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Unveiling Inspiration: A Candid Conversation with Mehr Afshan Farooqi on "Postcolonial Mind: Urdu, Culture, Islam, and Modernity in M. Hasan Askari" by Samriddhi Mishra

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Introduction:

In the rich tapestry of literature and cultural discourse, few voices resonate as profoundly as Mehr Afshan Farooqi, a distinguished scholar and author whose insights have illuminated the intersections of Urdu, culture, Islam, and modernity. Today, we have the privilege of delving into her latest work, "Postcolonial Mind: Urdu, Culture, Islam, and Modernity in M. Hasan Askari." Join us as we embark on a candid conversation with Mehr Afshan Farooqi, uncovering the inspiration, reflections, and scholarly depth that define her groundbreaking book.

Exploring the Journey:

Interviewer: Can you provide an overview of the central thesis or argument of your book "Postcolonial Mind" and how the concept of Askari fits into it?

Farooqi: Certainly. "Postcolonial Mind" explores the complexities of postcolonial consciousness within the context of Urdu literature, culture, and Islamic thought. At its core, the book seeks to illuminate the ways in which Urdu literary texts negotiate the challenges of modernity and postcolonialism. Askari's ideas serve as a guiding force throughout the book, particularly his emphasis on the transformative potential of culture and literature in navigating the complexities of postcolonial identity.

Interviewer: In your research, what were some key findings or insights regarding the experiences and narratives of Askari within the colonial framework?

Farooqi: Askari emerged as a prominent figure within the colonial framework, grappling with the complexities of identity, culture, and modernity. His experiences as a student at Allahabad University, alongside scholars like A.N. Jha and Harivansh Rai Bachchan, deeply influenced

his intellectual journey. One key finding was the centrality of culture in Askari's thought—he viewed culture as a unifying force that transcends boundaries and fosters a sense of belonging. For instance, I discuss how Askari used the metaphor of mangoes to illustrate the diversity of culture within a single country, highlighting how this one fruit plays different roles in different states, yet binds us together through shared experiences and narratives.

Themes and Reflections:

Interviewer: How do you envision your book contributing to ongoing dialogues and debates within postcolonial studies, particularly in relation to understanding the complexities of colonial histories?

Farooqi: "Postcolonial Mind" seeks to contribute to ongoing dialogues within postcolonial studies by offering a nuanced exploration of Urdu literature and cultural expressions. By situating Urdu texts within the colonial framework, the book sheds light on the ways in which colonial histories continue to shape contemporary discourses of identity and belonging. Drawing on scholars like Gayatri Spivak and insights from postcolonial theory, the book offers new perspectives on the complexities of colonial legacies and their implications for postcolonial subjects. Moreover, I explore the role of English as a language that became a path or a theory, discussing how it has evolved into a language of technology, enabling societies to join the global race. Globalization, a buzzword in world literature today, further underscores the significance of these linguistic and cultural dynamics.

Interviewer: Finally, looking forward, do you have any plans for further research or projects that build upon the themes and insights explored in "The Postcolonial Mind," particularly in relation to the experiences of marginalised groups like the Askari?

Farooqi: Moving forward, I'm interested in further exploring the experiences of marginalised groups within the postcolonial framework, including the Askari. By delving deeper into their narratives and experiences, I hope to offer a more comprehensive understanding of postcolonial identities and the ways in which they intersect with broader discourses of power, privilege, and resistance.

Conclusion:

As we draw to a close on this enlightening conversation with Mehr Afshan Farooqi, we find ourselves deeply grateful for the insights, reflections, and scholarly depth she has shared

with us. Through her words, we have been transported on a journey through the complexities of postcolonial consciousness, guided by the profound ideas of M. Hasan Askari and enriched by Farooqi's meticulous scholarship. As we bid farewell to this intellectual journey, we carry with us a renewed appreciation for the transformative power of literature, culture, and scholarly inquiry—a testament to the enduring legacy of Farooqi's work in shaping our understanding of Urdu literature, cultural studies, and postcolonial thought.