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The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics

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The Mughal literary culture has been noted for its notable achievements in poetry and a wide range of prose writings in Persian. In terms of profusion and variety of themes this literary output was also perhaps incomparable. The court's patronage has rightly been suggested as an important reason for this. This patronage, however, was not consistent throughout; much of the detail of its detour thus requires a closer scrutiny. The phenomenal rise of the language defies explanation in the first instance. The Mughals were Chaghta'i Turks and we know that, unlike them, the other Turkic rulers outside of Iran, such as the Ottomans in Turkey and the Uzbeks in Central Asia, were not so enthusiastic about Persian. Indeed, in India also, Persian did not appear to hold such dominance at the courts of the early Mughals. In his memoir, Babur (d. 1530), the founder of the Mughal empire in India, recounted the story of his exploits in Turkish. The Prince was a noted poet and writer of Turkish of his time, second only to 'Alı Sher Nawa'ı (d. 1526).[1] Turkish was the first language of his son and successor, Humayun (d. 1556), as well. Turkish poetry enjoyed an appreciable audience at his court even after his return from Persia, when he came reinforced with

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[1] Fuad Koprulu, 'Babur—Literary Works' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. 1, pt 2, pp. 848–85; Mohibbul Hasan, *Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India* (Delhi, 1985), pp. 192–3; for a recent study of Babur's poetry, see 'The Poetry and Autobiography of the *Babur-nama*', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55, no. 3 (August 1996), pp. 635–64.

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Persian support to reconquer Hindustan.[2] Further, Bairam Khan—a most notable early Mughal noble virtually in full command during the early years of Akbar's time (1556–1605)—also made his mark as a poet of Turkish.[3]

One may conjecture that in matters of language the Mughals had no other choice, and that they simply inherited a legacy and continued with it. Such a conjecture sounds plausible, in a measure. Long before the coming of the Mughals, Persian had established itself in India as the language of the Muslim elite. Northern India had seen many poets and prose writers, including Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Zia-ud-Dın Nakhshabı, Amır Khusrau and Hasan Sijizı, in the Ghaznavid Punjab and in the territory of the Sultans of Delhi.[4] The famous line of Hafiz of Shiraz (d. 1389)[5]

Shakkar shikan shawand hama tutiyan-i Hind
Zın qand-i Parsı ki ba Bangala mı rawad
(All the Indian parrots will turn to crunching sugar with this Persian candy which goes to Bengal)

was a testimony of the receptive audience that the Persian poetry had in India.

But pre-Mughal northern India also witnessed the rise of Hindavı which gradually incorporated much of Persian culture, in particular through sufic hospices, and then expressed it forcefully in its poetry. There was hardly any notable Persian writer in the late fifteenth–early sixteenth centuries, while in Hindavı Malik Muhammad Jayası's *Padmavat*, recording an Indian fable, represented the best expression of Islamic ideas in the period.[6] Persian did not appear to be very strong under the Afghans from whom the Mughals took over the keys of power. In spite of their close association with Persian,

[2] Sidi Ali Reis, *The Travels and Adventures of Turkish Sidi Ali Reis*, translated from the Turkish with notes by A. Vambery, reprint (Lahore, 1975), pp. 47, 49–51 and 52–3.

[3] Cf. Bairam Khan, *Dıwan*, edited by S. Husamuddin Rashidi and Muhammad Sabir with Introduction by Mahmudul Hasan Siddiqi, Karachi, Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, 1971.

[4] M. A. Ghani, *Pre-Mughal Persian in Hindustan* (Allahabad, 1941), pp. 155–233 and 381–485, for Persian literature under the Ghaznavids and the Khaljıs and Tughlaqs.

[5] Hafiz Shırazı, *Dıwan*, edited with notes by Qazi Sajjad Husain (Delhi, 1972), p. 172.

[6] For the history of Persian in the period, S. B. F. Husaini, *A Critical Study of Indo-Persian Literature during Sayyid and Lodi Period, 1414–1526* (Delhi, 1988). Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Literatures in India*, part of vol. VII of Jan Gonda (ed.), *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1973), p. 21.

most of the Afghan chiefs could not speak Persian.[7] Hindavı was recognized as a semi-official language by the Sur Sultans (1540–55) and their chancellery rescripts bore transcriptions in the Devanagarı script of the Persian contents. The practice is said to have been introduced by the Lodıs (1451–1526).[8]

For the growth of Persian under the Mughals, the explanation may thus be sought more in the convergence of factors within the Mughal regime than in the Indo-Persian heritage of the earlier Muslim regimes. I have tried to identify some of the factors which created the conditions for the extraordinary rise of Persian in Mughal India and to examine the trajectory of its development. Since Persian occupied the indubitable position of the language of the empire, I have asked if it had any intrinsic strength to explain its wide use and if because of the Mughals' nearly total association with it their empire confronted any difficulties. Did Persian have any bearing on the formation of Mughal political identity? In what way did Persian influence the vicissitudes of Hindavı in northern India? Does religion come in anywhere in this politics?

Early Mughal Contacts with Iran

A large number of Iranians accompanied Humayun on his return from Iran where he had taken refuge following his defeat by the Afghans. They assisted him in reconquering Hindustan. Later, Akbar needed their help further and encouraged them to join the imperial service to overcome the difficulties he faced from the ambitious Chaghta'ı nobles. Earlier the Iranians had also helped Babur in his fight against the Uzbeks following the destruction of the Tımurid power in Herat.[9] All this contributed to the expansion of the frontiers of Persian in Mughal India. Particularly to be noted is Akbar's unusual interest in promoting social, cultural and intellectual con-

[7] Zahır-ud-Dın Muhammad Babur, *Babur-nama*, translated by A. S. Beveridge, reprint (Delhi, 1970), pp. 459–60.

