

Malik Ram and his Contribution to Islamic Studies

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Abstract

India, over the course of long history, has developed into a pluralistic society sustained by peaceful coexistence of the diverse religious denominations and a multitude of cultures and ethnicities. Among other religions, Islam made a significant and considerable influence on the Indian society. The intercultural and interreligious relationships between Hindus and Muslims were established gradually with the spread of Islam in India. Hindu intellectuals developed their interests in understanding Islam and its culture and from among Muslims various scholars/mystics were also interested in understanding the Hindu religion and culture. Muslim scholars produced either translations of works of Hindu scholars or elaborated their understanding of Hinduism and its philosophy in their original works since medieval times. Similarly, Hindu scholars (since medieval era) contributed to the study of Islam, as a culture, civilization and religion. Malik Ram Baveja (1906-93) was one among various modern era Hindu scholars including Baghwan Das, Dr. Radhakrishnan, K.L. Sheshagiri, Pandit Sundar Lal, Valji Govind Ji Desai and others, who have written on the diverse aspects of Islam. He was an internationally acclaimed authority on Mirza Ghalib and a famous Urdu, Arabic and Persian scholar of India. He published more than eighty works and 200 articles in his life time predominantly in Urdu in addition to Persian, Arabic and English. Known for his monumental four-volume “Tadhkirah-e-Muasireen” for which he received Sahitya Academy Award in 1983, Malik Ram also contributed significantly to Islamic studies. Keeping in view his significant contributions to the study of Islam, the current paper will humbly highlight this aspect of his academic life while providing the content summary of his two significant works on Islamic themes i.e., “Aurat Aur Islāmī Ta’līm” and “Islāmīyāt”.

Introduction

The Indian society is a pluralistic society assimilating diverse religious denominations and a multitude of ethnicities and cultures. This “complexity of Indian life”, in the words of Tara Chand, “is ancient, because from the dawn of history India has been the meeting place of conflicting civilisations.”ⁱ However, Indian society sustained with peaceful co-existence amidst the diversity and hardly succumbed to national disintegration and discord. The sense of ‘understanding the religious other’ and suspending inter-faith or inter-ethnic conflicts to a major extent played an important role in sustaining peaceful co-existence.

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