

Obituary

A Tribute to Dr Abid Ali Khan

*Syed Munir Wasti**

Dr Ghulam Sarwar was the founder [mu'assis] and Dr Abid Ali Khan the senior Professor [Ustad-i Buzurg] of the Persian Department, University of Karachi. The second generation of Persian Department teachers were all pupils of this illustrious pair mentioned above. The Persian Department was on the same floor as the English Department and its energetic and considerate peon Shoaib Ullah used to prepare excellent tea which was liked by all teachers of the neighboring departments. Arabic and Persian are the classical languages of Islam and possess rich literatures. In the late 1970, when I was a newly inducted teacher in the English Department, I revived my interest in Persian and produced two small booklets of translations from Persian into English. I took these very humble offerings to the then Chairman, Dr Abid Ali Khan. I hesitantly told him of my interest in Persian and handed him the two booklets. Much to my surprise, Dr Abid came enthusiastic over my humble endeavors and was delighted to see my interest in Persian and its importance. He asked me to bring two more copies the next day. When I came to his office, I saw that he had prepared two letters to the Consul General of Iran as well as to the Cultural Counselor. This was before the days of the Islamic Republic and the old name of Imperial Consulate-General was in vogue. He had written a very favorable review of the two booklets and forwarded this [with the booklets] to the aforesaid offices. I was greatly touched by his kindness and consideration. This was the beginning of a fruitful interaction between myself and the Persian Department whose seminar library was made available to me to borrow books from and to which I also contributed Persian books over the years.

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After his retirement, Dr Abid Ali Khan was invited to speak at the Persian Department and I was able to visit him at his house in Jamshid Road. Later, I learnt he had shifted to the Overseas Bungalows in Gulistan-e Johar—but I was not able to visit him there at one of the functions of the Persian Department, I saw a venerable gentleman with white hair and beard. I did not recognize him but he instantly recognized me. It was Dr Abid Ali Khan—when I was delighted to see after a gap of some years. Sometime after this, I learnt that Dr Abid Ali Khan had passed away from this unfeeling and unappreciative world. May his soul rest in peace!