
Noi'yat: An Intellectual and Innovative Repository: A Book Review

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Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Virk is currently working as a professor of Urdu at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) Lahore, Pakistan. He is a teacher, a researcher, a motivational speaker, a creative writer, a poet, a travelogue writer, a critic and above all a humorist. *Noi'yat (Nature)* is his seventeenth book which is an intellectual and innovative repository of his critical research articles. This book consists of 208 pages and has seventeen chapters.

It begins with the preface of worthy Dr. Najeeb Jamal which describes the inventive and unique style and content of Dr. Virk's writings. Dr. Virk, according to him, is naturally endowed by Allah the ability and talent to smile and make others smile and let them forget their frets for the time being. Sigmund Freud, a famous psychoanalyst, says that repressed desires of a human being come out from unconscious to the conscious in three ways i.e. through dreams, slips of the tongue and jokes. As Mary Klages said, "Freud says that, without the sublimation of our... desires into more productive realms, there would be no civilization" (64). Dr. Virk's repressed desires of reforming the world, disciplining the society and educating the uncivilized masses come out through humor. He has sublimated his energy of repression into jokes. He speaks humor, writes humor and live by humor. He has filled the colors in the book of his life with the tint of humor. Humor comes as a navigator to save him from being drowned in the river of tears. Even his critical research articles are colored with an innovative style of humor,

This book comprises of four parts.

First part deals with the research articles that looks classical prose and poetic writers with an innovative outlook. In this context there are five chapters. In first chapter, "Ghalib ki Dashnam Darazi" (Use of Abusive language of Ghalib), he has artistically pointed out the irreverent, rebellious and free thinking of Mirza Ghalib, the famous poet of Urdu Classical poetry. Dr. Virk has given all instances of Ghalib's life relating to his predilection of crossing language barriers and breaking social norms. Ghalib seems not to be interpellated by the traditional norms of language and society as according to Catherine Belsey, "ideology is engraved in each and every utterance and use of language" (56). Ghalib, in his writings, had pointed the con-men of the society of his time by using straight-forward or metaphorically abusive language freeing himself from all the interpellations of culture, tradition and societal rules. This is specialty of Dr. Virk to present in his paper such invaluable aspects with artistic and scrutinizing details.

In Second Chapter, "Sir Syed k Asloob me Tanz k Rang" (Shades of Satire in the Style of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan), Dr. Virk has explicated satiristic aspects of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's works. Dr. Virk has efficiently described the amalgamation of Sir Syed's thoughtful and satiristic literary efforts and activities to reform the Muslims. In this context, he describes that Sir Syed started a periodical entitled *Tahzib-al-Akhlaq* predominantly dedicated to spreading reformist views. Conceived in the same lines of the journals like *Tatler* by Richard Steele and *The Spectator* by Joseph Addison and Steele, this publication featured a good collection of brilliantly composed essays, discussions on general question related to morality and some interesting satires and comic pieces that ridiculed the outdated and corrupt ways of those times by swathing the irregularities, serration and jaggedness of the society. Sir Syed portrayed the society exactly as he perceived. His art is real art as Leo Tolstoy says, "It is art if a man, having experienced in reality or in imagination the horror of suffering or the delight of pleasure, expresses these feelings in on canvas or in marble in such a way that others are infected by them" (39). Sir Syed thoroughly condemned the social evils of the society of his time like slavery, polygamy, pretentious behavior and other derisible practices in his actions and writings.

Dr. Virk in the third chapter of his book, "Akbar Ala Abadi aur Asar e Hazir" (Place of Akbar Ala Abadi in the Present Era), has elucidated that how can Ala' Abadi's sharp wit, keen eye for every detail, intellectual vigor, icy scorn and searing anger of his works be contemplated and applied to understand the problems of present era. As a poet and a colonized Indian, he refused to be a subaltern who is "removed from all lines of social mobility" and brow beaten by the promulgators of the new culture and power (Spivak 475). According to Dr. Virk, in embracing our culture and language and freeing ourself from the barriers and shackles of colonizers (still ruling our mind), Ala Abadi's work is helpful and relevant.

Fourth and Fifth chapters both deal with Allama Muhammad Iqbal (our national poet). Fourth chapter “Shair e Farda o Dosth” (Iqbal as a Poet of Past and Present) presents Iqbal as the most versatile genius that the modern Muslim world has produced. He is described as a well-cut diamond whose many facets reflect rays of truth from all directions by Dr. Virk. So his teachings and philosophies can be utilized in the present era too. Dr. Virk in fifth chapter “Iqbal: Tehseen nahi Tafheem” (Iqbal: Contemplation not Appreciation) recognize in Iqbal a thinker whose reevaluation of Islamic thought has given the Muslim Community a new sense of purpose in life. Dr. Virk urges the need of aesthetic sense in a person to perceive unusual and hidden aspects of art and inspiration in Iqbal’s poetry as David Hume says, “Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty” (“Of the Standard of Taste”). Iqbal’s poetry, according to Dr. Virk, urges youth to aspire for bigger and unseen possibilities. By telling them that they have more skies ahead of them, Iqbal demands the youth to break new ground, become trailblazers and see beyond the obvious to tread where no one has ever walked before.

Second part of this book deals with his conversations and dialogues with the great intellectual personalities of humor and satire. In this context, there are two chapters. Chapter six “Mumtaz Mufti Banam Ashfaq Ahmad Virk” (Mumtaz Mufti’s Letters to Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Virk) deals with the letters which great Mumtaz Mufti wrote to Dr. Virk in which he is acknowledging Dr. Virk’s writing talent, thinking faculty and artistic expertise. Mufti’s encouragement, motivation and inspiration in his letters helped a lot Dr. Virk in building his intellectual career. As Edward W. Said in his *Traveling Theories* says:

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity (226).

