

FROM A PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT, containing the biographies of noted Sufis and distinguished men in Islam. The author is given as Abd-al-Rahman, son of Achmad-al-Jami. On the fly-leaf is inscribed, apparently by the first owner, Kandahar, A. H. 883, or 1478 of the Christian era. This manuscript is written in the Ta'liq hand, a plain script intended for scholars, but not without the fascination of all such honest craftsmanship. That the book was in constant use is evident not only from the worn condition of the leaves, but also from the annotations on the margins. The language employed in this manuscript, differing but slightly from the spoken and written language of modern Persia, is known technically as New Persian. It is a language of genuine Iranian stock, which reached its present form at the time of Firdausi, and has remained essentially unchanged for nine centuries. ¶ The philologist regards Old Persian (as distinct from Zend which was really the sacerdotal language used in the Avesta) as the mother tongue from which, with various external influences, came Middle Persian or Pahlavi, and later, New Persian. But five centuries before Firdausi, Persia was conquered by the Muslims and forced to accept the Arabic alphabet. Hence for 1300 years written Persian has been a transliterated language, though enriched by innumerable words taken bodily from both Arabic and Turkish. We may repeat here that Arabic, and the languages using the Arabic alphabet, are written from right to left, the order of the pages and the direction of the lines being the opposite of European usage.

ما سانی فکر کنی کی مسیبت الی معنی
بهینا مد اکم مرا شد شامی باد
سودی تکیه نشا کرد و اند
مرا آینه بر دهن تو کند

