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Contents

From Editor-in-Chief's Desk.....	5
<i>Shoja Ahmadvand</i>	
Persian Language and the Decline of Indo-Persian Knowledge Tradition: Significance, Perception & Revisit	9
<i>Akhlaque Ahmad 'Ahan'</i>	
Post-1979 Iranian Cinema and Post-1947 Indian Cinema: Responses to Changing Times.....	32
<i>Zulfikar Ali Ansari</i>	
Presence of Persian Merchants in Gujarat: Some Inscriptional Evidences .	60
<i>Abha Singh</i>	
Tangible Intersections of India & Iran: The Meherjirana Library	87
<i>Shernaz Cama</i>	
Re-birth of Cultural Values in International Relations; Islam and the Asian Perspective	100
<i>Karim Douglas Crow</i>	
A Study on the Impact of the Tourism Industry on India's Economy, with a Look at Iran-India Tourism relation.....	122
<i>Soha Norouzi</i>	



From Editor-in-Chief's Desk

The cultural relations between Iran and India date back to ancient times when there were large migrations from North-Eastern Iran to the Indus region. Among historians, they are known as “the Indo-Aryan migrations.” Since then, the relations have more or less continued, and politics, despite its hegemonic effects at various times, could not disrupt it. There are references to India in Achaemenid inscriptions, and the kingdom of Darius the Great had extended beyond the Indus civilization. The relations continued in later periods, as the Persian language moved to India during the Ghaznavid period and became the language of literature, poetry, culture, and science. In India, several great poets, including Bidel Dehlavi and Amir Khosrow Dehlavi, wrote their poems in Persian. The Indian style of poetry was born in the same language. Perhaps Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous quote can best reflect these long-standing ties. The “relations between Iran and India are an ancient story in the history of the world,” he said. “We have to rewrite this ancient story on the pages of the universe with the ink of determination and stability and the quill of the coalition,” added the former Indian prime minister.

The three essential aspects of the relations include the historical-mythical, the literary-linguistic, and the exchange of written thought in books and magazines. Mythical history is the first aspect. Myth has played an essential role in shaping the metaphysical worlds of the two nations, and subsequent developments are rooted in the same mythical context. For instance, Iranian *haoma* and Indian *soma* are among the oldest mythological elements of the two ancient civilizations. In ancient mythology, haoma (or soma) was a sacred plant, from the extract of which Iranians and Hindus made a healing and energizing syrup. In the Rigveda and the

Avesta, there are eloquent and passionate prayers about this plant. Obtaining its extract is considered to be one of the best human conducts. Haoma was used in performing religious rites and ceremonies in Iranian Mithraism, which was considered Christianity's counterpart for four centuries. After consuming haoma, practitioners entered a world of ecstasy and complete inattention to the world for hours. Several studies have reported similarities between Indian soma and Iranian haoma. In later periods, historical, religious, and commercial communications introduced the Iranian arts into India. Iranian art was rooted in mythical ideas, especially those produced in the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid, and even Islamic periods.

The second factor, namely the language, has been of great significance in the relations between the two countries since ancient times. On the one hand, language, as the main element in shaping different cultures, has a pivotal role in cultural relations. On the other hand, given the similarities between Avestan and Sanskrit, the ancient languages of Iran and India, the two nations have been closely related from the beginning.

Iranians were always interested in Indian culture. The Indian writers, poets, and thinkers' also passionately followed Persian literature. Their active participation in Iran's cultural and national events demonstrates the strength of these relations. For example, the visit made by Rabindranath Tagore (a critical literary, cultural and political figure known to the whole world following his receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913) to Iran in 1932 was the most important indication of the cultural interactions between the two nations in the contemporary era.

Since the formation of the Indo-European hypothesis in the nineteenth century, Iranian and Indian nationalists and European anthropologists and linguists have

pointed to the cultural ties between the two nations in the pre-Islamic period. It seemed that, apart from their linguistic links, a common religious history was also connecting Iran and India together. Persian poetry also had an active presence in the subcontinent. This presence dated back at least to the Mongol period. All of this reveals the deep literary and linguistic relations between the two nations, continuing up to this day.

The third side of these relations is exchanging written ideas in books and manuscripts. Among the various cultural apparatuses, the written culture and, above all, books and manuscripts have played a key role in consolidating and continuing these relations. Travelers also played a crucial role in realizing these cultural exchanges, and merchants who were constantly traveling between the two countries brought several cultural goods, particularly books. For example, Iranian travelers brought several manuscripts from India, and Indian merchants brought books and techniques to promote intellectual power. The story of the exchange of Nard (backgammon) and chess games between the Iranian and Indian courts is a historical manifestation of the same cultural and intellectual interaction.

As revealed in the exchange of the strategic games of chess and nard, the two cultures have influenced each other in various fields. For example, Islam took on an Iranian spirit in India. Iranian art, literature, mysticism, philosophy, and Sufism are also very close to the Indian intellectual tradition since both nations are of the same race, language and origin. Politics overshadowed the relations between the two countries at some points in history. Still, since politics is always a guest and the host is culture, politics could not disrupt their relations altogether.

In continuing the third aspect of the cultural interactions between the two countries, the Journal of Indo-Iran Cultural Dialogue is dedicated to studying the

scientific and cultural relations between the two countries. The journal started with the initiative of Iran Culture House, New Delhi, and in cooperation with Allameh Tabataba'i University (Iran) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (India). The main themes in this journal include comparative religious studies, literary and linguistic topics, anthropology, women's studies, cinema, art, music, architecture, philosophy, sociology, and culture. I hope the prominent scholars in these areas present their valuable research to the journal and help to strengthen the bilateral relations in the new round of activities.

Shoja Ahmadvand

Persian Language and the Decline of Indo-Persian Knowledge Tradition: Significance, Perception & Revisit

Akhlaque Ahmad ‘Ahan’¹

Abstract

The meeting of two cultures and their intellectual traditions always provides an opportunity for new churning and intellectual innovations. However, the churning sometimes is prohibited or thwarted by political power. In contemporary times such a dialogue is becoming difficult as knowledge traditions are being subjected to identity politics. This article suggests that to reclaim this tradition of dialogue, inter-faith and inter-cultural interactions and engagements, we need to go deeper into the process of the pre-colonial era. In this context, it hints at the contributions of innumerable personalities, including likes of Dara Shukoh and look carefully at our pre-colonial history’s traditions and cultural attitudes.

Keywords: Persian, India, Knowledge tradition, pre-colonial era, Culture

Introduction

In Indian culture, *Samudra* (Ocean) has been used as a metaphor for knowledge traditions. The mythological story of ‘Samudra Manthan’ to Dara Shukoh’s ‘Samudra Sangam’ indicates that this geographical region has witnessed several inter-cultural dialogues. One can count the Bauls of Bengal and enumerable Sufi traditions in this series. One needs to recall the philosophical churning of the 6th

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century BC when in Vaishali in Bihar Buddhism, Jainism, Charvakians, Naiyyayiks, and many others were engaged in intense dialogue. The meeting of two cultures and their intellectual traditions always provides an opportunity for new churning and intellectual innovations. Unfortunately, the churning sometimes is prohibited or thwarted by political power. In contemporary times such a dialogue is becoming difficult as knowledge traditions are being subjected to identity politics. This article suggests that to reclaim this tradition of dialogue, inter-faith and inter-cultural interactions and engagements, we need to go deeper into the process of the pre-colonial era. In this context, it hints at the contributions of innumerable personalities, including likes of Dara Shukoh, who was one of the leading intellectual interlocutors in the recent past. The greatest irony of our times is that the streams of knowledge, culture, and shared heritage of our civilization, which has been flowing for centuries, are being attached or, more precisely has, already been done to small identities and getting divided among them. This is the biggest challenge before us to respond. To understand this tradition, one must look carefully at our pre-colonial history's traditions and cultural attitudes.

Indian Knowledge Tradition

While looking into the Indian Knowledge Tradition, we need to look into the notion of Knowledge Tradition and what does the Indian Knowledge Tradition mean? Knowledge in any form may probably be created or produced by an individual or group of people of a particular place or region, yet it may not be restricted to a demarcated domain. It is something inherited by all, and therefore it has been part of the evolution of the whole human society at large. Thus, human society has travelled since the time of a gatherer and nomad to the era of exploring other planets in the space. It is therefore, since ancient period people

have been traveling and migrating to learn from the experiences of different people, and vice-versa. It is therefore, restricting knowledge to any region, community etc or considering it circumscribed to a restricted domain would be primarily an anti-knowledge or flawed approach, as people have always been learning through the interactions. Yet, experiences and experimentations vis a vis production of thought and ideas in the form of practices, traditions, customs, conducts or texts do have an identity background, though it may be disseminated to others after some years or centuries.

It is therefore, knowledge is created and inherited by human being as a whole. The apparent diversities are because of the lack of dissemination, interaction or mostly different environmental conditions. Historically, a huge number of events, and incidents prove the same. For instance, imprints of exchanges among Mesopotamian, Indus, and Nile valleys is now a known fact, and similarly caravans swarming through silk, roman, sea and different other routes throughout the history; one of the reasons of Alexander's military adventures said to be to see the dissemination of Aristotle, his teacher's philosophy and teachings. It means attempts were made to do so. Similarly, Zoarashtra's travel from Baku to Balkh, Buddhism's propagation to Srilanka and Bukhara, and subsequently to Central Asia, China and Far East. Import and revival of Greek, Indian and Chinese texts and knowledge by Arabs and Iranian at the *Baitul-Hikma* in Baghdad, and rejuvenation of old Babylonian, Egyptian, Iranian, Semitic traditions. Again re-interaction of West Asians with Europeans, opening of different doors of interactions, travel of West Asian-Indian-Chinese knowledge to Europe, and subsequent revival of Greek and Roman knowledge tradition, and its entry into Indian sub-continent. This reveals, neither knowledge nor people could be so-

called pure or unalloyed, or any such claim would prove being primitive like untouched aborigines.

Therefore, when we talk of the Indian Knowledge tradition, it means the knowledge in different forms produced due to various interactions, interfaces, exchanges, and inheritance within and from outside the sub-continent. There has not been any singular stream, nor the streams flowed in were singular in characteristics. Nonetheless, during the last millennium, the dominant stream introduced to and exchanged with the sub-continent traditions could be termed the Persian Knowledge Tradition, which otherwise was already a concoction of almost all the traditions mentioned above in an evolved form.

Indo-Persian shared legacy and Decline of Indian Civilization

Identity politics is the real cause and a trap which led to the civilizational decline of the Indian Sub-continent. This can be understood through a glance at the historical developments in education, language and identity politics during the last two hundred years. For instance, Persian, for many centuries before the arrival of the colonial feet in Asia, was, in fact, the link language of Asia and the most important language of literary and academic expressions from banks of the Black Sea to China and the Indian sub-continent. Being an Indo-Arian Language, it has connected with almost all the languages of different regions, even with Sematic and Turkic languages like Arabic, Uzbek, Turkish, Kurdish, etc. This helped vitally spread and communicate knowledge, poetry, philosophy, interfaith, and intercultural dialogues.

This also should be reiterated that in Asian tradition, forms of knowledge, including languages, were generally not attached with the identities. Therefore,

we see people like Amir Khusraw, Abdul Quddus Gangohi, Mulla Badauni, Dara Shukoh, etc. as the experts of Sanskrit and translating Sanskrit texts into Persian finally introduced Indian philosophical traditions globally. Similarly, we see Mahesh Thakur, Baba Lal, Chandrabhan Brahman, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, etc., as the experts of Arabic, Persian and Quranic studies. This was indeed a general trend among the educated, and attaching knowledge traditions including languages to identities was almost foreign to Asians.

With their colonial ambitions and agenda, the British were active in all these regions (especially from mid-18th – mid 20th century). Therefore, they very well realized the importance of this connection, as well as the role of the Persian language in this vibrant cultural, economic, academic, and political exchange and link. During the last two millennia, Persian had well interacted and mingled with different sub-continent languages, including Sanskrit, and incorporated their intellectual and literary traditions and transported them around the world. This can be understood even by one aspect of this interaction, i.e., translation, from *Panchatantra* (in 6th century) to *Upanishads* (17th century).

Indo-Iran relation is as old as these two civilizations. They probably have the most intimate cultural and civilizational relations compared to any other civilization. Either you take the examples of legends mentioned in *Shahnama*, to the translations of *Panchatantra* as *Kartak wa Damnak* and *Matigan e Chaturang*, to the mention of Indian fables mentioned in *Masnawi* of Mawlana Rumi, and subsequently his popularity along with other poets of Persian like Nizami, Saadi, Khayyam, Hafiz, and many more in Indian sub-continent. Alberuni's India has always been a source of information and insight for everyone, and Indian Persian poets Amir Khusraw, Bedil, and Iqbal are equally popular in the whole Persian

world. *Shahnameh* of Firdausi and *Mahabharata* of Ved Vyas are among the greatest epics of the world of literature and have many identical characters, such as Arash and Arjun. The name Arash remains a popular name among Iranians, and so Arjun among Indians.

This vivacious connection was indeed a great hurdle to the larger colonial and imperialist aspirations that aimed and pursued political and cultural ambitions. Therefore, while pursuing their colonial agenda to control politically and prevail culturally in India, they first tried to dissociate people from this link language through identity politics and attach them to regional dialects. For example, they replaced Persian with Hindustani in 1835, almost an unborn language, a conglomeration of different dialects, not having even of its own grown-up prose. For this purpose, they had earlier established Fort William College, where some of the Persian and Sanskrit texts were translated into Hindustani, which was further divided as Urdu and Hindi on the ground of scripts and then attached to two identities, i.e. Muslims and Hindus. This is obvious that these infant languages would not have been able to stand English language and literature, similarly as English could not have the strength to compete with Persian in Asia, including the Indian sub-continent. So, it was part of the politics of the British Empire that firstly to replace Persian with the infant or frail local dialects in the name of identity, besides the language of the empire i.e. English.

Obviously, since these languages could not have the strength to stand before English as a literary or academic language, English would easily become the link language, and exactly this happened during the course of the last two hundred years in the sub-continent or elsewhere, including Afghanistan and Central Asia. Later, the same policy was apparently followed by Russians in the occupied

republics of Central Asian Countries. And therefore, all those countries which suffered colonization also suffered a kind of ‘Culture-fracture’, which means they were separated from their cultural past and knowledge traditions. The Imperialist powers successfully pursued this policy by boosting regional nationalism and identity assertion, pampering through awards, etc. Probably, one of the reasons for awarding Tagore with the Noble and not awarding Iqbal may be the language, as Iqbal mostly wrote in Persian. Possibly, if he had written only in Urdu together with conformist content, he too would have got it. Though, it is needless to assert that Tagore’s creative genius certainly deserved the recognition. Besides, the Noble Committee also recognized Tagore’s contribution to the English language.¹ The British very cunningly used the natural fondness of the people with their local languages and dialects to divert their attention from losing their own greater and continuous cultural and literary heritage and ultimately trapping into the English language and literary tradition. Since these regional and infant languages and literature could easily be defeated by the English language, as these did not have the required capacity to express the literary, academic and intellectual content, people were obviously swayed to pay more attention to English. By then, the educational set-up too was ready for the same. So the new generation Indians easily became the bearers of English Culture. This must be added that knowing a

¹ The Nobel Prize in Literature 1913 was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West." (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1913/summary/>). For related issues further can be seen in the book titled as *Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, and the British Raj: Some Untold Stories* by A.B.M. Shamsud Doulah (Partridge Publishing Singapore, 2016); and also on: (<https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item124197.html>) & (<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society-the-arts/story/19831031-fresh-doubts-arises-about-circumstances-under-which-rabindranath-tagore-was-given-nobel-prize-771159-2013-07-16>)

language, whatsoever foreign or native, is always an additional boon, but losing one's own linguistic and literary heritage is a gross civilizational catastrophe, which we have inherited though not realized yet, by almost losing the Indian Persian literary legacy.

Though this is not the phenomenon supposedly has ended with the fall of the classic colonial era, but has been ceaselessly lingering on in different apparels. Margret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, candidly expressed in her article during the post 9/11 scenario and illustrated this centuries-old colonial mindset that *as long as we (the West) dominate technologically, our culture would prevail* (Hindustan Times, October 2001). But, what Thatcher said is not a new or so-called post 9/11 mindset; but has its historical background for many centuries, and has been repeated through the writings of western thinkers and policymakers time and again; either the “civilizing mission”(Conklin, 1998) of French's invasion on Egypt and later North African countries or the concept of “Oriental despotism” (Montesquieu, 2002) of Montesquieu and its incessant reflection in the writings of Machiavelli, Marx, Weber, J S Mill and later western thinkers. (Russell, 1966)

The Decline of Indian languages and literature

Finally, today we have inherited the general perception or somehow have now been believing that Persian, Urdu and Arabic are Muslim/Islamic languages and Sanskrit, Hindi as the Hindu, Brahmin languages. As a result, people try to avoid the languages on the ground of identity affiliations. This view and approach are now more fuelled by vicious identity politics. This has negatively impacted almost all modern Indian languages and their literature, especially poetry. The

fundamental reason for the degeneration of contemporary literature, especially poetry, is its divorce from the continuous literary tradition. These languages are substantially inherited from the Persian language and literature. For instance, it can be witnessed how this impacted the overall decline of Urdu and Hindi. Contemporary Hindi poetry is almost on the verge of demise. The stalwarts of Hindi, who though themselves were well conversant with Indian Persian literary tradition, vis a vis Arabic and Urdu, and thus could produce poetry of an inordinate standard even in its stage of infancy; yet commonly got trapped in the identity politics premeditated by colonial rulers. As a result, Hindi poetry gradually waned to decline, and at least it is evident in the contemporary scenario. It has lost its classic roots and rearing and now totally vanished into the English blank verse tradition instead of following the track of Indo-Persian tradition, especially Sanskrit prosodic scheme and Persian genres and diction. Similar syndrome happened with Urdu poetry and language, and precisely on the grounds of identical reasons. Similar misadventures could possibly be experienced in different modern languages of the Indian sub-continent.

In spite of the fact that the Indian sub-continent possesses seven most spoken languages among twenty most spoken languages of the world, the deplorable condition of literature, including publication and readership, can reveal the existent impairment (Summary by language size, 2019).

Hence I have a serious conviction that the replacement of Persian as the official language with vernacular i.e. Urdu/Hindi was a calculated colonial - imperialist design to finally replace all Indian languages and their literary traditions with English. This was fundamentally aimed to detach and disengage the future generations from their continuous civilizational legacy. The vernacular, too, was

deceitfully divided on the ground of script and deliberately attached to identities. Among all, this was the severest damage done to Indian civilization. Many other Asian countries faced similar situations and calamities and still struggling or regrettably unable to comprehend the misfortune in perpetuation. As a matter of fact, the political colonization probably ended in the sub-continent in 1947, but the linguistic and cultural legacy of the colonialism lingered on, rather growing up day by day.

Inter-Cultural Engagements

Though inter-faith and inter-cultural engagement was a norm of the pre-colonial era, yet Dara Shukoh (1615–1669) made a remarkable attempt to understand and explain the impact of the two dominant traditions of Faith in India, i.e. *Sanatan* and Islam, and the corollaries on the Indian culture, polity and society as a whole. Important examples of his search: *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain* (Persian) and *Samudrasangam* (Sanskrit), are an attempt to understand and explain these traditions. In Dara's opinion, a systematic method of acquiring knowledge was prevalent in the Sanskrit tradition. During the translation, compilation, contemplation and research on this book, he emerges as a serious scholar of religions and interfaith dialogue who attempted to study the similarities and differences of the two different religious faiths and traditions with each other. Besides, he also attempted to enhance an insightful and collective understanding of different faiths, beliefs and practices among the followers of different traditions. One such personality among most of the cultural icons of the pre-colonial era which represents the Indo-Persian knowledge tradition. Though Dara Shukoh is perhaps better known for his defeat in the war of succession, and what is commonly overlooked is his deep interest in knowledge traditions. His

characteristics of curiosity and inquisitiveness led to bonding with scholars, saints and Sufis, and consequently a deep study of *Sanatan* and other traditions along with Islam. He is credited with compilation and the Persian translation of 50 volumes of *Upanishads*, *Yoga Vashishtha* and other such texts, and also authored important books on Sufi tradition like *Sakeenatul-Awliya*, *Safinatul-Awliya*, *Risala-e Haq-Numa*. The most egregious examples of this curiosity are the books such as *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain* (Persian) and *Samudrasangam* (Sanskrit), which were in fact serious philosophical attempts to understand the flowing cultural streams, especially twin currents of *Sanatan* and Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

As there is a growing awareness of the image of Dara Shukoh as a liberal, there is increased curiosity about his contribution to the Indian knowledge tradition. There has been a limited mention and discussion about it in the history books, yet his personality always attracted people's attention. Diametrically opposite views are also held by scholars about this Mughal prince. However, Dara was not the first person to contribute to this field. This was the centuries-old tradition of this region for which Dara too contributed immensely. Generally, in the Asian traditions and particularly in Indian tradition, knowledge usually was not considered part of an identity. That is why Muslim scholars or *mullahs* were scholars of Sanskrit and other traditions in the pre-colonial period and similarly *pandits* as scholars of Arabic and Islamic learning. Baba Farid, Sheikh Nagori, Amir Khusraw, Abdul-Quddus Gangohi, Guru Nanak, Mahesh Thakur, Muhibbullah Allahabadi, Chandrabhan Brahmin, Dara Shukoh, Baba Lal, and Mazhar Jane-Jaan are some prominent names representing this general phenomenon in this tradition. Dara played an important role, which must be acknowledged in strengthening these traits of understanding the Indian heritage of

tolerance mutual harmony among other various streams of Indo-Persian thought and progress in the seventeenth century.

