Dawn of Printing in India: Lithography in Lahore

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Abstract

The introduction of printing press and camera during 19th century in India, mark the end of traditions of handwritten book. The method of printing mostly adopted all over India, including the region of Lahore, was Lithography. This paper attempts to investigate the reason for this choice by the artists of India when, the rest of the world was preferring Typographic methods for printing. It also aims to find out how Lithography was able to provide a smooth transition from hand-written to printed books. The region of Lahore has been taken as the area of study in this specific case. Two of the archives are utilized for this purpose that have provided the data sample of 250 lithographed books from Lahore. The study scrutinizes the information about authors, publishers, artists of these books as well as general formatting, illustrations and illuminations. Furthermore, it investigates how the artists managed to continue some features of book art while modifying others to suite the new printing revolution. A few art historians notably, Shaw (1995, 2015) and Shcheglova (1999, 2009) have studied early printing methods in India. Their studies naturally have covered those cities of India which produced maximum number of lithographic books namely Lucknow and Cawnpur. Lahore is mentioned but, only fleetingly. This study also endeavors to identify and examine the position of Lahore in the context of lithographic printing that overlapped the production of manuscripts in the second half of 19th century: the domain much needed to be explored by art historians.

Keywords: Lahore, lithographic printing, typographs, calligraphic tradition

1. Introduction

Lithography, a planographic method of printing, is one of the oldest mechanical printing methods introduced to the world. This technique of printing utilizes specially prepared limestone slabs on which the text is inscribed, or the design is drawn by hand. Working on the principle of

incompatibility of water and grease, oil soluble inks are applied on the prepared surface that adheres to the design leaving the negatives areas. Prints can be taken multiple times from the prepared stone by means of presses.

Lithography was invented in 1798 in Germany and quickly spread throughout Europe. Investigating from India Office Records, Graham Shaw notes that it was introduced by Nanthanial Rind in India in 1822 in Calcutta (Shaw 1994/95: 3). It started to be used in Bombay for official printing in 1824. Later during the century, it was taken over as the major printing method in all major cities of India including Lucknow and Lahore.

Lithography received an enthusiastic welcome all over India as compared to typography, which remained the major printing method of Europe during 19th century. Typography could not attain the same status in India as Lithography enjoyed. There were many reasons for that, foremost among which was, the age-old calligraphic tradition and the sentiments of the public attached to this tradition. Lithography ensured mass production of books while remaining within a culturally and aesthetically favorable type of writing. Furthermore, the presence of hundreds of calligraphers and their previously produced handwritten manuscripts were there to utilize. In addition to that, the local availability of indigenous type of limestone made it a convenient and cheaper alternative to typographs. It used to be transported from Kurnool in Barelley district of Madras Presidency for different cities (Shaw,1994, p.1). For Lahore, it was available from nearer areas of Potohar, Salt range, specially from Wah and Taxila (Awan 2003: 8-18). Additionally, lithography could also accommodate many scripts used in India which type forms could not.

Data from the archives reveal that highest number of lithographs were produced in Lucknow, then in Bombay, Cawnpur, Lahore and Delhi respectively (Edwards 1922; Naushahi 1983). Lucknow and Cawnpur were leading cities in lithographic book production in 1830's and the pioneering publishers were Haji Muhammad Husayn who established Muhammadi printing press and Mustafa Khan who established Mustafai printing press in both of the leading cities (Gharwi 1971: 26-36). In 1858 C.E. the largest publishing house was established in Lucknow by Nawal Kishur. It was called Awadh Akhbar. Nawal Kishur soon left all others behind in the field of lithographic production in quality and quantity. Branches of his

publishing houses were established in Cawnpur, Bombay, Delhi and Lahore.

