

CHAPTER-II

Historical Background of

The Persians Impact

On Indian Sub-Continent

From

Ancient Times up-to

The Establishment of Mughal

Empire in 1526 A.D.

Scholars who are not well acquainted with the Persians' past role in Indian Sub-continent cannot really perceive their later role at the Mughal Court as well as in Mughal India. This chapter is consisting over two major segments. At first, a brief study of the Persians' role has been discussed to bring into light their impact on Indian Sub-continent during the ancient regime; secondly, the same investigation has also been made with the advent of Islam in India in 712 A.D. to the establishment of Mughal dynasty in 1526 A.D. Actually, this chapter is an effort with the screening of an overall role of Persians in view of the pertinence of the topic to make a linkage between the old Indo-Persian relations with their later interactions during the Mughal rule.

(A) Persians' impact on Indian Sub-continent during Ancient Times

From the remote past India and Persia were linked partly by a common ruling dynasty and partly by routes of trade and navigation which served as a common ground for cultural activities and contacts. These in turn affected the entire gamut of Indo-Persian social and cultural affinities and similarities, owed to its origin to common geographical background.¹ As present Pakistan lies at the south-eastern edge of the present day boundary of Iran and is divided into two distinct physiographic regions: firstly, the hilly region of Balochistan on the west and north-west which constitutes one-third of the total area of Pakistan, and secondly, vast plain of the Indus river system on the east. Among these sharply defined regions, "Balochistan is geographically an eastern extension of the Iranian plateau. This eastern edge of the Pakistani-Iranian borderland is sharply defined by the Sulaiman and Kirthar mountain ranges respectively of the northern and southern Balochistan. The central Makran range of southern Balochistan runs parallel to the southern shoreline of both Iran and Pakistan."² Indian Sub-continent is surrounded by sea on three sides and by the Himalayas in the north, is geographically inaccessible being vulnerable only from the north-west direction. All foreign invasions, therefore, including the first Aryans invasion, necessarily out of sheer geographic compulsion, came through the north-west

direction. The ancient invaders the Greeks, the Sakas (Scythians), the Kushans, the Huns, on their way to India had first to attack Iran. Many times these invaders had Persian soldiers with them. North-west India in this manner had been almost constantly in touch with the Persians. Hence right from the very ancient times India, like Persia, came to have many foreign elements in its culture. "India and Iran (Persia) have had very close relations for the last 3,000 years of their history (ignoring prehistory). Both had a reciprocal flow of scientific and cultural exchanges. Persia was strategically placed in such a way that all caravans starting from Central Asia or India to the Mediterranean had to pass through the Iranian high plateau."³

It is believed that sometimes during 1500-1000 B.C. a branch of Aryans had migrated from Central Asia to Persia via the areas of Afghanistan and settled there at Gilan, which is situated at north-west of Persia. These Aryans gradually spread in the present fertile areas of Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz, the central and western parts of Persia. Afterwards, they flourished well there and occupied more Persian Land, until the establishment of Median Empire probably in 715 B.C. by Deioces.⁴ Media was the most ancient empire of north-western Persia, with its capital city at Ecbatana (modern Hamadan), generally corresponding to the modern regions of Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and the parts of Kermanshah. The cultural contacts, between Persia and India date from still earlier times even before the Vedic period (1500 B.C. to 500 B.C.) in India. Indo-Aryans and Indo-Iranians were the two branches of the common Indo-European stock. They, therefore, had similar culture and similar way of life. There is a great similarity in their religious beliefs and customs. They were jointly offering sacrifices to the nature gods like the *Asura* or the *Ahura*. They were participating in the *Soma* or *Haoma* drinking ritual and were worshipping their ancestors, the *Pitaras* or *Pitras* (fathers in Hinduism or in *Vedas* were the sacred scriptures of ancient India which were considered immortal like the gods) or the *Fravashi* (in ancient Persians called to the spirits of dead ancestors who have been properly buried with proper rites).⁵ Even before the Vedic age the pre-Aryan peoples in North-West India and Persia had same matriarchal culture. Both the peoples were

worshipping mother goddess and snake gods. The great purification ceremony by means of cow's urine called *Gomez*, practiced by the Persians can be compared with the similar observance of the Hindus.⁶ The Persian influence on Indian religious life has been subtle and penetrating.

The undivided Indo-Iranians passed a long time in their common home and developed a specific Indo-Iranian or Indo-Persian culture. However, in that society there were two groups of people worshippers of *Davia*-gods and worshippers of *Asura*-gods. The followers of *Davia* religion were believer in vigorous activity and wandering life, while the followers of *Asura* religion were practicing agriculture and cattle breeding. The antagonism between these two groups gradually increased and resulted into the 'Great Split' after which people, who settled in India, developed the Vedic culture and people residing in Iran, followed the *Asura* religion, accepting the reforms introduced by Zoroaster, the founder of *Zoroastrianism*, or *Parsee-ism*, as it is known in India. This, by no means, reflects the complete absence of *Davia* worshippers in Iran or of *Asura* worshippers in India.⁷ The sun was also a powerful symbol in ancient Persian *Zoroastrianism* and its view of a polarized light and dark universe; solar images were readily identified with kingship and were affixed to Sassanian emblems of sovereignty such as crowns, scepters and royal daises. In the Islamic context, this metaphor of light and kingship was modified slightly so as to identify the sun with God, or *Allah*. Thus, later on by the sixteenth century A.D. dynasties like the Mughals and the Safawids had formed a political ideology which was essentially an amalgamation between the Islamized Sassanian metaphor of sun and kingship and the *Ithna Ashariyah* (Twelver) theory of divine designation.⁸