However, an incisive enquiry into the fortune and fate of Dara reveals that he was not only unfortunate to receive failure in the political struggle, but even otherwise he has been almost accused or credited for something which he probably never envisioned to; and that happens to be the extreme perceptions around his academic and spiritual adventures. At one side a group of pro-winning side Muslim clergy supported discredited him as a heretic on the ground of his writings. However, none of his writings supports or substantiates this view. Regrettably, the same claim has been received as a fact for all these centuries by a section to view him so. On the other hand, there are two other groups which consider him as 'liberal' or 'sanskritised' Muslim for the same reason that chose to be heretic or oppose the orthodox theological path.

In fact, he was neither, nor there has been any need for him to be the one, nor he individually aspired to, neither was it the tradition of the time any way desired for any one of any community, and he was none other than the heir Prince of the most powerful monarch. He was in fact following the tradition, prevalent since many centuries and was being nurtured by all Turk rulers since they started to rule in 12th century and the same existed before they started to rule. It was basically the Asian tradition even being practiced before Turks came to India, and Alberuni is one such example who learnt Sanskrit in Ghazni before he arrived, travelled and stayed in the sub-continent India for around ten years. Similarly, Khwaja Moeenuddin Chishti too learnt Sanskrit at Multan before shifting and settling in Ajmer. The current image of Dara is mostly the concoction of the contemporary historians who tried to paint him according to their own subjective ideas and

ideologies, which too is mostly the byproduct of the colonial politics and their scheme of promoting identity-based historiography.

The education system, too, was obviously based on the same philosophy, so almost all prevalent and contemporary education, including languages, were pursued at the educational institutions and individual pursuits. For instance, Mir Fat'hullah Shirazi, a migrant Iranian scholar and scientist of Akbar's era, introduced many new subjects, including science, as a result of the same, Ahmad Me'mar, an alumnus of Mulla Abdussalam Lahori's Madrasa, prepared the drawing of Taj Mahal, and built it. Akbar established a translation centre at Fatahpur Sikri, and Sanskrit texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata and other books were translated into Persian. These epics were translated by Mulla Badauni. Even we find evidence that Princes like Jahangir took an interest in the translations. Mullah Daud, Amir Khusraw, Abdul Quddus Gangohi, Baba Nanak, Mulla Badauni, Mirza Bedil, Chandrabhan Brahman, Bindrabhan Das Khushgo, Mirza Ghalib, like overall educated people were having expertise in different languages including Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, local languages, mathematics, philosophy, medical sciences, and other prevalent knowledge. They all were products of these Madrasas, and their books were also taught there as well. These are just a few examples to show that languages and disciplines of knowledge were not attached to identities. Even attributions to the Almighty had a grace which explains the profundity of understanding; for instance, at the beginning of *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain*, Dara Shukoh writes:

Be naam e Aan ke oo naami nadaarad

Be har naami ke khwani sar bar aarad

(I begin with the name of the one, who doesn't need a name, whatsoever the name you attribute to him, he pays attention to it.)

And most of the books by Brahmin or other non-Muslim start with the Arabic attribution to the Almighty, i.e. *Bismil-la-hir-rah'manir-Raheem* (In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate). For example, the Persian translation of *Ramayana*, Sumer Chand of Seventeenth Century, starts the book with *Bismil-la-hir-rah'manir-Raheem*. A prominent scholar of the Quran in 19th century Faz'le Rahman Ganj Muradabadi, translated the Quran in Hindawi and used the word *Manmohan* for *Allah* as the literal translation of the word Allah. The great Noble of Akbar-Jahangir's era Abdur Rahim Khankhanan and Raskhan's bhakti poetry for Krishna is known to everyone, and they enticed no denunciation ever.

Most of the rulers were also great patrons of books. During the Mughal period, Babur brought his personal library from Andijan (Uzbekistan) and also clasped Ibrahim Lodhi's library after the victory. He even complains about the humid weather of India being unsuitable for his books. Humayun possessed his own library. Faizi, the Court poet of Akbar, had six thousand books in his library, and most of them bear his signature, which were incorporated into the Akbar's library after his death. Mulla Badauni was Akbar's librarian, and Akbar had also appointed *Warraqs*, who used to turn pages of the books. This great library was inherited later by Dara Shukoh, and then by latter emperors. Due to the great uprising in 1857, and subsequently the fall of Mughals, this library too got dismantled. The invaluable manuscripts of this library later got place in British Library and libraries at London and Bodleian, Oxford besides National Museum,

National Archive, Rampur Raza Library, Khudabakhsh Library, Patna, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad etc.

Earlier we see Sufis in Punjab, Gujrat, Rajasthan, Bengal, Deccan, and Kashmir played a major role in developing and enriching the local languages and culture. Baba Farid learned the local Punjabi language and composed poems in it, which is quoted in Guru Granth Sahib. Sheikh Nagori was sent to Nagor by his spiritual master Khwaja Gharib Nawaz. When he went there, he found it was the town of Jains, and he decided that he won't have non-vegetarian food, and even he asked his followers not to have non-vegetarian food on his Urs, and it is still followed strictly. Mian Meer, the spiritual mentor of Dara Shukoh, laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple. These Sufi masters had inherited the teachings of universal love and compassion from the great Sufi masters and poets like Attar, Rumi, Saadi, Hafiz and Jami and taught the same to others. For instance, Attar says:

Hame ja Talib e Yaar-and che hoshiyar, che mast

Hame ja khana e eshq-ast, che masjid, che kanisht

(Everywhere people are yearning for the beloved, whether they are drunk or cognizant; everywhere there is abode of love, whether it is Mosque or Temple.)

Or Saadi of Shiraz says:

bani Adam aa'za-ye yek paiykar-and / ke dar āfarīn-ash ze yek gowhar-and

chu 'ozwi be dard aawarad rūzgār / digar 'ozwhā-rā na-mānad qarār

to kaz mehnat-ē dīgarān bī-ghami / na-shāyad ke nāmat nahand ādamī

(Adam's children are limbs of one body, as they in creation are made of one constituent.

Whenever a limb is hurt, other limbs will not be at ease.

And, you who are not sad for the suffering of others do not deserve to be called human)

And the Sufis teachings and writings are abundant with such messages.

As discussed above, to understand this tradition, one has to look carefully at the traditions and cultural attitudes of our pre-colonial history (times). It is necessary to reflect on those periods of our history when the ruling personalities strove to pay attention to these divisions, to bind the land together rather than create divisions and differences. One such personality was the Mughal Prince, Dara Shukoh, eldest son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan. There is a need to understand Dara's personality, character, policies, philosophy, and intellectual and literary contributions to know and acknowledge his contributions towards strengthening and enriching the incessant Indian knowledge tradition. History, though, generally records Dara Shukoh as the Prince who lost his trial for the throne in the War of Succession, but he was a great scholar of his time. He was a Sufi and Poet besides a scholar of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and regional dialects.

Traditionally, patronage and leaning towards literature were considered important among the princely Mughal elite. Some of them earned reputation for their expertise and distinction as writers and poets. The curious Dara took an interest in Sufism and monotheism, and this curiosity perpetually inspired him to be in touch with many saints and scholars of different faiths and traditions, including Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Kabirpanth, Christian and others. Several such pictures are

available in which Dara is shown interacting with Hindu ascetics and Muslim saints. *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain* (a book based on a comparative study of *Sanatan* and Islam) was his first attempt at a comparative study of religions; if he had chanced and lived longer, he probably could have attempted such studies about other streams of faith too. He is credited with the translation to Persian of 50 volumes of *Upanishads*, *Yogavashistha* and other such texts, and also authored important books on Sufi tradition. The most egregious examples of this curiosity are the books such as *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain* (Persian) and *Samudrasangam* (Sanskrit), which were, in fact, serious philosophical attempts to understand the mainly flowing twin currents of faith traditions in the Indian subcontinent, i.e. Sanatan and Islam. In the same way, his attachment and association with the great Sufis like Hazrat Muhibullah Allahabadi, Mian Mir, Mulla Shah Badakhshi, Sarmad, great saints like Baba Lal and the pandits of Banaras also corroborate his deep interest in this. He is also considered an important poet of Indian Persian tradition.

In fact, there have been two ways of using religion or even a philosophical cult. The first way is followed by those who use it in the truest sense and spirit to proliferate love, sanity and knowledge or a trait; however there has been a section who misuses it for the sake of self-interest. Dara himself is one of those who followed the first way and got connected with the sincerest people of his time, and therefore he severely criticizes imposters and pretentious ones.

Generally, those people who use religion against others for vested material interest do not realize that they are basically causing irreparable harm to the religion or identity they claim to represent. For instance, Emperor Akbar, who too was keen on understanding different faiths and traditions, organized multi-faith discussions. Instead of simply representing and show-casing their respective

faiths, many of the clergies attempted to demean others. This, in fact, dejected Akbar, and a response to this, he once apparently tried the obliteration of religions by assimilating all. Similarly, many contemporary groups representing different faiths and identities are self-destructive and cause harm to the identities, they claim to represent. Many a time, including in the recent past and even in contemporary times, we have witnessed the fallout of such misrepresentations turning into extreme identity-based hate politics, and finally resulting into a catastrophe for instance, Nazism, Fascism and different faith-based extremisms. Unfortunately, India is at the imminent edge of the analogous disarray for the same and similar reasons. Akbar's primary aim was to build a united empire, and for the same reason, he wanted to have friendly relations with different religions and groups and marry in Rajput families. Two of the Mughal emperors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, were sons of Rajput mothers. This was not the innovative policy of Emperor Akbar, but being accommodative has been the age-old policy of all stable empires.

There should not be any misperception between just being part of identity whatsoever, religious or cult and being a genuine believer of the same. It is generally observed that many of the individuals who apparently represent religions are seen spoilt into greed of material indulgence while misusing the identity, and even abusing it for identity politics and hatred. However, a careful look into such cases reveals that they are either not practicing or superficially practicing a lot of the religions or bereft of spiritual perception. In my humble view, a religion or faith system has a three-tier system. The primary stage includes faith or the concept of God and the rituals for the divine. The secondary stage includes the doctrine for the prescribed deed, ethics and behaviour including

conduct for the people; and the ultimate stage is spiritual realization, which includes itself different stages of realizations, but the observable part of such stage contains two apparent characteristics, i.e. renunciation of worldly greed and compassion for the fellow being. It is, therefore, the observational and emotional shallowness and dearth of devoutness may be noticed among mere or pure theologians and scholars because they visualize the first or initial stages as the complete religion and do not see beyond that or do not pursue the stages of spiritual realization.

Nonetheless, even the basic followers of a religious doctrine (i.e. followers of primary and secondary stages) too, on the ground of their earnestness of strictly following the rules and doctrine of religious ethics, may become a role model. However, there is always a higher vulnerability of succumbing to materialism or worldly lures, which would be quite natural. The chances of this vulnerability are mostly because of the lack of internal or spiritual training which spiritualists do follow. However, when such a person attains the spiritual awareness, and subsequently accomplishes the stages of renunciation and consciousness, and achieves different junctures of spiritual realizations and finally attains the highest stages, then it would be highly unlikely that such a soul would succumb to worldly lure or abhorrence.

Dara Shukoh was, in fact, in the quest and pursuit of spiritual realization. More interestingly, he was curious to know the different approaches and ideas espoused and assumed in different religions and traditions to accomplish the ultimate realization. His books and writings clearly reveal this earnestness, aspiration, and longing. He even clearly states the same in the preface of *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain*:

“It is, therefore, the interpretations of the two different parties are compared together. Besides, many other views are compiled because their knowledge would be essential and valuable for all those seeking the ultimate truth. Since the enlightened considered it as the compendium of knowledge and truths, it is titled as *Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain* (The Mingling of two oceans) (*Maj'ma-ul-Bahrain*, p. 80).”

He asserts the same in the preface of *Sirr e Akbar*:

“This seeker of the ultimate truth (i.e. Dara Shukoh), who is in pursuit of the Ultimate One, craved to translate the *Upanishads*, the treasure-trove of monotheism, into Persian. Even in the community, only a few scholars of this text left today. This translation I did without any change, just word to word, so that I can understand what is the secret hidden in it, which they try to conceal” (*Sirr e Akbar*, p. 5).

His frequent interactions and bonding with people like Shah Muhammad Dilruba, Sarmad, Baba Pyarey, Mian Bari, Muhsin Fani Kashmiri, Shah Fatah Ali Qalandar, Shaikh Sulaiman Misri Qalandar, Bhakta Ramanand, Mirza Salik Lahori is again a witness of his longing as a seeker of knowledge and spiritual consciousness. This association profoundly influenced his thinking. Many writers believe that Dara Shukoh also had good relations with the Sikh Gurus, especially Guru Har Singh (1630 - 1661). Shah Jahan is said to have ordered special herbs for Dara's treatment during his prolonged illness from a hospital in the Punjab run by Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru of Sikhs, as mentioned in his book *Sakinatul-Awliya*.

‘*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*,’ i.e., equal respect to all religious beliefs, has been the ageless tradition of India, which attracted followers of different faith and

tradition. Subsequently, they added to the colorfulness of the diversity of the land like Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki, and Baba Farid Ganjshakar and many others. Similarly, Indian traditions, faiths, knowledge and philosophy too has been spread through our missionaries, scholars, saints to different parts of the world especially to Asian societies like preachers of emperor Ashok, Pandits at Darul-Hikma at Baghdad, Jamaluddin Jamali, Guru Nanak and many others. There has been incessant multi-lateral cultural and literary interaction almost throughout the ages.

Conclusion

The Persian language has been virtually the link language as well as the language of literary and intellectual expression of a major part of Asia, especially of the Indian sub-continent, for many centuries during the pre-colonial era; and has played vitally in enriching its cultures and languages. The colonial mind realized this fact and set a web of intrigue among different identities of the sub-continent, especially among two major communities, i.e. Hindus and Muslims, which resulted in many civilizational disasters, including the decline and abandoning of Persian language and literature from public and private spaces. Besides, it is also important to understand what literary personalities and scholars of the pre-colonial era contributed to enriching the Indo-Persian Knowledge tradition. The uniqueness of such efforts and traditions lies in carrying forward the age-old knowledge tradition of the Indian sub-continent, or rather the Asian knowledge tradition, in a way that attracted all to comprehend it more deeply and incisively through unattended sources, texts and deliberations. Generally, in Indo-Persian tradition, knowledge, including languages, was not generally attached to identities. Amir Khusraw, Abdul-Quddus Gangohi, Guru Nanak, Mahesh Thakur,

Muhibbullah Allahabadi, Chandrabhan Brahmin, Dara Shukoh, Baba Lal, and Mazhar Jane-Jaan are just a few names of this tradition.

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Post-1979 Iranian Cinema and Post-1947 Indian Cinema: Responses to Changing Times

Zulfikar Ali Ansari¹

Abstract

Iranian and Indian films have received global recognition for their unique story-telling style, which is rooted in their culture. A few countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Japan, and China can match the film making of these two countries whether at the level of content or technical aspects. These two Asian countries have many cultural aspects in common given their historical relations, which does not only confine itself to political connections but extend to their economy, literature and arts, and aesthetics as well. This commonality of culture makes the study of films of Iran and India an interesting enterprise.

From the film footages of the first Persian filmmaker Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akkas Bashi, in July 1900 to the present, Iranian cinema has undergone several changes. Here, we trace the changes which have occurred after the Revolution of 1979. While commercial cinema has been entertaining the domestic audience during this period, Iranian art films have achieved international acclaim and now enjoy a global following.

Like Iranian cinema, the history of the Indian cinema also begins quite early, i. e., in 1896, and has reached the present with enormous changes regarding the concept, genres, and technical aspects of film making, particularly after 1947.

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While Indian films are a global phenomenon with their commercial success, Iranian films have increasingly become a favorite at many international film festivals in the last two decades. The main aim of this article is to analyse the evolution of cinema in Iran and India and show how these two countries can cooperate with each other in this field.

Keywords: Iran, India, Post-Revolution, Post-Independence, New Wave, Art Cinema, Commercial Cinema, Bollywood

Introduction

Post-Revolutionary Iran and Post-Independence India witnessed a paradigm shift in their social and political approaches, which brought about drastic changes in their cinemas. The content of films, film-making processes, censor codes, film techniques, their reach, marketing, that is, every aspect of cinema has changed in response to changing times. Tracing these changes makes a very interesting study.

In the last four decades after the revolution, Iranian cinema has traversed a long and difficult path, maturing in the process to such excellence that it has been showered with appreciations all over the world. Iran became one of the best exporters of cinema in the 1990s and has been praised by some critics as the producer of world's most important national cinema, artistically, with a significance that invites comparison to Italian neorealism¹ and similar movements in past decades (web.stanford.edu, Retrieved on April 2021). Iranian cinema has

¹.Italian neorealism is a national film movement characterized by stories set amongst the poor and the working class, filmed on location, frequently using non-professional actors. Italian neorealism films mostly contend with the difficult economic and moral conditions of post-World War II Italy, representing changes in the Italian psyche and conditions of everyday life, including poverty, oppression, injustice, and desperation.

garnered various categories of awards at a variety of international film festivals in the last twenty years. At present, however, the Iranian box office is dominated by commercial Iranian films despite the fact that Iranian art¹ films are internationally acclaimed.

While the main language of Iranian films is Persian, multilingual India produces films in a number of languages. Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telgu, Malayalam, Kannad, Gujarati, Punjabi, Odia, and Assamese are the main languages in which most of the films are made. Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore, Bhubaneshwar, and Guwahati are the major centers of film production in India (Film Making Centres of India, Retrieved on September 2021).

The world-famous Indian film industry, Bollywood², with its center in Mumbai, produces Hindi language films and has the largest revenue share at the box office, followed by Tamil and Telugu films (DNA, July 2, 2007 & Namrata, Feb 18, 2020).

While Hindi films represent mainly the north Indian culture, the South Indian film industry encompasses five film cultures: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tulu. Another prominent film culture is Bengali cinema, where the parallel cinema movement flourished most in contrast to the masala films more prominent in Bollywood and Southern films at the time.

¹.Art cinema is intended to be a serious, artistic work, often experimental and not designed for mass appeal made primarily for aesthetic reasons rather than commercial profit. It is also referred to as parallel cinema as against mainstream commercial cinema.

².The term “Bollywood” was initially coined as a derogatory term by the western media to refer to Hindi films. Term was derived based on the city of Bombay which is now called Mumbai.

Indian cinema is now a global enterprise having a following throughout Southern Asia and across Europe, North America, Asia, the Greater Middle East, Eastern Africa, China, and elsewhere, reaching over 90 countries (Embassy of India in Sudan, Retrieved on June 2020). Along with the story, song, dance, and music play an important part in Indian films. Recently, Indian cinema has been undergoing drastic changes both in terms of content and technical aspects as well as market ventures with the ongoing processes of its corporatization, globalization, and diversification.

Post-1979 Iranian Cinema

The story of post-revolution Iranian cinema exhibits the courage of the Iranian filmmakers who continued their artistic journey even during the most difficult times and reminds us about their determination not only to make films but to make world-class films. After the revolution of 1979, the Iranian cinema came to a halt as the disturbed political conditions were not conducive to its production (Filmreference Encyclopaedia, Retrieved on March 2021 & Issa, March 3, 2004). However, film production began again though slowly in the early 1980s. In 1982, the annual Fajr Film Festival¹ started to promote and finance films (Sarsangi, and Soleimanzadeh (2018).

Later, the Farabi Cinema Foundation was established in 1987 to promote high-quality films and reassemble disorganized cinema. The following year, the government began to provide financial aid.

The films made in Post-1979 Iran can be dealt into two categories:

¹The festival is supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It takes place on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution every year since 1982.

1. Iranian Art Films (Second Wave Films)
2. Iranian Commercial Films

1. Iranian Art Films (Second Wave Films)

The Iranian art films which are being produced in the Post-Revolutionary era are often referred to as the Second Wave Films as they are considered to have evolved out of the First Wave¹, which began in the 1960s with Forogh Farokhzad's documentary *The House is Black* (1963) being considered as the precursor of the movement (Henderson, February 22, 2005). According to film critic Ahmad Talebinejad² "A new trend began in the cinema since 1968. It was due to developments in the cultural arena with origins in the political, social, and cultural developments of the 1950s and 1960s (Paras Times, March 7, 1995)." Moreover, Iranian filmmakers often cite Vittorio de Sica's "Bicycle Thieves" (1948) as one of the most influential films. Iranian filmmakers find their favorites also in the themes dealt with by India's Satyajit Ray's films, whose "Appu" trilogy (1955) depicts the collapse of traditional values whilst criticizing the social failures of a political system (Issa, *ibid*). Despite the fact that Iranian films share these common characteristics, they have their own unique cinematic language and

¹First Wave films were influenced by schools as varied as Italian neo-realism and Nouvelle Vague in their aesthetics. They were often critical of the ruling Shah regime, exposing the moral and spiritual emptiness of urban existence. They drew material from the more classical arts such as poetry and painting. They also employed innovative, unconventional and disjunctive narrative structures. Some of the notable films of the First Wave are *The Cow* (Darius Mehrjui, 1969); *Qeysar* (Masoud Kimiai, 1969); *Tranquility in the Presence of Others* (Nasser Taghvai, 1969/1972); *Downpour* (Bahram Beizai, 1972); *A Simple Event* (Sohrab Shahid Saless, 1973); and *Still Life* (Sohrab Shahid Saless, 1974).

² Ahmad Talebinejad is the author of the book titled "A Simple Event - A Review of the New Wave Trend in Iranian Cinema."

visual aesthetics to present the everyday life of an ordinary person blurring the boundaries of fiction and reality, a feature and documentary (Issa, *ibid*).

The First New Wave had a profound impact on what could be called the Second New Wave of Iranian cinema: a group of radically innovative — if not as politically overt — films during the 1980s-90s and 2000s which call into question most of our assumptions about the medium and our relationship to it (Srinivasan, June 09, 2012).