The history of printing in Lahore dates to Mughals. Introduced by the Jesuit missions, it used to be in typographed script and illustrated engravings. Emperor Akbar and Jahangir both employed artists to copy the illustrations but are never known to order their artists to emulate typograph forms (Khursheed 1963, Sheikh 2013). In 18th century, print made its first public appearance. It was moveable typeform that generated records of the rule of East India Company and other scientific research reports. It served the twin function of control and education.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, first printing press was established in Ludhiana by American Presbyterian Mission (Sheikh, 2013). "*Ludhiana Akhbar*" issues from 1836 to 1840 are present in National Archives of India. The issues of 1840 are lithographed and the earlier ones are typographed (Siddiqui 1957: 253). First printing press in Lahore was established by East India Company's British residency in Lahore in 1842 (Sheikh 2013). According to Goulding (1924) this press was working in the enclosure of Daye Anga mosque. In this printing press, Lahore's first newspaper was printed. It was "The Lahore Chronicle" in English with a section in Persian. We know that lithography was put in use for this paper and Emile Billon was the superintendent in charge of lithographic section as mentioned in one of the entries of the Gazette of United Kingdom in 1853 C.E. mentioning the name of Billon as the "Former In charge" of Lithographic Press of the Lahore Chronicle. Kuhinur was the first Lahore daily newspaper started on 14th January 1850. Dya Ram Kaul Tuta, Maulawi Fazal Din Sahhaf and Pandit Mukand Ram were working for this paper (Bhutta 2007: 267). They were the prominent manuscript artists. One illustrated manuscript from British Library by Fazl Din Sahhaf (IO Islamic 3243) and two from National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi has been recorded by the author transcribed and illuminated by Ram Kaul Tuta (MS 1962-184, NM 1970-1).

2. The Publishers

From 1950's onwards many book dealers started to produce lithographed books in Lahore. This was being done in many languages including Persian, Urdu, Punjabi in *Nastaliq* scripts and some in

Gurumukhi script as well. Graham Shaw records that Bengali was also lithographed in Lahore when it was typographed in other parts of India (Shaw, 1995. p. 4). Most of the publishers were based in Kashmiri Bazaar. Haji Charagh Din and Haji Siraj Din were the most famous among them. Their book shop/ *Kutub khana* was established in 1856 C.E [1]. Others include Sheikh Illahi Bakhsh, Muhammad Jalal al-Din and Haji Siraj Din. Another prominent name in this connection is that of Malik Muhammad Hira who also published '*Garanth Sahab"* on a large scale (Adeeb 1967: 17).

Books were also exported from Lahore to Central Asia and Afghanistan. People going to Makkah for Hajj used to place orders for the books in Lahore to be collected while returning on their way back (Adeeb 1967: 17). Publishers based in Lahore were also taking orders from other cities[2].

3. The Artists

When we try to search for the names of artists/calligraphers of these early printed books, we come to know that they are not as highlighted as that of the names of publisher on the first page along with the author. This marks the beginning of the effects of early commercialization of book production. We do find some humble mentions in the corners of any one of the leaves or at the end of the books (see figures,1,2,3).

