

# Pioneers of Library Movement in Pakistan

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## Abstract

The paper aims to describe in brief the contribution of seven leaders of Pakistan librarianship, viz. K.B. Khalifa M. Asadullah, Prof. Dr. Abdul Moid, Dr. Abdus Subuh Qasimi, Muhammad Shafi, Fazal Elahi, Khawaja Nur Elahi and S. V. Hussain. The early library developments are given for better understanding of the role of these leaders.

*Keywords: Library leaders; Library movement; History of libraries; Pakistan*

## Introduction

Pakistan, born on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947 as an independent nation after the partition of British India, was denied its rightful share out of the common library resources built up over the years during the British rule. All the major libraries of British India happened to be located in those areas which, after partition, became part of the present day India. The city of Lahore, once the "cradle of library movement," had become inactive because of sad events following independence (Khuda Bakhsh, 1949). The earliest library education program outside USA, started by Asa Don Dickenson in 1915 at the University of the Punjab, also suffered during this period and remained suspended from 1946-1948. Pakistan inherited only two libraries of significance on the eve of independence. These were the University of the Punjab Library and the Punjab Public Library, both located in Lahore. It may be pointed out that for many years the Government did not

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pay attention to this sector because of other national priorities. The establishment of the Directorate of Archives and Libraries in 1951 to administer the development of libraries was, in fact, the only significant step on the part of Government in this direction.

Under such circumstances the lead was taken by few individuals in the form of founding of Karachi Library Association (KLA) in 1949, which started a certificate course of short duration to meet the urgent needs of library professionals in the country. This was followed by the formation of Pakistan Bibliographical Working Group (PBWG) in 1950, with the assistance of UNESCO. Taking the advantage of these developments some of these men of wisdom tried to focus the attention of the Government through the pages of their first professional journal, *Modern Librarian*, to the need of development of libraries. But these individual efforts did not produce tangible results; however, it did convince the Government to the need for library planning in the country.

Consequently, L. C. Key of Australia was invited under the Colombo Plan, to prepare a library development plan for the country. Key submitted his report in 1956 (Key, 1956). The Key Plan did not materialize; yet it did influence the thinking of librarians in the country. This is evident in library developments that took place in the second-half of 1950s, particularly at Karachi, the then capital of the country. Of these developments, mention may be made of the formation of Pakistan Library Association (PLA) and the establishment of Pakistan National Scientific and Technical Documentation Center (PANSDOC), both in 1957, launching of publication of *Pakistan Library Review* (1958), and the promulgation of Basic Democracy Order (1959). But the most important event of this decade was the institution of Post-Graduate Diploma Course in Library Science in August 1956 at the University of Karachi, followed by the University of the Punjab in 1959. It must be added here that these early historical developments were possible only through the initiative and efforts of a few individuals. The profession in Pakistan owes much to them and this article is a humble effort to pay our homage to these great men.

## Definition of Pioneer

Who is a pioneer? For the purpose of this paper the following definitions have been used: According to *The Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1986), a pioneer is a person "who begins or helps open up or develops something new and prepares a way for others to follow." The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) gives an identical definition, that is, a pioneer is one "who goes before to prepare or open up the way for others to follow." Both definitions emphasize on being the first to lead the way to be followed by others. And, in line with this meaning of the word all the persons included in this article do meet this single criterion of being first in terms of their contribution to Pakistan librarianship. For instance, Khalifa Muhammad Asadullah was the first prominent librarian to opt to serve the newly created independent Pakistan without knowing his ultimate fate. Prof. Moid has the distinction of being the first to take initiative for institution of the first graduate library training program in the country and having the distinction of being the first PhD and professor of library science. Muhammad Shafi has left indelible marks on classification in the shape of expansion of DDC for Islamic and Oriental topics. Fazal Elahi was the first and perhaps the last chartered librarian, the country ever had. He was instrumental in the formation of PLA. Khawaja Nur Elahi was the pioneer to lead the country's largest public library in the initial years of independence. Likewise, Dr. Qasimi was the first to combine together the highest Oriental and Western qualifications so vital for the country for bringing harmony in traditional and modern librarianship. Villayat Hussain Shah has the distinction for nursing at least three major professional associations (PLA, KLA and PBWG) in their formative stage.

