

Influence of Shahnama on Persian Literature Produced in Kashmir

Firdowsi is sometimes called the Homer of Iran. He is considered to be one of the great epic poets who flourished in Iran. His main contribution to the Persian Language and Literature is "Shahnama" in which he incorporates most of the heroic legends of early Iran, earning thereby an everlasting fame for himself. He very confidently professes to have preserved the ancient history by writing Shahnama which deals with the legends and deeds of ancient heroes of Persia. While dealing with such deeds and legends he admits that by reconstructing Iran's royal history and reviving the tales of its legendary heroes he not only made a unique contribution but also immortalized these heroes.

چو عیسیٰ من این مردگان را تمام

سراسر زنده کردم بنام

The Shahnama is virtually the result of Firdowsi's more than thirty years continuous labour as he says:

بسی رنج بردم درین سال سی

عجم زنده کردم بدین پارسی

This master-piece was not composed, as some scholars have wrongly opined, in hope of receiving some reward from Mehmood Ghaznavi - the most powerful monarch of his times. Firdowsi had started composing - the Shahnama on his own and neither directed by any one to

compose nor compelled to do so; hence the question of reward did not arise.

The work of Firdowsi owes its popularity in the Persian spoken world to its wide range of peculiarities. It has rightly been considered as the national epic of Persia. E.G. Browne considers this work as "the prototype and model of all epic poetry in the lands of Islam".¹

According to Reuben Levy "Firdowsi's poem however, by the extent and wealth of its contents was marked out for greatness, and the ardent patriotism which it breathes, made it the national epic of Persians"²

Firdowsi says:

چو ایران نبا شدتن من مباد
بدین بوم و برزنده یک تن مباد
همه سربه سرتن به کشتن دهیم
ازان به که کشوربه دشمن دهیم

Firdowsi has efficiently chosen the most suitable rhythm and metre in his work, i.e.

(بحر متقارب مثنیٰ محذوب مقصور) فعولن فعولن فعولن فعل

The use of this metre has added to its quality and made it a classic in world literature. It may be pointed out here that Firdowsi's Shahnama, Asadi Tusi's Gurshasap Nama, Nizami's Sikander Name and Saba's Shahan Shah Nama are all in the same rhythm and metre.

The Shahnama contains information about the history, culture, civilization, knowledge and innumerable experiences of its writer. Besides, if these ancient historical events had not been recorded by Firdowsi in his shahnama, there would have been apprehensions of losing them and thus, the

ancient history of Persia would have not been available in complete form.

The Shahnama laid deep impression on the Persian Literature and has played a vital role in the evolution of Persian language. It laid a great impact on the evolution of Persian Literature in Kashmir also. Many Persian poets of Kashmir have tried to compose Shahnamas or mathnavis in imitation and pursuance of Firdowsi. Among the Kashmiri poets who imitated Shahnama, are Abdul Wahab Shaiq, Mulla Mohammad Taufiq, Rehmat-ullah Navid, Mulla Rahij, Mulla Ashraf Bulbul. Some poets have outrightly criticized the work of Firdowsi for having legendary and unrealistic fables in it. For example Sheikh Yaqoob Sarfi – a well known poet of Akbar's times, has written a mathnavi namely Maghazi Un-Nabi pertaining to the wars fought by Prophet Mohammad (SAW) in imitation of Shahnama. While criticizing Firdowsi and his Shahnama he says:

مغازالنبی

چودر هرجد یدی بود لذتی	که خالی نمی باشد از حکمتی
ترا بهر این گنج باید گزید	گهرهای تازه ز کان جدید
دل من مرا گفت اگر طالبی	دُر افشان بشرح مغازالنبی
دفا تر که کردند افاضل رقم	بجنگ و جدال سلاطین بهم
اگر غزوه های نبی را بیان	کنی بهتر از قصه های چنان
نظر کن بفردوسی نکته سنج	که عمری بشاهنامه بردست رنج
ازان رنج بود آن هوادر سرش	که محمود چندان بخشد زرش
که یابد عنایش بعالم رواج	نماند بکس هر گز احتیاج
نشد حاصل ازوی مراد دلش	ندامت بد از رنج خود حاصلش
بد نیاش نفعی نیاید یقین	ز مدح سلاطین چه نفعش بدین
گر این غزوها آوری در بیان	یقین ست نفع بعقب اذان 3