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[1] This information is given at the back of the last folio of *Srimad Bhagawad Gita* in Urdu (www.searchkashmir.org) Accessed on 1/10/2016.
[2] Ganj Bakhsh Library. lithographed book Acc. No. 890/17011, *Pandnamah-i Aṭṭar*, transcribed in 1873, have the name of Aḥmad Din Dealer of Books in Rawalpindi in addition to Charagh Din the dealer of Lahore.
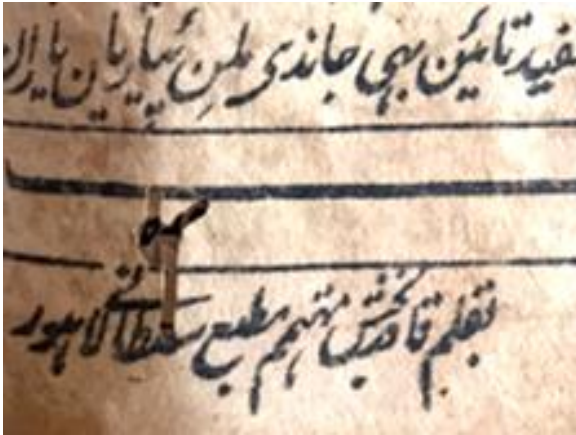
Fig. 1 - Last folio with signature of the scribe, Qissa Bahram Gur, 1875 CE., National Archives of Pakistan. Call no. 12357 (Photo by the Author).
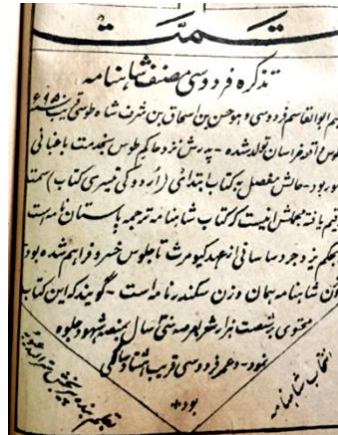
Fig, 2 - Signature of the scribe, Muntakhibat-i Farsi,1872 CE., Ganj Bakhsh Library, call no. 1289 (Photo by the Author).
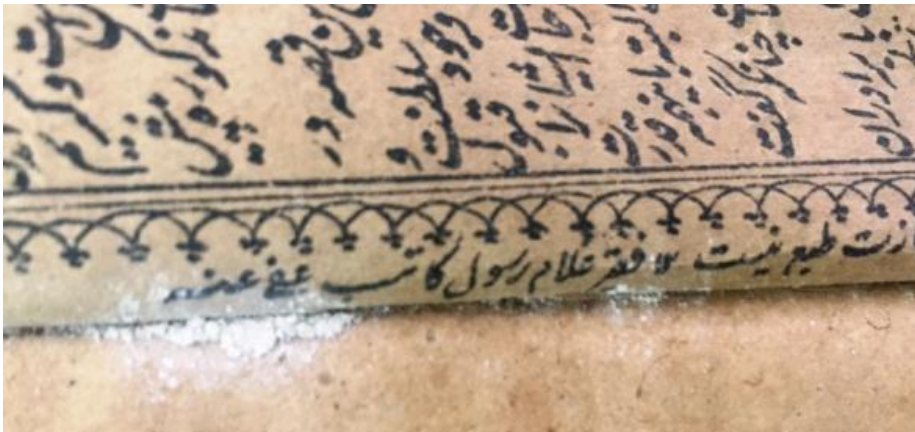

Fig. 3 - Corner of folio showing name of scribe, Sharh-i Bustan, 1878 CE., Ganj Bakhsh Library call no. 19915 (Photo by the Author).

The sheer number of lithographed books available indicate that a lot of people were transcribing them. Many of these names are the same that can be found in the colophons of the manuscripts of earlier decades. For example, the names of two of the calligrahers, Fazal Din and Pir Bakhsh, that appear at the end of *Muntakhibat-i Farsi*, Ganj Bakhsh Library, Acc. No. 890/7304, a lithographed book, were quite well-

known artists of 19th Century. Fazal Din was the son of famed Muhammad Bakhsh Sahhaf mentioned by Kanhayya Lal and Nur Muhammad Chishti as well (Lal 1884: 51; Chishti 1858: 672). He used to occupy a quarter, *hujra* in Wazir Khan mosque. Pir Bakhsh has been noted by Srivastava as the artist of repute in late 19th century (Srivastava 1983: 26-27). In addition to him, there are many others as Qadir Bakhsh, Imam Din, Ghulam Rasul, Ghulam Husayn, Muhammad Hayat, Muhammad Ali who have written their names on the corners of one of the pages of these lithograph books. These names can be correlated with many of the names found in histories mentioned as artists and calligraphers. To quote one, Din Muhammad (calligrapher of *Tutinamah,* Ganj Bakhsh Library, Acc. No. 1729 was the artist who made posters for Allama Iqbal in the elections of 1929 (Bhutta 2002: 43-44). Another name, Ghulam Husayn was well known in Mayo College and Aitchison College as a drawing instructor during early 19th century. His signatures as a calligraphist can be noticed in some books as for an instance, *Mathnawi Bu Ali Qalandar* (Ganj Bakhsh Library Acc. No. 19997).

