PREFACE

Humanity is witnessing the victorious freedom movement of the formerly enslaved colonial peoples of Asia and Africa during the last decades. Most of them have broken the chains intended to keep them in bondage for ever, and have successfully started to build up their own life. This process means that even some peoples who, generally speaking, were hitherto only the subject matter of foreign orientology, are now masters of their own destiny, and as academic facilities develop in their countries, radically change the character of orientology internationally. India, where a modern scientific tradition formed long ago, nevertheless has only enjoyed full freedom to develop her scholars since her political independence. She now plays a leading part in the re-shaping of modern orientology and will hasten the participation of those within her own boundaries who were formerly treated as backward and illiterate minorities and studied by others from outside.

The orientologists in the German Democratic Republic are aware of this fundamental change in the position of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Therefore while preserving the valuable scientific heritage of the past and continuing the humanistic traditions of classical German orientology, they concentrate at the same time more and more on studying problems of the modern history and culture of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Naturally the history of the national liberation struggle in these countries is one of the most important topics for orientologists in our country.

In the field of German indology this development was prepared historically over a long period but could only now be realized. Classical German indology, which emphasized the study of language, literature, philosophy and religion of ancient India, was founded at the beginning of the XIX century. Many important scientific achievements resulted, leading to the international esteem of German scholarship in this field. Apart from this development which dominated indological studies at German universities for about 150 years, a new trend of German indology began outside the universities in the middle of the XIX century. It was inaugurated by Karl Marx, who, taking the side of the Indian people, cleared the path for the study of the problems of modern India and especially of the national freedom struggle by his fundamental observations on past and contemporary India. These two trends of German indology have been amalgamated in this country, elevating indological studies to a new level.
The research plans of the Institute for Oriental Studies in the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin are devised on the basis of this new approach to orientology. Accordingly great emphasis is laid on major scientific undertakings such as the Egyptian Dictionary, the Hittite Thesaurus or the Chinese Dictionary, to mention only a few.

In the field of historical research two main groups of problems are being studied here which call for the cooperation of many scholars. The first is a special problem of great historical significance which is not limited to the history of only one country but relates to most of the Asian and African peoples, i. e. the genesis and special features of the indigenous mode of production which, to distinguish it from the European development, may be termed the "Asiatic mode of production" (K. Marx). This is an important field in which results can only be achieved after careful and detailed research.

Another very complex branch of study conducted at the Institute for Oriental Studies concerns problems of the national liberation movements of the Asian and African peoples. In this context the general course of development has to be considered as well as local features and national peculiarities. Most interesting in this context is the rise and growth of the revolutionary wing within the national movement and its contact with socialist ideas which have been adopted and incorporated in various ways, thus preparing for transition from national liberation to the national-democratic revolution. To investigate the origins of this process and to study the different paths of transition, is a fascinating subject of research.

This line of study at the Institute for Oriental Studies, representing the general trend in the field of orientology in the German Democratic Republic, corresponds to the scientific conviction of the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf who was attracted by this basically new approach to orientology. Moreover, his special approach to problems of Indian history and culture had special value for us, for he embodied, both as a scholar and as a man, exactly the way of thinking that we are trying to put into practice in our work. To understand his scientific and political attitude we only need to look at the history of the Indian liberation movement in this century.

After a long and hard struggle for freedom the Indian people won political independence in 1947. This fight was decided by the active participation of the Indian masses. Indian history in the modern period shows us that whenever broad sections of the people have participated in the decisive battles for freedom and social progress, there has been an advance in the general development of the country. But only when the masses of India became conscious of their aims did they join the national liberation movement on a broad scale. Their vague aspirations for freedom and a better life were kindled and guided by national leaders who marched ahead to show the path by which to achieve the goal.

One of the most outstanding leaders in India during the last crucial decades in the battle for independence was the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf. He was a genuine patriot and a true internationalist. His fundamental studies of Indian history and his own experiences in the revolutionary movement made him understand the importance of the combination of the political and the social struggle. These ex-
periences, combined with his profound studies of Marxism-Leninism, led him to the conclusion that only socialism could bring the fulfilment of the wishes and hopes of the Indian people. He will always be remembered for his consistent and continuous struggle against communalism and his exposure of its causes both internal and external. Because he worked and fought so consciously and out of a feeling of responsibility based on knowledge, the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf lives in our memory as the incarnation of the ideal type of an historian — the learned scholar combined with the ardent revolutionary.

Therefore whatever memorials are dedicated to the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf in India, we also felt an obligation to contribute our own. This commemoration volume is but a humble tribute to his memory from some of his friends and colleagues in India and abroad. It does not claim to be a substitute for a biography which can only be written later after careful research in India, Great Britain and elsewhere. A collection of his numerous speeches and articles on historical and current topics which have stirred the Indian masses and thus made history, should also be published.

I should like to thank all those who have contributed to this volume in spite of the long distances, many preoccupations and recent developments in India which created many difficulties that had to be overcome. It was not possible, however, to avoid a delay in publishing although we are happy to say that most of the promised papers were actually sent. It is gratifying to note how many people who did not share the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf’s political opinions, nonetheless contributed to honour his memory. Among these was one whose name inevitably occurs frequently in the following pages, India’s first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who in spite of declining health and the urgent responsibilities of the time sent a personal message for this volume shortly before his death so deeply mourned throughout the world by all lovers of international peace. It is given in facsimile on page 339. While we did our best to make known our intention of publishing a memorial volume and sent personal invitations to those of his old friends who were known to us, some whose addresses could not be traced may have been omitted.

I am very grateful to Mr. Junaid Ahmad, Junaid Printing Press, Bombay, for his kind permission to publish the translation of the chapter Dr. K. M. Ashraf on Himself from Personalities and Incidents that influenced me (Urdu), Bombay, pp. 37–59; to Mr. S. M. Agarwala, Managing Director, Kitab Mahal Private Ltd, Allahabad, for allowing us to publish the translation of the chapter Kunwar Muhmed Ashraf from the late Rahul Sankrityayan’s Naye bharat ke naye neta, Allahabad, 1943, pp. 1–11; and to Dr. S. P. Sen, General Secretary of the Indian History Congress Association for allowing us to reprint Dr. K. M. Ashraf’s Presidential Address delivered at the Indian History Congress, Aligarh, 1960.

It would be impossible to thank individually here all those friends and colleagues of the late Dr. K. M. Ashraf who have assisted both in India and in this country with the selecting, translating and editing of the materials, in addition to the cooperation and helpful suggestions from those whose names appear here as
contributors. Mrs. P. M. Kemp-Ashraf is responsible for some of the translations as well as for reading the whole manuscript. Mrs. R. Koppe supervised the transcription of the Persian names and terms. Mrs. A. Lübecke from the technical staff of the Institute for Oriental Studies, has been untiring in rendering technical assistance. Mrs. G. Hertel prepared the index.

The authors speak for themselves. Their views expressed in this volume are not necessarily those of the editor. Statements or impressions about Dr. Ashraf's life and ideas appear as the writers have given them.

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H. K.