familiar with its location and prayed that I would reach in time. Luckily, I did so and there I saw Prof. Shakeel Siddiqui attending to various matters with efficiency. I did not know that Dr. S. Siddiqui would soon follow his teacher Prof Ali Mohsin into the great beyond so soon afterwards.

Prof. Ali Mohsin Siddiqui remains in my mind as a great devotee of Islamic teaching. Far from obtaining appreciation of his, Prof. Siddiqui attracted jealous enmity but he remained indifferent to all such trivial considerations.