The *Rigveda* of the Indians and the *Avesta* of the Persians are the two earliest sources that throw interesting light on the cultural history of these two peoples. The language of *Rigveda* and *Avesta* are regarded as twins that originated from Indo-European languages. The earliest Sanskrit agreed completely with the earliest *Avestan*.⁹ The later Indian literature also has preserved the record of this contact of the Indians and the Persians. The court and the administration of the Mauryas, the coins of the Kushans and the Guptas

show traces of Persian influence. It is from such literary, numismatic and archaeological sources that some estimate can be made of the value and depth of the cultural contacts between these two peoples. The game of chess, originated in India was introduced in Persia under the name *Satranj* or *Shatranj*, corrupt form of its Sanskrit name *Caturanga*, the four limbed army.¹⁰ “In this manner, though the two peoples, Indians and Iranians, were separated due to the Great Split there are signs in history that speaks about their common origin and the intimate affinity between them. The close blood relation of these two peoples is reflected in all fields of life, like language, literature, religion, politics and arts.”¹¹

Achaemenids

During the prehistoric times, contacts between Persia and the territories which now called Pakistan go back to nearly 5000 years B.C. having great affinities in the cultural material discovered from various archaeological sites of Iran and Pakistan.¹² During the period 2800 B.C. these contacts became all the more intensified which are very well attested by the common ceramic traditions especially in the form of perforated and painted pottery of Iran and Balochistan.¹³ The relationship between Indo-Pakistan and Persia do not begin in the early historic period only, or when the parts of present day Pakistan were included in the Old Persian Empire. In fact, the links between the two countries are deeply rooted in antiquity. Attention to this fact was drawn first by the discovery at Harappa and Moenjodaro and the other sites of the well-known Indus or Harappan civilization (2350-1750 B.C.) where the archaeological findings show parallels with those from Persian influences. Geography and political events form two of the basic elements in this relationship, but it is essentially composed of cultural affinity and the interplay of cultural forces accentuated after the advent of Islam, by a common religion, a common language and a common sense of purpose. Persia, the land of cultures and civilizations, enjoyed cordial relations with the neighboring countries, which influenced the indigenous cultures of these

neighboring countries. Both Central Asia and Persia, combined with local tradition, are the ingredients which make up the genesis of Indian civilization.¹⁴ During her long history, extending over 2,500 years, Persia has always been preserved her frontiers more or less unchanged, and she even emerged after the World Wars without loss of territory or status.¹⁵

Of all the lands of the Middle East, Iran is perhaps both the most conservative and at the same time the most innovative. Iran seems to have preserved much more of its ancient heritage. The Persians still never forget the glories of their ancient imperial rule of the Achaemenian Empire. The ancient empire of Persia was established in sixth century B.C. by Cyrus of Achaemenids (558-331 B.C.) who united Media with Persia, and gave glory to Persia during her ancient history.¹⁶ Contacts between India and Persia were very intimate in this early historical period when some of the northwestern regions of the Sub-continent; Sindh and Gandhara, formed part of the Achaemenian Empire. In sixth century B.C. Gandhara was listed as a *satrapy* (province) of the Achaemenian Empire. Ancient Gandhara (the modern Peshawar Valley), also enjoyed good relations with ancient Persians.¹⁷ Achaemenid Persia was so deeply rooted in the north-western soil of Pakistan that in Gandhara art there are so many innumerable examples of architectural and sculptural elements which are obviously traceable to Persian origin. Silver coinage was struck on the Persian standard. The punch marked coins struck at a later date in the main cities of Gandhara bear testimony to Persian influence and was belonged to fifth century B.C. In Persia, their labors were devoted to work in all materials which could enhance the magnificence of their lavish art patrons.¹⁸

Regarding the religious influences from Persia, it may be noted that “the people of Taxila (Capital City of Gandhara), used to expose their dead to vultures, which was a distinctive feature of the *Magian* (a priestly caste in Zoroastrianism) way of life. This practice was one that had been introduced by the Persian settlers in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.”¹⁹ as it is practiced by the modern Parsees. It is, therefore, reasonable to infer that originally this *Magian* custom of disposing of their dead must have been introduced at Taxila by

the Achaemenians. The Persians hold Gandhara continued up to 330 B.C. when Darius-III, the last Achaemenid king, asked for a supply of troops to resist Alexander's invasion. Therefore, Alexander's invasion of the Indian Sub-continent was not only to quench his thirst, but also to punish the people of Gandhara for helping the Persians in the war against Greeks. Due to their great love and admiration for each other, the people of Persia and Gandhara remained in active contact throughout in this historical era.²⁰ The only permanent result of Alexander's campaign besides the overthrow of the Achaemenid dynasty, that it opened up of communication linkage between Greece and Indian Sub-continent, but also paved the way for a greater and more fruitful intercourse between Iran and Pakistan.

The Persian and particularly Achaemenian influence is evidently seen upon the Mauryan Court. Moreover, during the Mauryan period India was constantly in touch with ancient Persia under the Achaemenids, than with any other empire,²¹ as Indian troops were serving the Persian kings, similarly, the Persian troops also were serving the Indian kings, particularly the Mauryans. It is said that Chandragupta won the throne with the help of Persian army.²² The magnificence of the Mauryan Court can be described as replica to a certain extent of the Achaemenian Court. It is also pointed out that certain practices followed by the Mauryan monarchs and administrators are similar to those of the Persians. The custom of solemnly washing the hair of the king on his birthday and making presents seems to be derived from Persia. Another custom mentioned as being derived from Persia is the punishment of half shaving a man's head for crime as sign of disgrace.²³

Ashoka, the greatest of Indian rulers, is seen so much influenced by the Persians in his dominant feature of the Persian architecture. Asoka was highly indebted to Achaemenian monarch Darius, due to the idea of recording royal orders and directions on such permanent materials as rocks, seems to have been inspired by Achaemenian practice. It was from Persia that the craftsmen of Asoka learnt how to give so lustrous polish to the stones; a technique of which abundant examples survive at Persipolis (capital of Achaemenian dynasty) and

elsewhere in Persia. Persian influence is visible in nearly every aspect of Mauryan art and architecture.²⁴ *Ajanta Caves* are one of the World Wonders, situated on the western coast of India just 65-miles away from Aurangabad, and is celebrated for its wall paintings. These paintings depict colorful Buddhist legends and divinities with ancient Persian exuberance and vitality that is unsurpassed in Indian art. These caves are the symbol of the close contacts between Indians and Persians, as Chapekar says "it is possible that Persian artists were employed at the Indian court. The caves in the western coast bear the sign of close contacts with the Persians."²⁵ As far as Indian art is concerned, whether its designs were conceived by the Persians or they only executed the designs conceived by the Indian mind, the fact is incontrovertible that the Persian artists contributed a good deal to the development of Indian art.