[8] Momin Mohiuddin, *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals, from Babur to Shahjahan, 1526–1658* (Calcutta, 1971), p. 28. Mohiuddin cites from Maulavi Muhammad Shafi's article in *Oriental College Magazine* (Lahore), May 1933, for a reference to a UP State Archives Document, No. 318, an edict of Sher Shah dated 947 AH.

[9] J. F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire: The New Cambridge History of India*, 1.5 (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 11 and 19; for Shah Ismail Safavı's help to Babur, see Mohibbul Hasan, *Babur*, pp. 40–3.

tacts with Iran. In 994 AH/1585–86 Hakım Humam, a brother of the famous Hakım Abul Fath Gılanı, was sent to Turan and Iran with a mission to persuade the people there for increased friendly contacts (*dostı-o-ashha'ı*) with his empire.[10] The purpose of this mission was to identify the literati and persuade them to come and settle in India. Later the Emperor commissioned the famous poet Faizı (about 999/1591) to submit a report on the literati in Iran. After making enquiries from travellers and traders arriving from Iran, Faizı prepared a report which he submitted to Akbar in which he says:

> Chalapı Beg is a savant of excellent disposition and wide culture, and he deserves a place in His Majesty's *majlis*. Educated at Qazwin, he has during the last twelve years made a great name for himself and is universally well-spoken of. He now lives at Shiraz.

Evidently, it was in consequence of this report that Akbar sent an invitation to Chalapı Beg and issued orders to an Iranian trader to make arrangements for the scholar's journey to India.[11] On his arrival, Chalapı Beg was made the principal teacher at a royal *madrasa* at Agra.[12]

Even prior to his invitation to Chalapı Beg, Akbar sent an invitation to Mır Sadr ud-Dın Muhammad Naqıb who had communicated his wish to join Akbar's service. The *farman* inviting him was issued in 1591 and reads:[13]

> This court's patronage of men of learning . . . is well-known. Now Ghiyath ud-dın Naqıb Khan of this court has spoken highly of Mır Sadr ud-dın. Therefore it is hereby commanded that 100 Iranian *tumans* (*tuman-i ra'iji-i 'Iraqı*) be paid at once to the distinguished trader Khwaja Chalapı Qazwını who is forthwith given conge so as to carry the money to the Mır who is to use it as travelling expenses.

If the amount thus remitted was insufficient, Mır Sadr ud-Dın was authorized to take more money from Khwaja Qazwını or from the traders who had business in India.

Akbar received an encouraging response. A very large number of Persian writers and poets came to India, many of them in search of

[10] Abul Fath Gılanı, *Ruq'at-i Abul Fath Gılanı*, ed. Muhammad Bashir Husain (Lahore, 1968), pp. 116–20.

[11] Riyazul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations, 1500–1750* (Karachi, 1979), I, pp. 117–20.

[12] Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nama*, ed. Agha Ahmad Ali and Abdur Rahim, III (Calcutta, 1886), p. 747; Mulla Qati' Heravı, *Tazkira Majma'-ush-Shu'ara-i Jahangır Shahı*, ed. Saleem Akhtar (Karachi, 1979), pp. 35 and 203.

[13] R. Islam, *Calendar*, I, pp. 106–7.

better fortunes, others fleeing from religious or political persecutions of the sectarian Safavid regime.[14] Akbar's India earned the distinction of being the place of refuge and abode of peace (*dar ul-aman*) where the wise and the learned received encouragement.[15] How Akbar succeeded in creating conditions in his territory to welcome the Iranian scholars, be they non-conformists, is illustrated from the way Mulla 'Abd-ul-Qadir Badaonı, the well-known historian of Akbar's time, records Mır Sharıf Amulı's arrival in India. Amulı was a Nuqtavı and he, in Badaonı's view, was made welcome by Akbar and his courtiers because of the extraordinarily tolerant atmosphere in India.[16] This was largely true, but generous welcome to the Iranian scholars may have been caused by the Emperor's desire to pay back the debt the Mughals owed the Iranians for their support in reconquering India.

Iran under the Safavids had turned Shi'ite, in a very narrow sense of the term. In Mughal India, on the other hand, the space for accommodating oppositions and conflicts was widening, subsequent to the Mughal policy of *sulh-i kul* (peace with all). The policy, as we know, was a result of Akbar's bold initiatives, but it could also be explained in the light of the nature of the country where people with diverse beliefs and social practices had learnt to live together, their clashes notwithstanding. The non-conformist and dissident Iranians then found a natural refuge in India. As an ambitious ruler in obvious competition with the Iranian Shah, Akbar thus also tried to exploit this situation to extend the frontiers of his authority into the Safavid domain. Akbar intended thus to neutralize the awe and the impact the Iranian Shah had exercised over the Mughal household because of the Iranians' help to Babur and Humayun. The following letter of the Emperor (Akbar) to Amır Ahmad Kashı is of special interest here:[17]

[14] Aziz Ahmad, 'Safavid Poets and India', *Iran*, 14 (1976), pp. 117–32; see also Hadi Hasan, *Mughal Poetry: Its Cultural and Historical Value* (Madras, 1952), *passim*, and Zabihullah Safa, *Tarıkh-i Adabıyat-i Iran* (Tehran, 1363), pt 1, for some Iranian poets in India.

[15] 'Abd-un Nabı Qazwını, *Tazkira-i Maikhana* (Tehran, 1340), p. 809.

[16] 'Abd-ul-Qadir Badaonı, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarıkh*, tr. W. H. Lowe, reprint (Delhi, 1973), II, p. 253.

[17] R. Islam, *Calendar*, I, pp. 101–2, emphasis added; see also his 'Akbar's Intellectual Contacts with Iran' in Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle (eds), *Islamic Culture and Society: Essays in Honour of Aziz Ahmad* (Delhi, 1983), pp. 351–73, for the text of the letter.

