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**An Introduction to the Peshawar
Museum - Peshawar Illustrated**

S . M . JAFFAR

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S.M. JAFFAR: A LEGEND OF HISTORY, ARCHIVES AND MUSEOLOGY

Ahmed Salim
(Islamabad)

Sardar Mohammad Jaffar, affectionately known as Jaffar Lala, is one of the most famous names in NWFP's historical and archaeological literature. He was a world-renowned historian, writer and an archaeologist. He stands amongst those people in history who have wordlessly devoted their lives to the promotion of knowledge and have served humanity with devotion and enthusiasm for their profession. His work has benefited the entire nation. He never desired appreciation or reward but was always committed selflessly and without remuneration to his work.

S. M. Jaffar was born in Sialkot, Punjab, British India, in 1910. He passed his Matriculation from Sanatan Dharam High School, Peshawar and completed his graduation from King Edwardes College Peshawar. He studied at Edwardes College from 1927 until 1931. He worked in the thirties and forties for the Judicial Commissioner in the North West Frontier Province. Later he became Professor of History at Islamia College in Peshawar. He was also the Director of the Department of Archives in Peshawar and the Director of the Peshawar Museum under the Government of West Pakistan in the fifties and sixties. He is the author of more than 100 books on the history of Muslim India along with other social science disciplines. He died in 1979 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

S.M.Jaffar's family belonged to the Qazalbash clan, who originally migrated from Iran. His forefather, Rasul Khan, migrated to the Indian sub-continent. Rasul Khan had three sons,
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Sardar Ahmad Khan, Sardar Amir Khan and Sardar Mohammad Khan. His grandfather was an Inspector in Ludhiana. When his grandfather transferred to Sialkot, S. M. Jaffar's father, Sardar Mohammad Sadq also moved to Sialkot. Then his father shifted to Peshawar due to his business.

S. M. Jaffar's professional life began with his appointment as a translator in the Judicial Commissioner's courts. He appeared in the ICS and successfully passed the examination but was not selected in the interview because of his poor financial background.

S.M. Jaffar used to relate history with philosophy. One of the most important achievements of his life is his first book *The Mughal Empire*, which was published while he was completing his graduation. This book addressed the same subject on which he was doing his graduation. Famous writer, historian and thinker Sir Abdul Qadir wrote the Preface for the book, a fact that ratifies the abilities and standing of S.M. Jaffar's work as a writer.

Besides the special features of Prof. Jaffar's excellent book, briefly referred to above, there are other features, equally attractive, which need not be discussed here and will be better appreciated by reading the book. I think it can be safely said that the author during his studies at college had succeeded in giving to the students of Indian History an accurate and instructive account of the Mughal rule in India. The book is the most useful contribution to Indian historical literature and should interest not only the general reader, but also students of Indian History in schools and colleges¹.

One of his great contributions to Peshawar was the establishment of the Central Records Office in Peshawar. It was due to his

¹ Sir Abdul Qadir, in Introduction for "The Mughal Empire ", by S.M. Jaffar, London, 20th December, 1935.

sincere and indefatigable efforts that later this Department was known as the Peshawar Archives and he was appointed as its first Director. Along with these responsibilities he also remained in charge of the Peshawar Museum and Library, from 1964 until 1970.

He was also a member and fellow of many national and international societies, including the Royal Historical Society London, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Indian History Congress, and the Indian Historical Record Commission.

S.M. Jaffar was a prolific author. He published more than one hundred books and many manuscripts are awaiting publication. Among his best known books, the first volume of *The History of History* was published during his lifetime and the remaining nine volumes were in process when he died. Amongst his most famous scholarly contributions are *Peshawar Past and Present*, *some cultural aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, *Arab Administration in Sindh*, and *Muslim Rule in India*.

His works on history also include *Cultural aspects of Muslim Rule in India*, *The Mughal Empire and Education in Muslim India*. These books have received international appreciation. Renowned scholars who contributed Introductions and reviews on his books include Sir Abdul Qadir, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Dr. S. M. Suleman, R.C. Majumdar, Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Prof. H.K. Sherwani and George Cunningham.

