

**Office of the PRO-Media Coordinator  
Jamia Millia Islamia**

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Press Release

**Ahmed Ali Memorial lecture at JMI on 'A learned Clerk in the Colonial Archive: Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube and the Linguistics Survey of India'**

The Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, hosted the Twelfth Ahmed Ali Memorial Lecture on 28th February, 2019. The lecture entitled A learned Clerk in the Colonial Archive: Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube and the Linguistics Survey of India, was addressed by noted scholar, Professor Shahid Amin. The talk opened with a welcome address by Professor Nishat Zaidi, Head, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia and was chaired by Professor M. Asaduddin who gave a brief introduction to the speaker and the topic under discussion.

Professor Amin's lecture focused on the lesser-acknowledged but integral contributions of Ram Gharib Chaube, a learned man during colonial times, who was abreast with the British colonial system of education, being fluent in dialects of Awadhi and Bhojpuri, as well as Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit and English. He became Mirzapur's district collector of revenues and while there, he met William Crooke, an Englishman who was keen to document Indian folklore. Ram Gharib Chaube assisted William Crooke in various ethnographic researches during the period of the British Raj. Professor Amin held that Chaube's is an insistent presence in the leading ethnographic journal, North Indian Notes and Queries, which William Crooke edited from 1890 to 1896 with his assistance. Chaube also functioned for several years as the chief clerk and translator for George Abraham Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India.

Professor Amin shed light on the resolution undertaken at the third Oriental Congress in Vienna in September 1886 which required to undertake a systematic survey of the languages of India. It was to be primarily a collection of specimens; a standard passage was to be selected for purposes of comparison. The first specimen was to be a version of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Professor Amin continued on how local or regional dialects such as the Laria dialect of Chattisgarh or Bhojpuri, all formatted to the standard Prodigal Son Parable were collected by District Officers in their respective districts and forwarded to the Shimla Office of the Linguistic Survey of India, where Chaube led the team of native transcribers who rendered the Devnagari text into English with interlinear literal translation of each and every word.

The enriching lecture brought to the fore the marginal comments that Chaube made for his masters, either as personalized writings in response to a long-distance enquiry, or quite literally in the margins of the manuscripts he was charged to prepare for publication. These marginal comments by a knowledgeable and aware native, whose importance was perhaps not realized during his time, exemplify new ways of tackling the issue of native agency in the production of official knowledge about colonial India. Chaube the ethnographer, the maker of marginal comments, started making his presence felt, suggesting linguistic nuances and ethnographic reflections as he worked on the several versions of the Prodigal Son tale for his living. Professor

Amin drew on actual instances and quoted from the transcriptions and translations which added immensely to the lecture.

The lecture was delivered to a full house, attended by undergraduate and postgraduate students, research scholars, faculty and guests. It came to close with a vote of thanks by Dr. Shuby Abidi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia.

**Ahmad Azeem**  
PRO-Media Coordinator







Department of English

Jamia Millia Islamia  
New Delhi

Twelfth All India Memorial Lecture

*A learned Clerk in the Colonial Archive:  
Punjab, Ran Ghosh Chatterjee and the  
Linguistics Survey of India*

By  
Professor Shahid Amin

Thursday, February 26, 2015 at 2 pm

Room: 101, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi



Department of English

University of Delhi  
New Delhi

1990-2020

Tenthth Ahmed Ali Memorial Lecture

A Javed Clerk in the Colonial Archive  
Feroz Khan Ghosh Choudhury and the  
Linguistics Survey of India

By  
Professor Shafiq Anwar

Thursday, February 26, 2020 at 4 pm  
Department of English, University of Delhi





# **Twelfth Ahmed Ali Memorial Lecture**



**By Professor  
Shahid Amin**