The supremely important thing is spiritual relationship and proximity. God be paised that Safı ud-dın Amır Ahmad Kashı has realised this truth, and has placed himself under the guidance of this humble servant of God (sc. Akbar). Let Amır Ahmad be not discouraged by the spatial distance, for the writer is [spiritually] close at hand to give him succour. *Love of the people of Iran has been deeply ingrained in his (Akbar's) heart from the very beginning; it is his desire that this exalted community should come close to him spiritually as well as materially, and thereby prosper materially and spiritually, and the high and low (that is, all classes) of that community should partake of imperial favour.* It is indeed fortunate that Amır Ahmad is there among them to guide them on the right path. He should write regularly and seek guidance about his spiritual experience (*waridat-i ghaibiya*, lit. things coming in from the heavens) and mystic problems to the Emperor who is indeed the solver of problems spiritual and universal. He (Amır Ahmad) should assure Sadıd ud-dın Darwesh Khusrau, whose excellence has been brought to royal notice by Abul Fazl of royal esteem and favour. He (Amır Ahmad) should look after the guidance of the group for the Emperor is deeply impressed by what he has come to know about that capable young man. It will be desirable if Rashıd ud-dın Ishaq who is a man of great talent and ability and has partaken of the divine *mashrab* in a large measure, should come in person to the imperial court. It will be appropriate if the enlightened one (sc. Amır Ahmad) keeps the Emperor posted of the affairs of the *tabaqa-i illıya-i umana'* in that country (Iran). *Blessed be the person who comes to this (Akbar's) sacred presence (huzur-i muqaddas-i ma). If for some reason, this desire (umniyat) is not fulfilled, the members of the group will nevertheless be remembered in the sacred assembly (of Akbar).*

Persian at the Mughal Court

To what extent Ahmad Kashı and Safı ud-Dın, or for that matter the other scholars to whom Akbar chose to write in person, could extend his influence in Iran is a matter of debate. They were executed by the Shah together with many others like them.[18] However, the Mughal emperor's desire of bringing 'the exalted [Iranian] community close to him spiritually and materially' prepared the grounds for many of them to make India their second home. The Iranian talents flourished more in Mughal India. Surely, Iranians never accepted Akbar's claim of being 'the solver of their spiritual problems' which pertained to the life hereafter; soon, however, the belief in literate Iran was widespread that a visit to India promised material comforts and honoured position in this world:

Nıst dar Iran zamın saman-i tahsıl-i kamal
ta nayayad su-i Hindustan hina rangın na-shud

[18] Israel and Wagle (eds), *Islamic Culture*, p. 356.

(The means of acquiring perfection do not exist in Iran.
The henna does not acquire colour till it comes to India)

In the process India drew close to Iran culturally, and this, among other things, helped Persian attain the status of being the first language of the king and the court in Mughal India.

Among the first literary works of the reign of Akbar, at a time when he was consolidating Mughal power in India, was the preparation of a Persian translation of *Babur-nama*. Ironically, the translator was 'Abd-ur Rahım Khan, Khan-i Khanan, the son of Bairam Khan, who, as we noticed above, was also a poet in Turkish. But it was not simply that Babur's memoir was to be rendered into Persian, the Emperor also desired that the sources of the new court history recording Mughal achievements be compiled in Persian. Humayun's sister, Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun-nama*, was written in Persian, even though Turkish was the native tongue of the Princess and her husband, Khizr Khwaja Khan. Indeed, Mrs Beveridge, who translated Gulbadan's account into English, suspects that the book was originally composed in Turkish.[19] Similar was the case with the other two accounts of Humayun's time, *Tazkira-i Humayun wa Akbar* and *Tazkirat ul-Waq'iat*, meant to serve as sources of Abul Fazl's history, *Akbar nama*, while their authors, Bayazıd Bayat and Jauhar Aftabchı, could manage little beyond a 'shaky and rustic' spoken Persian. Jauhar, in fact, got the language of his account revised and improved by Ilahdad Faizı Sirhindı before presenting it to the Emperor.[20]

Akbar did not have any formal education. Important books were therefore read out to him regularly in his assembly hall. His library consisted of hundreds of prose books and poetical works in Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Greek and Kashmiri. But the books which the Emperor heard repeatedly were all in Persian.[21]

Akbar, according to a report, could also compose verses in Persian and Hindi; but Mughal sources record generally only his Persian couplets, and we have to wade through them to find just a few Hindi verses attributed to him. Further, only Persian poets had the privilege of enjoying royal patronage at Akbar's court.

Among the Muslim rulers of northern India, Akbar was possibly the first to institute a formal position of *malik-ush-shu'ara'* (poet

[19] Gulbadan Begum, *Humayun-nama*, tr. A. S. Beveridge (London, 1902), p. 79.

[20] Compare H. Ethe, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office* (Oxford, I, 1903), 222, ff. 2. Sirhindı was a reputed litterateur and philologist. Cf. his *Madar ul-Afazil*, ed. Muhammad Baqar (Lahore, 1345).

[21] Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nama*, I (Calcutta, 1873), p. 271.

laureate) at the court. To be awarded to a Persian poet only, this position continued until Shahjahan's time (1626–56). The *malik-ush-shu'ra'* during the period were—Ghazalı, Mashhadı, Husain Sana'ı, Talib Amulı, Kalım Kashanı and Qudsı Meshhadı—all Iranians; Faizı (1547–95) was the sole exception. Further, only nine out of fifty-nine rated as the best amongst the thousand poets of Persian who completed a *dıwan* or wrote a *masnawı* could be identified as non-Iranians.[22] Again, a large number of other Persian poets and writers—eighty-one according to Nizam-ud-Dın Bakhshı and one hundred and sixty-eight according to Badaoni—received the patronage of the Emperor or his nobles.[23] Over a hundred poets and thirty-one scholars were associated with the establishment of 'Abd-ur-Rahım Khan-i Khanan alone.[24]

Persian thus emerged as *the language* of the king, the royal household and the high Mughal elite. Akbar's son and successor, Jahangır (1605–26), was not good in Turkish, but he had his own style in Persian and wrote his memoir in an elegant prose. He was also a good critic of Persian poetry and composed several verses and *ghazals*.[25] It was for him that Jayası's *Padmavat* was translated into Persian, but the work was recognized only as an Indian fable (*afsana-i Hindı*) and not as a book on Islamic mysticism in Hindi.[26] Still later, with volumes of letters and edicts, Aurangzeb (1656–1707) established himself as a fine prose writer of his time.[27] The formal aboli-

[22] Abul Fazl, *A'ın-i Akbarı*, ed. H. Blochmann (Calcutta, I, 1872), pp. 617–80.