By the year 2001, the number of features produced in Iran rose to 87 (from 28, which is the number of films that were produced in 1980, after the fall of the Shah). The most popular genres were melodramas and historical pageants, which seldom attended festivals. In 1997, the newly elected president, Mohammed Khatami, would eventually come to play a role in helping filmmakers achieve a certain degree of artistic freedom (Sadr, 2006 & Khalili Mahani, July 31, 2006, p.200). Further, The Government encouraged a whole new generation of filmmakers, which included female directors as well. With this, the focus shifted to children overcoming obstacles: true stories, lyrical, mystical drama, real-life problems, documentary footage, etc (Sarsangi, *ibid*). Some of the main characteristics of the Second Wave films are: Realistic, documentary-style; Poetic and allegorical storytelling; Use of 'child trope' (in response to regulations on adult material within films); Self-aware, reflexive tone and; Focus on rural lower-class.

Post-revolutionary Iranian cinema has been praised and awarded in many international forums and festivals for its distinct style, themes, authors, the idea of nationhood, and cultural references. Khosrow Sinai's¹ *Viva...!* (1980) was the first

¹. Sinai won a Crystal Globe at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival for *Viva...!*

Iranian film to receive recognition at an international forum (Sarsangi, *ibid*). Jafar Panahi achieved international recognition with his feature film debut, *The White Balloon*¹ (1995), which won the Caméra d'Or at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, the first major award an Iranian film won at Cannes (Brooks, December 10, 2005). However, it was after Abbas Kiarostami² won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Taste of Cherry* in 1997 that Iranian films have been increasingly recognized at the global level for their content and style (BBC, Nov 29, 2018 & Sarsangi, *ibid*). For instance, in 1998, Majid Majidi's film *Children of Heaven*³ had the honor to get nominated at the Academy Awards, better known as Oscar, for the Best Foreign Film category but it lost the award to *Life is Beautiful* the Italian movie.

Later, Asgar Farhadi's "*A Separation*" won the Oscar for the best foreign-language film in 2012, becoming the first Iranian movie to win the honor (Grover, February 27, 2012). In 2017 Farhadi was honored with his second Oscar in the same category for his film *The Salesman*. The film relates the story of a young married couple of Tehran who performs Arthur Miller's 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* on stage.

In fact, in the last three decades, the most important international film festivals have included one or more Iranian features in their programs nearly every year (Cross, April 04, 2019). In 2006, six Iranian films of six different styles

¹ The Guardian has listed this film as one of the 50 best family films of all time.

² Abbas Kiarostami is regarded by some critics as one of the few great directors in the history of world cinema. His films *Where Is the Friend's Home?*, *Close-Up*, and *The Wind Will Carry Us* were ranked among the 100 best foreign films in a 2018 critics' poll by BBC Culture. Akira Kurosawa has rightly said, "Words cannot describe my feelings about them and I simply advise you to see his films... When Satyajit Ray passed on, I was very depressed. But after seeing Kiarostami's films, I thanked God for giving us just the right person to take his place."

³ Majidi's Indian venture *Beyond The Clouds* (2017) made in English, Hindi, Tamil and Persian may be seen as another version of his previously directed *Children of Heaven* (1997).

represented Iranian cinema at the Berlin Film Festival. Critics considered this a remarkable event in the history of Iranian cinema (Sadr, *ibid*, p.147). Along with men, Iranian women film makers such as Hana Makhmalbaf (*Buddha Collapsed in Shame*, 2008), Manijeh Hekmat (*Zendane zanan*, 2003), Rakhshan Bani-Etemad (*Under the Skin of the City*, 2001), Tahmineh Milani (*The Unwanted Woman*, 2005), and quite a few others have garnered accolades for their films at international forums.

As the government started funding film in 1998, Iranian Kurdistan has particularly witnessed the rise of numerous filmmakers such as Bahman Ghobadi, and the entire Ghobadi family, Ali-Reza Rezai, Khosret Ressoul, and many other younger filmmakers in the region (Sarsangi, *ibid*).

It must be noted that Iran is also known for high-quality documentaries which are often critical of society's assumptions and ideals, such as the films directed by Mohammedreza Eslamlu. For example, Eslamlu's political documentary "The 9/11 Black Box" refers to the term '9/11 black box', which was frequently used by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in his speech at the UN headquarters in New York. The film is about a committed Iranian documentarian named Mohammad who has an apocalyptic view of contemporary events in the world. Accompanied by the French journalist and political activist Thierry Meyssan, Mohammad tries to make a documentary according to Meyssan's research on 9/11 (Tehran Times, January 30, 2011).

The 2016-documentary *Starless Dreams* by Mehrdad Oskouei is a haunting portrait of stolen childhood which plunges the viewer into the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and correction center on the outskirts of Tehran. Ziba Mir-Hosseini's co-directed *Divorce Iranian*

Style (1998); Jafar Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb directed *This Is Not A Film* (2011); and *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (2017) about a journalist persecuted in Iran who flees but arrested and kept by the Australian government in a detention center are only a few examples among the huge Iranian documentary treasure.

Cinema Verite (The Annual Iran International Documentary Film Festival) has been held in Tehran since 2007. It provides a venue for encouraging artists from all parts of the world. The festival is organized by the Documentary and Experimental Film Centre (DEFC).

Recently, Mohammad Rasoulof's film *There Is No Evil* (2020), dealing with capital punishment, has won the top prize at the Berlin International Film Festival. Rasoulof was banned from directing in 2017. He produced his sixth film in secret (BBC News, February 29, 2020). Iranian films "No Choice", "TiTi," and "The Wasteland" competed in the Tokyo International Film Festival (Rezapoer, September 29, 2020).

2. Iranian Commercial Films

Domestically oriented films made for local consumption and the Iranian diaspora are totally different from the Iranian cinema the outside world enjoys at international film festivals. Produced with the main motive of profit, the domestically oriented commercial Iranian cinema genre falls into three categories:

Films with strong religious and National sentiments about the victory of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the ensuing Iran–Iraq war and action filled: Barzakhaha, The Viper, Boycott, Duel, Taraj, Ekhrajiha, The Glass Agency, Kani

Manga, Ofogh, Bashu, the Little Stranger, Leily Ba Man Ast, M as in Mother, etc.(Sarsangi, ibid).

Formulaic films starring popular actors: Cinema managers generally prefer crowd-pulling comedies, romantic melodramas, and family comedies over the other genres. *The Blue-Veiled, Ghermez, Leila, Outsiders, Actor, Ejareh-Nesheenha, Shokaran, Dayere Zangi, Aquarium, Cease Fire, No Men Allowed, Charlatan, The Kingdom of Solomon, Guidance Patrol, Killing Mad Dogs, Girls Don't Scream, A Separation and Hush!* were among the post-revolutionary films that have been the most successful at the box office (Dabashi, 2001, p.139).

Crime thrillers crime such as *Senator, The Eagles, Boycott, The Tenants, and Kani Manga* occupied the first position on the sales charts during the war years.

Post-1947 India Cinema

With independence in 1947, Indian cinema underwent a huge change, focusing on social themes. Along with this kind of cinema, commercial cinema started its own success story whereby it has now become a global affair. It now has a variety of themes and genres ranging from the usual run-of-the-mill films trying to woo the audience through romantic comedies, thrillers, action films to such movies based on true events such as *Gangs of Wasseypur* and biopics¹. In 2001, the Government of India bestowed industry status on film production to give further impetus to Indian movies.

¹ Directed by Shyam Benegal, *Bose The Forgotten Hero* gives a complete account of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Some of the other biopics include *Mary Kom, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Paan Singh Tomar, The Legend of Bhagat Singh, Richard Attenborough's Gandhi* and Shekhar Kapoor's *Bandit Queen* on the dacoit Phoolan Devi.

Golden Age (late 1940s–1960s)

The beginning of the Golden Age of Indian Cinema almost coincides with India's independence in 1947. During this period, Indian cinema underwent a huge change from the earlier mythological and historical stories to social themes focusing on the lower classes, poverty, dowry system, prostitution, etc. This period lasted till the early 1960s (Moti Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004, p.17). This gave rise to the emergence of the parallel cinema movement. The movement emphasized social realism. Early examples include Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946), Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946), Ritwik Ghatak's *Nagarik* (1952), and Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), laying the foundations for Indian neorealism and the Indian New Wave (Rajadhyaksha, 2016, p.61). *Neecha Nagar* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, putting Indian films in competition for the Palme d'Or for nearly every year in the 1950s and early 1960s, winning many major prizes.

Satyajit Ray's *The Apu Trilogy* (1955–1959) won major prizes at all of the major international film festivals and firmly established the Parallel Cinema movement. *Pather Panchali* (1955), the first part of the trilogy, marked Ray's entry into Indian cinema (Rajadhyaksha, 2016, p.638). Cinematographer Subrata Mitra, who debuted in the trilogy, had a significant influence on cinematography globally. One of his most important techniques was bounce lighting to recreate the effect of daylight on sets (Encyclopaedia of Cinematographers, Retrieved on July 2021).

Commercial Hindi cinema began thriving, including acclaimed films like Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957) and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959); Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951) and *Shree 420* (1955). These films expressed social themes mainly dealing with

working-class urban life in India; *Awaara* presented the city as both a nightmare and a dream, while *Pyasa* critiqued the unreality of city life.

Mehboob Khan's epic film *Mother India* (1957), a remake of his earlier *Aurat* (1940), was the first Indian film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. *Mother India* defined the conventions of Hindi cinema for decades (Tarini, November 25, 2012). It spawned a new genre of dacoit films. Dilip Kumar (Muhammad Yusuf Khan) starred *Gunga Jumna* (1961) was a dacoit crime drama about two brothers on opposite sides of the law, a theme that became common in Indian films in the 1970s (Ganti, 2004, p.153). With his *Madhumati* (1958), Bimal Roy popularised the theme of reincarnation in Western popular culture (Doniger, 2005, p.112-136).

Dilip Kumar debuted in the 1940s, rose to fame in the 1950s and was one of the biggest Indian movie stars. He was a pioneer of method acting, predating Hollywood method actors such as Marlon Brando. Much like Brando's influence on New Hollywood actors, Kumar inspired Indian actors, including Amitabh Bachchan, Naseeruddin Shah, Shah Rukh Khan and Nawazuddin Siddiqui (Mazumder, December 11, 2015).

This period also saw the beginning of independent production, as against the studio system prevalent in the early thirties and the forties, it allowed more flexibility to the filmmakers. It saw the emergence of playback singing and also gave rise to the 'formula' films of Bollywood, along with elaborate songs and dances (Dwyer and Patel, 2002, p.20-21).

Classic Bollywood (1971s–1980s)

Realistic Parallel Cinema continued throughout the 1970s, practised in many Indian film cultures. Mrinal Sen's¹ Utpal Dutt starred in *Bhuvan Shome* (1969) is considered a landmark in modern Indian cinema. His *Akaler Sandhane* (1981), *Kharij* (1983), *Khandhar* (1984) and *Ek Din Achanak* (1989) were honoured at Berlin, Cannes, Montreal and Venice Film festivals, respectively. Another renowned director Shyam Benegal has such notable films to his credit as *Ankur* (1973), *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1977). Mahesh Bhatt's *Saaransh* (1984), Prakash Jha's *Damul* (1984); and Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh* (1980) and *Ardh Satya* (1983) continued the parallel cinema in the 1980s.

However, it was commercial cinema that dominated the box office, first with Rajesh Khanna and then with Amitabh Bachchan as superstars. The decade of the seventies worked on three important formulas. The first is the lost and found story which involves the parents and children and often siblings being separated and reunited years later following 'revelation of mistaken identities, often after much emotional churning. The second important theme was that of the male bonding through a number of *dosti* films. Two male friends fall in love with the same woman and the one who discovers the triangle first, sacrifices his love and often his life for the sake of his *dost*. The revenge theme too was an extremely important component of this decade (Rosie, 2006, p.288). Other writers have listed a number of defining characteristics for Indian cinema (Kazmi, Fareed, 1999).

¹*Calcutta 71* (1972); Mithun Chakraborty's debut film *Mrigaya* (1976), are also among his notable films.

Here it may be noted that by the early 1970s, Hindi cinema was experiencing thematic stagnation, dominated by musical romance films. The arrival of the screenwriter duo Salim–Javed, consisting of Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, revitalized the industry. They reinterpreted the rural themes of *Mother India* and *Gunga Jumna* in an urban context reflecting 1970s India, channelling the growing discontent and disillusionment among the masses, unprecedented growth of slums and urban poverty, corruption and crime, as well as anti-establishment themes. This resulted in their creation of the "angry young man", personified by Amitabh Bachchan, who reinterpreted Dilip Kumar's performance in *Gunga Jumna*, and gave a voice to the urban poor with his films like *Zanjeer* (1973) and Yash Chopra directed *Deewar*¹ (1975) (Awaasthi, January 30, 2017).

In the 1970s, the conventions of commercial Bollywood films were established. mainly associated with the creation of the masala film genre, which combines elements of action, comedy, romance, drama, melodrama and musical. With his *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), *Coolie* (1983) and other films, Manmohan Desai further expanded the genre in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1980s, Hindi cinema experienced another period of stagnation, with a decline in box office turnout, due to increasing violence, a decline in melodic musical quality, and a rise in video piracy, leading to middle-class family audiences abandoning theatres. The turning point came with Yash Chopra's musical romance *Chandni* (1989), starring Sridevi. It was instrumental in ending the era of violent action films in Indian Cinema and rejuvenating the romantic musical genre. It also set a new template for Bollywood musical romance films that defined Hindi cinema in the coming years. Commercial Hindi cinema grew in

¹ Danny Boyle described Yash Chopra directed *Deewar* as "absolutely key to Indian cinema".

the late 1980s and 1990s, with the release of *Mr. India* (1987), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Chaalbaaz* (1989), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) (Ray, December 18, 2016).

Cinema for NRIs- the 1990s

During this period, many successful films were also made with consideration of the Non-resident Indians (NRIs¹). The notable films of the period are: *Darr* (1993), *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997), Subhas Ghai's *Pardes*, *Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kya* (1998) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998). Cult classic *Bandit Queen* (1994, Shekhar Kapur) received both international recognition as well as controversy.

In the late 1990s, Parallel Cinema began a resurgence in Hindi cinema, largely due to the critical and commercial success of crime films such as *Satya* (1998) and *Vaastav* (1999). These films launched a genre known as Mumbai noir, urban films reflecting social problems there (Nayar, December 16, 2007).

21st-century Indian cinema

In the 21st century, Indian cinema has distinctly undergone three main kinds of changes: 1. Corporatization, 2. Globalization and 3. Diversification.

1-Corporatization: Indian film industry is being increasingly corporatized whereby film production, distribution and exhibition companies are coming out with public issues. More multiplexes are being built in the country, and initiatives to set up more digital cinema halls are coming up. While this process will

¹ NRI is abbreviation for Non-resident Indians, the Indians who live in other countries.

improve the quality of prints making film viewing a more pleasurable experience, it will also reduce piracy of prints as a by-product (FICCI & PwC, 2006).

2-Globalization: Although some Indian films *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas; Mehboob Khan's *Aan* (1952), and *Mother India* (1957); Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951); Shahrukh Khan starring in *Dar* (1993), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayege* (1995), *Dil Se* (1998); Salman Khan starring *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* (1994) and quite a few other films had been released overseas earlier and had made successful box-office ventures, it was at the beginning of the 21st century Indian films started targeting the western market, especially the Indian diasporas systematically. For instance, a proper public relations company was employed for Shahrukh Khan starring in *Ashoka* and was presented as a 'normal western film' in the media. Seventy-five percent of the cinema halls where Ashutosh Gowarkar directed Amir Khan starring in *Lagaan* was screened in the United Kingdom were those which did not normally show Hindi films, so it was the first crossover film (Rashmee, October 28, 2001).

Devdas¹ (2002), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's opulent adaptation of Saratchandra Chatterjee's classic romantic tragedy ran for several consecutive weeks in theatres in North America (www.indiatoday.in, May 21, 2012). The action-packed thriller *Kaante* is another example of the globalization of Hindi cinema. Based on *Reservoir Dogs*, it gives the viewer an experience of a Hollywood movie. *Kaante* (Thorns) has the credit of becoming the first Bollywood movie by a Hollywood production crew (PTI, December 25, 2002). Amir Khan, starring in *3 Idiots* (2009), *Dhoom 3* (2013), *PK* (2014) and *Dangal* (2016), had a record-making performance overseas, especially in China (Statista, December 2017). Apart from

¹ Time Magazine has ranked the film *Devdas* eighth among the ten greatest movies of the millennium.

the above Indian movies, Bahubali 2 – The Conclusion (2017), My Name is Khan (2010), Padmaavat (2018) and several other films have been huge commercial success overseas.

3-Diversification: Different types of films on a variety of subjects are being attempted with a number of young and energetic filmmakers joining the filmmaking in India. In 2001, Farhan Akhtar's directorial debut *Dil Chahta Hai* received critical acclaim for portraying modern youth. The film also won a National Award. Anurag Kashyap is one of the most distinguished filmmakers of 21st century India. Kashyap is regarded as an auteur and is credited for pioneering India's indie scene in the early 2000s (Szaniawski & Seung-hoon, 2016, p.287). Most of his films deal with realistic scenarios and take clues from real incidents¹. The protagonists of his films often deal with excessive drug, smoke or alcohol consumption, personal guilt, extreme rage, and arrogance, leading them into self-shattering situations. Often portrays small but strong female characters.

While promoting Bombay Talkies² in Anupama Chopra's show, Dibakar Banerjee described Kashyap's aesthetics as "purely new age or purely Indian", projecting "modern post-independence India" in his films. Kashyap prefers shooting on real locations by employing guerrilla-filmmaking techniques with hidden cameras and often makes his actors improvise their dialogues on set (Rediff.com, 7 February 2007). In *Ugly*, he did not show the script to any of the

¹For example, the 1976–77 Joshi-Abhyankar serial murders reference in *Paanch*, [25] the 1993 Mumbai bombing in *Black Friday*, the 1999 Delhi hit-and-run case and DPS MMS Scandal in *Dev.D* [169] and the depiction of real life gang wars in *Gangs of Wasseypur*. *Ugly* came from his "personal guilt" of not spending enough time with his daughter and the fear of losing her.

² *Bombay Talkies* is a 2013 Indian Hindi-language anthology film consisting of four short films, directed by Karan Johar, Dibakar Banerjee, Zoya Akhtar and Anurag Kashyap.

lead actors. He frequently uses the hand-held camera and experimental soundtracks.

Starting his career as a writer for Ramkumar Verma-directed crime film *Satya*¹ (1998), Kashyap has directed path-breaking films like *Black Friday* (2006), *Dev D* (2008), and *Gangs of Wasseypur* in two parts (2012 and 2013), among others.

After facing hurdles at the censor board for two years, his film *Black Friday* received universal acclaim after its release. According to the film critic Nikhat Kazmi, *Black Friday* “was indeed a difficult film to make, yet the director has managed to grapple with all the loose threads and put them together in a composite whole. So much so, the film moves like a taut thriller, without ideology coloring the sepia frames” (Kazmi, 10 February 2007).

Kashyap’s ambitious venture, *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), was a two-part crime saga centered on the coal mafia of Dhanbad. It has received appreciation from Indian and international critics alike. Kashyap's work inspired British director Danny Boyle who has cited *Black Friday* and *Satya* as the inspirations² for his Academy Award-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) (Kumar, 23 December 2008).

Delhi-based stories of Dibakar Banerjee's films like *Khosla Ka Ghosla* (2006) and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008) marked a shift in Bollywood themes, which typically focus on stories and characters in and around Mumbai. In 2010,

¹ *Satya* was a critical and commercial success,[19][20] and is regarded as one of the best films of Indian cinema. Kashyap co-wrote *Satya* with Saurabh Shukla.

² Boyle stated that a chase in one of the opening scenes of *Slumdog Millionaire* was based on a "12-minute police chase through the crowded Dharavi slum" in *Black Friday*. [173] He also described *Satya*'s "slick, often mesmerizing" portrayal of the Mumbai underworld, which included gritty and realistic "brutality and urban violence," directly influenced the portrayal of the Mumbai underworld in *Slumdog Millionaire*

Banerjee directed India's first film shot entirely on Digital Camera, and to be presented in the found footage style, *Love Sex Aur Dhokha*. The film was shown through Handycams, CCTV cameras, and mobile cameras.

Following his mentor Gulzar¹, Vishal Bhardwaj is known for his film adaptations of three Shakespearean tragedies --*Maqbool* (2003) from Macbeth, *Omkara* (2006) from Othello, and *Haider* (2014) from Hamlet. Bhardwaj is developing a film franchise based on the works of Agatha Christie. With his biopics² like *Shahid* (2012) and *Aligarh* (2015), Hansal Mehta has earned a reputation as a great filmmaker. Vikramaditya Motwane's *Udaan*, a coming-of-age genre film, has been acclaimed by critics with particular praise on the direction and the performances.

Anubhav Sinha's 2018 Hindi film *Mulk* (Country) deals with a Muslim family trying to reclaim its lost honor after a family member gets involved in terrorism. Sinha's *Article 15* (2019) deals with the question of equality, and *Thappad* (Slap) (2020) raises the question of the prejudiced and misogynistic approach of society towards women (Bollywood Hungama, Feb 27, 2020).

Nitesh Tiwari's Amir Khan starrer *Dangal* (Wrestling competition) released in 2016, is a biographical sports drama film that has been praised for its subject matter, camera work, and direction apart from its record-breaking box office collections. NagrajNagraj Manjule's *Sairat* (2016) is a historic milestone in Indian cinema. Selected at the Berlin Film Festival and a commercially successful

¹ Gulzar had directed *Angur* (1982) based on William Shakespeare's play *Comedy of Errors*.

² *Shahid* is a powerful and compelling film, a biopic based on human rights lawyer Shahid Azmi, who fought cases for the marginalised, including the Muslim minority, routinely accused of terrorism and imprisoned for years without trial or evidence. *Aligarh* (2015), too, is a courageous biopic on the real story of homosexual Professor Ramchandra Siras of Aligarh Muslim University.

film in the Marathi language, it deals with a rural teenage romance amid the savage realities of the caste system.

