

Obituary

A Tribute to Mrs Rashida Aftab Iqbal

*Syed Munir Wasti**

It was on 23 June 2000 that I visited Mrs Rashida, the wife of Aftab Iqbal, the eldest son of Allama Iqbal in her house at 33 Tipu Sultan Road [off Drigh Road] with my daughter Navin who then was seven years old. The purpose of my visit was to ask her to inscribe a copy of her book with her signature. I had obtained this book titled *Allama Iqbal aur un ke farzand-e-akbar Aftab Iqbal* from the bookshop in the Bahadur Yar Jung Academy just a little distance away. The front building of her house was the premises of a school system while a smaller house behind was the place where Mrs Rashida lived – all alone with a servant or two – after the death of her husband Aftab in 1979. I had gone to the office of the Oxford University Press [then located on Drigh Road] to purchase the school course books for my daughter so I took her along. After returning from there, I thought I should take the opportunity of visiting Mrs Rashida [whose house I had passed by many times but never entered]. So somewhat hesitantly, I rang the bell at the gate. After a long time, a servant girl emerged from the rear house and asked me my business. It was difficult if not impossible to explain that I wanted her signature and why. But finally I was admitted to the house with my daughter. Mrs Rashida was having a bath and after some time she emerged and greeted me courteously. I presented her book to her for her signature which she inscribed [in English] and said that if I had come to her directly, she would have given me a free copy. This book [with her signature] is now among the valuable books that I treasure. Although this was the first time, I had met her and that for an unusual reason, Mrs Rashida [who also bore the same name as my mother, Mrs Rashida Wasti d. 1986] treated me as though I were her son and spoke with great openness and informality. Her

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gracious attitude brought to mind the similar attitude that my mother exhibited in her daily life. She was so cheerful and lively and made witty and humorous remarks that I was captivated by her charm. She was over eighty years old then. She lived a solitary life in the large house as her sons and family were abroad mostly. I was surprised how she managed to do so but her resources of courage and endurance carried her through this difficult time.

After this meeting, I once went again to meet her but learnt from her servant that she had gone to visit her son Azad Iqbal in Jeddah. Time passed and I did not have another occasion to renew my acquaintance with her and to benefit myself from her wit and wisdom. I learnt from the papers that she passed away on 10.11.2004 and was buried next to her husband in the Sakhi Hasan graveyard. Although she is gone, she lives in my memory. I am happy to find that my daughter also recalls her only meeting with her and we both share this precious memory.