As mentioned earlier, S.M. Jaffar was still a university student when his first book *The Mughal Empire* published with the introduction of Sir Abdul Qadir, a renowned intellectual and writer. He noted:

"The author, as an enlightened Muslim, is naturally in sympathy with the Great Mughal Rulers who professed the faith of Islam and succeeded in establishing a vast and wonderful Empire in a country to which the Founder of the dynasty originally came as invader from his

Central Asian home. Mr. Jaffar does not conceal his admiration for the Mughals, yet he is not forgetful of his duty as an historian and comes out with frank criticisms of the policies and administrations of the Emperors whose reigns are described by him".

When the book published, scholars like Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Dr. G.E. carpani (Italy) and professor H.K. Sherwani praised the work. The Asiatic Review, London considered it "an able and conscientious volume wherein is gathered up perhaps all that history knows of Moghal Rule in India". Similarly, a renowned Indian journal *Islamic Culture* from Hyderabad Deccan wrote:

"As far as it goes, his book is a useful corrective to several existing books on the period. In a concise and lucid manner, he tells the story of Mughal rule in India; its splendour, its tolerance, its concern for the people of all classes and creeds, its justice and cultural greatness — all find a place in the description. He is scrupulously fair to the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Marathas; and his zeal for Islam does not blind him to the beauty and greatness of other creeds. There is no other book which, in the same compass, gives such a clear picture of the period".

Jaffar's another book *Education in Muslim India* was also hailed by scholars like professor H.K. Sherwani, Dr. Sir Akbar Hydary, Dr. Sir Ziauddin, Dr. P.K. Acharya, Dr. H.L.O. Garrett, Dr. Beni prasad, Dr. K.G. Saiyidain, Dr. Zakir Hussain and Dr. Sir S.M. Sulaiman.

Dr. Zakir Hussain noted: "*Students of Indian History will welcome this treatise as a useful guide*". Dr. Beni termed it "a very careful, painstaking and scholarly piece of work". Garrett

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declared it "*a very useful contribution to the study of Muslim Rule in India*".

Professor S.M. Jaffar released another important work *Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India* in 1945. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru found the work "very informing and interesting". The *Hindustan Times* noted: "This well-written book deserves serious study at the hands of all students of Indo-Muslim culture as it brings into prominent relief some of its leading characteristic features."

He delivered many lectures and papers on Islamic Culture and Civilization, amongst other themes. He also delivered numerous lectures in Persian at Tehran University on the incident and history of Karbala.

S. M. Jaffar established a successful publishing agency which was known as Sadiq Sons Publishers. He was also a very good poet and composed many poems and verses, which illustrate his visionary and literary approach.

"History must not be treated as something set off by itself" said Teddy Roosevelt in 1912, but unfortunately we have not only overlooked some very important names in the history of Pakistan but have also not given due respect to those who have devoted their whole life to their profession. Dr. S. M. Jaffar is one of the remarkable scholars whose contributions in the fields of art, the social sciences - particularly the history of NWFP - museology, archaeology, and archives is identical with reference to the North West Frontier Province.

History is indeed made up of significant events which shape our future and outstanding leaders who influence our destiny. S. M. Jaffar's contributions to our history place him in this inimitable position. In his life, he was instrumental in helping us to realize and rectify those unspeakable flaws in managing, defining and re-organizing our historical records and archives which were tarnishing the name of this historical land.

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We honor S.M. Jaffar because he showed us how to mend those broken fences and to work to build and preserve our cultural heritage rather than destroying it. He led campaign after campaign in the fields in which he excelled in his efforts to secure our heritage and history. Today he is not with us, but he has left us his literary contributions which provide access to our past and link that past to the future.

Dr. S. M. Jaffar's book *Peshawar: Past and Present* is a masterful example of historical glimpse from the past. It discusses the ancient civilizations that flourished in this part of the country with its rich historical and archeological sites. Eminent historian R.C. Majumdar notes:

"I have read with great interest and profit Peshawar: Past and Present' by S.M. Jaffar. The book gives a short account of the history and antiquities of Peshawar and surrounding regions. The author has brought together much useful information on this very important subject and anyone, who wants to visit this region, will find a very valuable help and guide in this work. The books deals separately with the monuments of the different periods and discussed the various problems connected with them. Readers will thus get an adequate idea of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh and British Monuments with which the region bounds".

The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London noted in its review:

This useful book gives a brief but clear account of historical places at or near Peshawar. The remains and relics of Buddhist times and the surviving specimens of the art of Gandhara have great interest. The book indicates the wide

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field for archeological research that still remains to be worked.

