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"Influence of Persian Language on the Literary History of Kashmir"

The Kashmir valley is preserved from all sides by a chain of mountains, gave rise to a feeling of aloofness among Kashmiris in the past and they were not in a mood to allow any foreigner except a few Jews to enter the valley. But with the passage of time, its treasures of language and culture were known to outside world, which tempted traders as well as conquerors to bring Kashmir under their influence. Traders and soldiers, who came from time to time, brought with them their customs, traditions and manners. One cannot shut eyes to the glaring fact of history that the day-to-day life in the valley is full of foreign influence. History also bears witness that the ancient Kingdom of Gandhara, extending from Anantnag to Peshawar (Pakistan), had its cultural relations with Iran. Iranian influence on art is clear from the examination of tiles excavated from the Buddhist monastery at Harwan in Kashmir. Thus, Persian

language was introduced in Kashmir through such cultural contacts from earliest times. It was first introduced in the Dardistan which is adjacent to the valley and sharp minded Kashmiris at once responded to the call and even went to the extremes of surpassing the Persians. Mahomud of Ghaznavi had appointed a Kashmiri Pandit Tilak, incharge of Persian and Sansrit Translation Bureau from whom Alberuni learned Sanskrit.

Persain received impetus with the arrival of Sufi Sayyids from Central Asia who preached Islam and the people of Kashmir became well versed with the language. The presence of some Persian scholars like Moulla Ahmad, Court poet of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin and author of History of Kashmir and other scholars of Kashmir made the language populr in the region.

It was within a couple of years that it assumed the statues of official language in Kashmir. Even the Pandits who showed cold response to the new challenge at the initial stage, due to their social order, could not afford to avoid the use of Persian and adopted this language that they excelled the acknowledged scholars of the time. Within a short time, Kashmir became famous as Iran-e-Saghir (mini-iran). They even incorporated certain Persian words into the Sanskrit language.

According to Bahari-i-Gulshan-i-Kashmir, Persian language and literature had become with the Kashmiri Pandits from ancient times. It provides an opportunity to the Kashmiri Scholars to show their talent to outside world. With the passage

of time, Persian words become so common in Kashmir that it was difficult to differentiate them from the Kashmiri words. With the ascendancy of Shah Mir Sultans to the throne of Kashmir, a large number of scholars and Preachers came to Kashmir in the beginning of the 14th century A.D. Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamdani came to Kashmir with a large number of Sufis, scholars and mystics and stationed them at different places. They opened hospices and preached Islam to the people of Kashmir. It is obvious that they must have preached Islam in their mother tongue--- the Persian language which was having some roots in Kashmir. Kashmiri language previously a local language could not be spoken by these scholars whereas the Kashmiris had some acquaintance with the Persian language. They established a number of schools (Madrassas) in Kashmir.

A University "Darul-Uloom" with the name of "Qurwat-ul-Vosqa" was established where thousands of Kashmiris used to learn Persian and Arabic. As such, it was easy for both the parties to understand each others view points in Persian. To facilitate the colleagues Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamdani himself wrote many books in Persian which were easily read by Kashmiris. In the capacity of an ambassador from Iran, Mir Shamus-ud-Din Iraqi came to Kashmir at the end of the 15th century. He introduced Shia school thought in Kashmir and also introduced Iranian language and culture in Kashmir. Exchange of ambassadors between the two countries showed the result that

Iranian arts, crafts, music, literature and culture made such an impact on the people of the valley which exists even today.

Sultan Qutub-ud-Din (1354-1374 A.D) established a University in Qutub-ud-Din Pora which became a centre of Persian language and literature. This institution continued even after him and during reign of Jehangir-a Mughal Emperor, it was headed by Mala Jowhar Nath, and the great scholars like Mula Mohsin Fani, Mula Tahir Gani and Mula Abdul Satar were on its teaching staff. Dr. Sufi is of the opinion that "Shaful-Amraz" was composed by Tabib Shahab-ud-Din-Abni-Abdul Karim during reign of Sultan Qutub-ud-Din.

Sultan Sikander (1373-1389 A.D) a great patron of scholars who encouraged literary activities in the valley. He invited a batch of Scholars from Iran, Khorsan and adjacent areas for settlement. He established an institution near Jamia Masjid, Srinagar which imparted education to all. Within a short period, this institution became a great centre of learning. Many schools, with Persian as medium of instruction, were established. During this period, works on theology, medicine and history were compiled by eminent scholars.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin came to power in 1420 A.D. and his reign is termed as the golden period of Persian in Kashmir. He worked hard to popularize Persian throughout his kingdom. He had received enough of training during his long stay of eleven years at Samarkand. The Sultan had good command over

Persian, Kashmiri and Hindi. His court was full of scholars including those who had come from Iran and Turkistan.