Notwithstanding all this, Firdowsi's shahnama has been translated into many languages of the world including Kashmiri. Its versified Kashmiri translation has been done

by Abdul Wahab Parray Hajini (Death 1335 AH = 1914 AD) and has been printed and published twice in Kashmir. It is pertinent to note that Firdowsi's Shahnama is inordinate so far as the length of the poem is concerned and consists of more than fifty-five thousand verses. Abdul Wahab Parray has tried to condense the whole Shannama into 16,825 verses leaving a large portion of the original text un-noticed, which is considered to be the main defect of this Kashmiri version or translation. 4.

The Persian Language and literature entered Kashmir in the beginning of 14th Century A.D. with the advent of Islam during Shahmiri Kings. It acquired general adoption during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Death 1420 AD) who was one of the greatest kings of this dynasty. He was a learned scholar and patron of art and literature. His patronage was confined not only to Muslims but also Hindu scholars who were rewarded for their eminence. Bodhi Bhata was first learned non-Muslim Kashmiri scholar who had mastered Shahnama of Firdowsi and used to recite it to the delight of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. It may not be out of place to mention here that Shahnama writing is very old tradition in Kashmir. The first Shahnama, known as Rajtarangni, was composed by Kalhan Pandit (Death 1148 A.D.) in the 12th Century A.D. Kalhan wrote Rajtarangni or shahnama in Sanskrit language. During the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, Juna Raja composed Rajabali (1412 A.D.)- an account of the King.

Zain-ul-Abidin, it is to be noted was the first king of Kashmir who established a translation bureau in his court and appointed Mulla Ahmad Kashmiri as its chief for translating Rajtrarangni written by Kalhan Pandit from Sanskrit into Persian. Even Sukh Jiwan Mal (Death 1763 A.D.) during his Governorship (of Afghans) established a Board of Persian poets (Anjumani Shorai Farsi) in Kashmir for composing the Shahnama of Kashmir in imitation of the Shahnama of Firdowsi. This board consisted of the following seven poets:

01. Abdul Wahab Shaiq;
02. Mulla Muhammad Taufiq;
03. Rehmat-ullah Banday Navid;
04. Mohammad Ali Khan Mateen;
05. Mulla Rahij;
06. Mullah Rafi Mantji (Death 1177 AH – 1763 A.D.);
07. Mohammad Jan Beigh Saami.

Abdul Wahab Shaiq (Death 1768 A.D.) wrote a versified history of Kashmir or shahnama-e-Kasmir under the title Reyaz-ul-Islam. This portion of Shahnama consists of about 6000 couplets. This book, known as Tarikh-e-Shaiq, was composed by him in 1177 A.H. A MSS copy of Reyaz-ul-Islam is preserved in the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages Srinagar. This work is one of the important epics composed in Firdowsi's style, some selected verses are given below:

<p>قوی هیکلی داشت زهره گسل که رم کردی از دیدنش اهرمن عدو همچو روباہ و او نره شیر قوی گردنی داشت چون کر گن پس و پیش و قلب و یسار دیمین بکف تیغ چون برق رخشان شدند شدی بردمش نقد جانها نثار هزار آفرین از زبان اجل گشادند بازو چو اسفند یار گریزان شد آندم حیات از میان 5</p>	<p>زدیگر طوف غازی شیردل عجب مستی دلشت آن صف شکن ببازوی قوی و به همت دلیر بلی بود روئین تن آن پیل تن بر آراست غازی بصد خشم و کین بمیدان یلان گرم جولان شدند دم تیغ میبرد جوهر بکار دم تیغ بر آمده از ازل بکف نیزه مردان خنجر گزار مقابل چو گشتند با هم یلان</p>
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Mulla Lal Mohammad also known as Taufiq is regarded as next to ghani Kashmiri. Sukh Jiwan Mal made him the poet-laureate, the high position in his court. In imitation of Firdowsi's Shahnama, he composed a mathnavi entitled "Tarikh-e-Kashmir", One copy of which is preserved in the manuscript library of the Research and Libraries Department, University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