There were so many other certain elements in Mauryan dynasty like, road-construction, currency, where the Persian influence is undeniable. Indians must have learnt from Persians, the art of minting coins by stamping a mould on the molten metal, and its lion mark displayed traces of Achaemenian influence as the coins of Darius Hystaspes, were depicted with him hunting a lion.²⁶ Gandhara art, flourished more under the leadership of great Kushans during the late of the first century to third century A.D. The two branches of the Indo-Iranian stock were separated after the Great Split. In the Vedic Times the actual contacts between these two peoples cannot be proved. But in the later period, however, the two communities continued to have deep social and cultural contacts with each other. The political contacts began in the sixth century B.C. with the conquest of Punjab and Sindh by the great Darius in 512 B.C. Indeed, from this year began the long and uninterrupted association between India and Persia.

There is no doubt that Cyrus conquered the borderland between Persia and present Pakistan, and thus gained a position which brought him tribute from the king of this area. Elam in southern Persia extended from Mesopotamia into Balochistan before its annexation into the Achaemenian Empire during the reign (538-30 B.C.) of Cyrus. It is said that the some fractions of northern Punjab was a part of Darius's dominion during 522-486 B.C. According to Herodotus, "West

Pakistan was counted as the twentieth *satrapy* of the Empire of Darius, to which it contributed one-third of its total revenue, 360 talents of gold dust, equivalent to over a million Pounds Sterling.²⁷ The Persian influence left a far-reaching impression upon the people of West Pakistan during the rule of the Achaemenid dynasty. The archaeological excavations of Bhir Mound, Taxila, clearly indicate that the city owes its foundation to the Persian conqueror.²⁸ A new cultural pattern is usually associated with the grey-ware pottery tradition and related materials found in northern Iran and in Dir, located on the western border of Pakistan. The great civilization of Susa in Iran and of the Indus Valley in Pakistan gave way to this new cultural movement in which both countries shared equally. The administrative system of the Achaemenians was so deep-rooted in the soil of West Pakistan that the *satrapal* system was preserved even after the Persian Empire passed into the hands of the Salucids.

Another important legacy that the Achaemenians bequeathed to West Pakistan was its script. The Achaemenians had adopted *Aramaic* speech and writing as a medium for official communication throughout their empire, and it was also used for writing Old Persian.²⁹ The same Aramaic alphabet was employed in Taxila and other regions of Gandhara. Ashokan inscriptions in Kabul and Qandahar also have been found in the Aramaic characters.³⁰ In those times, Seistan was also a critical station on the route from Kerman, in south-eastern Persia. Moreover, the place has always an air of mystery about it, and it shows legendary and historical accounts of Persia. Zoroaster, founder of Persia's great faith, found refuge in Seistan in the sixth century B.C. with Vishtaspa, father of king Darius the great. In many ways Seistan was the last great centre of strictly Persian tradition on the road to India. Besides, Rostam, the great folk hero of the *Shahnama*, is said to have been born there.³¹

India has a special relation with Persia, these contacts were mainly in the meadow of literature, religions and arts and the contact between these two peoples, have been fairly continuous and unbroken. Persia, in view of her geographical and ethnological reasons, has had her full share in these fields.³² These relations were generally of a peaceful nature and an invasion in force by

either side during this period never occurred.³³ Trade relations between the Persia and India existed before recorded history.³⁴ “In ancient times, Persia and Afghanistan were the main sources of gold.”³⁵ Alexander’s victorious campaign (327-25 B.C.) of India opened the gates to a whole epoch of cultural exchange. Consequently, after a long conflict, Greek and Persian cultures co-existed on the same terrain; and with India as the third side, a fascinating cultural triangle was created. Shortly after Alexander’s retreat from the Indus Valley, Chandra Gupta Maurya rapidly extended the boundary of his North Indian Empire westward to include Arachosia (Afghanistan) and Gedrosia (Balochistan) which geographically belong to the Persian highland, thus making the frontier of Persia contiguous to the north-western region of Pakistan. Through this bordering, it was natural that the influence of Persia in cultural field of the Mauryan dominion flowed more freely.³⁶ With the destruction of Achaemenian capital Persepolis by Alexander, the scattered artists and craftsmen sought refuge at the Mauryan capital Patliputra, where they established a new school of art with strong Persian affiliation. The bell-capital introduced in the Mauryan Empire is of Persepolitan type. This type of Persepolitan bell-capitals survived for a long time in the Sub-continent and gradually assumed a purely local form. “From Megasthenes account it is clear that the Mauryan Emperors at Patliputra, imitating the Persian monarch, lived in pomp and magnificence of the Achaemenid Court, zealously guarded by his armed retainers, mostly secluded from the public.”³⁷ It seems likely that his adaptation of the Persian customs and splendor, like Alexander and the Syrian Seleucids, was lingered on as the greatest and most imposing empire known to the world at that time. Even the net-work of royal roads built by the Mauryas throughout their empire find parallel in Achaemenid Persia.³⁸