Similarly, Dr. Surendra Nath Sen expressed:

Mr. Jaffar has brought together information about his native town and its environments from all available sources and the result has been an extremely readable monograph equally useful for the laymen and the serious students of history.

According to Jaffar's findings the Peshawar Valley appears for the first time in history as forming part of the ancient kingdom of Gandhara. The name of Gandhara figures in Sanskrit literature from earlier times and is also used by the Chinese pilgrims who visited the kingdom in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries of the common Era. Strabo describes a country which he calls Gandaritis, lying along the river Kophes (Kabul) between the Choaspes and the Indus. The ancient capital of the district was Pushkulavati from which is obviously derived the Peukelas of Arrian, the historian of Alexander. The position of the capital is vaguely described by Arrian and Strabo as "near the Indus." The geographer Ptolemy, however, fixes it upon the eastern bank of the Suastene or Swat.

The history and art of the Gandhara remained unknown to the inhabitants of the area and the rest of the world until much later. In the 19th century, British soldiers and administrators started taking an interest in the ancient history of the Indian Subcontinent. In the 1830s coins of the post-Ashoka period were discovered and in the same period Chinese travelogues were translated into English. Charles Masson, James Prinsep and Alexander Cunningham deciphered the Kharosthi script in 1838. In 1848 Cunningham found Gandhara sculptures north of Peshawar. He also identified the site of Taxila (Takshashila) in the 1860s. From then on a large number of Buddhist statues were discovered in the Peshawar valley. After 1947 Ahmed Hassan Dani and the Archaeology Department at the University of

Peshawar made a number of discoveries in the Peshawar and Swat Valleys. It was again Professor S. M.

Jaffar who began to preserve these historical/archeological antiquities in a very organized way. Excavations on many sites of the Gandhara Civilization were being done by researchers from many universities around the world, and the name of Pakistan in terms of Buddhist civilization and its antiquities became world's central point. But unfortunately in recent years this rich cultural heritage has faced immense danger from the internal and external threats.

However, the Gandhara culture in Pakistan has always been a focus of interest and inspiration for Buddhists, owing to its spiritual, religious and historical importance, and because of the scholarly efforts of historians, archivists and archaeologists like S.M. Jaffar and others.

Peshawar Museum had the largest collection of Gandhara Greco-Buddhist art in the world. In total, there were 4,247 Gandhara pieces, including Buddhist stone sculptures and panels, stucco sculptures, terracotta figurines, relic caskets and toiletry objects. The subject matter of Gandhara Art in the Museum's main hall included stories from the Buddha's life, miracles, worship of symbols, relic caskets and individual standing Buddha sculptures. It is very important to make positive efforts to promote these antiquities following the methods established by S.M. Jaffar.

Despite S.M. Jaffar's significant contributions to the study of the history of ancient NWFP and Peshawar, not much is known about the man himself. Even the valuable contributions he made to other fields of knowledge have remained a point of discussion among scholars. Although it is now generally agreed that his name is always in the forefront of history, archaeology and other related disciplines, unfortunately he has been not been considered to its justified merit.

Professor S. M Jaffar is also known for his contributions to Archaeology and Museology. In 1964 he became the Director of the Peshawar Museum². It has the most magnificent collection of Gandhara sculpture anywhere, and that is its most outstanding feature. It was Prof. Jaffar who attempted to curate and preserve this vast collection of Gandhara art in its historical sequence. He also modernized the over-all display to include expressions of national sentiment. During his tenure he not only enriched the presentation of Buddhist sculptures but also presented the statues, friezes and reliefs so that the life of Buddha was presented in chronological order.

He also put a new life into the display of the historical monuments of Muslim civilization. His main theme was to develop the Muslim Indian Gallery to fill the gap between ancient and modern times in the Museum of Peshawar. During his tenure another important addition to the Museum was the Pakistan Gallery, designed to portray the genesis and the history of Pakistan and its relics of the long struggle for independence. The beautiful display of the cultural heritage of Pashtun tribes who fought the British for over many years was also a valuable contribution.

He added new galleries to the Museum on becoming its Director, in compliance with the orders of the Provincial government.