He established a university at Nowshehra in Srinagar. A Translation Bureau was attached with this University. This Bureau was entrusted with the work of translating books of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. For this purpose a large number of manuscripts were obtained from various countries and deposited in the library. Most of the manuscripts were translated into Persian. Mula Ahmad Kashmiri translated Maharashtra Katha, Saristsagara, Rajatarangini, Vedas and Shastras into Persian. Similarly, Pandit Scholars like Sirivara, Soma and Bodhi Bhatta translated some Persian and Arabic works into Sanskrit. Soma was a great scholar of Persian and remembered Shah-Nama by heart. Jonaraja updated Rajatrangini up to Zain-ul-Abidin's time. Sirivara also translated 'Yousuf-Zulai-Kha' of Jami into Sanskrit in 1505 A.D. Any Pandit taking Persian as a subject was granted scholarship after completing education was appointed on high post.

Political uncertainty during the last days of Shahmiri Sultans resulted in discontinuation of literary activities, but still there are a few Persian works of the period, such as Tarikh-i-Kashmir by Sayyid Ali. Literary activities were revived during the period of Mirza Haider Dughlat. Who was a great writer and his famous work Tarikh-i-Rashidi throws enough of light on the events of the period. One more history Tarikh-i-Kashmir by Mula Hussain Qari was also written during his reign.

It was followed by stormy literary activities during the

Chak were great Patrons of Art and learning. A galaxy of Persian Scholars arrived from Iran during their reigns which strengthened the roots of Persian language in Kashmir. Poetry, Calligraphy, Art, Painting, Music and Medicine received royal patronage. Education Institutions received active support of the Sultans and became popular among masses. Great scholars like Mula Nami Gani, Mula Mehdi and Maulana Ahmad were the products of the Chak period. Besides the works of Baba Daud Khaki and Shiekh Yaqoob Sarfi and others assumed reputation outside the Kashmir. Bahristan-i-Shahi an important history, distinct from other histories, in Kashmir has been written during this period.

The advent of Mughals is marked by change in literary taste. Upto this time Persian had been used in writing religious books and histories, but its sphere was extended to Poetry, prose and other forms of literature. Histories like Muntakha-bul-tawarikh by Hassan Beg and Tarikh-i-Kashmir by Haider Malik Chadoora were written in the beginning of the Mughal rule. The scholarship of Kashmiris received appreciation outside Kashmir also. Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan was struck by the scholarship of a Kashmiri Mula Mohammad Ali who had migrated to Ahmad Nagar and enlisted him among his Court Scholars. He enjoyed the privilege of translating Saif-ud-Din's Alama-ul-Ulma in to Persian. Jehangir was fond of poetry and would always like to spend some time in the company of poets and scholars. He was

very much struck by the natural beauty of Kashmir as well as the scholarship of Kashmiri poets and authors. This encouraged local scholars and some good works written. Baba Nasib-udin-Gazi's "Noor-Nama" which is the main source of information about Hazrat Noor-ud-Din Wali (Nund-Rishi) is of great importance, Mula Ali Pustak, Mula Kamal, Jawahar Nath, Khawaja Habib-ullah, Haider Malik Chadura and many other Scholars, poets and historians flourished during the reign. Shah Jehan's period is considered to be the golden period of the Mughal rule. During this period Persian language reached to its Zenith. Some of the works brought out during his reign were studied by Iranian Scholars. The famous poets of Iran like Saib, Kalim and Qudsi visited Kashmir to have a firsthand knowledge of Persian poets of Kashmir especially to meet Mula Tahir Gani. Ahsan who rose to the position of Governor of Kashmir is still remembered for his talented works and mastery over Persian. Mula Tahir Gani, wrote in Persian *Dar-i-Gani*, which enabled him to be counted among the top most poets of Persian language. Mula Mohsin Fani also attained world fame. Mohammad Sadiq Kashmiri wrote a book entitled *Tabkat-i-Shah Jehan* during this period. Persian being the Court language during reign of Aurengzeb (1650-1742 A.D) and his successors. Kashmir continued to be a prominent centre of Persian language and culture. Baba Dawood Mishkati, Sheikh Ali Pampori, Mula Zain-ul-Din Naqashbandi and Mohammad Azam Dedmari are among the famous Scholars of

the time. Pandit Nand Ram alias Permanand translated Upanishads into Persian. Some small states around Kashmir also came under the influence of Persian. Pandit Shiv Kak Dhar and Shiv Ji Dhar wrote their history of Kishtwar in Persian. Pandit Narian Kaul's Muntakhab-ul-Twarikh is one of the good Persian works written in the closing years of Aurengzeb's reign. Another leading Persian writer, Khawaja Azam Dedmari was an author of many books and his Waqt-i-Kashmir ranks among the leading histories of the time. Moulana Aman-ullah Shaheed, a great Persian scholar of Kashmir was bestowed with the honour of Shiekh-ul-Islam by Mohammad Shah.