Sassanids

After the collapse of Achaemenid dynasty, Persia was governed by the Selucid and the Parthian dynasties respectively. Under the leadership of Ardashir-I the Sassanians overthrew the Parthians and created an empire that

was constantly changing in size as it reacted to Rome and Byzantium to the west and to the Kushans to the east. The Sassanides (242-642 A.D.) of Persia were very powerful kings, and were definitely the true heirs of the Achaemenids, who extended their dominions by annexing contiguous portions of the neighboring countries.³⁹ After the Mauryas, the Sunga dynasty (185-73 B.C.) came to power in India. It has been suggested that Pusyamitra Sunga, the founder of the Sunga dynasty may have been a Persian, a worshipper of the Mithra. The Sungas were followed by the Kushans, who had good political relations with the Sassanids. The Sassanian king Hormezd-II (301-10 A.D.) said to have married a daughter of a Kushan king. This dynasty was replaced with the great Guptas. In fact, the zenith of early Pak-Iranian cultural contact was reached in the Sassanian period, especially in early fourth century A.D. when their contemporary in India was Guptas.⁴⁰ The Indus valley was subdued by them, as the objects in bulk have recovered from the excavations at Banbhore. The Sassanian influences extended even to Rajputana and Gujrat. In Rajput paintings it is easy to trace the geometric composition and sweeping lines, the flatness and simple color which are characteristics of the Persian tradition. At that time, the coins which were circulation in Sindh and Gujrat, actually, were the copies of Sassanian coins.⁴¹ Other objects of recognizable Persian character consist of pottery, both glazed and unglazed. The supremacy of the Sassanians was finally destroyed, together with most of their monuments, by the nomadic hordes of the White Huns from the south of Tarfan in eastern Turkestan, who swept over Gandhara in the third quarter of fifth century A.D. carrying ruin and devastation wherever they went, and from this disaster Gandhara never quite recovered.⁴² Under the rule of Khusrow Anushirwan (531-579 A.D.), Persian commerce reached its greatest activity; he made an invasion of the Indus Valley. It is also on record that King Khusrow Anushirwan sent a Persian physician to India named Barzoi, to acquire proficiency in herbal medicine.⁴³

There were also commercial relations between the two countries during those times. There were two routes of communications, the land route via Balochistan reaching the northern part of India like Punjab and Sindh, and the

sea-route via Persian Gulf reaching the western part; Gujrat, Kathiawar and Maharashtra. Persian influence is, therefore, more visible in the northern and western parts of India rather than other parts of the country. The intercourse was chiefly by land route, the one used by all ancient invaders to India. The political activity in India was primarily determined by the advent of the Central Asian people who were coming through this route via Persia. Before reaching Indian Sub-continent, "the invaders first assimilated the Persian culture and civilization so much that the successive immigration of the Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas has been described as waves of Persian influence."⁴⁴

In Sindh, Daibal with its famous port city Bhambore, from thence, the findings of cultural materials, particularly the pottery and coins, bear evidence of close commercial and cultural contacts with Persia. Sassanian influence may also be observed in the collection of coins unearthed from the Bhambore site, containing on the reverse a crude representation of the Persian Fire Temple.⁴⁵ As far as Persian language is concerned Persian was basically a dialect of Fars, and rose to an imperial language by the Sassanians. It absorbed many Median, Parthian, and other words, and it was an official spoken language of the Sassanian Empire when the Arab conquest began.⁴⁶

(B) Persians' impact on Indian Sub-continent from the advent of Islam up to the establishment of Mughal Empire in 1526 A.D.

Advent of Islam

The advent of Islam introduced fundamental changes in the political, economic and religious life of Persia and Indian Sub-continent. The new Islamic spirit of egalitarianism swept over the souls of men and presented a challenge to all established institutions, including the monarchy, the priesthood and the social system. The Mosques belongs directly to the people, unlike the Fire Temples, which, during the Achaemenian and Sassanian times, were under the direct control of kings. Education became the right of everyone, instead of being a class privilege. Islam broke the bonds of race and geography and sought to create a

society in which every human being could realize his potentialities to the full. Islam proved as a decisive factor in the Persian consciousness, and expressed itself there in a new tradition. The cultural link between India and Persia had been renewed with the advent of Islam. "During the early period of Muslim conquest, the Turks and Afghans were the muscle; whereas the Persians supplied the brain of the Muslim ruling aristocracy of India."⁴⁷

Arabs

In Northern India Muslims began their encroachment during the Caliphate of Hazrat Umar (R.A.T.A.) by making their earliest attempts on the ports of the northern coast, and when Persia and Mekran had been annexed to the empire they invaded Sindh.⁴⁸ The arrival of Islam in the Sub-continent, which in fact preceded the conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D. by Muhammad Bin Qasim, who was one of the youngest and most amazing general of history. It was the beginning of a new era in history, which later laid the foundation of the emergence of Pakistan and India as two separate States. The common bond of faith between Muslims in the Sub-continent and in Persia also contributed greatly to a continuing interplay of mutual cultural influences. It may also be recalled that Muhammad Bin Qasim came to Sindh from Shiraz, where he had his headquarters, and that his army contained a number of Persian soldiers. The Arab rule in Sindh continued till the eleventh century A.D. when Mehmud of Ghazna conquered it.

The political or territorial expansion of Islam went apace and the standards of Islam, bearing the emblem of crescent, were carried far and wide by the Muslims under the ennobling influence of their religion. With the conquest of Persia and the transfer of its sovereignty to Baghdad, Persian ideas and ideals began to flow fast into the rank and the file of the followers of Islam, changing their spiritual outlook into one material. Coming into close contact with the Persians, Arabs took an extraordinary fancy to the ideas of the former. Commenting on this augment situation S.M Jaffar writes, "The conquerors were literally conquered by the culture of the conquered people."⁴⁹ They took such a

fancy to the culture of the Persians that their eager fascination for it they did not even pause to pick and choose from Persian ideas but assimilated them wholesale in almost every department of administration and in every nook of their social life. Politically, they adopted the principles of Persian government; the division and organization of the various departments of state, including their names, the personality of the Persian king, his seraglio, his slaves, his servants; state ceremonials and all other symbols of sovereignty, including his dress; the rules of military organization and equipment, the tactics of war and even the titles and designations of the rank and file in fact every minute detail of administration. Socially, they imbibed the idea of the Persians about social pleasure and pastimes and borrowed from them Chase, Chess and *Chaugan* (Polo), drinking, music and songs and even the spring festival of *Nauroz*, which is also spelled as Noruz, or Noroz (nine-days), a New Year festival which usually begins on March 21, and is associated with Zoroastrianism and Parsee-ism. The festival is still celebrated in many other countries, including Iran, Iraq, India, and Afghanistan. Culturally, they made Persian their court language and took over almost all Persian ideas, including *Ta'bir* (the science of interpreting dreams).⁵⁰