These included:

- Pakistan - Post-Independence period
- Muslim India - Medieval period to the present
- Gandhara: The ancient period

The addition of new galleries to the Peshawar Museum had certainly fulfilled the national aspirations. The inclusion of the pre-Gandhara section - Aryan, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian and Indo-Sananian including the Kalash valley - had given the Museum a representative character. It provided space for the

² Views and Reviews, (On the work done in the Peshawar Museum Peshawar, as its Director from 18th January 1964 to 14th October 1970), Sadiq sons, Peshawar, 1972

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relics of the cultures which flourished in this region and took care of all the available cultural wealth, including Pakistan's own.

S. M. Jaffar's efforts for the betterment and development of preserving the cultural and ancient heritage of the lands of NWFP and Pakistan are noteworthy. He exhibited a number of remarkable pieces of art that had been in storage, which undoubtedly added to the significance of the Museum. His efforts can well be judged in light of the comments of some of the eminent personalities, historians, politicians and archaeologists.

Professor G. Tucci, President ISMEO, University of Rome, Italy, stated:

"I am very much impressed by the great development of the Peshawar Museum. I hope that it will increase and display with the same love and competence the wonderful treasures of art which are the best documents of the history of Pakistan".

A renowned writer Mr. Flotsam in one of his articles says;

"I should not like to end this account without stating that some of the more precious of MSS and old books in the Archival Museum and the Muslim India Gallery *belong to Prof. S. M. Jaffar, Director of the Museum, himself. The Professor is a keen collector and his private collection at his residence is worth a visit. The love and care which he showers on historical objects is evident from the improvements in the Museum, mentioned by me*³".

³ The Pakistan Times, Rawalpindi, 30 October 1967

I would also like to highlight the significant contribution made by Professor S.M. Jaffar in tracing the origins and development of archives in Pakistan, and more particularly with reference to the ancient NWFP and its civilizations. This includes a discussion of the Provincial Archival collections made by S.M. Jaffar. Before and even after the partition of India, Archival development has been hindered because of several constraints, including the lack of competent personnel; the need for better coordination among archival institutions; the absence of national leadership in archival issues, and the limited application of information technology in archival work. Despite these and other difficulties, S.M. Jaffar's achievements with reference to archival development and the preservation of records in Peshawar and NWFP are tremendous. It is interesting to note that he developed ten monographs on this important subject for the learning and training of young archivists in the early days of Pakistan. "All these publications will serve as useful guide books to the archivists in general and to the students of history of Pakistan in particular and I offer my sincerest congratulations of your honest efforts" noted Dr. Surendra Nath Sen, Director National Archives of India.

The main objective of S.M. Jaffar was to safeguard the cultural heritage of Pakistan and to organize the work of discovering, preserving, and publishing public records. However, there was no institutional framework within which to accomplish this.

In 1947 there was no provision for training archivists and records managers in the territories now constituting Pakistan. As early as 1948, the Central Record Office, North West Frontier Province (now named the Provincial Directorate of Archives, N.W.F.P.) had begun its work in collecting records and training people in this discipline under the supervision of S. M. Jaffar, who, as noted above, was one of the pioneers of the archival movement in Pakistan. Except for a brief reference to this course in Jaffar's booklet, Archives: Meaning, Scope and Importance (1949), very

little is known about the course⁴. It was a course of short duration and was basically intended to instruct those working in the Provincial Archives and students wishing to perform archival work. The participants were not charged a fee. Professor Jaffar conducted the course until 1953. A Diploma course was also planned under the auspices of the Central Record Office, Peshawar, but it was never launched.

As a matter of fact, training for Archivists has always been neglected. This could be attributed to the domination of the archival profession by history graduates who did not consider formal training to be an essential requirement for their work. Their emphasis, for the most part, had always been on the acquisition and preservation of documents rather than on the records' organization and use. Unfortunately, the technicalities involved in classifying and indexing documents do not interest archivists in this part of the world.

The Pakistan Government established the Directorate of Archives and Libraries in November 1951. Despite the efforts of the Pakistan Historical Records and Archives Commission, as well as the personal interest of some prominent historians, significant progress in developing the Archives remained limited. After Independence, Pakistan faced a multitude of social, economic, and political issues that needed immediate attention. Professor Jaffar strongly felt that there was considerable data of great value to historians that existed in the Provinces. Unfortunately, the great value of those records is still not fully recognized.