3. Scripts and Formats

Nastaliq was reserverd for Persian and Urdu; *Naskh f*or Arabic. Some of these early printed books are written in *Shikasta* script as well for Persian, Arabic or Punjabi writing. Formatting of these books echo the traditions of manuscript writing. *Jadwal* or columns are drawn in between the lines in case of poetry works (fig. 4). Explanations of the text are in slanted lines outside the margins on each folio as used to be in handwritten books (fig. 5). Another feature that directly follow the manuscript tradition is the triangular tail piece at the end of the text (fig. 6). Despite taking much from the predecessors, one may also notice some features that resulted from modernization. These include the pagination of folios by writing page numbers in place of catch words. Another important modern inclusion was the title page discussed later in detail.
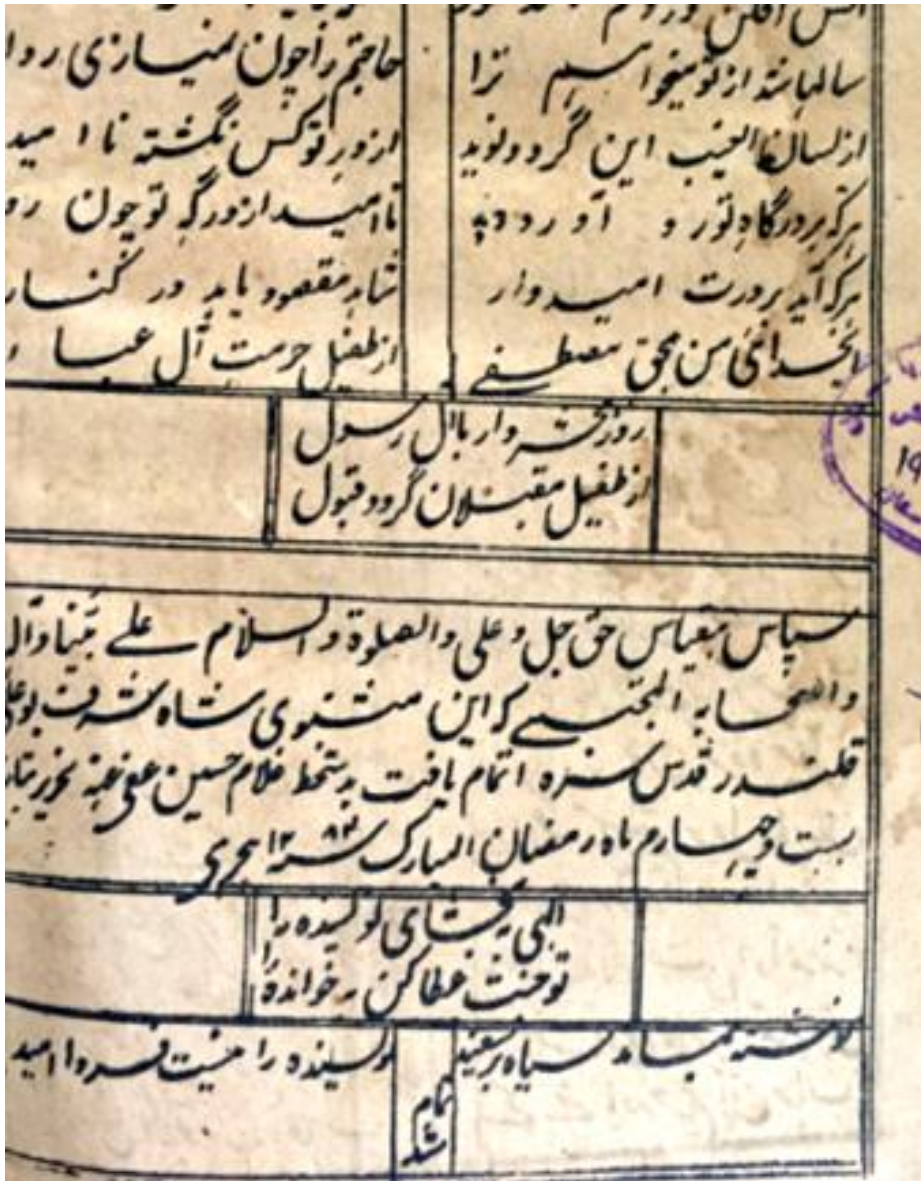
Fig. 4 - Last Folio. Masnawi Bu Ali Qalandar. 1898 CE. Ganj Bakhsh Library. Call. No. 19997 (Photo by the Author).