### **Khalifa Muhammad Asadullah (1890-1949)**

Khan Bahadur Muhammad Asadullah could be rightly called as the main architect of library movement in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. He was in the very first class of Asa Don Dickinson, an American Librarian, started in 1915 at the University of the Punjab. He started his career as the first graduate librarian at the Government College, Lahore; moved to MAO College,

Aligarh (India) in 1919; was the librarian of the Imperial Secretariat Library at Delhi for eight years; and finally landed at the Imperial Library, Kolkata in 1929. As a recognition for his superior performance the British Government rewarded him in 1931 the exalted position of Librarian of Imperial Library, Kolkata. He was the first Muslim and the second native to hold this coveted position. He was one of the key figures, along with Dr. Ranganathan, Dr. Niharanjan Roy, Prof. Bashiruddin, Prof F. M. Velt, Justice Abdul Qadir and Lala Labhu Ram, responsible for the formation of Indian Library Association. He was its secretary from 1933 to 1947. He was also associated with All India Muslim Educational Conference, Aligarh; Muslim High School, Kolkota; Aligarh Old Boys Association (Bengal Branch) and Aligarh Muslim University.

On 18th July 1947 he left the Imperial Library to serve the newly created Pakistan like many other Muslim officers. In Pakistan he was appointed as officer on special duty in the Ministry of Education (Haider, 1987). A group of librarians believes that the defunct Directorate of Archives and Libraries was the brain child of Asadullah. Many of us may not be aware that he was very close relative of Chowdhury Muhammad Ali, who was then holding the position of Secretary General of the Government of Pakistan and later the Prime Minister of the country (Raipuri, 1999). Asadullah died soon after independence in November 1949 at Lahore due to a stroke and could not do much in a newly formed country going through a state of chaos.

#### **Prof. Dr. Abdul Moid (1920-1984)**

He was in fact the Melvil Dewey of Pakistan in terms of founding of the first library school and the national library association. The establishment of a graduate program within the walls of a university as early as 1956 was not an ordinary achievement of the man. He had to face obstacles of all kinds in this regard as it was not so easy to convince the academic community to the need of a program in a little known discipline at a newly established university. In fact, the qualified librarians coming out from the Department each year shaped the direction of library

development in the country. Of these, mention in particular could be made of Dr. Anis Khurshid, Dr. Syed Jalaluddin Haider, Prof. Akhter Hanif, M. Adil Usmani, Ghaniul Akram Sabzwari, Dr. Mumtaz A. Anwar, Abdul Hafeez Akhter, Dr. A. R. Butt, Dr. Fazil Baloch, Dr. Khawaja Iftikhar and Meer Hassan Jamali.

Born in India on 20th January 1920, Prof. Moid received BA degree from Aligarh Muslim University (1941); MA from University of Michigan (1955) and PhD from Illinois University (1964). The topic of his dissertation, which he completed under the supervision of Prof. R. B. Downs, was *Urdu Language Resources in USA*. Of his teachers, mention could be made of luminaries like Maulana Abdul Aziz Memon (Aligarh), Prof. Gjelsness (Michigan), and Prof. R. B. Downs (Illinois). He was personally known to S. R. Ranganathan, Sir Frank Francis and Dr. Ralph R. Shaw.

He worked in a number of libraries both in India and Pakistan including Arabic College (Delhi), Delhi University, Punjab Public Library (Lahore), Sindh University and Karachi University, of which he was the founder librarian and played a key role in building it as the largest library of post independence period. From 1973 to 1983 he taught at Ahmad Bello University (Zaria, Nigeria) and Bayero University (Kano, Nigeria) where he established LIS Department and headed the University Library. He also taught at North Texas State University as a visiting professor during the summer of 1967.

Prof. Moid was instrumental in the formation of the PLA and was bestowed the honor of being elected its founder secretary-general. The contribution of Prof. Moid as secretary-general of the Association had been organization of its first annual conference. This historic conference inaugurated on January 8, 1958 by the president of the country proved to be a great success in spreading the message of library service and cult of books in the country. Some of the resolutions adopted at the conference dealt with: the need for planning of library services, easing of import restrictions on import of books and journals, establishment of library schools at the universities, amendment in copyright law, etc. (PLA, 1958). Prof. Moid tried his best to project the

Association both at the national and international level. He was also associated with country's other professional bodies like Society for the Promotion and Improvement of Libraries, Karachi Library Association and PBWG in various capacities. He represented Pakistan at several international forums, including the Organizing Conference of Asian Federation of Library Association, Tokyo in 1957 and International Association of Orientalist Librarians (Haider, 1984).

Prof. Moid was not a prolific writer but he did contribute 30 articles to professional journals (Khurshid, 1994). His article on "Illumination" to the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science deserves special mention. Amongst his publications are: (1) A guide to works of reference, published in Pakistan, (2) A guide to periodical publications and newspapers in Pakistan, (3) Directory of libraries etc. (PLA, 1958). He was member of the Advisory Board of *International Library Review* and *Journal of Library History* in their formative stage.