It was only during his tenure that the North West Frontier Province Record Office did a commendable job in the salvation, preservation and arrangement of historical records pertaining to the Province. The records were made easily accessible to everybody for research and references. While commenting on this achievement the then Governor, N.W.F.P Province, stated:

⁴ S. M. Jaffar, Archives (Peshawar: Central Record Office (N.W.F.P), 1949), i-ii.

"The Archives occupy a space of over 4,000 cubic feet and the library attached to it has about 8,000 volumes in stock. The two together are well in their way to becoming an important cultural and historical research center in this part of the country⁵".

The Central Record Office under the guidance of its Director S. M. Jaffar had made marvelous progress during a short time and fulfilled the purpose for which it was created. It was also the case that some important training had also been imparted regarding record keeping and historical research. Quoting Dr. Riaz-ul-Islam, the then Deputy Director of Archives, Government of Pakistan: (observed that)

"It is highly creditable that the Committee and Record Office have been doing such useful work under difficult circumstance. It shows what the enthusiasm, sincere work and devotion can achieve in spite of limited resources and unfavorable conditions."

S.M. Jaffar also developed many research papers and books on matters concerning the maintenance and use of archival materials. Among those; *A Guide to the Archives* of the Central Records Office, North West Frontier Province 1948), *Problems of an Archivist' Archives: Meaning and Importance* (1949) and *Historical Wealth of North West Frontier Province* are perhaps the most significant.

In a recent review of his contributions in the form of published and unpublished books, articles, papers and other source

⁵ His Excellency Khawaja Shahab-ud-Din, Governor, N.W.F.P, Peshawar, Views and Reviews, (On the work done in the Peshawar Museum Peshawar, as its Director from 18th January 1964 to 14th October 1970), Sadiq sons, Peshawar, 1972
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materials, it is revealed that most of his work has been appreciated at the national and international level. His writings gained him recognition as a visionary early in his career; later the combination of archeological references, the history of ancient India, the history of the Mughals and some valuable works on the North-West Frontier Province, solidified S. M Jaffar's reputation.

His services were sought by international organizations such as the Royal Asiatic Society, London, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and by Governments as far apart as Turkey, Iran, India, the USA, China and the United Kingdom.

Since he took charge of the National Historical Records and Archives, he led the training on different issues and re-organized and arranged some valuable source material for history which proved to be of considerable importance for the research students. He also developed Guides on historical research and archives management and record keeping. His best known contributions are *Record Keeping — Numerical System (published in 1951)* and *Guide to the Archives and Central Record Office*.

Most of his unfinished or un-published work is waiting to be made available to those who have a love for history and literature. After a detailed and comprehensive research and review of the work done by S.M. Jaffar, one might think for a while and feel a little guilty that the work of such a great scholar, who excelled as an historian, writer, archivist, publisher and museologist, is missing in our major accounts. S. M. Jaffar, as the genuine custodian of our national treasure; i.e. our history, heritage and culture, contributed so significantly to the difficult task of restoring and preserving the decayed archives, yet has been ignored for a very long time. The process through which he became Pakistan's internationally recognized restorer and conservator of manuscripts and archival data needs some serious attention from academicians, publishers and general readers with a thirst for knowledge.

Professor Jaffar was a driven man who has devoted more than three decades of his life to gathering, restoring, compiling, and editing this national treasure. His spirit and dedication for his work can be seen in his literary contributions. Today people are benefiting from his valuable contribution. Few historians and fewer teachers can hope to achieve more in lifetime.

The remarkable book on Peshawar and his unpublished material are intellectual endeavours of the highest order. Archives are the memory bank of a nation, and works of history articulate that memory in organized, meaningful ways. It is truly tragic that our Archives suffer from neglect and fragmentation, and that historians are almost extinct in Pakistan. To make matters worse, we are bringing up ill-informed generations who are being taught in schools poisonous and ideologically loaded distortions as history.

It is the time to reactivate our knowledge of S. M. Jaffar's quest for excellence, his lifelong dedication to the task he set himself, and our people's response to his endeavours. Sadly, there is paucity of recognition of excellence in this country. It was not always so in the land of Mohammed Iqbal, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Saadat Hasan Manto, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Professor S. M. Jaffar, whom we have all but formally cast out from our midst. Shall we let the darkness gather, or shall we follow the lead of this remarkable man and rekindle our own knowledge of our past?