[23] Badaonı, III, pp. 171–388; Khwaja Nizam-ud-Dın Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbarı*, ed. B. De (Calcutta, II, 1927), pp. 484–520.

[24] 'Abd-ul-Baqı Nihawandı, *Ma'asir-i Rahımı*, ed. H. Hosain (Calcutta, III, 1931), pp. 9–114 and 115–1576. Evidently many of these poets were also from Central Asia, but few of them could earn a coveted place in Mughal courts. Mutribı Samarqandı also notes some Central Asian Persian poets in his report on his meetings and conversations with Jahangır, cf. *Khatirat*, ed. A. G. Mirzoyef (Karachi, 1977).

[25] Cf. Nur-ud-Dın Jahangır, *Tuzak-i Jahangırı*, ed. Syud Ahmad, Allygurh (Aligarh, 1863–64), pp. 103, 245, 303, 316 and 431; *Tazkirat-ush-Shu'ara*, ed. Abdul Ghani Mirzoyef (Karachi, 1976), *passim*; Mutribı Samarqandı, *Khatirat*, pp. 44, 48–9, 56–61 and 66; see also Shibli Numani, *Shi'r-ul-'Ajam* (Azamgarh, 1945), III, pp. 5 and 148.

[26] Compare 'Abd-ush-Shakur Bazmı, *Dastan-i Padmavat*, ed. A. H. Abidi (Tehran, 1350). See also editor's Introduction for twelve other renderings of *Padmavat*, pp. 16–26.

[27] Compare recently edited-published volumes of Aurangzeb's writings, e.g. Shaikh Abul Fath Qabil Khan, *Adab-i 'Alamgırı*, ed. Abdul Ghafur Chaudhari, 2 vols (Lahore, 1971); 'Inayatullah Khan Kashmırı, *Kalimat-i Tayyibat*, ed. S. Azizuddin Husain (Delhi, 1982); Ashraf Khan Husainı, *Ragaim-i Karaim*, ed. S. Azizuddin Husain (Delhi, 1990); see also Najib Ashraf Nadvi, *Muqaddima-i Ruqa'at-i 'Alamgır* (Azamgarh, 1981).

tion of the institution of *malik-ush-shu'ara'* affected little the supreme status of Persian. Indeed, later seventeenth-century northern India witnessed numerous native poets of high standard in Persian, including the great Mirza 'Abd-ul-Qadir Bıdil (d. 1719) and Nasir Alı Sirhindı (d. 1696).

Language of the Empire

The frontiers of Persian, however, extended far beyond the circle of the emperor, the princes and the high nobles. Akbar was also the first among the Indo-Islamic kings of northern India formally to declare Persian to be the language of administration at all levels. The proclamation to this effect was issued by his famous Khatri Hindu revenue minister, Todal Mal, accompanied by reorganization of the revenue and the other administrative offices by the equally famous Iranian noble, Mır Fathullah Shirazı. How an eighteenth-century historian, Ghulam Husain Tabataba'ı remembered and recorded this changeover is significant;

> Earlier in India the government accounts were written *in Hindi according to the Hindu rule.* Raja Todar Mal acquired new regulations (*zawabit*) from the clerks (*nawısindagan*) of Iran, and the government offices then were reorganized as they were there in *Wilayat*.[28]

These Iranian clerks remained in noticeable control of accounts and carried their jobs with unmatched efficiency and integrity throughout the heyday of the Mughal empire. Aurangzeb, the last of 'the Great Mughals' writes:

> No other nation is better than the Persians for acting as clerks. And in war, too, from the age of Emperor Humayun to the present time, none of this nation has turned his face away from the field, and their firm feet have never been shaken. Moreover, they have not once been guilty of disobedience and treachery to their master. But, as they insist on being treated with great honour, it is very difficult to get on well with them. You have anyhow to pacify them, and should employ subterfuges.[29]

Thus, it was not simply the royal household and the court which bore the Iranian impress. The Iranians as *mutasaddıs* and minor functionaries could also be seen everywhere in the government offices,

[28] Ghulam Husain Tabataba'ı, *Siyar-ul-Muta' akhkhirın* (Lucknow, 1876), I, p. 200.
[29] Hamıd-ud-Dın, *Ahkam-i 'Alamgırı*, ed. and tr. J. N. Sarkar (Calcutta, 1912), p. 53.

even though they were not in exclusive control of these offices. A substantial part of the administration was carried out by the indigenous Hindu communities who had hitherto worked in Hindi. This was of greater consequence for our purpose. They learnt Persian and joined these Iranians as clerks, scribes and secretaries (*muharrirs* and *munshıs*). Their achievements in the language were soon to be extraordinary. To this development Akbar's reform in the prevailing *maktab* and *madrasa* education, influenced again by the Iranian Mır Fathullah Shırazı, contributed considerably. The Hindus began to learn Persian in Sikandar Lodi's time. Badaonı mentions one Brahman as an Arabic and Persian teacher of this period.[30] Akbar's enlightened policy and introduction of 'secular' themes in the syllabuses at middle levels 'stimulated a wide application to Persian studies'. Hindus—Kayasthas and Khatris in particular—joined *madrasas* in large numbers to acquire excellence in Persian language and literature, which now promised good careers in imperial service.