South Indian Films

Malayalam has been at the forefront of technological innovation in Indian cinema. The first neorealistic film (*Newspaper Boy*), the first Cinemascope film (*Thacholi Ambu*), the first 70 mm film (*Padayottam*), the first 3D film (*My Dear Kuttichathan*), the first Panavision film (*Vanaprastham*), the first digital film (*Moonnamathoral*), The first Smartphone film (*Jalachhayam*), the first 8K film (*Villain*) in India were made in Malayalam (Cinemaofmalayalam.net, Retrieved on October 4, 2020). Kannada cinema contributed to Indian parallel cinema. Influential Kannada films in this genre include *Samskara*, *Chomana Dudi* (B. V. Karanth), "*Bangarada Manushya*", "*Mayura*", "*Jeevana Chaitra*", "*Gauri Ganeshha*", "*Udbhava*". Tamil cinema is influenced by Dravidian politics and has a rich tradition of films addressing social issues. Tamil films are distributed to various parts of Asia, Southern Africa, Northern America, Europe, and Oceania. The industry-inspired Tamil film-making in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and Canada.

Known by the sobriquet Tollywood. India's largest number of theatres are located in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, known for producing Telugu feature films. Ramoji Film City, which holds the Guinness World Record for the world's largest film production facility, is located in Hyderabad. The Prasad IMAX in Hyderabad is the world's largest 3D IMAX screen and is the world's most viewed screen. The Telugu cinema created history with S. S. Rajamouli's¹ two parts of magical spectacle *Baahubali: The Beginning* (2015) and *Baahubali 2: The*

¹*Magadheera* is another great movie by him.

Conclusion (2017). The *Baahubali*¹ franchise has achieved the highest-grossing Indian multilingual film franchise of all time globally, with a box office of approximately ₹1,900 crores (US\$270 million) (Sudhir, May 1, 2017).

Women Directors of India

Compared to men, the number of women filmmakers may have been quite less in India, but they have made many memorable films. In 1981, Aparna Sen received the top prize at Manila Film Festival and National Film Award for Best Direction for her *36 Chowringhee Lane* (English). The film portrays the plight of a lonely woman in a society that cares little for questions of female subjectivity and self-fulfillment (Dissanayake, June 1989)." Kalpana Lajmi is known for her films like *Rudali* (Professional Mourner) (1993) and *Daman: A Victim of Marital Violence* (2001). Meera Nair won 23 international awards for her film *Salaam Bombay* (1988), where we can see a real and authentic portrayal of street children. Her film *Mississippi Masala* (1991) which told the story of Ugandan-born Indians displaced in Mississippi.

The film revealed the evident prejudice in African-American and Indian communities. Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), a movie about a Punjabi wedding, was awarded the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival, making Nair the first female recipient of the award (Whitney, 10 September 2001). *Hysterical Blindness* (2002), *Vanity Fair* (2004) and *The Namesake* are other remarkable films of Nair (2006). Deepa Mehta is an Indo-Canadian film director and screenwriter is an internationally acclaimed filmmaker best known for her

¹ The film was a record-breaking commercial success, becoming the highest-grossing Indian film ever, the fifth highest grossing non-English film ever and the highest-grossing sports film worldwide.

Elements Trilogy, *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005). Other well-known women filmmakers include Tanujaa Chandra (*Dushman*, 1998), Nandita Das (*Firaaq*, 2008 and *Manto*, 2018), Zoya Akhtar (*Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, 2011 and *Gully Boy*, 2019), Meghna Gulzar (*Talvar*, 2015; *Raazi*¹, 2018 and *Chhapak*², 2020), Reema Katagi (*Gold*, 2018), Kavitha Lankesh (*Deveeri*, 2000) and Anjali Menon (*Manjadikuru*, 2008).

Conclusion

Both Iranian and Indian cinema have tried to woo the masses through their commercial films. At the same time, they have registered their creative potentials through parallel cinema at the global level. The filmmakers of both countries have exhibited great creative talent and courage despite the enormous difficulties and odds that they have come across. They have always tried to come up with new solutions as answers to their challenges. Various types of experiments tried by leading filmmakers show that there is no shortage of talent in both countries for churning out a movie that is superior in quality at content and technical level. If Iran and India promote filmmaking positively and enthusiastically, there would be a tremendous rise in the number of good films, and more and more talented people will be able to contribute to the process of filmmaking. We have a very good example of Indo-Iranian film collaboration dating back to 1932 when Abdolhossein Sepanta of Iran produced a film called *Lor Girl* (Iran's first talkie released in 1933) in Bombay (now Mumbai) with Indian veteran filmmaker Ardeshir Irani. This type of collaboration will prove beneficial for both countries

¹ A thriller based on Harinder Sikka's novel *Calling Sehmat* became one of the highest grossing Bollywood movie.

² It is a biopic on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal.

keeping in view their common cultures. Indian cinema is relatively popular among the Iranian masses – six to eight Bollywood films make it to Iranian movie theatres each year. Moreover, there is already a recent example of successfully producing a film *Beyond The Clouds* in India under the direction of Majid Majidi.

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Presence of Persian Merchants in Gujarat: Some Inscriptional Evidence

Abha Singh¹

Abstract

Gujarat was well connected with West Asia through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Iran, particularly the Persian Gulf route, was of crucial importance with their nodal port towns of Basra and Hormuz. This article attempts to underline the close cultural contacts established between Iran and Gujarat during the pre-Sultanate period (11-15th centuries) as a result of the trading activities. The article attempts to highlight: a) the presence of Iranian settlements in Gujarat in the 11-15th centuries; b) Irani merchants' permanent settlements in Gujarat; c) level of religious freedom they enjoyed; d) the type of state protection and assurance for the freedom of worship received by them; e) in case of atrocities, what type of protection they received from the state; f) prevalence of religious freedom across communities under the Chalukyan and Vaghela and later under the tutelage of the Delhi Sultans; g) prevalence of communal harmony and an atmosphere of mutual trust in matters of individual worship.

Keywords: Gujarat, Iran, India, Persian Gulf, Trade

Introduction

Gujarat was well connected with West Asia through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Iran, particularly the Persian Gulf route, was of crucial importance with their nodal port towns of Basra and Hormuz. However, prior to the 13th century, it was

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the adjacent entrepot Qays which was of greater importance and where one finds the dominant presence of settlements of Gujarati Bohra community. There were brisk trading activities in the Indian Ocean through these ports to the ports of the Gujarat Sultanate. When Marco Polo visited around 1295, he found it the main center of horse exports to Gujarat (Marco Polo: 1921: 83-84). Abdur Razzaq, who visited Hormuz, speaks aloud about the presence of Gujarati merchants there (Major, 1857: 5-7). The most important entrepot was on the Gujarat coast Cambay with its extended outlets, Gandhar and Ghoga. Visiting in the first half of the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta records that ‘majority of its [i.e., of Cambay] inhabitants are foreign merchants, who continually build there beautiful houses and wonderful mosques – an achievement in which they endeavor to surpass each other (Hussain, 1976 [1953]: 172). No wonder Muhammad bin Tughlaq appointed a foreigner *Malik-ut Tujjar*, the governor of Cambay.

Here, my prime focus is not to quantify the Gujarat-Persian Gulf trading activities instead to underline the close cultural contacts established between Iran and Gujarat during the pre-Sultanate period (11-15th centuries) as a result of the trading activities.

The article attempts to highlight: a) the presence of Iranian settlements in Gujarat in the 11-15th centuries; b) Irani merchants’ permanent settlements in Gujarat; c) level of religious freedom they enjoyed; d) the type of state protection and assurance for the freedom of worship received by them; e) in case of atrocities, what type of protection they received from the state; f) prevalence of religious freedom across communities under the Chalukyan and Vaghela and later under the tutelage of the Delhi Sultans; g) prevalence of communal harmony and an atmosphere of mutual trust in matters of individual worship.

Almost all inscriptions discussed below are in Arabic. These inscriptions of Persian merchants from Cambay appear to have been uprooted from a ‘single’ place, which could be guessed as the common graveyard for the immigrant merchant community. It is difficult to identify their original specific locations, for these inscriptions are largely not *in situ* instead were uprooted and placed within the walls of the tombs of local Pir Parvar Shah/Parwaz Shah and at a little away, within the same complex, in the tomb wall of Pir Tajuddin.

Inscription 1

The first inscription pertains to a settlement of Kirmani merchants from Bamm (a fortress town in the Kirman province):

Line 3: ‘He who builds for Allah a mosque, even if it be like the nest of a sand-grouse. Allah builds for him a house in Paradise’. This is (the result) of what Allah has guided

Line 4: and helped him with, in the construction of this Jami mosque and its buildings in *toto* and in entirety, from his personal wealth

Line 5: granted to him by Allah through His benevolence and generosity, purely for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, (by) the creature, expectant of the mercy of Allah, may He be exalted and glorified.

Line 6: Said, son of Abu Sharaf, son of Ali, son of Shapur al-Bammi, may Allah pardon him and his parents. And this (construction) took place

Line 7: on the date in the month of Allah, Muharram, (of the) year six hundred and fifteen (April 1218 AD). And may Allah's blessings be upon Muhammad and all his progeny.

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 6-7

The above inscription is presently emplaced in the western wall of the prayer chamber above the pulpit on a modern Jami mosque in Salwa mohallah, Cambay. The inscription is dated AH 615/1218 CE. Like all the early Muslim inscriptions, it also was deeply impacted by the Sanskrit style of writing inscriptions, and thus it was incised and not engraved as was the case with later Arabic and Persian inscriptions. This is the earliest Muslim inscription to be found in Gujarat. The inscription belongs to the Chalukyan period when the Chalukyan ruler Bhimadeva II (1178-1242) was the ruler of Gujarat.

Interestingly, when the author of *Jawami-ul Hikaya*, Muhammad Awfi, visited Gujarat, he also saw this Jami mosque and referred to its building by Sa'id on the ruins of the existing mosque. Elliot (Elliot, 1868: 164) mentions the name of the builder as Sa'id Sharaf Tamin. However, the inscriptional reading suggests that the mosque was constructed by Said, son of Abu Sharaf al-Bammi. The use of the *nisbah* al-Bammi confirms his association with Kirman.

Nonetheless, Awfi's account is of great interest to understand the Irani merchants' presence in the region as well as the history of the construction of the Jami mosque. The history of the construction of the Jami mosque appears to date back to pre-Siddharaja Jayasimha (1092-1142). Awfi records that during the reign of Siddharaja Jaysimha on account of the instigation of Mughhs (*muqaddams*)¹.

¹ Mugh is often used for Zoroastrians. Elliot (1868, Vol. II, p.163) has used the word in this sense. He calls them fire-worshippers. S.H. Hodiwala (Studies in Indo-Muslim History, Bombay, 1939,

They destroyed the minaret of the mosque and burnt it; the scuffle resulted in the killing of eighty Muslims. The *khatib* (one who reads the Friday sermons) of the mosque Ali escaped and reported the matter to King Siddharaja, who personally enquired the truth of the case.

Once confirmed of the oppression of the Muslims, he not only punished the leaders of the community (Brahmins, Parsas, Mahan [Mahatan], Nawala [Borala?], Seoda and Mughs [*muqaddams*]¹) but also gave Ali four parasols and one lakh Balohas to get the damages repaired. Awfi informs that when he visited the mosque, he saw the parasols (*chhatr*) lying in the mosque and were available for viewing only on special occasions. Awfi's account is of great value, and interest for it connects the thread of the construction of the mosque vis-à-vis the liberal atmosphere of tolerance and accommodation prevailed in Gujarat in general and under the Chalukyas in particular.

The mosque was intact till a few years when Awfi visited, which was again destroyed by the Malwa king's invasion of Gujarat, and then it was rebuilt. The present inscription speaks of the building of the mosque the second time. Awfi's account suggests the presence of the mosque even prior to Siddharaja Jaysimha's (1092-1142) reign, also indicates the presence of the Muslim/Iranian settlements in Cambay even dates back prior to the tenth century CE. This time Said again rebuilt the structure out of his own expenses. Awfi informs that he erected four minarets with golden cupolas.

pp. 172-173) believes them to be Jains. However, Z.A. Desai argues that in the Bankipur manuscript of Awfi the word is muqaddam not Mugh which appears to be a correct reading looking at the people received punishments.

¹ Elliot (1868, Vol. II, p. 164), however, does not furnish the names of the leaders which are provided with by Z.A. Desai, 'Arabic Inscriptions of the Rajput Period from Gujarat', *Epigraphia Indica* (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961, p. 164.

Inscription 2

It appears that al-Bammi extended family mentioned in the above inscription had their permanent settlements in Cambay. Another inscription dated 1249 CE from Cambay belongs to Abu Sharaf al-Bammi:

Line 4: This is the grave of the weak creature, the drowned one ,

Line 5: the martyr, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted,

Line 6: Sharafud-Din Abu Sharaf, son of Abi Shams, son of Abi Sharaf

Line 7: al-Bammi, may Allah pardon him, his parents and all the Muslims.

Line 8: (He died) on the date, (viz.) the night of Monday, the 26th

Line 9: of Dhil-Hijja, year (A.H.) six hundred and forty-six (11th April 1249 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 10

The inscription belongs to Vaghela king Vishaldeva (1245-1261). The deceased Abu Sharaf al-Bammi does not appear to be the father of Said of the above inscription (1) for the father of Abu Sharaf mentioned here is Abi Shams, not Ali as mentioned in the above inscription. Interestingly, this inscription is found in the same compound of the tomb of Pir Tajuddin (discussed in the following inscription). It suggests that it was probably uprooted from the common graveyard of Irani merchants, where also buried merchants of al-Qazwin (see Inscription 4). Desai believes that since the word *al-ghariq ash shahid* is used for

him, he appears to have drowned during one of the trading voyages (Desai, 1961:9).

Inscription 3

This is the third tombstone dated 1300 CE that belonged to al-Bammi extended family. The reference of another member Kamaluddin Sulaiman, from another epitaph (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1959-60, Epigraph No. 118) from Cambay, suggests that the al-Bammi family had longstanding ties with Cambay and involved in trade for long and the family was settled at Cambay permanently. The inscription reads:

Line 3: This is the grave of the weak creature, the stranger (or emigrant), the one who is called unto Allah's mercy and pardoned,

Line 4: the sinful, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted, Kamaluddin

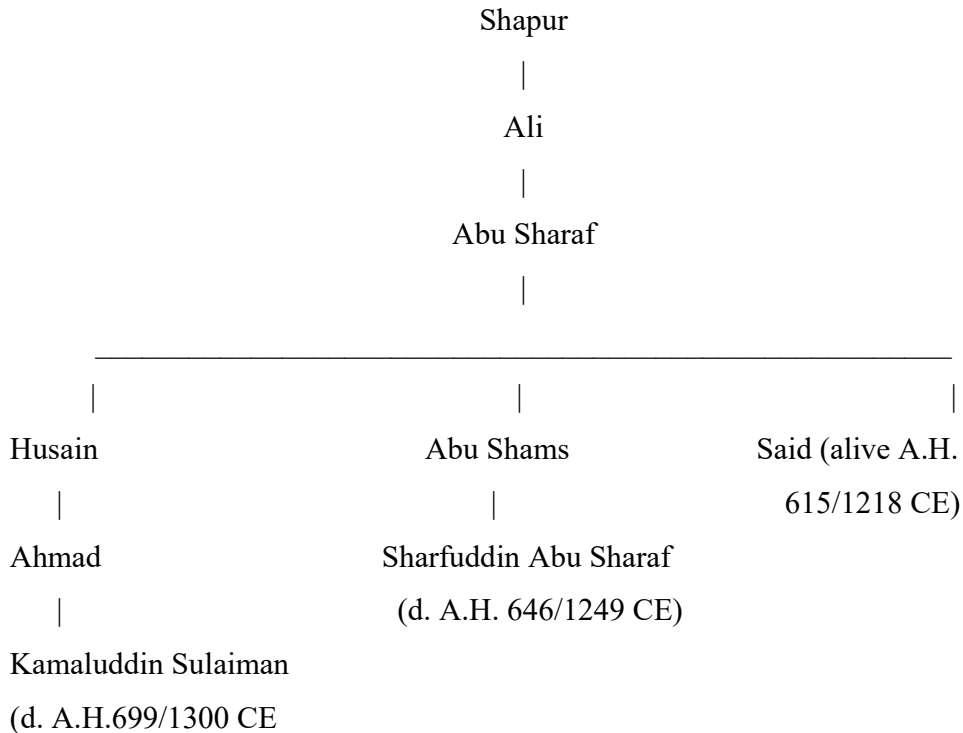
Line 5: Sulaiman, son of Ahmad, son of Husain, son of Abi Sharaf al-Bammi (lit. of Bamm), may Allah cover him

Line 6: with (His) mercy and pleasure and settle him in the abode of Paradise. He died on Mon

Line 7: day, the last day of (the month of) Jumada the First (of the) year (A.H.) nine and ninety and six hundred (the last day i.e. 30th Jumada I 699=22 February 1300).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971 : 7

Z. A. Desai (Desai, 1971:5) has traced the family tree of this al-Bammi family:



However, unlike the first two, Kamaluddin Sulaiman does not seem to be the permanent settler at Cambay. The word ‘stranger’ (*al-gharib*; emigrant, foreigner) suggests that he probably was a permanent settler of Iran and visited Cambay on a trading voyage and accidentally died there. Nonetheless, his extended family was very much settled there through whom they might have conducted business at Cambay. In all likelihood, they had a partnership in trade between Iran and Gujarat. Though it is difficult to discern their *modus operandi*, it clearly suggests that as early as the thirteenth century, trading networks/partnerships of the extended family were very much in extant, which served as connecting link in

supplying/selling commodities from one place to another, perhaps similar the type of network which was operating among the Multani merchants through the overland route during this period.

Inscription 4

The present inscription is engraved in the compound of the tomb of Pir Tajuddin Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini at Cambay. The tombstone embedded in the wall enclosure of Tajuddin's tomb belongs to Aminuddin Abul Mahasin, son of Ardashir al-Ahwi:

Line 5: This is the grave of the weak and the sinful creature,

Line 6: the supplicant, the dependant on the mercy of Allah the Exalted,

Line 7: Aminuddin Abul Mahasin, son of Ardashir

Line 8: al-Ahwi, (who) died on Wednesday, the 10th of

Line 9: the month of Muharram, year (A.H.) thirty and six hundred (27th October 1232 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 7

The inscription is dated 1232 CE and belonged to the reign of Chalukya king Bhimadeva II. Z.A. Desai rates it the second earliest Muslim inscription of Gujarat (Desai, 1961:4). Interestingly, the script is Kufi which is otherwise used only in a few inscriptions. The *nisbah* al-Ahwi suggests his association with Ahwaz (Iran).

Inscription 5

The present inscription at Cambay is engraved on the tombstone of a Qazwini merchant Tajuddin Muhamad, son of Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini dated 1301 CE. This four-walled enclosure possesses three tombs. The middle grave belongs to Pir Tajuddin. Besides the epitaph of Tajuddin, there are four more headstones in the walled enclosure, two of which I have already discussed above. The tomb is presently revered as the tomb of Pir Tajuddin at Cambay:

Line 3: This is the grave of the weak creature, hopeful of the mercy of Allah,

Line 4: the Exalted, Tajuddin Muhammad son of Muhammad az-Zakariyya al-Qazwini (lit. of Qazwin)

Line 5: may Allah cover him with (His) mercy and pleasure and settle him in the abode of Paradise.

Line 6: And he died on Monday, the ninth of the month of Jumada the Second (of the) year (A.H.) 700 (9 Jumada II 700=19 February, 1301).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 8

The *nisbah* al-Qazwini confirms his lineage to Persia. He was an Irani migrant merchant who probably migrated to Cambay and settled there. How he assumed the position of a *pir* (saint) from a merchant cannot be stated clearly nonetheless probably on account of his deeds and spirituality sometime later, his tomb assumed the status of a *pir* for in the epitaph, he is simply mentioned as Tajuddin Muhammad.

Nonetheless, it does suggest the prominent position of Tajuddin in the then Gujarati society of Cambay. Even the inscription is inscribed on marble and written in arch shape indicates his special position in the then society [till Akbar's period use of marble was mainly confined to religious places or Sufi shrines]. A foreigner and that too a merchant acquiring the status of a *pir* suggests the prominence of Persians as well as their acceptance and assimilation in the Gujarat society.

Inscription 6

The present inscription at Cambay must have engraved initially on the tombstone of a Qazwini merchant Tajuddin Iwaz, son of Abdul Aziz al-Qazwini, dated 1329 CE. However, it's not *in situ* now. Presently the epitaph is embedded within the north wall of the tomb of Bahlul Shahid in the Tin Limdi (Chhipwal) locality of the town.:

Line 4: This is the grave of the creature taken into (Allah's) mercy and pardoned, Tajuddin Iwad, son of

Line 5: Abdul Aziz Qazwini (i.e. of Qazwin), may Allah cover him with His mercy and pardon and settle him in the centre

Line 6: of His Paradise. He died on Monday, the seventh (of the) month of Muharram (of the) year (A.H.) thirty and seven hundred (7 Muharram 730=31 December 1329).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 27

The genealogies of the deceased given in inscriptions 5&6 are so brief to discern any connection between the two. Nonetheless, it confirms the presence of Qazwini merchants in Cambay in considerable numbers.

Inscription 7

Another epitaph found from Cambay dated 1284 is found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period. The epitaph does not originally belong to the present tomb. The Arabic inscription reads:

Line 3: This is the grave of the fortunate, the martyr, of lofty rank and lineage, the one who departed from the house of transitoriness (i.e. the world)

Line 4: to the house of permanence (i.e. the next world), hopeful of the mercy of the Lord and His pleasure, Sharfuddin Murtada,

Line 5: son of Muhammad, son of al-Hasanal-Musawi al-Husaini of Astrabad, may Allah cover him with His pleasure and lodge him in

Line 6: the parlour of Truth in His paradise. The departure took place in the early hours of Thursday of the month of

Line 9: Rabi-ul Akhar, year six hundred and eighty-three of the Hijra (June-July 1284 A.D.). May salutations and peace be on the chief of the mortals, Muhammad and upon his chosen excellent descendants.