Parsees (Zoroastrians) in India

The *Parsees* also spelled *Parsis*, whose name means 'Persians,' member of a group of the followers of Zoroastrianism in India. The Persian prophet Zoroaster or Zarathustra, who was born during sixth century B.C. advocated monotheism and urged his followers to worship Ahura Mazda the omnipotent god.⁵¹ In the seventh century A.D. by primitive Muslim Arab invaders, Persian Parsees were badly inflicted. In this crisis of their history, Parsees tried their best to preserve their religious identity by improvising new institutions and specializing in new activities.⁵² Afterwards, they had to migrate to India to avoid religious persecution by the native Persian Muslims. The exact date of the migration of Parsees is unknown. Parsees initially settled at Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, but finding themselves still persecuted they set sail for India. The migration in fact

has taken place perhaps as late as in the tenth century A.D. The earliest refugees arrived in the area of Div or Diew, a small island lying to the south-west of the peninsula of Kathiawar, Afterwards, they gradually found asylum chiefly in Gujarat, Bombay, and in a few towns and villages mostly to the north of Bombay, but also at Karachi (Pakistan) and Bangalore (Karnataka, India).⁵³ Although they are not, strictly speaking, a caste, since they are not Hindus, they form a well-defined community. During their stay in India, the Parsees acquired knowledge of the language, religion, manners and customs of the Hindus. But they remained adhered to their ancient Zoroastrian faith. They were not idolater, “but worshiped one God, the Creator of the World, under the symbol of Fire, and such is also the present practice among their descendants in India.”⁵⁴

Their connection with their co-religionists in Persia seems to have been almost totally broken until the end of the fifteenth century A.D. when re-established in 1477 A.D. The connection was kept up chiefly in the form of an exchange of letters until 1768 A.D. They also adapted themselves to their Indian culture by minimizing what was repugnant to the Hindus, namely, blood sacrifice; and they surrendered to some extent to the vogue of astrology and to theosophy. On the other hand, ever since they were attacked by Christian missionaries for their dualism, they have been emphasizing the monotheistic aspect of their doctrine. During the Mughal regime these Parsees remained in almost isolation and even not properly interacted with the Muslim community of India, but did not ever showed their diminutive infidelity towards the Mughal’s rule. Akbar as being a liberal Emperor maintained a library full of books on various subjects, and was fond of intellectual and philosophical debates on the matters of religion among Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jaini and Zoroastrian scholars. Furthermore, after his promulgation of his new religion *Din-i-Ilahi*, which was a sort of mixture of all the religions prevailing in India, he lighted perpetual sacred fire in his royal palace at Agra on the pattern of Parsees.⁵⁵ Jahangir’s religion with the sincere belief in God was not as rational as that of his father Akbar; therefore, “he did not accept the practices or rites of the Hindus, and the Zoroastrians.”⁵⁶ One of the Persian immigrants during the reign of Jahangir was Mir Abul Qasim Findarski, who is

said to have absorbed Zoroastrian influences. He traveled to India for studying asceticism, and became a recluse for seven years in Zoroastrian practices.⁵⁷

They remained for about 800 years as a small agricultural community. With the establishment of British trading posts at Surat and elsewhere in the early seventeenth century A.D. the circumstances of Parsees altered radically, for they were in some ways more receptive of European influence than the Hindus or Muslims and they developed a flair for commerce. Bombay came under the control of the East India Company in 1668 A.D. and since complete religious toleration was decreed soon afterward, the Parsees from Gujarat began to settle there. The expansion of the city in the eighteenth century A.D. owed largely to their industry and ability as merchants. An important textile industry of Bombay was built up particularly by Parsee businessmen.⁵⁸ Under British rule, the Parsees, who previously had been humble agriculturists, started to enrich themselves through commerce, then through industry. They became a most prosperous and “modern” community, centered in Bombay. Formerly they had adopted the language (Gujarati) and the dress of their Hindu milieu. Later they adopted British customs, British dress, the education of girls, and the abolition of child marriage. In their enterprises as well as in their charities they followed the example of the West. Under British rule, the Parsees found employment for their talents; no longer repressed and kept down by the ignorance of those in authority over them. They were enabled to give full scope to their powers, and a new field has opened to them, in which they were encouraged to labor, and from which they reaped both profit and honor.⁵⁹

From the nineteenth century A.D. they were able to help their less favored brethren in Iran, either through gifts or through intervention with the government. Dosabhoy Framjee in his book *The Parsees* writes; “Our race in India enjoys all the blessings of an enlightened and liberal government and our wish is that our brethren in the Persian soil may also be as happy and fortunate as ourselves.”⁶⁰ By the nineteenth century A.D. they were manifestly a wealthy community, and from about 1850 A.D. onward they had considerable success in heavy industries, particularly those connected with railways and shipbuilding.

Ghaznavids

Mehmud of Ghazna after his accession to the throne in 998 A.D., succeeded in laying the foundation of a new empire in Sindh, the Punjab and the north-west frontier of Pakistan. Although, the major aim of his expeditions were the propagation of Islamic faith and the capture of spoils of war, however, with these expeditions *Farsi* or the Persian language began to penetrate into India. In this way Persian was brought to India as the main administrative and literary language of Islam. At the court of Mehmud Ghaznavi, much early Persian talent in literary field had come to be concentrated.⁶¹ The administrative system and the court life of the Ghaznavids show the influence of Persian aristocratic and monarchic traditions. However, there is no doubt that Persian became the official language when Mahmud of Ghazna and his successors from the north-west set foot on the soil of the Sub-continent. It is remarkable that although most of these early invaders and rulers were of Turkish origin and their mother tongue was Turkish, they adopted Persian as the language of the administration, accounting, education and culture.