Fig. 5 - Folio 1 Tuhfat al Ihrar, 1863 CE. Ganj Bakhsh Library call. no. 19642 (Photo by the Author).
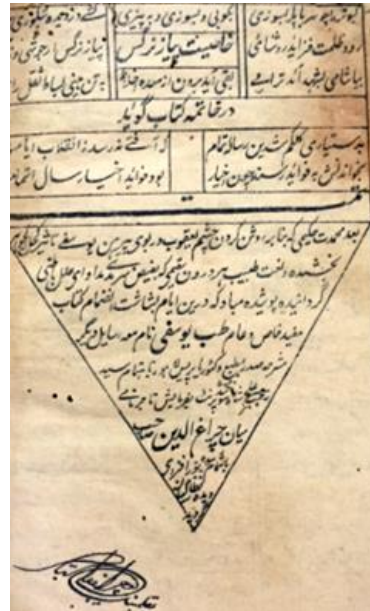

Fig. 6 - Last Folio. Tail piece, Ṭibb-i Yusufi. 1879 CE. Ganj Bakhsh Library. call no. 18785. (Photo by the Author).

4. Illumination

Be it figural composition in the form of illustrations or, graphic decoration in the form of illumination—both had to go through a transformation from the hand painted versions of manuscripts to lithographed books. The first compromise had to be with the colour. The black and white version of illumination in design was much like the manuscripts. Head pieces were inserted before the beginning of the text in most of the instances. The calligraphists were so used to this feature that even if not drawn, one-third of the first page used to be left blank (fig. 7). The first two decades of lithograph followed more or less the same design elements, as for example in 1864 edition of C.E *Anhar-al Israr* the typical tri-foiled interlaced design is used (fig. 9); later on the illustrator started to fathom the effective exploitation of black and white tonalities in broader designs as in the *Bandaginamah* of 1878 (fig. 8).

Fig. 7 - Ajaib al-Qassas , 1864 CE., 1/3rd of the folio left blank Ganj Bakhsh Library. Call no. 3854/5616 (Photo by the Author).

Fig. 8 - Bandaginamah, 1878 CE. folio 1. National Archives of Pakistan Call. No. 12099. (Photo by the Author).
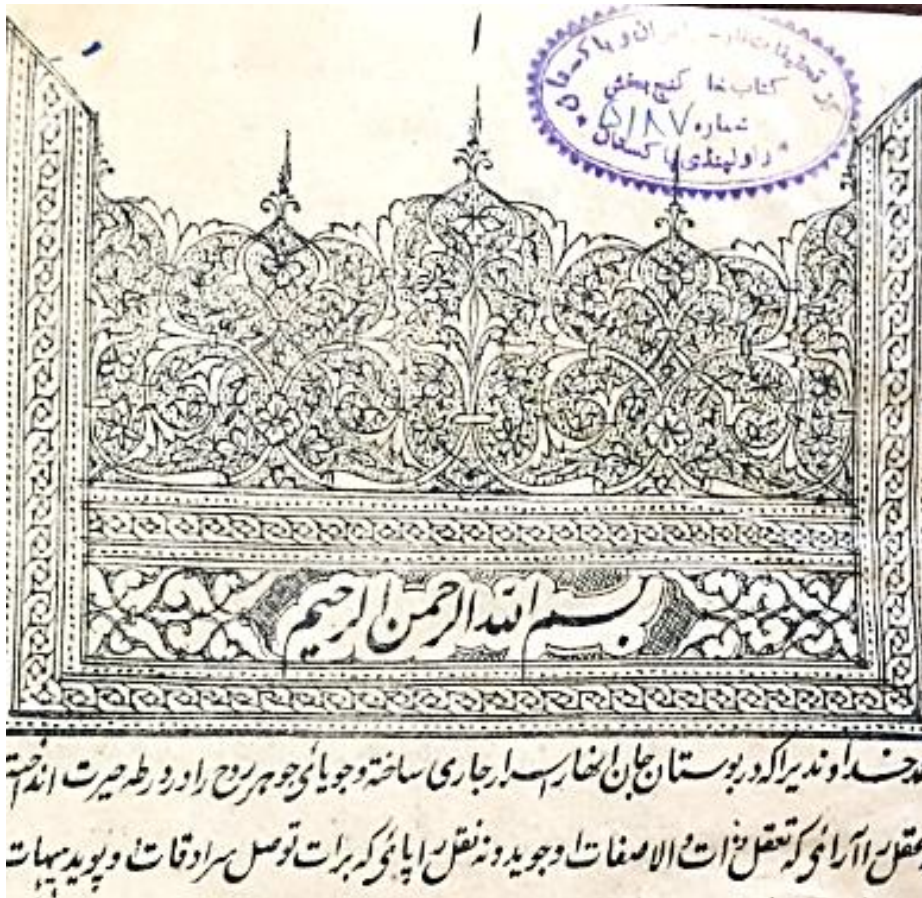
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Fig. 9 - Anhar al- Israr, 1864 CE, Illumination drawing, folio 1. Ganj Bakhsh Library, Call. No. 890/5623 (Photo by the Author).