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 18

Though by the epitaph, nothing much can be discerned about the identity of Sharfuddin Murtaza, whether he was a merchant or a Sufi. The *nisbah* Astrabad (modern Gorgan, Iran) suggests that he had Persian descent. Nonetheless, three things suggest his noble lineage and Sufistic/noble life. Firstly, the epitaph is

incised in marble, which was often, as mentioned earlier, was often associated with people of noble lineage, or could be a *darvesh*. In all likelihood, he appears to be a wealthy merchant who got settled at Cambay. Secondly, the word used for him is martyr, which again suggests his noble personality.

Inscription 8

Another epitaph found from Cambay is dated 1287, is again found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period. Interestingly, the inscription is partly inscribed in Arabic and contains verses in Persian. Poetry appears to be that of the deceased who wrote with the nickname 'Salari'. The inscription is also important in the sense that it provides the earliest specimen of Persian poetry in Gujarat. Its long inscription contains 13 lines reads:

Line 12: This is the grave of the great chief (*sadr*), one who unto
Allah's mercy, Sultanul Muhaqqiqin (lit., ornament
of the religious fraternity, Truth and Religion),

Line 13: Ali, son of Salar, son of Ali al-Yazdi (i.e.) of Yazd who
died on Sunday, the 23rd Dhil Hijja year (A.H.) six
hundred and eighty-five (9th February 1287 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 22

The high-sounding title of religious nature suggests that Zainuddin Ali Salari was not only a prominent personality of the time but also a man of piety and greatly revered too in society. He also appears to be a Persian poet of repute that even his own verses (*ghazal* and *rubai*) were inscribed over his tombstone. It also reflects the impact of the Persian renaissance that can be felt as early as the 13th

century in Western India, in spite of the Arab dominance in the region. One can also conjecture why the tomb complex of Parwaz Shahid was known as *pir's dargah*. All four inscriptions (Nos.2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) indicate the deceased as men of piety.

Inscription 9

Another epitaph from Cambay, dated 1291, is again found on the grave of Parwaz Shahid. Clearly, the epitaph belonged to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's period (c.1274-1296). The inscription reads:

(B) Line 1: the pardoned, the magnificent chief, the great and glorious master, king,

Line 2: of merchants and prince of shipmasters, Izzudd-Dunya wad-Din, Nasir

Line 3: ul-Islam wal-Mualimin (lit. glory of the State and the Religion, helper of Islam and the Muslims), al-Haji Ibrahim, son of Muhammad, son of Ali Al-Irbili,

Line 4: commonly known as Fatolia, may Allah cover him with (His) mercy and pleasure and grant him abode in the centre of

Line 5: the paradise. He died on the day of Friday, middle of Junada II, year (A.H.) six hundred and ninety (15 June 1291 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 24

Haji Ibrahim originally belonged to Irbil, near Mosul, Iraq. Again the inscription confirms the presence of prominent Persian merchants at Cambay. Haji Ibrahim appears to be an extremely rich and famous Persian merchant. He seems to have extended family settled in Cambay and enjoyed extreme prominence to the extent that the family was commonly known by the local nickname Fatolia. Two other inscriptions carrying the same nickname Fatolia survive from Cambay: one is of 1336. It reads Shamsuddin Muhammad, son of Abu Bakr Irbili (with the name Fatolia) died A.H. 736=1336; another was the tombstone of Haji Abu Bakr, son of Ali, son of Abu Bakr Irbili (d. A.H. 710=1310) (*Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1959-60:122-123*).

Inscription 10

The present epitaph found on the eastern wall of the grave of Parwaz Shahid from Cambay dated 1310. This is the second epitaph belonging to a member of the Irbili family of Persia settled at Cambay. The inscription reads:

Line 5: ...Haji Abu Bakr, son of Ali, son of Abu Bakr

Line 6: Irbili (i.e. of Irbil, near Mosul), May Allah illumine his
grave with His ample pardon. He died on
Wednesday,

Line 7: the twenty-fifth of (the month of) Muharram (of the)
year (A.H.) ten and seven hundred (25th Muharram
710=24 June 1310).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 15

Inscription 11

This inscription again belongs to the Irbili family that comes from Cambay dated 1336 is again found on the eastern wall of the grave of Parwaz Shahid. The inscription reads:

Lines 3&4: ...This is the grave of the [creature?]

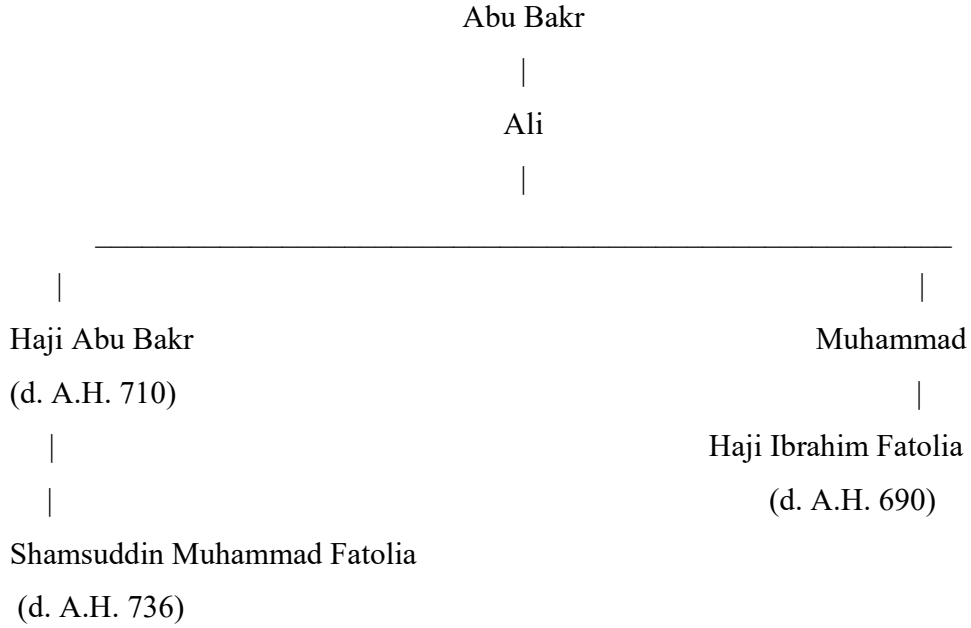
Line 5: Shamsuddin Muhammad, son of the one who is received into (Allah's) mercy, namely Abu Bakr,

Line 6: Irbili (i.e. of Irbil), *alias* Fatolia, May Allah pardon him. (He died) on

Line 7: the date twenty-fifth (of the month of) Dhul-Qada (of the) year (A.H.) six and thirty and seven hundred (25 Dhul-Qada 736= 5 July 1336).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 47-48

The above three inscriptions (9-11) that belong to the Irbili family from Mosul are of great importance. They throw light on the prominence of the family not only as prominent merchants (in inscription 9, the high-sounding titles were attributed to al-Haji Ibrahim – the magnificent chief, the great and glorious master, king of merchants and prince of shipmasters, Izzudd-Dunya wad-Din, Nasir ul-Islam wal-Mualimin (lit. glory of the State and the Religion, helper of Islam and the Muslims) but also the family appears to have enjoyed high status within the society that people gave them the title *Fatolia* and the family was commonly known by that cognomen. The following genealogy is traced by Z.A. Desai (Desai, 1971: 13) about the *Fatolia* family:



The above family tree and the sobriquet *Fatolia* enjoyed by the family not only suggest theirs being the prominent merchant family in Cambay but also their long settlements and the influence in the region.

Inscription 12

Inscription from Prabhas Patan, commonly known as Somnath/Patan/Somnath Patan/Deopattan, is extremely fascinating and important.¹ It is a bilingual Arabic/Sanskrit inscription, speaks of a constuction of a mosque at Sikottari Mahayanpal in the outskirts of Somnath. Its Sanskrit version is more elaborate than its Arabic version. It is a very long inscription of twenty eight lines. Its

¹ Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 12-15. Its Sanskrit version is given and translated by E.Hultzsch, 'A Grant of Arjunadeva of Gujarat, dated 1264 A.D.', Indian Antiquary, Vol. XI (1882), pp. 241-245; Sarkar, D.C., Epigraphia Indica, vol. XXXIV, part IV, pp. 141-150.

Sanskrit version was uprooted and taken out from its original place at somepoint of time to temple of Harasiddha Mata at Veraval. The present Arabic inscription is at Qazi mosque façade in Qazi Mohallah. However, the inscription of the mosque's central *mehrab* reads that the mosque was built by Mahmud, son of Usman suggests that even the Arabic version of the inscription does not originally belong to the present mosque and must have placed sometime at a later date. Though both Sanskrit and Arabic versions tally in spirit, the Sanskrit version is better preserved as well as more detailed, particularly in terms of the details provided for the maintenance of the mosque; Arabic version speaks only briefly about that.

The present inscription mentions the construction of a mosque dated 27th Ramazan 662 AH/23rd July, 1264 CE in the outskirts of Somnath by a wealthy merchant and a ship-owner Nuruddin Piroz, son of Khwaja Abu Ibrahim, son of Muhammad al-Iraqi of Hormuz. Nuruddin had business ties at Somnath and appeared to be an influential merchant working closely with the local Hindu merchants.

The inscription speaks of his close ties with the leading man of the town, Rajakula Sri Chhada, who sold his piece of land to him in the presence of Thakkur Sri Palugideva, Ranak Sri Somesvaradeva, Thakkur Sri Ramdeva, Thakkur Sri Bhimsila and others. Piruz not only bought the land for the construction of the mosque but also ensured the recurring expenses of the mosque: for the expenses of oil for lamps, water, for the maintenance of *Imam*, *muazzim* (one who gives *azan*; caller of prayers), monthly reader of the *Quran*, expenses of festivals, annual whitewash, repairs etc., and the surplus was to be sent to Mecca and Medina. To ensure the regular income, he allotted one

palladika, one *danapala* (belonging to one oil mill); and two shops in front of the mosque which he bought from Kilhandeva, Lunasiha, Asadhar, and others.

The Arabic version also does not mention the reigning Vaghela king of Gujarat, Arjunadeva. However, high-sounding titles attributed to Nuruddin Piroz and his father are missing from the Sanskrit inscription. Like other early Gujarat Arabic inscriptions, this is also not in relief but incised in tune with the Sanskrit inscriptions of the time.

Inscription conveys much more than the presence of Persian merchants. Somnath, where the mosque was constructed, was and still is one of the most revered places of the Hindus and was their chief temple town.

In such a place, a grant of permission not only to buy land for the mosque's construction but also ensure its long-term maintenance by Arjunadeva, the Vaghela king, suggests the presence of an extreme level of cordiality and an atmosphere of communal harmony. The land sold belonged to a Hindu, and all those who held the surety were Hindus.

Piruz was not only a very prominent Persian merchant who settled there but probably possessed property in the region and had close working relations and friendship with the then prominent person of the city, Rajakula Sri Chhada, who himself had sold the land and granted permission to construct the mosque over his land.

Inscription 13

The present inscription pertains to Pattan, also known as Anhilwara, Nahrwara. It was the capital of the Chalukyan kings of Gujarat. The inscription is again on the tombstone, records the death of a Persian merchant:

Line 2-3:This is the grave of

Line 4: the needy creature, hopeful of his Gracious Lord,

Line5: Fakhruddin Ibrahim, son of Abdul Malik, son of Siddiq,
the merchant,

Line 6: of Shahrzur, may Allah the Exalted cover him with His
Mercy.

Line 9: He died in (the month of) Muharram, year six hundred and
eighty-one (of the Hijra) (April-May, 1282 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 16

The epitaph presently incised in the wall of a mosque in Kali Bazar in Pattan suggests that it was perhaps later placed into the wall of the mosque and didn't belong originally to the mosque. The inscription belongs to Vaghela king Sarangdeva's (c.1274-1296) period. The deceased appears to be originally from Shahrzur, near Babylon, Iraq.

The present inscription not only speaks about the widespread presence of Persian merchants but also attests to the first inscripational reference to the presence of Muslims in the Chalukyan capital town Pattan.

Inscription 14

The present inscription belongs to Junagarh, a town till 1472 that remained a stronghold of the Rajputs when Mahmud Shah I of Gujarat finally occupied and assimilated it into the Gujarat Sultanate and renamed it Mustafabad. The present inscription pertains to mosque construction in 1286-87 suggests that again it was

the time when in Gujarat Vaghela ruler Sarangdev was ruling; while Junagarh was under the tutelage of Chudasama chiefs. The inscription reads:

This auspicious mosque was ordered to be constructed by the generous, magnificent, benevolent, (divinely) supported and respected chief, prince of chiefs and shipmasters, the mainstay of the Hajj (pilgrims) and the holy cities (Mecca and Medina), Afifud-Dunya wad'Din Abul Qasim, son of Ali al-Iraji (of Iraj), in the hope of earning the pleasure of Allah, May Allah accept it from him and his parents, in the (Hijra) year six hundred and eighty-five (1286-1287 A.D.).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1961: 19

The inscription is of immense importance. It suggests the presence of a sizable Muslim population at Junagarh, for which a need was felt to construct a mosque. Again, it also confirms the presence of an extremely tolerant and harmonious atmosphere among the communities and suggests the presence of complete religious freedom to the extent that even a migrant settler could build a mosque out of his own efforts. Secondly, Abul Qasim again appears to be a wealthy Persian (from Iraj, Fars) merchant who owned a number of ships and, apart from dealing with merchandise, was also quite active in organizing Hajj pilgrims there. That in turn also suggests that even as early as the thirteenth century, Gujarat emerged as a prominent centre of Hajj pilgrim transportation.

Inscription 15

The present inscription is of utmost importance. It belongs to Muhammad bin Tughlaq's period. This suggests the peak of Persian merchants' influence and

dominance in Gujarat in general and Cambay in particular. The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta (Hussain, 1976: 67-68) speaks aloud about him and also records his death. The inscription reads:

Line 6: This is the grave of the weak creature, the fortunate, the martyr, the one taken into Allah's mercy, the pardoned, Malik-i-

Line 7: Muluki'sh-Sharq wal-Wuzara (lit. the prince among the princes of the east and Ministers) one who is celebrated in Arabia and other Islamic countries, Zakiud-Daulat

Line 8: wad-Din (lit. one who is just in the matters of State and Religion), 'Umar son of Ahmad al-Kazaruni entitled Parviz Malik, may the Exalted Allah cover him,

Line 9: with (His) mercy and pardon and settle him in the abode of Paradise, one who returned to the mercy

Line 10: of the Exalted Allah, on Wednesday, the ninth of (the month of) Safar (of the) year (A.H.) four and thirty and seven hundred (9 Safar 734=22 October, 1333).

Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement), 1971: 43

The inscription is *in situ* and embedded in the tomb housed in the present Jami mosque of the town. Unfortunately, while on his way to Delhi, probably just outside Cambay, Malik-ut Tujjar was killed (that's why in the inscription he is referred to as 'martyr prince') otherwise, as reported by Ibn Battuta, Muhammad bin Tughlaq even promised him the *wizarat* (Ibid) that's the reason why he was addressed as Malik-i-Muluki'sh-Sharq wal-Wuzara in the inscription. Muhammad bin Tughlaq granted him the *iqta* of Cambay and gave the charge of

the city to him. The present inscription epitomizes the peak of the Persian merchant's influence at Cambay.

Along with Malik-ut Tujjar's tombstone, in the same complex, there also survive two more epitaphs on the graves one, of his wife Fatima (dated 1382) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 55-56), and another that of his slave Khwaja (dated 1326) (Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy: 1971: 41).

Besides the epitaphs mentioned above, there also survive many more such epitaphs of a number of Persian merchants at Cambay. In fact, Parvaz Shahid's tomb contains many more such inscriptions, though they are not *in situ*. Nonetheless, their displacement to Parvaz Shahid's tomb is a blessing, for they survived to posterity; otherwise, these would have been lost in the ravages of time. Another such epitaph is recovered from the tomb of Parvaz Shahid's southern wall. It is that of Zainuddin Ali, son of Najib, son of Hamid al-Hanjuri (Hanjur, near Al-Laqbah, Syria). The last of the series of the tombstones that survived in the Pir Tajuddin's tomb complex is that of another prominent merchant mentioned as 'chief of merchants, pride among the great' that of Khwaja Asil, son of Umar, son of Saduddin, dated 1395 (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 57-58).

Cambay was such a large settlement of Persian merchants that it accompanied the migration and settlements of religious dignitaries and scholars. One such epitaph is that of Fakhruddin Ahmad, son of Husain, son of Abu Bakr, *alias* al-Qaziul-Isfahani i.e. Isfahani Qazi (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 21-22). He probably served as local Qazi at Cambay. The tombstone dated 1321 is presently embedded in the southern wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shah and not *in situ*.

Another such tombstone is that of Imam Maulana Muhammad, son of Ahmad al-Jauhar al-Farsi (lit. of Fars) dated 24 Rajab 731/3 May 1331, survives from the western wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shahid. The epitaph applauds the deceased as ‘Maulana, the greatest Imam’ Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 31-32). He appears to be a man of great learning and piety and enjoyed utmost respect in society. A similar tombstone of another righteous and pious person, addressed as ‘great Shaikh’, is that of Jamaluddin, Haji Muhammad, son of Abdullah *alias Kukband* (?), which survives at the west wall of the Faraspur/Piraspur ki Masjid dated 1376 Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 53-54).

Persian merchants' establishments at Cambay do not appear to be just transitory settlements. It seems that their families too migrated along with them, and they established their permanent settlements at Cambay. This is confirmed by some tombstones of the ladies and the sons of the merchants. One such inscription dated 1335 that survives on Parvaz Shahid's tomb is that of Kamaluddin Kamal, son of a Persian merchant Husain al-Basri. In the inscription, the deceased is addressed as ‘dear son’ suggests that probably during his father's lifetime, he died, and the tombstone was built by the father in Memorium (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 45).

Similarly, there is another such epitaph on the tomb of Bibi Rani daughter of Saiyyid Tajuddin Husain al-Alavi dated 1337 at present village Nagara, five kilometres north of Cambay (old Cambay) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 48). It clearly suggests that the deceased belonged to a respected Saiyyid family. Another inscription dated 1340 embedded in the eastern wall of the tomb of Parvaz Shahid pertains to daughter of the prince of merchants Sad (?) (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 50-51). Clearly the merchant was living at Cambay along with his family. Another

tombstone embedded in the west wall of Parvaz Shahid's tomb pertains to the grave of Lady Sharaf, daughter of Kamaluddin Muhammad, son of Abdul Baqi, son of Amir, son of Tarahan Ansari dated 1345 (Epigraphia Indica, 1971: 52-53).

Conclusion

The above description clearly points out the prominence of Persian merchants in the province of Gujarat. Among the Persian merchant families of Persia Al-Bammis and the *Fatolias* (Irbilis) appear to be of great prominence. Besides them, we get the reference of the settlements of merchants from Isfahan, Basra, Hormuz, Fars, Qazwin, Hanjur, Kazarun and Kirman. These families confirm Ibn Battuta's statement regarding the dominance of Persian merchants (foreign settlers) at Cambay. However, though Cambay was the major centre, where Persian merchants' settlements were largest, the Persian settlements were not only along with the coastal towns, but their penetration is clearly visible into the interiors.

Cambay was the chief connection with Qays/Hormuz and ports of Persian Gulf as well as the Red Sea during the 10-15th century. Clearly, the spread of Persian settlements was not confined to Cambay; instead, it was spread all over Gujarat.

Even the prominent religious centre of the Hindus, Somnath, appears to have big Persian settlements there. Persians were scattered all over, as far as Junagarh and Anhilwara (the capital town of the Chalukyas). Inscriptions corroborate the accounts of Arab travellers like Al-Masudi, Istakhri, Ibn Hauqal, who speak aloud the presence of Muslim merchants in Gujarat and their flourishing trading activities. Another point to ponder is that under the Chalukyan rule, Muslim

settlers enjoyed complete freedom – they were not only granted space for settlements but had the freedom to construct mosques. Persian merchants appear to have constructed mosques at Cambay and Somnath Pattan, suggesting tolerance and communal harmony. In one instance in Cambay when mosque was damaged by the rogues Chalukyan king not only ordered for its restoration but also funded the repairs. Further, even they were allowed to send the excess income earned from the property at Cambay to Mecca and Medina.

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Tangible Intersections of India & Iran: The Meherjirana Library

Shernaz Cama¹

Abstract

The hybrid culture of the Parsi Zoroastrians, with its ancient oral traditions yet seamless acceptance of modernity, privilege, and position from the 19th century onwards and then facing drastic demographic decline from the 20th century, has enough paradoxes to call for an in-depth analysis by cultural historians. This article focuses on the cross-national cultural heritage represented in our tradition. The research observation primarily revolves around one of the most significant pieces of Zoroastrians tradition, namely The Meherjirana Library.

Keywords: Meherjirana Library, Zoroastrianism, Parsis, traditions

Cultural memory reflects the similarities and diversity of people across boundaries of time and space, but it is fragile. Every day, irreplaceable parts of this memory disappear forever. UNESCO, the world agency responsible for protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage, in 1992, launched the Memory of the World Programme to guard against a globally growing “collective amnesia”.

Fortunately, tradition is no longer an inappropriate word; it has been accorded a new legitimacy in the post-modern world, while academic discourse today acknowledges the need for a more holistic approach towards culture. Each of us ‘lives at the intersection’ of many narratives, but the hybrid culture of the Parsi

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Zoroastrians, with its ancient oral traditions yet seamless acceptance of modernity, privilege, and position from the 19th century onwards and then facing drastic demographic decline from the 20th century, has enough paradoxes to call for an in-depth analysis by cultural historians.