Akbar's reform pertained in the first place to the learning of the Persian alphabets and the basic words. Children were not to spend too much time, as was the practice, on alphabet. After learning and practising the shape and name of the words they were required to commit to memory some Persian couplets or moral phrases directly and thus appropriate the ethos of the language at a very young age. Then they studied the prescribed curriculum which included ethics (*akhlaq*), arithmetic (*hisab*), notations peculiar to arithmetic (siyaq), agriculture (*falahat*), measurement (*masahat*), geometry, astronomy, physiognomy, household economy (*tadbır-i manzil*), the rules of government (*siyasat-i mudun*), medicine, logic, mathematics (*riyazı*) and physical and metaphysical (*tab'ı* and *Ilahı*) sciences.[31]

At an advanced level works of classical masters were studied in order to acquire proficiency in Persian composition and poetry. Texts prescribed at this stage were *Bustan* and *Gulistan* of Shaikh Sa'dı, *Akhlaq-i Nasirı* of Khwaja Nasır-ud-Dın Tusı, *Akhlaq-i Jalalı* of Jalal-du-Dın Dawwanı and *Akhlaq-i Muhsinı* of Mulla Husain Wa'iz al-Kashifı. Among chronicles the students generally read *Habıb-us-Siyar*, *Rauzat-us-Safa*, *Tarıkh-i Guzıda* and *Zafar-nama*. Later, Abul Fazl's *Akbar-nama* together with his *insha* also figured in the essential read-

[30] Badaonı, III.

[31] Abul Fazl, *A'ın*, I, pp. 201–2; see also N. N. Law, *Promotion of Learning in India during Mohammadan Rule* (London, 1916), pp. 161–71.

ings.[32] Most of the students discontinued their studies after completing their secondary education, since that was a sufficient qualification to secure employment on the clerical staff in local *daftars*. The accountancy department attracted them most because it promised better salaries. The art of a *munshı* (secretary) was a difficult task, 'a whole life was required to acquire proficiency in that art'.[33]

The teachers in charge of these *madrasas* were initially often the masters of Fars and Shiraz (*ustadan-i Fars-o-Shıraz*). But in the course of time, Indians including Hindu masters also began to teach. Their writings, in particular the specimens of their *insha*, formed part of Persian syllabi.[34]

In India there was always a 'set ready and a fixed caste (*jami'*) of workmen of every profession and trade, for any employment, to whom vocation descends as a family heirloom'.[35] These trainees, like many other workmen, thus crystallized into 'a fixed caste' of scribes, accountants and secretaries. The son of a clerk (*muharrir*) was destined to be a clerk not because he may have preferred this profession but in order to keep up the family tradition, and if he worked hard, he would rise to the stature of a chief secretary (*mır munshı*). In most cases the *munshı* families trained their own relatives as a father would do his son, either under his own direct care or through correspondence. This is illustrated best from Chandrabhan's advice to his son Khwaja Tej Bhan.[36]

From the middle of the seventeenth century, the departments of accountancy (*siyaq*), draftmanship (*insha*) and the offices of revenue minister (*dıwan*) were mostly filled by the Kayastha and Khatri *munshıs* and *muharrirs*. Harkaran Das Kambuh of Multan is the first known Hindu *munshı* whose writings were taken as models by later *munshıs*.[37] Chandrabhan was another influential, rated second only to Abul Fazl. Chandrabhan also wrote poetry of high merit.[38] And then

[32] Balkrishan, *Arzdasht . . .*, Br. M. Add. 16859 cited in Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, p. 41; see also Syed Muhammad Abdullah, *Adabıyat-i Farsı men Hindu-on ka Hissa* (Lahore, 1967), pp. 240–3.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[34] Abul Hasanat Nadvi, *Hindustan kı Qadım Islamı Darsgahen* (Azamgarh, 1971), pp. 28–9; Abdullah, *Adabıyat*, p. 240.

[35] *Babur-nama*, p. 518.

[36] Chandrabhan Brahman, *Char Chaman*, cited in Abdullah, *Adabıyat*, pp. 241–3.

[37] For an analysis, see Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, pp. 215–20.

[38] Muhammad Abdul Hamid Faruqui, *Chandra Bhan Brahman: Life and Works with a Critical Edition of his Dıwan* (Ahmadabad, 1966); for his prose, see Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, pp. 228–34.

followed a large number of Kayastha and Khatri *munshis*, including the well-known Madho Ram, Sujan Rai, Malikzadah, Anand Ram 'Mukhlis', Bindraban 'Khwushgo', who made splendid contributions to Persian language and literature and whose writings formed part of the syllabi of Persian studies at *madrasas*. Certain fields hitherto unexplored or neglected found skilled investigators, chiefly Hindus. On the philological sciences the Hindus produced excellent works in the eighteenth century. *Mir'at ul Istilah* of Anand Ram, *Bahar-i 'Ajam* of Tek Chand 'Bahar' and *Mustalahat-us-Shu'ara* of Siyalkoti Mal 'Warasta' are among the most exhaustive lexicons compiled in India. Their Persian Grammars and Commentaries on idioms, phrases and poetical proverbs show their keen interest, admirable research and accomplishments in the Persian language.[39]

The masters of the Iranian classics thus found an increasingly appreciative audience even among the middle-order people in big and small towns as well as among the village-based revenue officials and the other hereditary functionaries and intermediaries. All Mughal government papers from the imperial orders (*farmans*) to the bonds and acceptance letter (*muchalka*, *tamassuk qabuliat*) that a village intermediary (*chaudhuri*) wrote were prepared in Persian.[40] On the other hand, there was no bookseller in the bazaars and streets of Agra, Delhi and Lahore who did not sell the anthologies of Persian poetry. The *madrasa* pupils in general were familiar with the Persian classics.[41]

In two separate letters, one, an *arzdasht*, addressed to the Emperor Akbar and the other, a *dastur-ul-'amal*, meant to be a manual for the officials, Abul Fazl, the premier ideologue and the *mir munshi* of the Mughal empire, had suggested *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, *Kimya-i Sa'adat*, *Masnawi* of Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, as essential readings.[42] In Abul Fazl's own time only the high nobles could have read them. By Shahjahan's time (1626–56), these books and many more similar titles began to figure as routine readings even among the middle-order Hindus associated with the Mughal state.