In the eleventh century A.D. there was a free and profuse inter-course between the different parts of Persia, Afghanistan, Trans-oxiana, Khorasan, and the Punjab, and the literary language was bound to be the same in all these places. This language, of course, was Persian.⁶² The Indian Sub-continent was opened to Persian influence with Islamic missionary activities in the early centuries of Islam. The Ghaznavids of India were among the first patrons of Persian poetry in the Sub-continent.⁶³ Since the time of Ghaznavids, Persian remained as Indian Muslim's sole language of literature and as well as of the court.⁶⁴ When Ghaznavids established in northern India, Lahore remained as an immense centre of Persian language and literature, in Indian Sub-continent,⁶⁵ and became an important centre, politically as well as socially equal to Ghazna itself. The emblems of the Ghaznavid art in the areas of Pakistan are the towers of victory built by Mehmud and Masud of Ghazna shows significant information on the development of Muslim architecture, that it was a continuation of Samanid

tradition. The highlight of the cultural influence of the Ghaznavid Empire was the emergence of Persian poetry in the Sub-continent. In fact, Ghaznavids patronized Persian language and literature and gathered in their court, great Persian poets and writers including, Firdowsi, Unsari, Asjadi, Farrukhi, Albiruni and many others of lesser caliber. Particularly, Mehmud Ghaznavi was a munificent patron of art and culture, who collected poets and scholars around himself. The most famous poet among them was Firdowsi, who wrote his great epic poem, when the Persian people were looking back to their Persian heritage, and Firdowsi galvanized Persian nationalistic sentiments by invoking pre-Islamic heroic imagery.⁶⁶ Firdowsi was the pseudonym of Abu-ul-Qasem Mansur who was born in 935 A.D. at Tus (a place in Khorasan in Persia), and was died on the same place in 1026 A.D. His famous work renowned in history as the '*Shah-Nameh of Firdowsi*', which is actually poem of collection of nearly 60,000 couplets, had fixed thereafter the standard for the Persian language more than any other single work.⁶⁷ In this period, the Turko-Persian culture of India prospered. Another person who is worth of mentioning here was Abu Rehan al-Biruni, who was a Persian scholar and one of the greatest scientists of his times. He was indeed, one of the most learned men of his age and an outstanding intellectual figure, possessing a profound and original mind of encyclopedic scope. He applied his talents in many fields of knowledge, excelling particularly in astronomy, mathematics, chronology, physics, medicine, and history. Some time after 1017 A.D. he went to India along with Mehmud Ghaznavi, and made a comprehensive study of Indian culture, and wrote '*Tarikh-al-Hind*' (A History of India), which is besides one of his other marvelous books. According to Richard Frye that "the contributions of al-Biruni and other Persians towards mathematical knowledge in the Muslim world, are of astonishing."⁶⁸

Ghorids

The Ghaznavids, however, were no longer in power, and another Muslim dynasty, the Ghorids had disgorged from the Hindu-Kush Mountains, possessed Ghazni and captured Lahore. Pressing further into the Sub-continent by their

leader Shihab-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori, they made Dehli their capital in 1192 A.D. under Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, the first Sultan (ruler) of the Slave dynasty and as well as of Muslims in Indian Sub-continent. The Ghorids and the Sultans of Dehli who succeeded them were also great patrons of Persian language. During their times; Thatta, Sehwan, Multan, Uchh, Pakpattan and Lahore were important centers of learning. A number of Persian inscriptions in many of these towns have survived the ravages of time.⁶⁹ It was their society that was enriched by the influx of Islamic scholars, historians, architects, musicians, and other specialists of high Persianate culture that fled the Mongol devastations of Trans-oxiana and Khurasan. Khurasan is also taken in a large sense of Persian eastern provinces namely; Herat, Mashhad, Qandahar, Merv and Seistan.⁷⁰ In early thirteenth century A.D. Persia gone into the hands of Mongol horde as an irruption led by Chingiz Khan⁷¹ where the Mongols found a rich civilization near about 2,000 years old. After the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 A.D. Delhi became the most important cultural center of the Muslims in east. Like Ghaznavids and Ghorids, the Sultans of Delhi modeled their life-styles after the Turkish and Persian upper classes that were predominated in most of western and central Asia. They patronized literature and music but became especially notable for their architecture; as their builders drew from the architecture elsewhere in the Muslim world to produce a profusion of Mosques, palaces, and tombs unmatched in any other Islamic country. Under the Seljuks, Persia witnessed most creative periods in the history of her art. During the reigns of later Ghaznavids and the Ghorids, the Seljuk art tradition penetrated into the Sub-continent. The earliest Mosque in existence in the Sub-continent today is the *Quwwat-ul-Islam* at Lalkot, Delhi, which is a symbol of Seljuk tradition, and was begun in 1193 A.D. by Muhammad Ghori who combined in his service all the finest spirits that Persian civilization could produce.⁷²

Sultanate of Dehli

With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, Persia and Persian culture provided the dominant inscription for Indo-Islamic civilization. The Saltanate of

Dehli soon became important cultural and political centers with Persian as their court language,⁷³ therefore, Persian rapidly spread throughout the Sub-continent. In official documents some of the Arabic letters were also substituted by purely Persian characters.⁷⁴ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries A.D. it was a time of great cultural florescence in western and southern Asia. In spite of political fragmentation and much ethnic diversity in the region from the Mediterranean to the mouth of the Ganges there was, among the elite Muslim classes, a great deal of shared culture. In this time Persia truly asserted itself as the liveliest component of the Islamic acumen. This was a brilliant period of Persian literature and art, when the Persian literature of the time was greater than the Arabic; when so many themes and ideas of art and architecture were carried from east to west.⁷⁵ In the time of Ilutmish, whose capital was the cosmopolitan Muslim city of Delhi, there were separate *mohallas* (community centers) assigned to the emigrants from every Islamic county. The Persian culture showed a greater vitality than Arab or any other culture. An analysis of the literary and cultural contributions of Islam to medieval India on a racial basis would easily prove the Persian predominance throughout. This was due to the influx of the Persian middle class and intelligentsia to Indian Sub-continent since the beginning of the Muslim conquest. The majority of the Persians were Ithna Asharis, therefore, they had an advantage in India as the Muslims were fewer and the Ithna Ashari-Sunni bitterness was less keen in their new home.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the regional Muslim kings that succeeded the Dehli Sultans in the fifteenth century A.D. continued to patronize culture. They fostered the production of fine books and illustrations in the Persian style, and assembled large collections of books from many other parts of the Turko-Persian world, on Islamic, scientific and philosophical subjects, written in Arabic as well as in Persian. Robert L. Canfield as mentioning this scenario says: "As the predominant influences on Turko-Persian Islamic culture (in India), their administrative cadres and their literati were Persian; cultural affairs were thus marked by characteristic pattern of language use: Persian was the language of

state affairs and literature; Persian and Arabic the languages of scholarship; Arabic the language of adjudication; and Turkish the language of the military.”⁷⁷