Dr. Virk, following the valuable of guidance of Mufti, has transformed into an intellectual elite from a traditional household proletariat. Seventh chapter “Muhammad Khalid Akhtar k Sath ek Yadgar Mukalma” (A Memorable Dialogue with Mhammad Khalid Akhtar) deals with Dr. Virk’s dialogue and meeting with Muhammad Khalid Akhtar in person inquiring about his family, education, employment, literary career, development of writing genres, inspirations, style, favorite books, views about life, achievements, criticism, bibliophilic nature, hobbies, marriage and some other academic questions. This conversation provides us with a lot of worthwhile information about one of Urdu language’s greatest modern humorists and satirists.

Third part of this book deals with the reviews of the books and personalities of his dearest friends who are also part of the genius academia of Urdu Literature. Writers discussed in this context are divided into nine chapters. Dr. Mazhar Mehmood Sherani, who is a famous researcher, character sketch writer, teacher and well-versed in Persian literature and language is appreciated in chapter nine of the book i.e. “Dr. Mazhar Mehmood Sherani: Ek Muhaqqaq, Ek Khaka Nigar” (Dr. Mazhar Mehmood Sherani: A Researcher, A Character Sketch Writer) for his literary contributions and achievements. Mustansar Hussain Tarar, a famous author, travel enthusiast, novelist and a columnist, is acknowledged by Dr. Virk in chapter ten of his book named “Mustansar Hussain Tara aur Ae Ghazal e Shab” (Mustansar Hussain Tarar and Ae Ghazal e Shab). He has specifically focused on his novel Ae Ghazal e Shab here. Hussain Ahmad Sherazi is an intellectual person, writer and a former bureaucrat. Chapter eleven of this book “Babu Nagar ka Babu” (Babu of Babu Nagar) focuses on Sherazi’s book Babu Nagar which is one of the greatest contributions to Urdu academia.

Dr Virk’s close friends and colleagues such as Dr. Akhtar Shumar, Dr. Ghafoor Shah Qasim, Jameel Ahmad Adeel, Imran Naqvi, Dr. Noreen Razaq and Naeem Gillani are described in chapter twelve “Dr Akhtar Shumar ki Aaji’zana Peshkash” (Humble Contributions of Dr. Akhtar Shumar), chapter thirteen “Dr, Ghafoor Shah Qasim: Ek Khalis Adbi Salis” (Dr. Ghafoor Shah Qasim: A Pure Literary Person), chapter fourteen “Sahib e Asloob Jameel Ahmad Adeel” (Sahib e Asloob Jameel Ahmad Adeel), chapter fifteen “Imran Naqvi aur Kal Di Gal” (Imran Naqvi and Kal di Gal), chapter sixteen “Dr. Noreen Razaq aur Pakistani Khawateen Afsana Nigar” (Dr. Noreen Razaq and Pakistani female short-story writers) and chapter seventeen “Naeem Gillani aur Khwab e Zad” (Naeem Gillani and Khwab e Zad) respectively. All these great personalities are applauded, complemented and admired by Dr. Virk in a lighter, humorous and an aesthetic tone.

There is also one chapter apart from the above sections which is commemorating the death of legendary writer Mushtaq Ahmad Yousafi. Dr. Virk adores Yousafi a lot. This chapter eight of the book named as “Yousafi ko Bhe Mout Aagae” (Yousafi Also Passed Away) explains in detail about Yousafi’s whole life span including his personal information, family, background, education, employment, marriage, children and especially description of his literary contributions such as *Charagh Tale*, *Khakam Badhan*, *Zargasht*, *Aab e Gum* and *Sham e Sher Yaran* in detail. Dr. Virk’s eighteenth book on Yousafi named *Aalam Men Intikhab* is going to release within few days.

Noi'yat is really a thought-provoking, inspiring and as well as an interesting book. It is written in an easy language, persuasive style and by using impressive techniques of stylistics. This book is dedicated to his two dearest friends i.e. Mr. Khuram Abbas Virk and Professor Akram Saeed. Splendid front title cover with color pencils tearing apart a simple paper is symbolic of the innovating ideas transcending thinking in a mainstream. Verses written on the first page of the book by a renowned poet Dr. Khursheed Rizvi also provoke the same idea about the book. Design of front title cover was the result of the unprecedented thinking and contemplation of Dr. Virk but designed by Tayyab. Back title lists all the literary contributions of Dr. Virk from 1992 (when he was born in academia) until the present time. It also contains the reviews of two critics i.e. professor Fatah Muhammad Malik and Dr. Ghafoor Shah Qasim about the writing style of Dr. Virk. Dr. Qasim writes in the preface of another book of Dr. Virk about his writing style that Dr. Virk is a perfectionist and he does all his work in a systematic manner (*Mauqaf* 8). This book was composed by Zulfiqar Ali (composer of Nawa e Waqt newspaper office). It was published with great reverence and honor by Ilm o Irfan publishers Lahore and released on 15th March 2019. Its price is four hundred rupees.

I really appreciate the brilliance, erudition, sagacity and hard work of Dr. Virk. I congratulate him on the success of this book with all my heart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zunera Bukhari is a lecturer of English at Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur. She is both Urdu and English fiction writer. Her two books of short stories *Chandravati* (2018) and *Migraine aur Mohabbat* (2019) are published by Ilm o Irfan Publishers Lahore. She has recently completed her MPhil in English Literature from Forman Christian College University Lahore. Her research interest is about critically analyzing the hidden aesthetics and social aspects of literary texts with the application of critical and literary theories. Her prominent area of research are trauma, interpellation, translation studies and aestheticism. Her favorite area of literature are literary theory, prose and short story. She is an active presenter in various International Conferences of research throughout Pakistan.

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