[39] Abdullah, *Adabiyat*, pp. 121–68.

[40] Even in Bengal, the administrative papers prepared and issued in the name of the local Hindu intermediaries were in Persian. Persian *insha*, indeed, had influenced the Bengali prose, Promesh Acharya, 'Pedagogy and Social Learning: *Tol* and *Pathsala* in Bengal', *Studies in History* (New Series), 10, 2 (July–December 1994), pp. 255–72.

[41] Badaoni, II, pp. 285.

[42] *Insha-i Abul Fazl* (Lucknow, I, 1280 AH), pp. 57–67; *Majma'-ul-Insha* of Muhammad Amin Bani Israil, MS Paris, Persian Supplement, 461, ff. 38a–41a.

Persian was then their first language. They appropriated and used the Perso-Islamic expressions like *Bismillah* (with the name of Allah) *lab-ba-qur* (at the door of the grave) and *ba-jahannam rasıd* (damned in *jahannam* = hell) as their Iranian and non-Iranian Muslim counterparts did. They would also now look for and like the Persian renderings of their texts and traditions. Lest they be forgotten, the religious scriptures were then rendered in full into Persian by individual Hindu authors.[43]

If, on the one hand, for the Hindus, prospects of good careers and also possibly of direct access to the ancient scriptures now available in Persian provided incentives for learning Persian, on the other, the language acquired a kind of religious sanctity for the Muslims. Jamal-ud-Dın Inju, author of *Farhang-i Jahangırı*, the first comprehensive Persian lexicon, dwells at length on the point that Persian together with Arabic is the language of Islam. The Prophet of Islam, he reports from various sources, knew and spoke Persian. The Prophet, according to Inju, spoke highly of the merits of the people of Pars; he cites verses from the Quran in appreciation of the people of Pars for their bravery and courage to fight for a noble cause. Faith (*ıman*) according to Inju is integral to their (people of Pars) character. They would have acquired faith even if it were far in the sky.[44] Inju began to compile the *Farhang* at Akbar's instance and since it was completed after the Emperor's death, it was dedicated to his son, Jahangır.[45]

The message through such construction was possibly intended to be communicated to the Indian converts, whose native language was some form of Hindavı. There was certainly wide application of Persian studies among the *shurafa*, the Muslim landed magnates, the revenue-free land holders in the rural areas, those who had daily allowance (*a'imma*, *wazıfa*) in towns and petty officials. Even ordinary literate Muslims like soldiers, for instance, were expected now to read simple Persian. In Shahjahan's time treatises on religious disputations in simple prose were written for common poor Muslims in order to prevent them from falling into the Brahmanical 'trap' and thus leaning towards innovation, idolatrous practices and infidelity.

[43] Compare Gopal bin Govind's Preface to his Persian translation of *Ramayana*, Paris, MS, Blochet, I, 222.

[44] Mır Jamal-ud-Dın Husain Inju Shırazı, *Farhang-i Jahangırı*, ed. Rahım Afifi, 3 vols (Meshhed, 1972), I, pp. 14–22; Siraj-ud-Dın Alı Khan Arzu, *Muthmir*, ed. Rehana Khatoon (Karachi, 1991), pp. 6, 7 and 14–17.

[45] *Ibid*., pp. 4 and 10.

One such treatise, *Hujjat-ul-Hind*, as the author claims, was translated from Hindavı into simple Persian for the benefit of 'the Muslims who live in the villages' where 'the elites are generally the infidels'.[46]

Persian, Prestige and the Mughal Political Culture

Learning, knowledge and high culture began to be associated with Persian at many levels in Mughal Indian society. Command over good Persian was a matter of pride; deficiency in elegant self-expression in Persian meant cultural failure. For Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh Ashub, a noted poet and writer of the later Mughal era, a major failure of Samsam-ud-Daulah, Khan-i Dauran, the well-known early eighteenth-century Mughal noble, was his inability to speak good Persian; Khan-i Dauran generally spoke in 'Hindi'. On occasion he would embellish his conversation with Persian couplets and hemistichs, with a remark that 'to speak in Persian for an Indian is to make oneself a butt of ridicule'.[47]

Khan-i Dauran was, however, an exception. In general, Persian was held to be the only effective language to express cultural accomplishments. Persian came to be recognized as the language of politics in nearly the whole of the sub-continent.[48] This status received nourishment from the Mughal power it sustained, and the belief that Persian was the most functional pragmatic and accomplished vehicle of communication remained unshaken even after the virtual demise of the Mughal empire. Mirza Asadullah Ghalib (d. 1869), the last of the great Mughal poets, believed that the depth, complexity and variety of his ideas could be conveyed only through Persian words. Note the poet's plea with his audience to evaluate him on the strength of his Persian compositions, even as he earned a high place in literature due to his Urdu poetry:[49]

[46] *Hujjat-ul-Hind*, British Museum, Add. 5602, ff. 11.

[47] Mirza Muhammad Bakhsh 'Ashub', *Tarıkh-i Shahadat-i Farrukh Siyar wa Julus-i Muhammad Shah*, Br. M. Or. 1832, ff. 726.