A large number of Persian architectural features are perceptible in Indian architecture since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the twelfth century A.D. The Muslims after establishing their power permanently in India were having no need to be tutored by their new subjects in the art of building; they themselves were already possessed of a highly developed architecture of their own as varied and magnificent as the contemporary architecture of Europe. The Muslims who conquered India were of Turkish and Persian blood, endowed with a remarkably good taste and a natural talent for building. The most magnificent monument of the early period of Saltanat-e-Delhi is the *Quwwat-ul-Islam* Mosque, at Delhi, its foundation was laid by Muhammad Ghori but was completed in 1197 A.D. by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, to commemorate the capture of that place, he also erected a huge tower of victory there, the world famous *Qutub Minar*. Sultan Shamsuddun Iltutmish added a facade to the Mosque, beside the completion of the construction work of Qutub Minar in the Persian Seljuqid tradition. Under the Khiljis (1282-1320 A.D.) the architectural Seljuq traditions gained a firm hold. The *Alai Darwaza*, a gateway built by Alla-ud-Din Khilji is a monumental example of the Seljuk influence. The other most important pieces of Persian influenced architecture are the Mausoleums of Sultan Bahauddin Zakaria (1262 A.D.) Shams-ud-Din Tabrizi (1267 A.D.) built by Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban and the Tomb of Rukn-i-Alam Multani built by Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughluq (1320-24 A.D.) are the unique examples.⁷⁸ Sindh and Multan were the first to fall into the hands of the Muslims. Of the many monuments, particularly Mosques, built there during the Arab rule. The Muslim artisans brought art in India from Persia, for instance; the art of glazed tiles originated in Persia, mainly at Kashan, in thirteenth and fourteenth century A.D. and these blue tiles from that place copied and used for the construction of earliest Mosques in India.⁷⁹ In Multan, the oldest monuments are the tomb of Shah Yousuf Gardezi built in 1152 A.D. the resting-place of Baha-ul-Haque, built in 1262 A.D. the tomb of Shah Shams Tabrez, and the

shrines of Shadna Shahid and Rukn-i-Alam. They all show a great affinity to the artistic creations of Ghaznin and are mainly Persian in form and character.⁸⁰

The Bahmanid kingdom in Hyderabad Daccan (1347-1518 A.D.) have had strong relations with the Persians, therefore, they had a fine taste for architecture. The most noteworthy of the existing monuments at Gulbarga (the capital of Bahmanid kingdom), are *Chand Minar* at Daulatabad and the *Madrasa* of Mahmud Gawan at Bidar may be reckoned among the remaining edifices of importance. *Haft Gumbad* (seven domes), in Gulbarga, containing the tombs of Mujahid Shah, Daud Shah, Prince Sanjar, Ghiyas-ud-Din and his family and Feroz Shah and his family, is worth of mentioning. The style of architecture of these monuments is mostly Persian.⁸¹

Firoz Shah Tughluq, an indefatigable builder, to erect a number of cities, forts, palaces, Mosques, *Madarsas* (Islamic Educational Institutions), tombs, embankments in Persian style, along with other works of public welfare. The oblong shaped *Chhota Sone Ki Masjid* (small golden Mosque) and the *Bari Sone Ki Masjid* (grand golden Mosque) at Gaur in east Pakistan now in Bengal, built during the reign of Alla-ud-Din Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.) an independent ruler there, is a unique example of Mosque architecture in that area, which also shows a blending of Persian influence with indigenous elements.⁸²

Indo-Persian literature was dominated by the fascinating personality of the mystic poet, Amir Khusrow (1253-1325 A.D.) who was a profile writer both in Persian and Hindi.⁸³ The activities of Amir Khusrow, who is rightly called *Totee-i-Hind* (parrot of India), and is placed greatest among all ancient and modern poets. According to Barni, he was not only confined to literary sphere; he was a humorist, singer and dancer of a high order. He had mastery in instrumental music as well, he introduced *Sitar* (a musical instrument like Guitar) more correctly *Seh-tar* or three wires. He is also reputed to invent the *Qawwali* a unique mode of singing which was a judicious mixture of Indo-Persian models, which later gained a great popularity among the Indian Muslims.⁸⁴

During the age of Salatin-i-Delhi, the tone and standard of Persian language were first set in India by the *Tabkhat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj Abu Umar

Usman Bin Siraj and *Taj-ul-Massir* of Sadr-ud-Din Muhammad bin Hassan Nizami. Zia-ud-Din Barani preferred to follow the ancient Persian traditions of writing dynastic history with his famous *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*.⁸⁵ Later on, the educational system of Sub-continent also established its foundation with Persian language and literature including the implementation of *Dars-i-Nizami*, a classical syllabus based rather more in Persian than Arabic. The *Gulistan* and *Bostan* of Sa'adi, the *Mathnavi* of Rumi, the *Shahnama* of Firdausi and the *Diwan* of Hafiz, to mention only the most prominent and popular of the Persian classes, were the pillars on which rested the magnificent mansion of Muslim education and culture in the Sub-continent.⁸⁶ The Indo-Persian literature of medieval India abounds in *mathnavis* (masnavis), *diwans*, *kulliyat*, biographies, local and general histories, commentaries of the Holy Quran, and in works on philosophy, metaphysics, theology, Sufism, lexicography, medicine, logic and ornate prose.⁸⁷ The coins of early Sultans of Delhi, besides having the general pattern of coinage of the Muslim world, started using legends in Persian. Muhammad Bin Tughluq (1325-51 A.D.) who is famous in history of numismatics for his 'forced currency' was perhaps the first who used Persian folklore extensively on his coins to induce the people to accept the billon coins for gold value. In the same regime, Shahpur, who belonged to Khurasan was an eminent painter, who painted a lot of miniatures in Persian style, one of his model painting is still displayed in Calcutta Art Gallery.⁸⁸