The present MSS, consisting of about 2000 verses, gives a detailed account of the reign of Sultan Yousuf Shah Chak (dethroned 1586 A.D.) of the Chak dynasty to the end of Alamgir (Aurang Zaib) in Kashmir. This epic has a literary as well as historical importance. The fragment quoted below pertains to Sultan Yousuf Shah Chak who was addicted to wine and would listen to music always even at the time of war imposed on Kashmir by the troops of Mughal emperor Akbar in 984 A.H.

بجز نغمه افسانه خواب او	نبودی بغیر از شراب آب او
که صبحش زدی خفته بر روی یار	یکی روز از روزهای بهار
چمن دلکش و دشت خاطر زدا	هو اروح بخش و صبا جانقزا
بریحان مشکین در افکنده ناب	عروسان بستان گشاده نقاب
پنیسیر آب و هوای چمن	بتکلیف گل ز اقتضای سمن
بر آراست بزمی ز جام و ایاق	بطرف لب جوی در صحن باغ
چه باغی که فردوس از آن داغ بود	چه بزمی که رنگین تر از باغ بود
مهیا بد آنسان) که دلخواه بود	می و شاهد و مطرب و چنگ ورود
زهر گوشه مطرب کشیده نوا	زهر سوبمی داده ساقی صلا
می لاله گون تر ز خون تازدو؟	بگردش در آورده در پای سرو
کهن پیر زال فلک چرخ زن 6	بر آواز مرغان شیرین سخن

Saami Kashmiri (Death 1781 A.D.) who was one of the members on staff of the Anjuman-e-Shorai Kashmir

appointed by Raja Sukh Jiwan Mal also has contributed to the Shahnama-e-Kashmir. An incomplete copy of Shahnama of Kashmir by Saami is preserved in the Research and Libraries Department (presently situated at University of Kashmir) which opens with the following verses in which king Laltadhitiya is assending the throne:

که وامانداز مرگ تارانگین باللتادت آن گوهرسومین
 مشرف به تشریف شاهنشاهی مزین بدیهیم ظل الهی
 بصدناز بر کرسی زر نبشست برادر بجای برادرنشست
 ز بعد برادر خرد کوفت کوس بنوبت بآئین جشن جلوس 7

Another poet of merit who belongs to this period is Mir Saad-ullah Shahabadi who has composed Bagh-e-Sulaiman, (باغ سلیمان) in which he writes that the rulers and officers of his times had lashed a reign of terror in the State. Due to this oppression and tyranny Kashmir had turned into a desert. He says:

که ظلم شاهان وجود سلطانان
 یک قلم کرد ملک راویران 8

Saad-ullah's another work is somewhat larger in size. This mathnavi opens with the following verses and depict the miserable and politically bad condition of his times:

عجب روز گاریست این عهدما که تأشیر زهر است در شیر ما
 گل مهر از باغ دلها فسرد بجایش نهال حسد پافشرد
 زن وزر پرستی شعار همه سخاو کرم خوارو عار همه
 دغل منصب خود صدارت گرفت
 تصادف گری خواجه غارت گرفت 9

Hamid-ullah Shah Abadi (Death 1748 A.D.) lived in the conditions of political turmoil in Kashmir, in which Chaos and

confusion prevailed and therefore, despondency and discontent with the existing conditions can be perceived in his verses. He composed the following mathnavis in Persian:

1. Akbar nama;
2. Shakeristan;
3. Chai Nama
4. Radi Shia
5. Be Buz Nama.

Among all his works, the two master pieces, Akbar Nama and Bebuzz Nama have been composed in pursuance of Firdowsi's shahnama (one manuscript copy of Akbar Nama is preserved in the Muslim University Aligarh Library). He makes his countrymen feel to defend for their rights and as such achieves prominence for this type of patriotic verses. Hamid attracts the attention of the reader as he composes Chai Nama in the rhythm and metre of Shahnama. He says:

ازین وصف دررزیچیده بود	ظهوری مگر چای نادیده بود
بده تلخ گرشکروشیر نیست	بده ساقیاچای تاخیر چیست
غزالی شدی نبض منشاریش	اگرجم ازین خم شدی جرعه کش
تو گویی که منصور اناالحق زند 10	نبینی که چون دیگ بق بق زند

Hamid's contribution to the Persian poetry is commendable as he himself says in the following verses:

که تسخیر ملک معانی کنم	چنان از زبان تیغ رانی کنم
کنم نیزه های قلم را قلم	به چالاک طبعان جادورقم
هزار آفرین روح دانای طوس	کند برمن از گنبد آبنوس
کنم عشق راتزه داغ کهن	گراز عشقبازی برانم سخن
که دیوانگی یاد مجنون دهم 11	چناب شوری از سینه بیرون دهم

Another celebrated poet who composed "Raza Nama" in imitation of Shahnama Firdowsi is Mulla Mohammad Ashraf Bulbul (Death in 1756 A.D.), perhaps the first Persian poet of Kashmir who composed the tragedy and martyrdom of Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain in epic. He wrote the following quintet (Khamsa).

1. Arzan Heemal
2. Hasht Asrar
3. Mehr-o-Mah
4. Hasht Tamheed
5. Raza Nama.

But out of these mathnavis, only Raza Nama seems to have survived to our times and this deals with martyrdom of Imam Hussain and the tragic death of Imam Hassan. This mathnavi consists of 10,000 couplets as Bulbul himself states:

چو ابیات این نامه کردم شمار خرد گفت بامن بگوده هزار 12

According to the poet, as he believes, the only thing which keeps a man alive in the world, is either good poetry or the generosity (Charity). He says:

اگر چه نظامی بسی رنج برد ز گنجینه معنوی گنج برد
من از روح او یاری خواستم سخن را بمعنی بیار استم
دو چیز است اندر جهان پایدار سخا و سخن نکته آبدار 13

The book opens with the following verses which are in praise of Almighty God:

نوازش گرامنما قادرا	غریب آشنا حاضر اناظرا
حکیم که پیش تو علت شناس	سرخنت نبض دان قیاس
شکته دلم مومیای فریست	بچشم ترم روشنائی فریست
اگر چه دوتا شد ز بار گناه	کمر و گردن زبان عذر خواه
ولیکن ز فضل تو دارم رجا	قبولم دعا کن و رحمت نما
چو هستم من از جمله بیکسان	ز لطف عمیت بفیضم رسان
اگر چه بیاید ز من بندگی	که سازم بدان فخر و فرخندگی 14

The tragedy of poisoning Imam Hassan has been expressed by poet with grief in these words:

دریغا که در لعل سنگی نماند	که یعنی بهاری و رنگی نماند
دریغا (ز) گیتی مردت گزشت	محبت نماند و مودت گزشت
حیادر سرو چشم مردم نماند	صفائی بدوران و انجم نماند
چو شهزاده از زخم پرداخته	بعزم مدینه سرافراخته
چو دولت روان شد بدولت سرا	درون چون عقیق و برون کهربا
اگر چه برخ بود لعل یمن	بعارض چو در دویتن چون سمن
نهادند در پیش او طشت زر	همی ریخت در طشت خون جگر
ز الماس سوده جگر پاره شد	پس آن خون چون لعل فواره شد
شمر دند هفتاد پاره جگر	بیفتاد با خون در آن طشت زر
دلش خون شده معده بگسیخته	جگر پاره مادر طبق ریخته
شده آن طبق بسته با خون دل	همان خون دل میشدش جان گسل 15

Abu Talib Kashani and Haji Mohammad Jan Qudsi Meshhadi are the two prominent Iranian poets who migrated from Iran during the reign of Shah Jahan and settled down for sometime at Delhi and latter on in Kashmir. Both of them have made a remarkable contribution to the Persian

language and literature. Mohammad Jan Qudsi translated Shah Jahan Nama into Persian verse but due to his death in the year 1646 A.D. this work could not be completed. After his death this assignment was taken up and completed by Abu Talib Kaleem.