Iran stands at a meeting point between East and West. It had become an essential stop on the old Silk Route. When the Zoroastrians left Iran for India, there had already been an intersection of cultures. However, when Arab invasions destroyed the ancient Zoroastrian temples and texts, it was oral memory that kept the religion alive in the new homeland. Navsari, *Dharam-ni-tekri* or Pinnacle of religion, became the center of the priesthood and at its heart, along with the Atash Behram, was the repository of priestly knowledge: The Meherjirana Library.



Navsari Atash Behram



The First Dastoor Meherjirana Library

This library is named after one of the most significant figures in the history of the Parsi community. In 1534 AD (905 AY), a boy was born in Navsari into a priestly family. The son of Rana Jesang, he was called Mahyar (Meherji) Rana. Meherji Rana, adopted into the priestly lineage of his paternal uncle Vaccha Jesang, was a man renowned for his piety and learning. According to a Persian biography in the library of the *Māhyārnāma* (Manuscript F-81), Meherji Rana was chosen by the Mughal governor at Surat to have an audience with Emperor Akbar to explain the Zoroastrian religion. The Emperor and the priest shared the Persian language, which perhaps brought them closer. As Akbar was

interested in creating a syncretism of all religions and thoughts, he was keen to learn more about the Zoroastrian faith of his Persian ancestors.

He invited Dastur Meherjirana to his Court at Fatehpur Sikri; this history has passed down not just in oral tradition but in the Manuscripts and *Firman* from Emperor Akbar to the First Dastur Meherjirana. This *Firman*, given as a token of the high esteem with which the Mughal Emperor regarded this hitherto unknown Zoroastrian priest, was probably presented during Dastur Meherjirana's visit to the Imperial Court at Fatepur Sikri in 1578.



Akbar Sanad



The 16th Dastoor Meherjirana stands before the portrait of the First Dastoor Meherjirana reciting the Vanant Yasht, which was recited at Akbar's Court

An astonishing collection of correspondence in Persian is available at the Meherjirana Library, which provides links not only with the Mughal Court but also with the Iranian Zarthushtis. It contains letters by Akbar's Prime Minister Abul Fazl, Persian verses in praise of Emperor Jehangir composed by Kekobadji Mahiar Rana, various stories ranging from 17th centuries stories for children such as the "*Tuti-Nameh*" (*Tales of a Parrot*) to the tale of *Gulistan* and *Laila*

Majnun. There are important manuscripts on Divination as well as Medicine, Persian Lexicons, Persian histories, various treatises on astronomy and astrology, and even a Cookery book and a book by a Parsi Priest on Yoga.



A Depiction of ritual from an Avestan Manuscript at the MRL

The Persian books on Zoroastrian Theology, such as the manuscript written by Sheikh Abdul Samad of Hansot, revealed that Zoroastrianism was being discussed in the intellectual circles of Mughal India. Religious discussions and debates are reflected in manuscripts on Sufism, Christianity and Islam. Some of the Persian documents were presented to the library by descendants of Ervad Hormasji Behramji Dastur Meherjirana and included the *Sanads*, *Firmans*, *Parvanas* and other aspects or transfer of property dealing with the *Jagir* (large estate) bestowed by Akbar on the First Dastur Meherjirana.

It is little known how deeply Meherjirana and the Zoroastrian faith influenced Akbar. Legend has spoken of the importance of Zoroastrianism in the *Din-I-Illahi*, the religion that Akbar attempted to create out of all the philosophies of the Indian subcontinent. Here we had proof of the historical connections, manuscripts and letters from this period provide important documentation of the cross-cultural syncretism, which was the base of the Mughal Empire at its zenith.

During his stay at the court from 1578-9 AD, Meherji Rana impressed the emperor so much that according to the Mughal court historian ‘Abd al-Qādir al-

Badā'ūnī, the emperor ordered his vizier Abu 'l-Fazl to keep a fire burning day and night at the court. According to the traditional account found in the *Māhyārnāma*, Meherji Rana thwarted the sorcery of a Hindu priest called Jagatguru, who, according to the story, had caused a plate to levitate into the sky, appearing like a second sun. A famous *Khyal* (song) of Tansen describes the legend of Dastur Meherjirana's miracle in destroying this black magic at Akbar's Court. Before Meherji Rana left the court, he was presented with a *jāgīr* or land grant by the emperor, receiving property in an area called Ghelkhadi, near the modern town of Navsari.



Depiction, with close up of Dastoor Meherjirana defeating evil at Akbar's Court

Meherji Rana's presence in Akbar's court was a great historic incident for not only the Parsis of Navsari but for the whole Parsi community. Appreciating this, when he returned to Navsari, all the priests accepted him as the head of the Navsari priests. For the first time, the title of High Priest, Vada Dastur, was bestowed. Therefore, he became famous as the First Dastoor Meherji Rana, beginning a priestly lineage that continues to the present day. For almost 50 years (1960-2010), the Navsari community was served by Marhum Dastoor Meherji Kekobad Dastoor Meherji Rana, the sixteenth member of the Meherjirana family

to bear the title Dastoor. On January 25, 2010, Kaikhushroo Navroze Dastoor was chosen as the seventeenth Dastoor Meherji Rana. Today, after his demise, the 18th Dastur Kaikhushru Ravji Meherjirana is now the Head Priest in Navsari.

The First Dastoor Meherjirana Library has been continuously serving the people of Navsari, as well as the Parsi and scholarly community, for more than 135 years. In 1872, a wealthy Mumbai Parsi, named Navsariwala Seth Burjor Bamanji Padam commissioned a building to be erected on his own land, known as Lakkad Falia, and the First Dastoor Meherji Rana Library was born.

The Meherjirana Library is unique in that it was established by the scions of the Meherjirana family of Dasturs who have not only collected but also often themselves transcribed a large collection of manuscripts. Dasturji Erachji Meherjirana's collection covers not only outlines of Zend grammar, explanations of the Yasna, various versions of the *Khordeh Avesta* and such ritualistic details as the consecration of Atash Behram's or the *Varasio*, (sacred bull), but also displays his interest in the esoteric art of the *Jamaspi*.



Restoration of T- 54, Yasna, at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the period 2008-2011

The most important link in the Library between the Parsis of India and the Zoroastrians of Iran are the *Rivayats* or letters exchanged between the Dastur's of India and the Dastur's of Iran. These are the first recorded correspondences between these two sets of Zoroastrians and delineate questions regarding religious thought and practice. It is interesting to note that the earliest *Rivayats* are always questions from the Indian Parsis to the Zoroastrians of Iran. However, over the centuries, as the Parsis prospered and began to build great Fire Temples, while the Zarthushtis of Iran became less educated and lost their property, we can see a complete reversal. The later *Rivayats* are questions from the Iranian side, answered by the Parsi priests. Through the *Rivayats*, today we have written documentation to prove the oral tradition of both ritual and belief.



T-35, Rivayat of Dastur Darab Hormazdyar - It describes the creation of a Dakhma or Tower of Silence



T-35, Rivayat showing position of implements for rituals

As the Library's collections grew, the original building was found too small, and in 1906 Jamshedji Kavasji Dastoor Meherji Rana gifted the present building, located near the Navsari Atash Behram, to the library. In September 2009, with the assistance of the UNESCO Parzor Project, a new annex building was constructed from funds donated by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust wherein various modern facilities have been incorporated, including a new reading room, a conference hall, apartments for visiting scholars, and a laboratory for the preservation of the library's many rare books.

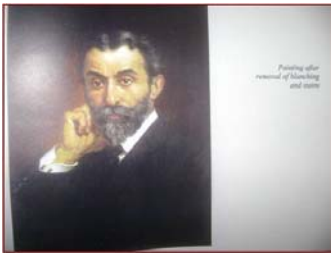
The First Dastoor Meherjirana Library is home to one of the most important collections of manuscripts relating to the Zoroastrian religion in the world. The library's oldest manuscript, an Avestan manuscript written in Iran of the *Vištāsp Yašt* (G-18), dates to the year 693 AY/1323 AD. The manuscript collection of the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library has grown. Most of the original donations of manuscripts came from the Meherjirana family itself, principally from Dasturs Jamsetji Sorabji and Framji Sorabji Meherjirana, Rustomji Kekobadji Meherjirana, and Edalji Navroji Meherjirana. The greatest number of manuscripts was donated by Dastur Erachji Sorabji Meherjirana (1826-1900), who served as the librarian of the Mulla Feroze Library in Bombay and copied more than seventy-five of the manuscripts in the library in his own hand. Dasturji Erachji, in his capacity as a poet, has left us Monajats in the *Ketab-I- Kulliyat*. He has gathered stories recording Zoroastrian travellers from Iran and their history, as well as stories of royal visits, which have made available to us the history of a period that is otherwise unrecorded.

Later manuscript donations to the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library have come from several sources. Extensive collections from Jamshedji Maneckji

Unvala and Meherji Navroji Kutar were both been generously given to the library sometime after Dhabhar's 1923 *Catalogue* was published. More recent donations have come from various families in Navsari, as well as manuscripts from the collection of Vada Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal. It is hoped that the library's collection will continue to be enriched in the years to come.



Jer Kutar of the USA requested only gifts of cash for her 100th birthday and gifted them to Parzor. With this money, the portraits of the Meherjirana Library were restored.



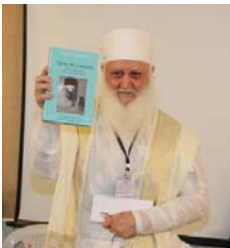
Restored portrait of Sir Dorabji Tata

Today, the manuscripts of the library are maintained in two catalogs. 1923, Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar was commissioned by the Library Committee to catalog all the library's manuscript collections. These, at the time, amounted to 469 MSS. Since 1923, a number of generous donations from private individuals have greatly enriched the manuscript collections of the library. The work of cataloging these manuscripts was begun some years ago by Dastur Dr. Firoze Kotwal, to whom the credit of identifying most of the texts is due. In November

2008, Dan Sheffield made further identifications, reassembled those manuscripts that had become disordered, and, with the constant assistance of the Librarian, Mrs. Bharti Gandhi, prepared a preliminary descriptive list of 157 manuscripts the library has received in the last 85 years. Therefore today, scholars can access online both these which are:

- Dhabhar, Bamanji Nasarvanji. 1923. *Descriptive Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the First Dastur Meherji Rana Library, Navsari.*
- Kotwal, Firoze, Daniel Sheffield, & Bharti Gandhi. 2008. *Preliminary Descriptive List of the Manuscripts Donated to the First Dastur Meherjirana Library since 1923.*

The First Dastoor Meherjirana Library, as one of the world's foremost research institutions for the Zoroastrian religion, also contains printed books on Zoroastrianism and Oriental Studies in Western languages, as well as Gujarati and Persian, ranging from the 18th century to the present day. Some of the rare and important books in the library's collection range from 19th century illustrated & lithographed *Shāhnāmas* and the complete 10 volumes of the *Parsi Prakash* to the more recent publications such as Pheroza Godrej & Firoza Punthakey Mistree; *A Zoroastrian Tapestry* and Shernaz Cama; *Threads of Continuity: Zoroastrian Life and Culture.*



Release of the Festschrift ed. Prof. Jamsheed Choksy on Vada Dastur Kotwal at the Meherjirana Library

The library's complete collection, which is constantly enriched with new acquisitions and donations, amounts to over 50,000 books. In addition to housing rare manuscripts, the library also functions as a lending library to the local Navsari community. Books of a more general interest include books on philosophy, psychology, astronomy, medicine & anatomy, astrology, etc. The library has extensive collections of classic and contemporary fiction in English, Gujarati, and Hindi. The library caters to school and college-going students by providing them access to encyclopedias, dictionaries, publications of academic interest, and internet facilities for research. The library also subscribes to a number of newspapers and magazines for the general reading public.



Library reading room

In recent years, the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library has been engaged in a number of significant projects to preserve and provide greater access to the important heritage that it houses. With hard work over 20 years and magnificent funding gathered by the Parzor Foundation and Ms. Pилоo Jungalwalla, the Library successfully completed the microfilming and digitizing of the ancient and precious manuscript collection. Parzor, has in the last several years, helped it connect with scholars, such as Professor Alberto Cantera and his students from

the Universidad de Salamanca, to digitize certain important Avestan manuscripts through the *Avestan Digital Archive Project*. Many of these manuscripts are now online and viewable from all over the world.

In 2013, Parzor and its Fulbright scholars, Dan Sheffield and Dinyar Patel, worked with the Meherjirana Library to create a conference entitled **Celebrating a Treasure: 140 Years at the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library, Navsari**. In recognition of its 140 years of service, and in celebration of the completion of a new annex and conference center in the library complex, the Librarian and Board of Trustees of the library, along with the UNESCO Parsi Zoroastrian project, welcomed Indian and international scholars of Zoroastrianism and the Persian tradition, while Amitav Ghosh, the Chief Guest, gave the Commencement Address.

The purpose of the conference was twofold. It would encourage scholars who have visited the Meherjirana Library in the past, as well as those who are interested in learning about this culture, in gaining experience at the library, to acquire an appreciation for its ongoing projects, and to forge and renew links with international and Indian scholars and community members. Second, the conference was meant to foster an understanding of the current state of scholarship and raise awareness in Navsari and in India about the crucial importance of the research that is currently being undertaken around the world from and through the Manuscripts at the Meherjirana Library.

The Presentations at the conference related the strengths of the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library's Collections, as well as portrayed different periods of Zoroastrian religious history. They covered the history of Western India and the Parsi community, art and archaeology, and the field of manuscripts studies, book

history, and library science. The Conference was accompanied by an Exhibition of the MRL Manuscripts, there were Curated Walks around the historic town, and over 150 experts saw for the first time the living crafts and cuisine of a people they had studied for a lifetime. As Navsari is the hometown of Sir Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy, Dadabhai Naoroji and Jamshedji Tata, the activities around the Conference showcased how the Parsis, once refugees from Iran, helped create commerce with China which built the city of Bombay. Dadabhai Naoroji became the leader of the Indian National Congress and the first to speak for Indian Freedom in the British Parliament, while Jamshedji Tata created the Industrial base of modern India.

Today, Navsari stands at a crossroad; developers eagerly wait to buy Parsi homes and build modern flats and apartments. Yet, this little town holds in itself the history of a people. At its center and preserving its history is the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library at Tarota Bazar.

Re-birth of Cultural Values in International Relations; Islam and the Asian Perspective

Karim Douglas Crow¹

Abstract

Security and policy analysts are invited to think seriously about cultural transformation in a global context. The question is posed: What may 'Islam' as a religious-social-political force for universal human wellbeing and justice contribute to the stability of the international system? The potential contributions of culture and of religion are assessed by reviewing key issues: – 'The West' vs. Islam; - the process of 'westernization' in the transformation of re-culturation characteristic of globalization; & - the de-secularization occurring in many Asian societies. Finally, the possibility of a future transition from ethnoreligious and nation-state identity towards the Global Community is raised. This article will attempt to review these issues from an Asian perspective.

Keywords: Asia, Culture, Globalization, Islam, West

Introduction

Following the collapse of the USSR and the enhanced profile of Islam worldwide, the impact of religion as an integral socio-cultural and ideological factor is evident both for relations between states and between different regions. With religion resurgent in many regions of the world after the end of the Cold War,

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more internal civil wars have a religious component than ever before, while a number of embattled political leaders have found the best way to survive is to increase their religious legitimacy. Religious civil wars tend to be deadlier and to last longer than other types of internal conflicts. Currently, Islam is present at the heart of a number of civil and regional conflicts for several reasons:

- the fusion of religious ideology and the state,
- the unabated vitality of religious nationalism,
- the location of Islam's holiest sites near petroleum reserves (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran), and
- the prolongation of trans-national Jihadism aggravated by the interventionist militarism of the United States into the heart of Asia.

Islam is one of the great Asian traditions of universal reach, shaping the lives of numerous peoples and societies for well over a millennium. Originating in Southwest Asia, it quickly spread its polity and values from the Iberian Peninsula in the West to Central Asia and the borders of China in the east. Muslim powers spread Islam through South Asia, while from the 10th century C.E. onward, networks of merchant-scholars diffused their faith in lands of Southeast Asia. The historical experience of immediate advance and political dominance accompanying the success of Islamic polity was taken as confirmation of its universal providential mission and divine support. The burden of this triumphalist worldview in our post-colonial global era still echoes loudly in the perceptions of many Muslims.

The Islamic presence in the Central, South, and Southeast regions of Asia experienced vicissitudes under imperial European powers, while the post-colonial

period has left Muslim societies searching for a renewed sense of authenticity and identity in the face of wrenching changes: experiencing communal life as a disadvantaged minority for Han Chinese, Indian, Philippine or Thai Muslims; emerging from Soviet suffocation for the Newly Independent States; stridently asserting new national entities for Pakistan and Bangladesh; and inheriting states from Britain and Holland for Malaysia and Indonesia. It is frequently forgotten that after the Arab peoples, the second-largest ethnolinguistic group among Muslims today consists of the Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Indonesia or Malay language speakers [about 280 million], splintered among seven nation-states in S.E. Asia now growing further apart by linguistic drift and nationalist identity¹. Given the economic dynamism and cultural assertion marking this region, Muslims in eastern Asia may expect to play a more pronounced role within the global Muslim community as the twenty-first century unfolds. The Muslim ethnic Han minority in China, for example, has barely begun to forge links with the rest of the far-flung global community of Muslims, in contrast to the Tibetan Buddhist minority in China which has succeeded in drawing the attention of the world to its plight.

The West & Islam

Because of the American military presence in their midst, as well as the legacy of European imperial control, many Muslim majority states in Southwest Asia remain fixated on western powers as a focus of security concerns and as the greatest cultural challenge to their societies. The need for asserting common ties and building coalitions with other Asian states to the east appears less compelling

¹ These are (in order of size of Muslim populations): Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, southern Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, the stateless Rohingya Muslims of western Myanmar [the medieval kingdom of Arakan], and Singapore.

and assumes a lower priority. In order to better perceive this need and its potential benefits, we will begin with reflecting on where Islam belongs between East and West.

Initiated partly by the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979–80, then accelerated more recently by the global impact of the September 2001 attacks against New York and Washington D.C. by radical Sunni militants, a critical self-awareness is now manifested among Muslim leaders and intelligentsia. The question is being asked: What may ‘Islam’ as a religious-social-political civilizational force for universal human wellbeing and justice potentially achieve and contribute to the stability of the international system? We may recall that the very idea of ‘civilization’ was abused for several centuries by European thinkers as an ideological construction to justify the conquest and enslavement of “barbarian” and “savage” peoples – Muslims, Africans, South Asians, and East Asians (‘Orientals’)¹.

At the close of the 20th century, the idea of an irreconcilable “clash” between ‘civilizational blocs’ was advanced as an American vision of the inevitable alienation and rivalry between strategic geographical regions defined largely by religious values. Huntington’s thesis, while serving the internal needs of American Exceptionalism, was ironically at the same time embraced by many Muslims feeling threatened by arrogant American cultural and military dominance. This divisive legacy remains to be overcome, and only in the past decade has it become possible to speak of the potential for peace and understanding present in the ‘worldview’ every civilization carries within itself -

¹ For a critique and deconstruction of the inherently conflictual basis of the concept of the ‘West’ (vs. the ‘East’), and the similarly polarizing notion of ‘Occidentalism’, consult: (Ernst, August 9, 2007) & (Aydin, 2007) These critiques were partially anticipated by the Tunisian thinker Hichem Djait, (Djaït, 1985) a work which retains its relevancy.

namely the “dialogue of civilizations” being advanced especially by prominent Iranian thinkers. Recent critics of this ideologically motivated polarizing thesis of “the West versus the Rest”, which capitalizes on deep-rooted fears and prejudices in Europe and America, are questioning the very basis of such a notion of the ‘West as a cultural unity along with its linked ideological projects exploiting this notion. The American professor Carl Ernst cogently observes that: “*implicit in the concept of “the West” is the colonial self-image of a superior civilization that is destined to rule over the rest of the world, whether in overt political domination or through the more subtle forms of globalizing economies.*” (Ernst, August 9, 2007, 12)

The historical rise and dominance of Europe (including today’s ‘West’ as a Euro-American construct) with its universalizing tendency, its omniscient rationality, and scientism, and its cultural vitality certainly display its own autonomous inner logic. Yet it has been argued with some cogency that one of the prime motives for Europe’s irresistible need for externalization and expansion was the sting of its inferiority complex toward Islam. Hichem Djaït observed that the rise of Europe simultaneously depended on the prompting of external actors for inaugurating its own expansion and overflowing dynamic—the primary agent being the birth and expansion of Islam which provided:

“... the axis around which the world system would turn. ... It was Islam and not, evidently, their own particular cultural roots - that the other groups used to define themselves as parts of a system. ... Medieval Christendom was not so much a particularized structure comparable to Byzantium, or a reminiscence of the [Roman) Empire, as it was a mobilizing response of Europe to Islam... Islam was at once a military force threatening Europe and an economic sphere sharing its

dynamism, just as later it would be an ideological enemy and a philosophical model. ... Europe's emergence into history took place - and it could not have taken place otherwise - through the mediation of Islam: in the beginning by means of defensive recoil, afterward by an offensive explosion.” (Djaït, 1985, 107-109)

The reality today is reversed: the United States is the chief military force occupying several Muslim states, and the pervasive dynamism of a mercantile and cultural globalizing “West” sweeps all before it. This economic, cultural, and military projection has been proceeding for several centuries, but has entered a radically new post-imperial and post-modern phase dictated by the Information Age and advances in international mercantile and monetary structures.

On the other hand, many Muslims realize that they remain marginalized as a global presence within the international system and are not contributing sufficiently to offer solutions to problems facing all humanity. Despite the great oil wealth enjoyed by several Muslim states the majority of the world's Muslims are affected by poverty and oppression, low productivity, high birth rates, high unemployment and low levels of education. Muslims remain under-represented in a variety of international organizations or institutions, nor do they effectively project a concerted presence and united voice regarding issues of great regional and global importance affecting human security, stability, and prosperity. Exploiting the undoubted hostility and aggression of the “West” may serve as a foil for distracting attention from these pressing concerns and needs.