[48] For Persian's position in the East India Company territories in the late eighteenth century, see Bernard Cohn, 'The Command of Language and the Language of Command' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1985), pp. 284–95.

[49] Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, *Kulliyat-i Ghalib*, ed. Syed Murtaza Husain (Lahore, 1967), vol. 1, p. 161.

Farsı bın ta ba-bını naqshaha-i rang rang
ba-guzar az majmu'a-i Urdu ki bi-rang-i man ast
(See my Persian [poetry] so that you may see colourful pictures,
Leave my Urdu collection which has no colour)

With a section of the fallen Mughal elite Persian was now to stay also as a symbol of the glory of the past. Noteworthy here is the way a minister in Hyderabad in the Deccan in the nineteenth century reacted to the suggestion for a changeover from Persian to Urdu as the language of government. One Maulavi Mushtaq Husain, who hailed from North India and held a high office in Hyderabad, had suggested this change to Salar Jang. Subsequently, Salar Jang mentioned it in the course of a conversation with Sarwar ul-Mulk, who was also from North India and held an important position in Hyderabad. Sarwar ul-Mulk supported Maulavi Mushtaq's idea. Thereupon Salar Jang who was reclining against a pillow, got up with a jerk and said:[50]

You Hindustanı (Northern Indian) people have little practice in Persian speech and writing. Persian language is the symbol of the victory of the Muslims. We have conquered this land with the sword. Having destroyed this symbol in your own country [North India], you people now want darkness here too. Persian shall remain here and flourish so long as I am alive.

Long association of the Mughals, their supporters and successors with Persian in political and military management created a memory of the language as an instrument of conquest. The memory was not a nineteenth-century construction. Persian did facilitate the Mughal triumph. The intrinsic strength of the language, combined with the emperor's decision, prepared the ground for forging the links between the court and the remote village. We may ask here if Persian offered anything positive for its being favoured by the Mughals as the language of their empire.

The Mughals were not content with establishing a mere paramount and imperial authority over the numerous local and regional power groups. They aspired also to evolve a political culture, overarching the diverse religious and cultural identities. Persian, in the existing circumstances, promised to be the most appropriate vehicle to communicate and sustain such an ideal. Persian was known to the Indians, from the banks of the river Sind to the Bay of Bengal. If Amır Khusrau is to be believed, as early as in the fourteenth century, 'Persian parlance enjoyed uniformity of idiom throughout the length

[50] S. M. Kamal, *Hyderabad men Urdu ka Irtiqa* (Hyderabad, 1990), p. 102.

of four thousand parasangs, unlike the Hindavı tongue, which had no settled idiom and varied after every hundred miles and with every group of people'.[51] As late as the eighteenth century Hindavı did not evolve a uniform idiom even in northern India. Siraj-ud-Dın 'Alı Khan Arzu (d. 1756), a noted eighteenth-century poet, writer and lexicographer, mentions Gwaliorı, Braj, Rajputı, Kashmırı, Haryanavı, Hindi and Punjabı as diverse authentic forms of Hindavı, besides the dialects of Shahjahanabad-Delhi and Akbarabad Agra.[52] Sanskrit or *Hindi-ye kitabı* (Hindi of the Book) as Arzu calls it could have been a choice in place of Persian as a language of the empire. But Sanskrit, as Mirza Khan, the author of *Tuhfat-ul-Hind*, noted in Aurangzeb's time, was not taken as an ordinary human tongue; it was a *Deva-banı* and *Akash-banı*. The language was too scared, too divine. No *mlechha* would perhaps have been allowed to pollute it by choosing it as a symbol and vehicle of his power. The *mlechha* could not have used it to create the world of his vision. On the contrary, Prakrit, which was *Patal-banı*, the language of the underground, of the snakes, was considered too low for the Mughals to be appropriated for lofty ideals. Braj or Bhakha, the language of this world, was also a regional dialect. Furthermore, Bhakha, in the Mughal view, was suitable only for music and love poetry.[53]

Again, in Persian, in particular in the poetry produced during the second phase (6th–8th centuries AH/12th–14th centuries AD) of its history which belonged to the *Sabk-i 'Iraqı* (the Southern Iranian Diction), the tradition of non-sectarianism had been very strong.

Persian poetry, which had integrated many things from pre-Islamic Persia and had been an important vehicle of liberalism in the medieval Muslim world, helped in no insignificant way in creating and supporting the Mughal attempt to accommodate diverse religious traditions. Akbar must have got support for his policy of non-sectarianism from the verses like the ones of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi whose *masnawı* the Emperor heard regularly and nearly learnt by heart:[54]

[51] Compare Amır Khusrau, *Nuh Siphr*, ed. Wahid Mirza (Oxford, 1950), Preface and p. 173.

[52] Siraj-ud-Dın 'Alı Khan Arzu, *Nawadir-ul-Alfaz*, Preface cited in Syed Muhammad Abdullah, *Mabahis* (Delhi, 1968), pt I, p. 75.

[53] Mirza Khan bin Fakhr-ud-Dın Muhammad, *Tuhfat-ul-Hind*, ed. Nurul Hasan Ansari (Tehran, 1356), vol. I, pp. 51–2.

[54] Jalal-ud-Dın Rumı, *Masnawı-ye Maulana Rum*, ed. Qazi Sajjad Husain, II (Delhi, 1976), p. 173. For Akbar's administration and fondness for the *Masnawı*, Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nama*, I, p. 271.