### **Muhammad Shafi (1895-1964)**

Shafi is the pioneer for being the first to expand the Dewey Decimal Classification for oriental and Islamic topics. This expansion is still being used by libraries in Pakistan and elsewhere. The history of this pioneering works dates back to pre-independence days when Muhammad Shafi was appointed convener of the special committee formed by the Indian Library Association, as early as 1935, "to draw up a standard scheme of expansion of DDC to meet the need of Indian libraries." (Usmani, 1973). This work was completed by Muhammad Shafi in 1960 with the assistance of a committee under the auspices of the Department of Library Science at the University of Karachi (Shafi, 1962) In fact, this expansion, known as Shafi's Expansion of DDC, played the role of a guideline for other expansions of DDC in the country. His expansion was partially accepted by the DDC Editorial Committee but unfortunately, his name didn't appear in the introduction of 17th<sup>h</sup> edition of the Scheme (Obaidullah, 1969).

Born and brought up in Amritsar, he graduated from the University of the Punjab. Muhammad Shafi entered into the service of Government of India in 1921. In the following year he was appointed as an assistant librarian of the Imperial Secretariat Library, Delhi. In 1923 he joined the Lucknow University Library as an assistant librarian, where he stayed for about 7 years and contributed significantly in its formative phase. In 1930 Muhammad Shafi was appointed librarian of the Imperial Agriculture Research Library. He was selected in 1944 as Junior Scientific Officer, MGO Branch, GHQ India.

Shafi was one of the few librarians of pre-independence British India who opted to serve the newly created Pakistan. After independence he served as the librarian of National Assembly Library from 1947 to 1958. He took active part in the formation of Karachi Library Association and was its Vice-President for more than a decade. It was under his direction that the Association started a certificate course, first of its kind, to meet the immediate needs of qualified library professionals in the country. Of the librarians who passed this course mention may be made of Dr. Anis Khurshid and Adil Usmani. Of the teachers of this course mention could be made of Prof. Moid, S.V. Hussain, Noor Muhammad and Muhammad Shafi himself. In fact, this course paved the way for establishing the first post-graduate program at the University of Karachi.

He was founder member of both Indian Library Association and PLA. Of his publications mention in particular is made of *Intizam Kutub- Khana* (Shafi, 1949). This was the first book on the subject after independence. Muhammad Shafi was also associated with the Department of Library Science, University of Karachi as cooperative teacher for at least eight years. He worked as consultant on classification at the Karachi University Library from 1960 to 1964. He died of cancer on 2nd June 1964 in Karachi.

### **Fazal Elahi (1901-1961)**

With MA, BA (Hons), Diploma in Librarianship (London), and FLA., Fazal Elahi was perhaps the highest qualified librarian who opted to serve Pakistan after independence. He was born and brought up at Lahore. Obviously, he preferred to stay at Lahore in the initial years of Pakistan, and took active part in several professional undertakings in association with Prof. Moid and Khawaja Nur Elahi. It is said that he was strong candidate for the post of librarian of the University of the Punjab but was denied appointment for being vocal with the staff at the library just before the scheduled interview. Following this incident, the staff members in group met the vice-chancellor and complained against him. Consequently, the scheduled interview was cancelled (Prof. Moid, personal communication). And, he had to teach economics and English at MAO College from 1948 to 1950.

In fact, Fazal Elahi could not find a professional job until 1950, when he was appointed librarian of the Liaquat National Library at Karachi. The job was also not up to his expectations, qualifications and experience. He soon moved to East Pakistan, where from 1951 to 1954 he held the position of librarian at Dhaka University. There too, he could not stay for a long period because of differences with the authorities and staff. He left for Milan for one year to teach Urdu there. In 1955, he returned back to serve as librarian of the Rajshahi University from 1955 to 1958. But there too, he developed serious differences with the teachers' community forcing him to resign (PBWG, 1956).

In 1958 he joined the library of the American Friends of the Middle East at Karachi. This was the most productive period of his professional life. He was instrumental in the formation of the PLA and the organization of the first historical conference of the Association. In 1959, he was cooperative teacher at the Department of Library Science at the University of Karachi. He died of heart attack at Lahore in 1961 while making final arrangement for the 4th Annual Conference of the PLA.



Notwithstanding his personal weaknesses he played an active part in the development of library profession in the country. As early as 1948 he made an unsuccessful attempt in collaboration with Khawaja Nur Elahi and Prof. Moid for the formation of the national library association. This trio did succeed in reviving the *Modern Librarian* in 1949, but it ceased publication after three issues. The existence of a Diploma course in Library Science in 1948 at Lahore under the directorship of Fazal Elahi was reported in *Modern Librarian*; but it was nothing more than an advertisement to create an environment for such a course.