Persian lost much of royal patronage during the Afghan period. But some scholars upheld the traditions of the past. They were Mula Taufeeq, Mula Mateen, Pandit Daya Ram Kachoo, Pandit Bhawani Dass Kachroo, Mohtasham Khan Fida and Saad-ullah-Shahabadi. Pandit Tika Ram Akhoon, a great scholar of Persian established a School of Persian and Arabic language.

Sukhtulwan Mal who assumed the governorship of Kashmir during the period was a patron of Persian poetry. Himself a poet, he patronized many Persian scholars and poets. He entrusted compilation of Shah Nam-i-Kashmir to seven eminent poets, but it remained incomplete due to the dismissal of the governor. Mohammad Gani, Sami Abdul Wahab Shaiq, Rehmat-Ullah Naveed, Mohammad Ali Khan Muteen, Mula Lal Mohammad Taufeeq continued this works. Saad-ullah Shahabadi wrote his

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famous book Bagh-i-Sulaiman during this period which contains the account of the sufferings of the Kashmiris and their Plight. Mula Ashraf Bulbul wrote his famous Masthnavis entitled Hemal-Nagri, Hasbal-Asrar, Mehar-o-Mah, Hasbat-Behist and Razanama. Pandit Deya Ram Kachroo was a scholar of repute who wrote Persian verses under the pen name of Kushdil. During the Sikh period scholars concentrated on translating Kashmiri folk tales into Persian. Mufti Sadur-ud-Din Wafaie translated famous Kashmir folk tale Hemal-Nagrai into Persian.

Baha-ud-Din Mattoo, a great scholar produced many compilations in Persian which were full of poems and stories about the rishis of Kasmir. Pandit Birbal Kachroo authored Mukhtas-i-Twarikh. During this period, Baba Kamal-ud-Din wrote about the life and teaching of Hazrat Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali (Nund Rishi) in his famous Persian work entitled Noor-ud-Din Nama. Hamid-Ullah Shahabadi wrote many books in Persian which include Akbar Nama and Babul Nama. The latter throws light on the atrocities committed during the Sikh rule in Kashmir. Pandit Lachman Kachroo, Mehdi Mujram, Baba Pandit, Shiekh Ahmad Tarabali and Pandit Anant Ram Baikhud are some of the prominent scholars of the period. During the Dogra rule Persian held the position of the court language, while Urdu was gaining ground in the State. As such many books were translated into Urdu. Pandit Thakar Dass Razdan, Shiekh Noor-ud-Din Rafiqi, Pandit Sat Ram Bakaya and Mirza

Saif-ud-Din were the foremost Persian scholars during the earlier Dogra Period, Mirza Saif-ud-Din wrote Khulasat-ul-Tarikh which is the main source of information about the social and political conditions that prevailed during the time of Maharaja Gulab Singh. The scholars in Translation Bureau translated the Mahabharata the Gita and the Upanishads, into Persian. Dewan Kripa Ram deserves a foremost position among the Persian scholars. Besides the other works, he was the author of Gulab Nama which stands parallel to Abdul Fazal's Ain-i-Akbari. Pandit Vasu Kaul Ogra was a great scholar and a poet. His works in Persian include Chahar Darvesh, Gulzar-i-bulbul, Gulshan Andleeb and a play Harish Chander.

During the 19th century Kashmir enjoyed the privilege of producing a talented historian in the person of Ghulam Hassan alias Hassan Khuihami. His works in Persian cover a vast field which relate to History, Geography and literary activities of Kashmir. Mirza Mehdi had the honour of teaching Persian to Maharaja Pratap Singh. It was during Maharaja Pratap Singh's reign that Persian as the court language was changed into Urdu. This sudden change took the old officials by surprise. Henceforth, education in various schools began to be imparted in Urdu and English. Persian lost its importance and was taken up as an optional subject. After the dawn of independence in 1947 and the transfer of the power in the hands of the representatives of the people, it was felt that the age old tradition should be carried.

Besides, the availability of records in Persian and Sanskrit languages necessitated the education of classical languages. So, Persian began to be taught in schools from 6th class onwards as a regular subject. Later its status was reduced to an optional subject. But in about eighties the state government changed its policy and eliminated the teaching of classical languages at the elementary level. Persian is now being taught only at Higher Secondary level, college level at University level in the Kashmir and Jammu region. But the response of students is very poor. Now the P.G. Department of Persian University of Kashmir is trying its best in restoring this lost treasure which is dire need of the hour.