Among other prominent Persian poets of Kashmir who contributed to Persian literature by adding to the epic Poetry, mention may be made of Pandit Taba Ram whose nom-de-plume was Turki. Following verses from his Munajat are in the rhythm and metre of Shahnama:

خدايا نيامد ز من پوزشى	نه شد گرم هنگامه سوزشى
ز مهر تو برسيه داغى نه سوخت	نلم ربه بالين چراغى نه سوخت
ز چشم نيامد گهر ريزيى	چو شب نم نه كردم سحر خيزيى
به گلزار عمرم بهارى نم اند	بدستم جزاز خار خارى نم اند
سرم پانه گر ديده در راه تو	نه شد روى من سوى درگاه تو
زدستم نيامد چو ابر گهر	نه اشكى نه آهى نه سوز جگر
به كارت نه پرداختم ساعتى	نه كردم بكف تحفته طاعتى
شدم گرم عصيان بگفت و شنود	سيه كارى از من بر آورددود
همه خرمن عمر بر باد رفت	مراتوشنه راه از ياد رفت
عقوبت مكن و انقالم بس است	مر اطعنه آن ز عالم بس است
به پيش كه نالم ز عصيان خويش	پشيمان خويشم پشيمان خويش
خدا ياتونى خلق را چاره ساز	ندارى به ناز كسى را نياز
به درگاه تو نااميدى كجاست	گر اميد بيتاب دارد بجاست 16

The available evidences reveal that Shahnama has influenced the culture, social life, customs of Kashmir as well as its language to a great extent. The Kashmiri people have adopted Persian/Pahalvi words and customs to the extent that these have become a part of Kashmiri language and culture. Following are some technical terms used by Firdowsi in his Shahnama and are being used in Kashmiri language as well:

فوج لشکر زره بکتر تیر کمان تیغ شمشیر
گرز برج قلعه کارزار پیل تن جنگ
یزدان ایزد۔

The names of some famous kings mentioned in Shahnama are known in Kashmir for their achievements:

انوشیروان خسرو پرویز ضحاک مادوش جمشید۔

The names of some famous warriors mentioned in shahnama who have earned fame in Kashmir for their bravery are as under:

زال رستم سهراب افراسیاب اسفندیار۔

The following places mentioned in Firdowsi's Shahnama are familiar in Kashmir.

توران زابل سیتان عجم ایران مازندران توران۔

The impact of the verses of Shahnama on the Persian literature produced in Kashmir is so much that a good number of verses from Shahnama are being quoted by the common people of Kashmir in their day to day affairs. This practice is prevalent even now and it seems that it must have a tradition behind it. However, mention may be made of the following verses which are commonly and frequently used by the people:

- ۱۔ توانا بود هر که دانا بود ز دانش دل پیر برنا بود
- ۲۔ پرستار زاده نیاید بکار و گر چند باشد نامور شهر یار
- ۳۔ پژوهنده راز با ماد راست
- ۴۔ بنام خداوند جان و خرد

The people and the society in Kashmir have also been influenced by the Shahnama. It is said that during ancient days when Kashmir was engulfed in cold winters, inhabitants of a certain locality used to assemble at a particular place or in a community hall and one person who had mastered the Shahnama, would recite the verses and legendary stories from it to the delight of the people. The kings used to issue their official orders (Farmans) during peace and war times in the rhythm and pattern of Shahnama. Once Yousuf Shah Check (dethroned in 1586 A.D.) – a prominent king of the

Chak dynasty in Kashmir was deceived by his military General namely Abdal Bhat, Yousuf Shah wrote him the following versified letter. It is worth mentioning here that the metre and rhythm used by Yousuf Shah are the same which have been adopted by Firdowsi in his Shahnama:

زاخبار یوسف شہی دوربین
 زبانی بیان در جوابش کشود
 کہ ای بت بن بت نیلونتراد
 کہ نبود طریقی زانصاف بہ
 در انداختی همچورستم بچاہ
 بمیدان مردان فرس تاختی
 چگونہ شوی جنگ من روبرو
 کشاورزا کی سزدجای من
 کشاورزا رابادلیری چه کار
 مشوعاصی اندر خداوند خویش
 بہ پور علی شہ کہ آردشکست؟
 شبیخون کنان سوی من تاختی
 ستانی ز من ملک آبای من
 همان ہوشیارم همان بخودم
 کہ فولاد خودرا پسندیدہ ای
 ہراسان از پید پولا درا
 کہ بازوی جنگم نہ پیمودہ ای
 کفن بہ کہ پوشد بجای زره
 دروغی نمیگویم اینک مضاف
 کہ باسروہم باستانم کلاہ
 تودانی دگر بعدازین والسلام 17

چنین گفت مردسخن آفرین
 چوتهدیدابدال بت شہ شنود
 وزان پس سخن راچنین درکشاد
 بیاپای درراہ انصاف نہ
 تواز مکر خود سید وبادشاہ
 تواز امداد او سربرافراختی
 نیابیی تو امروز امداد او
 تو بودی کشاورز آبای من
 بشمشیر و ترکش مر است کار
 خداوند ملکم بہ پیوند خویش
 نژادہ منم دیگران زیر دست
 بخون ریز من لشکر ساختی
 بدان تابہم ہرزنی جای من
 تو گر ہوشیاری نہ من بیخودم
 تودر من چونرم آستین دیدہ ای
 تو گر برگ ساکن کنی بادرا
 در اندازہ من غلط بودہ ای
 کسی کوزند بر من ابرو گرہ
 ستانم ز پهلودر آرم بناف
 من اینک عنان باز پیچم زراہ
 تر آنچه بایست گفتم تمام

Firdowsi has very clearly emphasized the relevance and importance of knowledge and learning in his Shahnama. According to him ignorance is a curse on man; because

without proper knowledge and learning it is difficult to distinguish between the reality and the mirage.

که او هست و باشد همیشه به جای
همه زندگانیت آسان بود
ز گهواره تا گوردانش بجز

زدانش نحستین به یزدان گرای
چو دانش تنت را نگهبان بود

As a matter of fact there is hardly any poet whose attention has not been attracted by Firdowsi's viewpoint regarding knowledge and learning. Sheikh Yaqub Sharfi Kashmiri is one of such poets. He expresses his sentiments with regard to the knowledge in the following lines:

علم نه آنست که برتن تند	علم همانست که بردل زند
علم که برتن تند آن مارتست	علم که بردل زند آن یارتست
علم تو معلوم که خود تا کیجاست	از سربینی تو تا پشت پاست
علم که شد موجب کبر و غرور	ظلمت جان و دلت آمدنه نور 18

One of the main features of Shahnama is that the author, whenever intends to describe or give the details of the fighting heroes, he illustrates very vividly the triumphs and like a movie, the scene reveals in the readers mind. This tendency has also been illustrated by the poets of Kashmir who took their inspiration from Shahnama, and it seems as if the scenes are being revived in miniature. For example:

مقابل چو گشتند باهم یلان	گریزان شد آنم حیات از میان
اجل را شده روز بازار گرم	نمیگرداز زندگان هیچ شرم
سنان همسری با سران داشته	سری از تکبر برافراشته
ز جوشن گنرچون نمودی سنان	شدی جوهرش جوهر استخوان
ببین زور بازوی زاغ کهان	عقاب سه پر را نمودی راو 19

This brief survey makes it clear that innumerable mathnavis have been composed by the Persian poets of Kashmir in pursuance of Shahnama which itself is a great contribution to the evolution of Persian language and

literature in the subcontinent. A new form of poetry known as epic mathnavi or Shahnama Navisi شاهنامه نویسی was introduced and hundreds of words pertaining to weapons, warfare, military and civil administration, wisdom, culture, science and arts etc. used in Shahnama, were adopted by the Kashmiri poets in their poems. Above all Kashmiri language and literature also got enriched by the new words, trends, thoughts and ideas.

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