Re-Culturation

Before the worldwide Euro-American impact, most traditional societies existed in reasonable harmony within the intellectual, spiritual, and material resources at

their disposal. It was the process of ‘westernization’ - transformed in the internal revolution of reculturation termed modernization or development (Von Laue, 1987) - that forced them into a complex world beyond their comprehension and resources, destroying their former bonds of collective community, individual moral socialization and value formation. Most non-Western peoples have now become re-cultured to comply with the requirements of the global state system (in some cases superficially and reluctantly), while statehood is now the international framework for human existence. The nation-state system has inevitably universalized the structures and values of Euro-American institutions, including government bureaucracy, the armed forces, diplomatic service, literacy and mass education, communications, industrialism, and large-scale organization and management while enforcing a continuous mobilization of competition between states over wealth, power and influence.

In their new global interdependence, this intensely competitive self-consciousness among all peoples is accompanied by judgemental or moralizing cross-cultural comparison. The prevailing EuroAmerican political, economic and military dominance operates with the currency of a value-based symbolic exchange through intensifying flows of globalization.

We mean here by ‘globalization’ not so merely the international free market, but the widening and deepening connections created throughout our planet by the new information and communication technologies abolishing or fore-shortening time and distance. (Gray, 2002) Global confluence promotes a more uniform global community while simultaneously aggravating global anarchy and violence. Cultural confusion and incomprehension attending the sweeping forces of global interdependence has actually hardened diversity and multiplied insecurity,

encouraging relapse into divisive and self-righteous fundamentalisms, whether in religion or in politics. (Gray, 2003) & (Akram, 2004, 237-279)

This process of re-culturation has also been described as the relativizing effect of globalization, bringing about the universalization of Western cultural preferences and forcing particular traditions to find legitimization from within the dominant Euro-American framework of values and terms of reference. At the same time that it pressures peoples to relativize themselves toward (or operate in relation to) forces beyond their control, globalizing pressures also create trans-national connections or links between collective actors and individuals transcending the frontiers of the nation-state system. This facilitates global movements where electronic transfers of money, mass-mediated mobilizing messages, and educational institutions with students from far-flung continents connect people together across geographical, ideological, and national divides in common efforts and actions.

Despite the exploitation of this reality by Sunni Jihadists in activating their trans-national terror network, it nevertheless remains true that with the spread of mass education, mass communication, and the worldwide media, globalization indeed presents Muslims in each of their societies with new avenues for re-activating the efficacy of the Ummah on the world stage.

Culture and Religion

The phenomenon of ‘culture’ embraces those conditions wherein the human collectivity expresses itself within a social matrix distinguished by the material, aesthetic and symbolic products of human communal life. The social matrix includes human artifacts material, affective and ideational. Culture must not be confused with technological or scientific achievements alone; it embraces the

concrete demonstration of the aspiration and creative capacity of the human spirit in politics, crafts, arts, thought, as well as ethics, and religion. Culture requires either a firm power-base or polity to exist and operate meaningfully, or a firm ethnic and spiritual bond animating a people in terms of a potential polity) beyond state boundaries. Religion invariably occurs embedded within a cultural matrix that provides needed substance and field of play for the religion to operate and persist¹. Culture embraces at least three areas:

- the inter-human social dimension;
- the arena of human interaction with nature, the environment, and with material artifacts;
- and an internal structuring of the individual's inward-universe –the consciousness (the mind-spirit or perceiving soul) — through epistemic, cognitive and ethical disciplines releasing creative activity supporting effective collective organization without blocking individual realization.

This third dimension contains those knowledge, values and modes of symbolic meaning which distinguish the identity of a particular people from other cultures. Religion enters into all three areas, being especially relevant for the psycho-spiritual mechanism enabling the harnessing of individual will and training of psychic energies for the projection of communal goals. (McLean, 2000, 97-127) & (McLean, 2000, 7-49)

¹ The dynamics of interdependence between the cultural matrix and the religious energy it shelters or sustains is not our concern here, yet it is of great significance. Historically one observes how the primary religious impulse or vision may be subsumed and encrusted by cultural constructions, resulting in a shell that mimics the original energy. A shrine becomes a tomb, which in turn fades into a memorial.

Therefore, religion retains precious resources for the transformation of the human mind and spirit by offering distinctive techniques of socialization, disciplining, and creative imagination elaborated and explored over many generations-forming one of the most important legacies of humanity. However, when tied to the narrow identity of in-group parochial awareness, or the downward transcendence of large-group regression in mass movements, religion frequently devolves into an opposite force buttressing cross-cultural ignorance and inviting conflict or violence. (Volkan, 2006) The phenomenon of ethnoreligious nationalism over the past several centuries is instructive in displaying the ambivalent power religion may exercise in human affairs - instructive to those capable of apprehending its lesson.

Consumer commodities, computers, weapons, even nuclear technology and written constitutions may cross easily over cultural boundaries, but not those complex cultural constructions deeply embedded in the internal dynamics of specific cultures elaborated during the span of continuous historical experiences, including such things as ‘gender equity’, ‘democracy or “liberty’. These constructions represent elaborated cultural phenomena not readily transplanted since they take for granted and require a set of aptitudes, social habits and skills, knowledge disciplines, and definite organizational and cognitive patterns that must first be instilled through re-culturation.

Let us take an example: Secularism arose from the peculiar experience of 18th–19th century Europeans breaking free from the intellectual, social and spiritual domination of organized religion, hand in hand with the consolidation of science and material advancement shaping economic and political realities. The conventional wisdom still prevails that:

“It is the moment of secularity, freedom from religious/ecclesiastical tutelage, that separates the Modern Period, especially its science and philosophy, from the Middle Ages.” (Heimsoeth, 1994, 31)¹

Eighteenth-century European thinkers of the Enlightenment opposed the traditional Christianity of the institutionalized Church by rejecting ‘non-rational’ factors of traditional spiritual authority and faith, and they viewed reason as being contrary to ‘feeling’ or ‘emotion’. Modern notions of reason and of rationalism arose out of this spirit of anti-supernaturalism, being an anti-religious and anticlerical movement of utilitarian outlook stressing historical and scientific arguments against theism. The success of secular EuroAmerican culture and worldview over the revealed or faith-based worldviews of traditional societies was facilitated by its emphasis on individuality, personality, and the power of the self.

Nor should one forget that a chief element of pre-modern scientific thinking was the lack of any clear distinction between the sciences and philosophy, thus making the sciences dependent upon philosophy. In the past, philosophy provided

¹ Heimsoeth’s statement was merely part of his characterization of the conventional view of the transition to modernity that he intended to revise. His work sought to undermine the validity of trying to: “Distinguish modern philosophy, as purely secular and directed toward nature and natural existence, from medieval philosophy, which always inquired about ultimate supernatural things, about God, immortality, and the soul. Separating philosophy as autonomous science and secular wisdom from theology is absolutely not the same thing as separating their contents from the sources and the great questions of religious life.” (Heimsoeth, 1994, 32) Heimsoeth’s insightful handling of this process of separation that gave birth to modern scientism and materialism nevertheless fails to adequately account for the inversion of values this process accomplished, for which see (Nasr, 1996, 163-190) 1. The current dominant notion of ‘reason’ derives from the period of the Enlightenment and from Continental Rationalism, reflecting confidence in the unbridled powers of the human intellect (viewed in terms of ‘brainmind’) as a source of knowledge. Intellect was then conceived of in opposition to ‘faith’ and uncritical acceptance of traditional revealed became problematic due to its spiritualistic connotations, and the term ‘mind’ has replaced ‘soul in current western discourse. For the classical Islamic notion of ‘faith-in-reason’ see: (Crow, 2003, 109-137)

a primary epistemological foundation and a metaphysical framework for the sciences. This was true of the physical sciences, cosmology, and psychology of cognitive-perception (soul sciences) - which were treated under the category of *tabi'iyat* 'physics' in Islamic philosophy or *Hikmat*, wherein reason ('aql) remained intimately linked with the affective and intentional reality of ethical action at the level of conscience and will. The modern conception of scientific knowledge has separated 'science from any philosophical system, freeing the scientific method of empirical investigation and deduction from the constraints of the worldview of a philosophic metaphysic with its accompanying ethico-spiritual disciplines. 'Scientism' attempts to fill this void through an ad hoc metaphysic that collapses the immaterial cognitive facets of human experience into the empirically verifiable physical.

Nevertheless, the pattern of evolution experienced by Western European and North American societies may not easily serve as guide or blueprint for the cultural development of many societies who function individually and collectively in different modes constrained by their own specific historical and cultural dynamics. To assume that all other cultures or societies must inevitably undergo a similar process towards secularism as that experienced by Europe is a false assumption, as the current impasse in Turkey teaches us.

"Societies or politics culturally conditioned over long stretches of time cannot readily transform themselves according to a different cultural pattern: non-Western cultures cannot automatically follow the Western upward-bound route."
(Von Laue, 1987, 314)

To fail to anticipate and act on this reality when attempting cross-cultural intercourse in international security affairs only invites a form of cognitive

imperialism whereby one's effort to comprehend and have relations with others remains trapped within prevailing power relations, and it results in the abdication of responsible intellectual insight whether in historical research or policy studies.

H. Von Laue correctly remarked:

“Who understands whom on whose terms? In the last analysis, cross-cultural understanding is a matter of raw power: who has the power to make his own understanding prevail?” (Von Laue, 1987, 376)

So we see that re-culturation represents the inevitable reaction of weaker cultures compelled to relate to a powerful dominant culture.

De-secularization

Another important change in thinking that may assist policy analysts and decision-makers both east and west when dealing with this actual reality is to stop treating religious faith as a ‘category of irrational action. They should understand and make allowance for the re-assertion of political-religion in the cultural sphere. The previous widespread assumption that religious faith and ideology would necessarily fade away in the face of consumerist market capitalism spearheaded by multi-national corporatism is to be discarded as mistaken and utopian. It is now evident that modernization or ‘westernization’ does not necessarily induce the decline of religious faith in a society or in the minds of individuals, nor does the process of secularization inevitably usher in the assumed privatization and marginalization of religion in our globalizing world. (Høibraaten, 1993, 231-257) & (Casanova, 1994, 1166) & (Berger, 1999)

Presently we are witnessing a vibrant trend of de-secularization with its accompanying affirmation of public religious identity in many Muslim societies.

This is true in the Southeast Asian region, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as in Pakistan, the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, and even among Muslim minorities in Europe. The long-term consequences of this complex socio-cultural, ideational and spiritual shift are loaded with possible alternative directions whose unfolding depends upon how Muslims respond to the challenges and threats they confront both as individuals and as national polities.

While Euro-American discourse speaks of ‘post-modernity’ from within their own cultural and ideological perspective - indicating that their societies have moved beyond the 19th– 20th century social and economic transformations brought about by industrialization and mercantile expansion that largely fueled colonial enterprises - it is good to caution that for much of the remaining regions of the world ‘modernization’ remains the norm both in material and infrastructure changes as well as in the conceptual and symbolic realms. We mean simply that the relativizing process of re-culturation is still ongoing and unconsummated in many Asian societies, although greatly accelerated over the past few decades. Today’s pervasive globalizing forces nurture and reinforce an intellectual and spiritual passivity, where people do not think about their role in society or reflect on the requirements and implications of their faith. Instead, they are being habituated to become passive consumers whose material and psychic appetites are stimulated and magnified, replacing inner contentment with outwardly directed desires. Cultural and religious values may offer a significant antidote to this deep-set trend - but only when such values are understood and practiced intelligently and wisely, and are not exploited for the legitimization of ruling cliques in pursuit of private parochial self-interest. This type of abuse of the religious component of one’s cultural patrimony flourishes today in several Muslim societies.

Another reality is the increasing attraction of many in society to westernized or globalized lifestyles, consumerist cultural artifacts, and informational knowledge modes, but without the proper contextual understanding¹. This is true, especially among the younger generation shaped by modern mass education and T.V. and strongly affected by changing social and economic requirements of contemporary societies fundamentally re-shaped by nationalist group identities. Within many Muslim societies today there is a vivid sense of being under siege, whether from the ‘West’ or from their own authoritarian governments. This important segment of Muslim societies experiences tension between the traditional requirements of Islamic observances and practice and the demands for leading a successful modern existence in society. The dynamism and creative energy of youth shall play an increasingly crucial role in shaping Muslim futures, yet in many instances, they are not being provided with sufficiently enlightened models or wise guidance to adequately meet these challenges. Youth are not always shown more adequate responses that feed the flame of authentic Islamic values and principles while simultaneously facilitating a well-informed and engaged social and ethically responsible existence. The continuing appeal of militant Jihadism among certain sectors of Arab, Pakistani and Indonesian youths is one index of this failing.

Problems

It is helpful to highlight several potential fault lines in the international system which may affect the possible outcomes for the stability sought for by Asian societies.

¹ A small yet telling example is the fashion among young Japanese women of wearing jewellery in the form of a Christian cross or Nazi swastika with no comprehension of their historical symbolism, out of a naïve conviction that these represent modernity.

- 1) One lies in the expectation that economic growth will continue without interruption, even while patterns of economic growth may be unevenly distributed. The current high price of petroleum and liquefied gas resources lends this expectation a seeming inevitability for the producing countries. However, the ongoing turmoil in financial loans and banking practices, as well as the recent steep rise in food prices, undermines the certainty of such optimism. The probable shrinkage of global financial activity could well bring about increasing levels of deprivation and poverty - rising food and energy prices are already inducing hardships.
- 2) The increasing centrality of resource scarcity, with particular emphasis on water, food and energy as well as other natural resources of strategic value. Maintaining access to these resources will be crucial, especially since many strategic resources are located in areas of dubious security, raising the likelihood of resorting to military force to secure these strategic resources.
- 3) Increased wealth provides more resources for treating human needs while also increasing the risk of political and economic injustice and abuse. Globalized communications tend to feed frustrations over relative deprivation by heightening awareness of these uneven patterns of economic development and increasing pressures on governments to meet minimum standards of wellbeing for their people. Social-economic deprivations contain the potential for feeding new waves of conflict and violence whether at the level of inter-state wars over resources or regional influence, internal conflicts and civil wars, or the so-called asymmetric violence between the state and 'non-state actors'.
- 4) Proliferation of small arms and man-portable weapons as rocket-propelled grenades, shoulder-launched missiles, light mortars, and anti-personnel mines.

Already such weapons kill more people every year than automobile accidents. Given the increasing number of national defense industries – all seeking the limited goal of self-sufficiency in small arms and ammunition production - the proliferation of small arms and man-portable weapons represents the greater security concern for the immediate, medium, and long terms. The negative implications of these trends remain overly rooted in the realm of military security, but not all security concerns affect military power or are addressed best by military means alone. The current ‘crisis’ over nuclear energy acquisition by several Asian states, with increasing risk of nuclear weapons proliferation, has unfortunately tended to marginalize or eclipse the severity of the continuing threat to security that proliferation of small arms represents.

5) Growing contacts between different cultures and regions flowing from ongoing globalization are creating the conditions for people to become increasingly comfortable with cultural diversity. This intensified friction between cultures and polities is therefore not just a problem but an opportunity. Whether these conditions are exploited for sincere dialogue and selfless multi-cultural engagement does not necessarily follow. They may also coincide with increased secularism and spreading consumer materialism (especially among youth), as well as moral relativism and selfish pragmatism. This trend triggers a reaction from traditionally-defined communities having a conformist societal makeup that values faith-based social ethics and public adherence to religious ideals. An example of this latter reaction is the political activities of conservative Islamic parties in several Arab states, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, who feel compelled to exercise some form of social censorship on public behavior, dress, and the media; or the imposition of shari’ah law in Aceh (the westernmost province of Indonesia) leading at times to abusive vigilantism.

On a positive note, the demands imposed by pervasive forces of globalizing modernity are pushing Muslim societies toward more adequate responses. In order to maintain and freshen time-honored rituals and principles, an increasing proportion of Muslims turn to the essential vision and energy conveyed in their intellectual and ethical teachings, as well as in religious legal rulings. They view Islam as the immovable bedrock providing nourishment for the reinvention of community through transforming self, society, and polity. However, re-invigorating religion as a social blueprint and basis for governance and polity demands enlightened understanding and humane implementation to ensure that society inhabits the fifteenth century A.H. and does not revert to the first century. The resources provided by Islamic rationalist disciplines of legal theory, theology and philosophy, and ethical and spiritual teachings may be more valuable in the long term than the strictly juridical tradition that historically manifested certain servility to the preferences of the power possessors. For religion to play its proper role in awakening and strengthening culture, moral and intellectual leadership is crucial. Attention has naturally focused upon the qualities and vision of ‘Ulama’ and on reforming Islamic religious education.

Re-birth of Spiritual Culture?

The cultivation of a more spiritually-oriented culture and enlivening of essential values has great relevance for the possible future transition from the nation-state identity and specific ethno-religious collectivities towards the Global Community at large - for this is the inescapable logic of our global interdependence, indeed it is becoming the unavoidable demand of our terrestrial climate. This ‘change of mind’ in communal identities imposes the transcendent perspective of a more inclusive awareness beyond the constraints of particular national boundaries or

ethnic and class groupings. It opens up a unified planetary awareness joining all nations and continents, requiring the unity of the human race for wise and equitable action.

The stirrings of an expansion of identity are discernible in ‘Green’ movements for environmental conservation and purification, and it may be that natural events might force peoples and states to advance toward a planetary consciousness from necessity. The dramatic incidents of large-scale natural disasters in recent decades has now become a concern of policymakers and security experts who created the new discipline labeled “non-traditional security” in recognition of the reality of this threat to the collective wellbeing of society and state. But security and policy experts, who claim to possess intelligence and foresight, do not appear to have thought seriously about cultural transformation in a global context.

The change of mind’ begins by turning our gaze inward toward the interior dynamics of the human person and his or her unfulfilled potentials - the third dimension of culture mentioned above. This demands a balance between the human mind and heart and organism, between thought-feeling-instinct: an integration of the whole of the human person into a unity that reconciles opposites. It is achieved through conscious suffering and sacrifice. At the same time, it imposes new obligations and restrictions on individuals, corporations, and governments in adjusting to a greatly expanded community of common interests (e.g., for decreasing carbon emissions). The change occurs first within individuals, spreading through influential circles and organizations, before reaching a critical mass weighty enough to color the worldview and goals of ruling groups and governments, thereby effecting a transformation in the global human environment.

But this transformation is not a certainty, merely one possibility among others, and it cannot be taken as likely or inevitable however much hoped for. The resources that religions and their related cultural matrix may provide for advancing toward closer global cooperation beyond the limitations of the nation-state, for outgrowing parochial mentalities by instilling universal values nourished from the depths of human experience, demand individual and collective discipline, creativity, and a living moral sense. In the past, this order-of-magnitude change was often accomplished by means of war and conquest combined with widespread recognition of common interests transforming a collectivity into a greater community with an enhanced level of organization and corresponding cognitive and artistic-technological skills, as happened with the Islamic conquests. Our age of global confluence and the events of the twentieth century show that force and the threat of force shall not achieve the needed transformation - that persuasion and shared conviction hold out greater promise and hope.

The great material and social-political cultures now dominant in global affairs are approaching a point of internal assessment and critical self-appraisal. In a rush to acquire the material advantages and technological prowess of 21st-century existence, they must at the same time be actively searching for a comprehensive framework of spiritual culture and human values that may complement and rectify the imbalances brought by rapid outward development and profound socio-economic transformations. In their search for rediscovering essential principles and values buried in the roots of their own specific culture, each great universal culture has to experience its own process of self-awareness and self-criticism, and self-affirmation. Movements in the recent past that harmed or destroyed much of the valuable heritage of our human history (e.g., the Chinese cultural revolution')

give added urgency and importance to this search for enduring permanent values that may guide the re-birth of spiritual culture. Humans will never achieve the perfection and fullness of their existence if life's higher spiritual culture continues to be ignored or marginalized. Once the stomach is full and the sexual instinct sated, there remains a deeper imperative that hungers for fulfillment: to realize the full potential of being human creatures in our universe created for a wise and compassionate purpose.

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A Study on the Impact of the Tourism Industry on India's Economy, with a Look at Iran-India Tourism relation

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Abstract

With an ancient civilization and rich culture, India has always been an attractive destination for international tourists. For an emerging power like India, the tourism industry can not only be beneficial to the economy but also provide an acceptable image of the country. The current study aims to discover the impact of the tourism industry on the economy of India by applying a descriptive-analytical method and tries to answer the question of ‘what has been the impact of the tourism industry on India’s economy?’ According to the data collected for this study, the Indian government has invested heavily in the tourism sector in recent years and tried to develop specific types of tourism like religious tourism, MICE tourism etc. These initiatives have had positive effects on the industry; as a result, they have also been beneficial to the GDP, employment, tourism export and investment attraction of the country. Although the tourism industry has had positive impacts on the economy of the country in recent years, there are still some challenges and problems which prevented India from using its full potential in the tourism Industry, like inadequate conditions of infrastructures; in the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the situation. The author tries to examine the opportunities and challenges of tourism industry in India and suggest some ways to expand Indo-Iran cooperation in this field.