5. Illustrations

The books that contain illustrations are mostly Persian classics following the older tradition, or are inserted in Punjabi folk tales, a nascent variety. Alongside the compromise on colour, the artist here had to forgo his desired larger sizes too. Lithographic printing had to be done on limestone slabs which were difficult to acquire, carry and printed on presses. Resultantly the sizes are uniform and moderate. Commercial mass production of books had its toll too on quality. The illustrations that used to take larger spaces, sometimes the whole page in the past, were reduced to small bands within the text. This can be

observed in the illustrative examples in figures 10, 11 and 12. The composition got squeezed in a limited space with large figures and less space around.

Despite of the drawbacks, the visual iconography of Lahore's manuscript art of previous decades can be noticed in these early printed books. These features include the typical facial features as saucer eyes, thick beards of men, their head dresses and postures (fig. 10-14). The wings of the angels one bend and the other upright can be noticed at once belonging to Lahore visual vocabulary of hand painted illustrations (fig. 10). The tall cypresses among the thick short bunches of foliage, the regular distribution of tufts of grass on the ground, hills with shaded edges all come from a familiar repertoire of hand painted illustrated manuscripts of Lahore School from the beginning to the third quarter of 19th century. Furthermore, foliage of the trees drawn are shown bent over the main group in the composition-- a typical Lahore feature as well. This feature appeared in the hand painted illustrated versions of earlier times (fig. 10, 11). In some of the instances, the title pages of the books also contain illustrations as in figures 13,14.

Fig. 10 Qiṣṣa-i Bahram Gur, National Archive of Pakistan. Acc. No.12357. Page. Illustration;8 35 mm x 126 mm (Photo by the Author).

Fig. 11 - Hir Wari<u>th</u> Shah, 1875 CE. National Archive of Pakistan Acc. No. 12373, page. 15. Illustration; 33 mm x 140 mm (Photo by the Author).

Fig. 12 - Qiṣṣa-i Bahram Gur . National Archive of Pakistan. Acc. No.12357, pg. 34, illustration; 34mm x 126m (Photo by the Author).
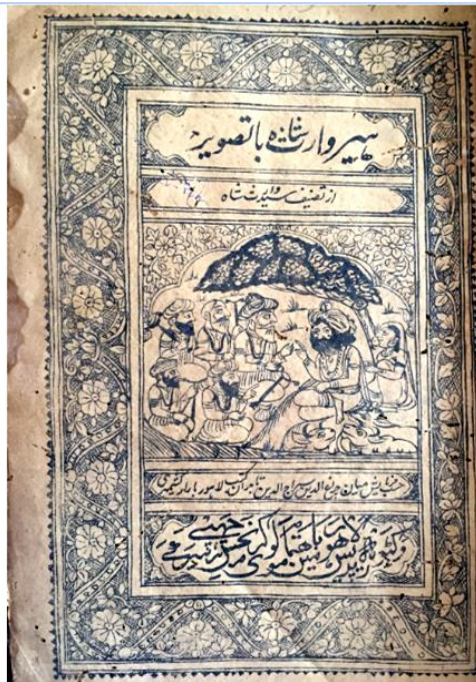
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Fig. 13 - Title page, Hir Wari<u>s</u> Shah, 1875 CE. National Archive of Pakistan Call. No. 12373 (Photo by the Author).

Fig. 14 - Title page, Subdinawan Mahal . National Archive of Pakistan Call. No. 12436 (Photo by the Author).