At the other hand, after the disastrous invasion of Mongols, in the 1200 A.D., migrated Turks and Mongolian tribes adopted the Persian customs and even language. In the 1300 A.D. the Ilkhanids, a dynasty founded by the Chingiz Khan's grandson Holagu Khan, had been an influential factor in Persia. During these turbulent years of thirteenth century A.D. the Persians had submerged themselves deeper in Islamic devotion and Sufism. Persian, which was not the native tongue either of the Turks or of the Mongols but only an acquired language had in the course of time, become so very popular among the Turkish and the Mongols races, during their stay in Central Asia, that it was freely used by the Princes of the house of Timur even in presence of their own native tongue,

the Turki dialect. The period of Timur has been one of the most glorious epochs in history for the growth of Persian literature and the nursing of the best poetry.⁸⁹ Timurids were highly educated and patrons of learning and literature. However, after the conquest of Central Asia, when the Timurids came in close contact with Persian, they were much impressed by its beauty and richness. It seems that they liked Persian more and a time came when it replaced their own language which was Turkish.⁹⁰ The legacy of Timur provides an example of how solidly established the Persian type of Islamic civilization was in Asia by the fourteenth century A.D. although himself of Turko-Mangol stock. Like other most great military figures of Muslim Asia, he founded a dynasty which has become synonymous with Persian painting, science, and architecture. In the court of Sultan Hussain Baiqra, the last great Timurid ruler, painter Behzad and Shah Muzaffar, poet Jami, historians Mirkhwand and Khwandamir, were of prime importance.⁹¹ The schools of miniature painting at Shiraz, Tabriz, and Herat flourished under the Timurids. Among the artists gathered at Herat was the most famous Behzad, whose dramatic, intense style was unequaled in Persian manuscript illustration. As in other field of learning, in Persia, the art of carpet making and book binding reached its zenith during the Timurid period in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. and its surviving specimens are among the finest ever produced. The Timurid workshops practiced leatherwork, wood and jade carving. In metalwork, however, Timurid artistry never equaled that of earlier Iraqi schools. In this regime, Persia has also played an important role in the development of the art of Muslim calligraphy. Timur's period has also been one of the most glorious epochs in history for the growth of Persian literature and the nursing of the best poetry.⁹²

During the Lodhi dynasty (1451-1526 A.D.), the reign of Sikandar Lodhi is most important as being the chief period in which Hindi and Persian grew in intimate relationship with each other, so that their reciprocal influence led also to a distinction between the "Persian's Persian" and the "Indian's Persian." Sikandar Lodhi, on his accession to the throne in 1489 A.D. attempted to install those of his subjects who possessed the classical knowledge of Persian, in the

responsible offices of the government. The consequence was that the Hindus and such of the native Muslims as whose mother-tongue was Hindi, began to introduce into their language words from Persian and Arabic. This was a turning point in the history of Persian literature in India.⁹³

Of all these Persian influences, the most important and significant influence on the Sultanate of Delhi was the 'Theory of Divine Right', the most distinctive feature of Persian monarchy. The approach of Divine Right of Kings contended how kings might come to power through a variety of means but a monarch's authority was still derived from God alone. This may be referred to the Muslim rule in India as the Muslim monarchs adopted the title of '*Zill-i-illahi*' (shadow of God), or the incarnation of God upon earth. In the late of thirteenth century A.D. Ghyas-ud-Din Balban, the ruler of Slave dynasty in India, adopted a theory of kingship which was based on the same principle of divine right theory. India, an ancient country like Persia, offered a most favorable field for the cultivation of such ideas. Here the submissiveness of the people and the ancient traditions of the country furnished a most congenial atmosphere for the establishment of absolute monarchy. The Muslim Kings had before him the precedents of Persian monarchs and the examples of Indian *rajās* (feudal), to whom divine honors were paid accordingly by their subjects. The prerogatives they enjoyed included the royal titles, the *khutba* (public sermon), the *sikka* (coin) and certain other symbols of sovereignty to distinguish them from the rest of the people. The over acts of sovereignty, which proclaimed their accession to the throne, was the recitation of the *khutba*, the striking of coins in their names and the issuance of *farmans* (royal orders), under their own seals or signets. Among other symbols of sovereignty may be mentioned the *taj* (crown), *takht* (throne), *darbar* (court), *naubat* (royal band), *alams* (standards), bearing the emblems of 'fish and crescent' which no one could use unless specially permitted by the kings. In fact, the Muslim Indian monarchs and statesmen had largely adopted the pre-Islamic Sassanian model of kingship.⁹⁴ These Achaemenian and Sassanian ideas of Kingship of ancient Persia, through the Arab conquest reached Baghdad, and from thence traveled into Ghaznin, as also into Europe

and the other parts of the world, and finally made their way into India with the march of Muslim conquerors, where these traditions flourished well. Therefore, S.M Jaffar says; “the Sultans of Dehli formulated their own laws, which was (were) based purely on Persian traditions and Indian usages, which were different from and even opposed to those of Islam but conducive to the State.”⁹⁵

Thus, the interplay of the Persians’ role in Indian Sub-continent during the ancient and medieval times was particularly noticeable in the form of visually significant cultural objects such as miniatures, manuscripts, calligraphy, coinage, book binding, carpets, jewelry and pottery, etc.⁹⁶ India has a special relation with Persians, because the two peoples are members of the same stock, the ‘Indo-European family.’ The Persians came to India, stayed here and served the country in different ways. The literary and inscriptional evidence shows that the Persians in the ancient and medieval times were soldiers in the army of the Indian kings. They were donors of religious gifts and theologies, and richly contributed to both the ancient and medieval Indian life in various fields like religion, politics and arts. They became a part of Indian society and later on merged in that society, and finally turned into Indianised.⁹⁷

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