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- **Keywords:** Tourism industry, Iran, India, Religious tourism, Medical tourism, MICE Tourism

Introduction

India is a large travel and tourism market. Cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, Eco-tourism, film, rural, and religious tourism are among the available niche tourism products. India has also been regarded as a spiritual tourism destination for both domestic and international tourists. In the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 which was published by the World Economic Forum, India came in at number 34. According to the WTTC's Economic Impact 2019 report, India's travel and tourism GDP contribution increased by 4.9 per cent, ranking third after China and the Philippines. In addition, the report states that between 2014 and 2019, India saw the greatest increase in the number of jobs generated in the tourism sector (6.36 million), followed by China (5.47 million) and the Philippines (2.53 million). (IBEF, 2021)

The travel and tourism industry contributed US\$ 121.9 billion to GDP in 2020, and it is predicted to grow to US\$ 512 billion by 2028. Between 2019 and 2028, the industry's direct contribution to GDP in India is predicted to expand at a pace of 10.35 percent per year. In 2020, the Indian tourism industry employed 31.8 million people, accounting for 7.3 per cent of the country's overall workforce. It is estimated to employ almost 53 million people by 2029. By 2028, international tourist arrivals are predicted to total 30.5 billion. As of March 2021, 171 countries had access to the e-Visa system. The government launched a scheme to stimulate the tourism industry by providing 5 lakh travelers with a one-

month free tourist visa until March 31, 2022. The government of India has launched various branding and marketing campaigns, such as ‘Incredible India!’ and ‘Athiti Devo Bhava,’ which have offered a focused impetus to growth. (Ibid)

To boost medical tourism in India, the Indian government has also introduced a new category of visa known as the medical visa or M-visa. By 2020, the government had 1 per cent proportion of global international visitor arrivals, and hopes to have a 2 per cent share by 2025. The government is also working hard to increase tourism-related investment. The automatic approach allows 100 per cent FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the hotel and tourism sector. For hotels in the 2-, 3-, and 4-star category located near UNESCO World Heritage sites, a five-year tax exemption has been provided (except Delhi and Mumbai) (IBEF 2021).

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has also emerged as one of the most important development engines in the country’s services sector. Given the country’s rich cultural and historical legacy, diversity in ecosystem, terrains, and natural beauty spots, tourism in India has a lot of promise. Foreign exchange earnings increased at a CAGR of 7 per cent from 2016 to 2019, but fell in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In FY 2020, India’s tourism sector employed 39 million people, accounting for 8.0 per cent of the country’s overall workforce. It is estimated to employ almost 53 million people by 2029. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, India placed 10th out of 185 nations in terms of total contribution to GDP from travel and tourism in 2019. Travel and tourism also contributed 6.8 per cent of the total economy’s GDP, or US\$ 194.30 billion in 2019 (IBEF 2021).

Objective and Methodology

Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study aims to determine the contribution of the tourism and hospitality industry to the economy of India. The main question of this study is ‘what has been the impact of the tourism industry on India’s economy?’ The study also uses secondary data gathered from a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources, including India’s Ministry of Tourism, IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation), India Exim Bank, WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), academic journals, Internet, etc.

Promotion of New Forms of Tourism

The focus of this section is on the specific types of tourism in which the Indian government has invested in recent years, including religious tourism, medical tourism, MICE and Eco-tourism

- **Religious Tourism**

Within and without India’s boundaries, the country’s rich civilizational and cultural legacy remains a highlight of the country’s image and identity. India’s large and ever-growing pilgrimage economy is an important part of this history, with various lucrative potential for foreign direct investment (FDI) in this area. The Indian government has shown increasing interest and investment in this sector in recent years, as seen by large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Buddhist Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, and Chaar-Dham road project, to mention a few. In some ways, the development of tourism-rich economic zones along pilgrim routes stems from a significant study that has revealed that shrines have been important economic hubs throughout Indian history.

As a civilizational state with multiple cultures, India's pilgrimage economy is one of the most important sectors of the country's economy, providing jobs for millions in industries ranging from infrastructure and construction to the travel and tourism business. It has been highlighted that there has been a larger investment in improving pilgrim infrastructure at both the state and federal levels of government. The Ramayana Circuit, a tourist circuit connecting cities/towns associated with Ram, one of Hinduism's holiest deities, and the Char-Dham road project, which aims to improve road connectivity between the four major Hindu pilgrimage sites (Char-Dham) in Uttarakhand, have been important projects of the current central government. There is widespread agreement within the current government that pilgrimage as an economic sector has enormous potential to contribute to the growth of the Indian economy, as this industry has mostly remained informal and underutilized despite being a big component of domestic tourism in the country. The travel and tourist business alone is estimated to employ more than 80 million people in India, with a year-on-year increase of more than 19 per cent and revenue of more than \$234 billion in 2018-2019 (Chawla 2019).

Religious tourism will also boost Indian economic earnings and pave the way for long-term economic growth. Religious tourism contributes to the creation of jobs. Tourism development would also work as a catalyst for the growth of entrepreneurship, small businesses, and economic variety. Individuals who want to work in this field are given the opportunity to improve their capabilities, skills, and talents so that they may make a significant contribution to enhancing socioeconomic benefits (Sharma 2019).

In India, religious tourism is critical to reducing economic disparities. The majority of localities, particularly rural regions and areas with no core competency or business, rely on religious tourism to thrive. It helps to meet the needs of the local community by providing business and job possibilities. For example, ‘Sulli Karadu,’ a little dry rural place near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, is well renowned for a powerful rural deity who should be worshiped by offering large quantities of Camphor is readily accessible in neighbouring shops. Thousands of devotees form a mile-long line to make their donations. It supports the local inhabitants by allowing them to sell Camphor to devotees, which is supplied by camphor makers (Vijayanand 2012).

- **Medical Tourism**

One of the fastest expanding industries in the world is medical tourism. Medical Value Travel (MVT) is being promoted as a synthesis of medical tourism. Medical Value Travel has grown all around the globe, but many opportunities still remain untapped. Thailand, Mexico, the United States, Singapore, India, Brazil, Turkey, and Taiwan are the top destinations for Medical Value Travel in terms of patient numbers. The global medical value travel business is estimated to be worth \$60-80 billion, with 14 million people travelling across borders for medical treatment. Medical Tourism Association has placed India 10th out of 46 global locations in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21. India has developed into a top-notch destination for medical value travel over the years as a result of its strong scores on a variety of parameters that affect overall treatment quality. India’s high-end healthcare system is on par with the greatest in the world. Complex surgical treatments are performed by renowned

medical specialists in a world-class global hospital at a much lower cost than they would be in other countries (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India 2021).

One of India's fastest expanding categories in marketing is health or medical tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, several state tourism boards, and even the private sector, including travel agents, tour operators, and the hospitality industry, see health and tourism as a market with huge promise for future growth in Destination India today. According to India's health policy, treating foreign patients is a legal "export" that is "qualified" for all financial incentives offered to export earnings (Naik and Lal 2013).

Year	Number of Foreign Tourist arrivals for medical purpose
2015	233,918
2016	427,014
2017	495,056

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India

The Indian healthcare industry is extremely diverse, with potential in every segment, including providers, payers, and medical technology. Businesses are looking for the latest dynamics and trends that will have a favourable impact on their business as the competition grows. The hospital business in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16–17 per cent from Rs.4 trillion (US\$ 61.79 billion) in FY2017 to Rs.8.6 trillion (US\$ 132.84 billion) in FY2022. By 2025, India's government intends to expand public health spending to 2.5 per cent of the country's GDP (IBEF 2021).

- **Eco-Tourism**

Eco-Tourism entails safe and responsible travel to various natural locations, as well as safeguarding and conserving the natural environment in which we live and increasing the well-being of local residents. The goal of Eco-tourism is to educate travellers and visitors, to raise funding for environmental conservation, to directly assist the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and to foster respect for diverse cultures and human rights. Eco-tourism is a type of socially responsible travel that emphasizes the preservation of natural habitats, the development of natural regions, and the long-term sustainability of the environment. Travelling to different sites across the world that are rich in flora and fauna, as well as culturally heritage-rich areas, is what Eco-tourism is all about. Eco-tourism initiatives that have a low negative impact on the environment and promote cultural integrity and local people's protection are examples of responsible Eco-tourism. Recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and the provision of economic opportunities for local populations are all part of Eco-tourism (Kumari 2021).

Due to its premise of producing social and economic advantages for all, as well as the emphasis on conservation, Eco-tourism has grown in popularity over the last three decades. One of the most important aspects of Eco-tourism's effectiveness is the accrual of economic benefits to local communities. Eco-tourism takes place mostly in and around national parks and locations with high wildlife populations, which are characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of education and skills, outmigration, and a lack of other economic opportunities, among other things. In addition, the exclusion of local communities in the name of development and conservation has frequently resulted in conflict between

residents and government organizations in India. Eco-tourism is a viable solution for addressing the aforementioned issues by establishing a responsible type of economic activity that connects conservation and social empowerment. Many studies have shown that Eco-tourism programs in India's protected regions have benefited local residents by creating jobs, increasing earnings, and giving alternative livelihood options. Many of Eco-tourism's beneficial contributions to local development in India may be seen in programs that recognize local communities as major partners in the development and management of Eco-tourism. For instance, Eco-tourism in PTR and Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (BLWS) has been effective because of a community approach and a community-based eco-tourism (CBET) paradigm. The success of CBET is largely dependent on the participation of locals, whose willingness to participate is determined by the number of practical and intangible benefits that CBET development may provide to local communities. An excellent example of a successful CBET model in India is PTR in Kerala. During the years 1996–2001, as part of the India Eco-Development project which was facilitated by the World Bank, an intervention strategy was implemented at PTR. It is regarded as India's most successful eco-tourism effort so far (Pujar and Mishra 2020).

- **MICE Tourism**

Among the various forms of tourism that exist in the world, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) is the one that has shown its maximum potential worldwide. Since the concept was created in Europe and America almost a century ago, the MICE industry has grown steadily and has had a persistent impact on the development of a destination and its economy. Overall, the MICE segment, with a 54 per cent market share, has surpassed the traditional business

travel segment. The two largest sub-segments of MICE are Meetings/Conferences/Seminars (41 per cent) and Exhibitions/ trade fairs (29 per cent) (MRSS, India 2016).

The estimated size of the global MICE market exceeded US\$808 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach US\$1.2 trillion in 5 years. The estimated size of the MICE market in India is Rs37,576 crore, of which almost 60 per cent comes from MIC (meetings, incentives and conferences). It should also be mentioned that 65 per cent are B2B events. The estimated size of the market for an event is around Rs4,800 crore for space rental, but it has a multiplier impact on the economy in terms of accommodation, travel, media, advertising, and remuneration to skilled ones (Majestic MRSS Ltd 2019).

MICE Hotspots in India

Established destination	Emerging destinations
Delhi (NCR)	Agra
Mumbai	Varanasi
Chennai	Udaipur
Hyderabad	Ahmedabad
Goa	Surat
Bangaluru	Pune
Trivandrum	Vishakhapatnam
Bhubaneshwar	Amravati

Source: <https://tourism.gov.in/>

Tourism's Contribution to GDP of India

According to the WTTC Report, travel and tourism contributed Rs.15,239.6 billion (about US\$234.0 billion) to India's GDP in 2017, accounting for nearly 9.4 per cent of GDP. This sector's contribution to India's GDP is predicted to reach 9.9 per cent in 2028 (Exim Bank 2019). India's travel and tourism sector also contributed roughly 4.7 per cent to the country's overall GDP in 2020. This was a considerable decline from the previous year's figure of about 7 per cent because of the Covid-19 pandemic (Statista 2021).

Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP

2019	2020
<p>6.9% of total economy Total T&T GDP = INR14,181.9BN (USD191.3BN)</p>	<p>4.7% of Total Economy Total T&T GDP = INR9,039.5BN (USD121.9BN)</p>

Source: World Travel & Tourism report 2021

Tourism's Contribution to Employment

There are primarily two ways in which employment opportunities in tourism might be established:

1. Direct employment opportunities: the entire number of job opportunities directly supported by travel and tourism; for example, employment provided by travel agencies, restaurants, tourism information offices, hotels, museums, religious sites, protected places like national parks, monuments, etc.

2. In-direct employment opportunities: Furthermore, it should be noted that tourism is also responsible for the creation of jobs outside of the industry in its more strictly defined sense and that individuals who sell goods and services to those directly involved in tourism are also benefactors of tourism. Construction companies that build and maintain tourist facilities and infrastructure, restaurant suppliers, various handicrafts producers, aircraft manufacturers, marketing agencies, accounting services, furnishing and equipment industries, souvenir industries, farming and food supply, and other activities that are more or less dependent on the companies that provide direct employment are examples of indirect employment opportunities (Venkateswari and Anumol 2018).

Travel and tourism also contribute significantly to the generation of jobs in the country. In 2017, the sector employed about 8 per cent of the workforce. In 2017, the tourist sector directly created over 26 million jobs or 5.0 per cent of total employment. By 2028, the total number of jobs provided by the industry is predicted to rise from 41.6 million to 52.3 million (Exim Bank 2019).

According to WTTC, the Travel and Tourism sector provided 40,111,900 jobs in 2019, which accounted for 8.8 per cent of the country's total employment. In 2020, the figure declined to 31,785,200 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to Employment

2019	2020	Change in jobs
40,111.9 Jobs (000s) (8.8 % of total)	31,785.2 Jobs (000s) (7.3 % of total)	-20.8% -8,326.7 (000s)

employment)	employment)	
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Source: World Travel & Tourism Report 2021

Tourism's Contribution to Investment

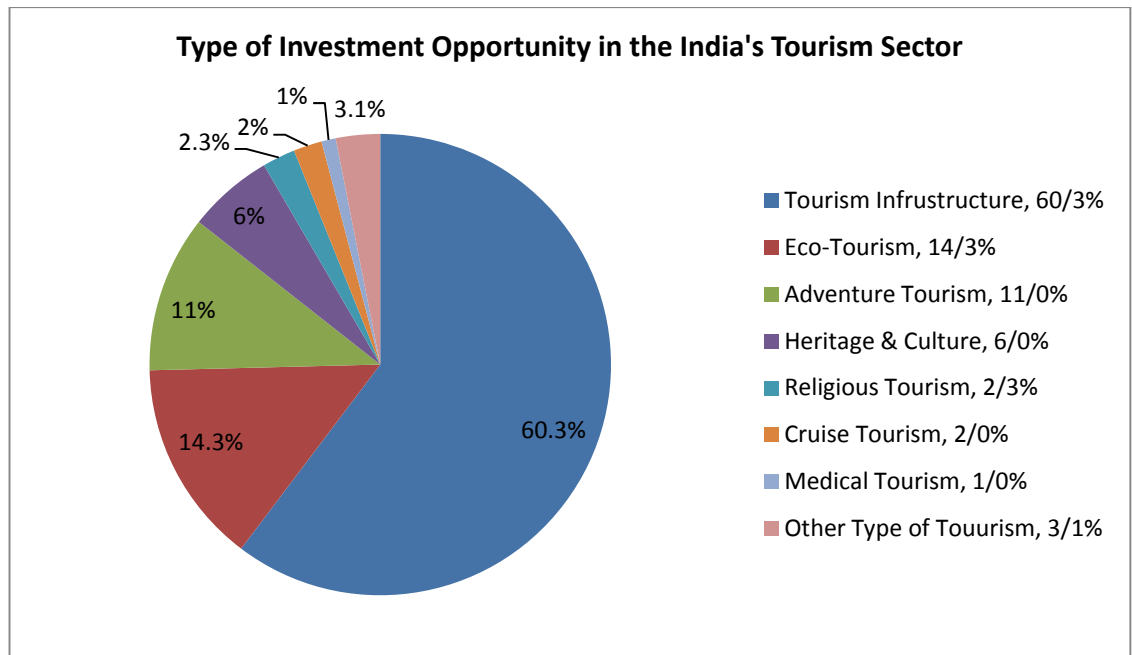
The value of capital investments in India's tourist sector is expected to be over 95.3 billion dollars in 2028, up from roughly 47.8 billion dollars in 2017. From 2008, there had been an overall increase in investments (Statista 2021).

Capital Investments Value across the Tourism Sector in India from 2008 to 2017, with a Forecast for 2028 (in billion U.S. dollars)

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2028
33.7	23.8	28.9	33	31.3	32.2	35	34.6	36.6	47.8	95.3

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/799836/india-capital-investments-value-in-the-tourism-sector/>

Tourism infrastructure has also been highlighted as the area with the highest investment opportunities in the tourism sector. The tourism infrastructure category is expected to get almost 60.3 per cent of tourism investment, followed by eco-tourism and adventure tourism (Exim Bank 2019).



Source: Incredible India Tourism Investors Summit, FICCI

Tourism Contribution to Visitor Exports

Tourist export is an important component of the direct contribution of tourism and travel. Visitor exports reached US\$27.3 billion in 2017, accounting for 5.8 per cent of total exports of goods and services for the year. By 2028, international tourist arrivals are expected to surpass the 30 million mark (Exim Bank 2019). In 2019 international visitors spent US\$ 30.8 billion, which contributed 5.8 per cent of total exports. In 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the figure reduced to US\$ 12 billion.

Visitor Impact

2019	2020	Change in visitor spend
International: INR2,282.3_{BN} 5.8% of total exports (USD30.8_{BN})	International: INR890.7_{BN} 2.5% of total exports (USD12.0_{BN})	International: -61.0% -USD 18.8_{BN}
Domestic: INR10,384.8_{BN} (USD 140.1_{BN})	Domestic: INR7,201.4_{BN} (USD 97.1_{BN})	Domestic: -30.7% -USD 42.9_{BN}

Source: World Travel & Tourism Report 2021

Challenges and Problems

Although India has always been an attractive destination for tourists due to its rich heritage and culture, there are still challenges that have had negative impacts on this industry and reduced the attraction of the country. Physical infrastructure, such as parts of entrance, means of transportation, and urban infrastructures, such as access roads, electricity, water supply, and telecommunications, are all needed for travel and tourism. Airlines, surface transportation, accommodation, and infrastructure and facilitation systems are all parts of the travel and tourism industry. One of the primary reasons why international tourists have been skipping India is the country's poor infrastructure. Another important problem that India has faced in recent years is the condition of amenities; various tourist destinations and facilities along the routes need to be improved. This includes

basic facilities such as drinking water, clean and well-maintained waiting rooms and toilets, first aid, etc. Another important issue is security and safety; there are anxiety within the community and the terrorist attacks that the country sometimes faces. The lack of banks and ATM facilities for international tourists is also problematic. Most tourist destinations in India do not have ATMs and banks for international tourists. The last issue is lack of publicity; lack of publicity of good tourist destinations among travellers and lack of education to the locals regarding the receiving and hosting guests are sometimes problematic. All of the mentioned issues have had negative effects on India's tourism economy (Sujith and Jisha 2017).

Another important issue in the last two years has been the Covid-19 pandemic; the lockdown has disrupted the lives of billions of people and created a scenario of economic collapse in India. Through a half-year period, tourism companies only achieved 24.80 per cent of revenue compared to the previous half-year. Lost income over a six-month period was Rs23636.27 Crore, approximately equal to the nominal GDP of the State of Manipur or Arunachal Pradesh in 2017-18. This half-year income loss is the same as 75.20 per cent of the previous half-year income. Entire chains of hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents, family entertainment venues and air, land and sea transports have been got into a slump (Yadav and Qureshi 2020).

A look at India-Iran Tourism Potentials

Beyond the energy collaboration between India and Iran, tourism is one area where the two long-standing friends may strengthen their bonds even further. According to research, 72,809 Indians visited Iran in the Iranian fiscal year

(March 2017-18), accounting for 2.3 per cent of all international visitors. According to the Iranian tourism administration, the number of Indian visitors decreased by 6.6 per cent compared with the previous fiscal year. At a time when Indians are looking for more cost-effective vacation spots, cities like Dubai, Malaysia, and Singapore are being discussed. These places have glitzy nightlife and massive skyscrapers, whereas Iran has all the charm to entice Indian tourists with its historical and natural attractions.

Iran and India have had a long and historical relationship. Multiple empires spanning both Persia and India ensured the ongoing migration of people between the two regions, as well as the development and evolution of Indo-Iranian linguistic groups. As a result, the people of India and Iran have a lot in common in terms of culture, linguistics, and ethnicity. Iran has to focus more on its tourist industry, which has enormous potential to change the country's struggling economy. It can begin with India (Rizvi 2018).

Results and Conclusion

As a country with ancient civilization, rich culture, and unique nature, India has always been an attractive destination for international tourists. For an emerging power like India, the tourism industry can not only be beneficial to the economy but also provide an acceptable image of the country. It seems that India in recent years has been successful in developing its tourism industry. According to the data gathered in this study, the following results were obtained:

- The Indian government has tried to develop specific forms of tourism, including religious tourism, medical tourism, Eco-Tourism, and MICE Tourism in recent years. Religious tourism has been important to improve the economic

conditions of communities in rural areas with no core competency or business. Medical Tourism Association has placed India 10th out of 46 global locations in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21. The number of Foreign Tourist arrivals for medical purposes increased from 233,918 in 2015 to 495,056 in 2017. According to India's health policy, treating foreign patients is a legal "export" that is considered beneficial to the country's economy. Eco-Tourism is another important part of the tourism industry that has benefited local residents by creating jobs, increasing earnings, and giving alternative livelihood options. MICE Tourism has also developed in recent years in India. The estimated size of the MICE market in India is Rs37,576 crore, of which almost 60 per cent comes from MIC (meetings, incentives, and conferences).

- Based on the data gathered, the contribution of the tourism industry to India's GDP has always been positive. In 2019 India's travel and tourism sector contributed roughly 6.9 per cent to the country's overall GDP.

- Travel and tourism also contribute significantly to the generation of jobs in the country. According to WTTC, the Travel and Tourism sector provided 40,111,900 jobs in 2019, which accounted for 8.8 per cent of the country's total employment.

- Investment opportunities in India's tourism sector have been increasing in recent years. Most of the investment has been in the area of tourism infrastructure by 60.3 per cent.

- Another important aspect of the tourism industry is tourist export, which is very beneficial to the country's overall exports. In 2019 alone, international visitors spent US\$ 30.8 billion, which contributed 5.8 per cent of total exports.

- Given the historical and cultural commonalities of Iran and India, the interaction of the two countries in the field of tourism can greatly contribute to the economy of both countries.

Despite all the benefits that the tourism industry has brought to the Indian economy, the industry still faces challenges. It seems that the country has not yet been able to use its full potential in the tourism industry. These challenges have prevented the country from using its full potential in the field of tourism. Some of the challenges are an unfavorable condition of infrastructures, security, lack of publicity, etc. In the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has also worsened the tourism industry's situation. We should wait to see what programs will implement to revive India's tourism industry.

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