6. Title Pages

A new feature added to the printed books is the insertion of title pages perhaps taken after the European books and the Britishers who started the same practice in India while producing printed educational material. Scheglova (1992) has identified two major formatting styles of title pages that were utilized all over India. First is the Bombay Style. In this style *shamsa* or medallion format was used. Two or three medallions are arranged vertically, the central one being the biggest containing title of the book and author's name. The second style is the so called Nawal Kishur Style-after the famed publisher of Lucknow. Lahore's printed book followed this style. It is horizontally oriented across the title page. An ornamental border with one or two bands is drawn on all four sides, the one at the side of the spine of the page is thinner. The border design is mostly multi-leafed rinceaux. Surrounded by the borders are three bands of text. The central one takes up most of the space, containing

the title of the book occasionally with authors name and date of publication. The upper most band contained supplication in Arabic in bold *Naskh* script. The lower band contained the name of the publisher (Fig. 15, 16).
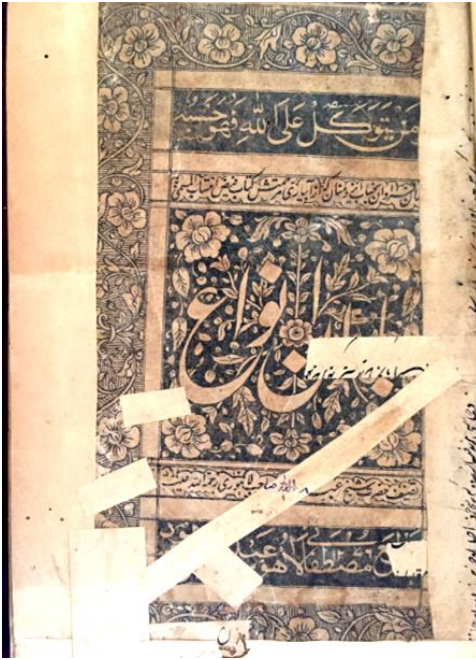

Fig. 15 - title page, Baran Anwa 1859 CE., National Archive of Pakistan, Call. No. 12425 (Photo by the Author).
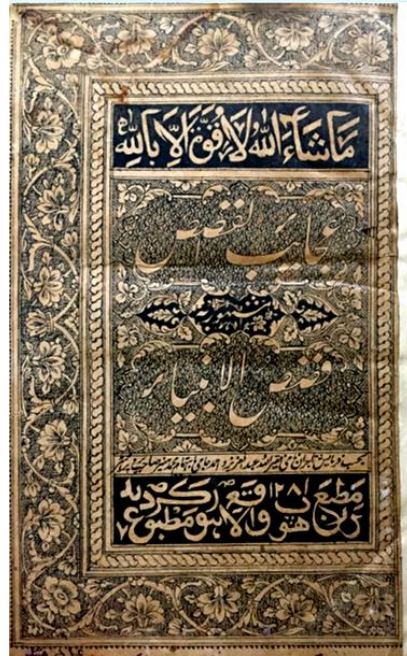
Fig. 16 - Title page Ajaib al- Qaṣaṣ, Ganj Bakhsh Library, Call. No. 890/19642 (Photo by the Author).

Towards the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th, Lahore's character of art of printed book starts to loosen its individuality. Ever increasing commercialization and exposure to a large variety of books from other cities; crude or fine, was the major reason for this deterioration. Publishers from other cities started establishing their publishing houses in Lahore. One of the examples is that of Nawal Kishur's publishing house that started its business in Lahore in 1890. The new dealers started to import and export books in Lahore. In many of these books produced towards the end of the century, a new competition may also be felt in providing cheaper and cheaper options as advertised at the end of the book on the last folio. Although

7. Conclusions

Lithography was given preference over typography in Lahore as in other parts of India during 19th century. The major reason for this choice was the cultural familiarity, love for hand written book and its aesthetic closeness to all the fonts used in India. As the consequence, we observe a large production of lithographed books not only in Persian but in Urdu and Punjabi in a great number as well in the multilingual society of Lahore. From its early versions in 1850's until about three decades it kept the Manuscript traditions alive in calligraphy, illustrations and illumination to a large extent. However, it went through a process of transformation gradually and the end of 19th century also witnesses the demise of Lahore's art of book as an individual entity which kept its status for the whole of preceding century.

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