### **Khawaja Nur Elahi (1905-1974)**

Khawaja Nur Elahi did his BA in 1917 from Islamia College, Lahore and from 1929 to 1933 he worked at the Quarter Master General Office of British Armed Forces Headquarters at Delhi. He completed the Certificate Course in Library Science in 1934 from the University of the Punjab and joined the Delhi University in the same year where he worked for 13 years in various capacities. He rose to the position of assistant librarian, which was quite a dignified post at that time. The Delhi University Library was then headed by Professor Das Gupta. He opted to serve Pakistan after independence.

As the librarian of Punjab Public Library, since 1948, he remained actively involved for about 18 years in all the major library events which took place in initial years of the establishment of the country. These include: preparation of the first plan for library development in the country, revival of *Modern Librarian*, formation of PLA, PBWG, West Pakistan Library Association and institution of Degree program at the University of the Punjab.

His leadership qualities, ably manifested on the eve of the 4th and 5th annual conferences of the PLA held at Lahore in 1961 and 1964 respectively. Modesty was perhaps his best asset and totally unmatched in the profession. Through his humility of character and his unflinching readiness to listen to the vibrant voices of others, he had earned their high esteem and lasting respect. Always I found him simple in ways, constantly inspiring, ever

understanding, unfailingly warm and a just man. He was one of few librarians who commanded the respect of the librarians of both the wings of Pakistan (Haider, 1996).

### **Dr. Abdus Subuh Qasimi (1917- 1999)**

Dr. Qasimi born on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1917 at village Ziarat Kaka Sahib, Tehsil Nowshera, District, Peshawar, in a middle class religious family. He did his Matriculation in 1935 and 'Fazil-Deoband' in 1941. He did Certificate Course in Librarianship from the University of the Punjab in 1946 and started his professional career from the University of the Punjab Library in 1947 as an Oriental assistant. Most probably he was appointed for cataloguing of Arabic books because of his proficiency in Arabic language and literature. He did his BA and MA from the University of the Punjab in 1952 and 1954 respectively.

In 1955 he did his MA in Library Science from Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. Between 1964 and 1967 he was at Columbia University for his Doctorate in Library Science. He developed *A Code for Cataloging Materials Published in Urdu, Pushto and Punjabi* under the guidance of Maurice F. Tauber. He was also associated with Library of Congress as a consultant for sometime in mid-1960s.

He served as the founder librarian of Peshawar University Library from 1951 to 1972. It was through his initiative and efforts that Post-Graduate Diploma in Library Science was instituted in 1962 at the University of Peshawar. Between 1967 and 1968 he was the librarian of the King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah. He also worked as Registrar of the Peshawar University between 1969 and 1972. In early 1970s, he rejoined the King Abdul Aziz University and stayed there for several years. He retired after serving the Ummul Qura University, Makkah, for nearly a decade.

He was instrumental in the development of the profession in North-Western Frontier Province being the founder librarian of the Peshawar University and the founder Chairperson of its Department of Library and Information Science.

He took active part in the activities of the PLA in the initial years of its formation. He was the chief organizer of the second annual conference of the PLA, held in 1959 at Peshawar. He was also actively associated with the activities of the Society for the Promotion and Improvement of Libraries and PBWG. (Hamid Rehman, personal communication).

### **Syed Villayat Hussain (1910-1974)**

Popularly known as Shah Sahib, he will always be remembered for his activities from the platform of PLA, PBWG and KLA. In fact, he was associated with all three organizations for more than a quarter of a century, beginning in 1949 till last breath in 1974 at Peshawar, where he was supervising a national survey on reading habits for the PLA.

Born in Lahore in 1910, he did his BA from the University of the Punjab in 1934 and obtained Certificate in Library Science from the University of the Punjab in 1938. What made him to join librarianship was never disclosed by him. His first professional appointment was as librarian of St. Stephen College, Delhi from 1939 to 1945. From 1945 to 1950 he was the librarian of S.M. College, Karachi. He was the librarian of British Council, Karachi between 1950 and 1953. In 1953 he joined the Government of Pakistan as the founder librarian of Liaquat National Library. He was promoted as Assistant Director of Libraries, Government of Pakistan in 1958, the post he held till his retirement in 1964. He was also associated with Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (Haider, 1986).

### **Conclusion**

All the above great men are now dead. This author has the distinction of meeting all of them except Asadullah. In fact, three of them were known as teacher at the LIS Department during the academic year 1959-1960. Much could be written about each but the limitation of space doesn't permit. It may be concluded that they are the part of history of Pakistan librarianship because of

their significant and long-lasting contributions. The coming generation will definitely get inspiration from them. What made them to succeed was their positive approach towards professional matters. Above all, they were sincere with the profession despite some human weaknesses.

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