Tu bara-i wasl kardan amdı
ne bara-i fasl kardan amdı
Hindiyan ra istilah-i Hind madh
Sindiyan ra istilah-i Sind madh
(Thou hast come to unite,
not to separate
For the people of Hind, the idiom of Hindi is praiseworthy
For the people of Sind, their own is to be praised)

The echoes of these messages and the general suspicion of mere 'formalism' of the faith are unmistakable in the Mughal Persian poetry as well. Faizı had the ambition of building 'a new Ka'ba' out of the stones from the Sinai:[55]

Biya ki rui ba mihrab-gah-i nau ba-nihım
Bina-i Ka'ba-i dıgar ze sang-i tur nihım
(Come, we turn our face toward a new alter
We take stones from the Sinai and build a new Ka'ba)

The Mughal poets, like their predecessors, portrayed, for instance, the pious (*zahid*) and the Shaikh as hypocrites. It was with the master of the wine house (*mughan*) and in the temple, instead of the mosque, they believed, that the eternal and Divine secrets were to be sought:[56]

Shi'ar-i millat-i Islamian ba-guzar gar khwahı
ki dar dair-i mughan a'i wa asrar-i nihan bını
(Give up the path of the Muslims, come to the temple, to the master of the wine house
so that you may see the Divine secrets)

The idol (*but*), to them, was the symbol of the Divine beauty; idolatry (*but-parastı*) represented the love of the Absolute; and, significantly, they emphasized that the Brahman be held in high esteem because of his sincerity, devotion and faithfulness to the idol: to Faizı it is a matter of privilege that his love for the idol led him to embrace the religion of the Brahman:[57]

Shukr-i khuda ki ishq-i butan ast rahbaram
bar millat-i brahman-o bar dın-i Azaram
(Thanks God, the love of the idols is my guide,
I follow the religion of the Brahman and Azar)

[55] Abul Faiz Faizı Faiyazı, *Dıwan*, ed. A. D. Arshad (Lahore, 1362), p. 470.
[56] Muhammad Jamal-ud-Dın 'Urfı Shırazı, *Kulliyat*, ed. Jawahiri Vajdi (Tehran, 3rd reprint, 1369), p. 152.
[57] Faizı, *Dıwan*, p. 53.

The temple (*dair, but-kada*), the wine-house (*mai-khana*), the mosque and Ka'ba were the same to 'Urfı; the Divine Spirit pervaded everywhere:[58]

Chiragh-i Somnat ast atish-i Tur
buwad zan har jihat ra nur dar nur
(The lamp of Somnath is [the same as] the fire at the Sinai,
the light spreads all around from that)

This feature of the Persian poetry remained unimpaired even when Aurangzeb (1658–1707) tried to associate the Mughal state with Sunni orthodoxy. Nasir 'Alı Sirhindı (d. 1696), a major poet of his time, echoed 'Urfı's message with equal enthusiasm:[59]

Nıst ghair az yak sanam dar parda-i dair-o haram
kai shawad atish du rang az ikhtilaf-i sangaha
(The image is the same behind the veil in the temple and *haram*
With diverse firestones, there is no change in the colour of the fire)

In fact, neither the mosque nor the temple were illumined by Divine beauty; it is the heart (*dil*) of the true lover in which it abides. The message was thus to aspire for the high place of the lovers. Talib Amulı then called to transcend the difference of Shaikh and Brahman:[60]

Na malamat-gar-i kufr am na ta'assub-kash-i dın
khanda-ha bar jadl-i Shaikh-o Barhaman daram
(I do not condemn infidelity, nor am I a bigoted believer,
I laugh at both, the Shaikh and the Brahman)

Persian thus facilitated the Mughal conquest in India even though not necessarily in the way Salar Jang of Hyderabad remembered it in the nineteenth century. In fact, this conquest, as 'Urfı declared, was intended to be bloodless:[61]

Zakhm-ha bardashtım o-fath-ha kardım lek
harqiz az khun-i kas-e rangın na-shud daman-i ma
(We have received wounds, we have scored victories,
but our skirts have never been stained with the blood of anyone)

The desire to build an empire, where both Shaikh and Brahman could live with minimum possible conflicts, necessitated the generation of adequate information about the diverse traditions of the land.

[58] 'Urfı Shırazı, *Dıwan* (Kanpur, 1915), p. 44.
[59] Nasir 'Alı Sirhindı, *Dıwan* (Lucknow, 1872), p. 15.
[60] Talib Amulı, *Kulliyat-Ash'ar-i Malik-ush-Shu'ra Talib Amulı*, ed. Tahiri Shihab (Tehran, 1967), p. 668.
[61] 'Urfı Shırazı, *Dıwan*, p. 3.

Akbar's historian, Abul Fazl, is not content in his *Akbar-nama* with a mere description of the heroic achievements of his master; he concludes his account in what he calls the *A'ın* (institutes) of Akbar. In particular are notable the third book of the *A'ın* which contains the survey of the land, the revenues, the peoples or the castes in control thereof, and, above all, the fourth book which 'treats of the social conditions and literary activity, especially in philosophy and law, of the Hindus, who form the bulk of the population, and in whose political advancement the emperor saw the guarantee of the stability of his realm'.[62] Further, to make the major local texts accessible and thus to dispel the ignorance about the Hindu traditions Akbar took special care in rendering *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* into Persian. The translations of these religious texts were followed in Akbar's own time and later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Persian renderings of a large number of texts on Indian religions, Hindu law and ethics, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, romance, moral fables and music.[63]

Persian generated and promoted conditions in which the Mughals could create out of heterogenous social groups a class of their allies and subordinate rulers. Like the emperor and his nobility in general, this class also cherished the universal human values and visions. But we ought not to ignore the fact that with Persian as the sole privileged language of the state and its 'apparatus', it also drove a wedge between the Mughals and the people. Persian was not an Indian language, but it had begun to assume an autonomous Indian identity in pre-Mughal India. Under the Mughals the Indian Persian diction matured, with some of the most brilliant writings in Persian. However, the Iranian idiom of Persian also emerged as the favoured reference point in Mughal India.

Indian Persian vs. Iranian Persian

Amır Khusrau (1253–1325), with whose poetry and writings the Indian diction assumed a distinct personality of its own, had disap-

[62] H. Blockmann's Preface to his translation of the *A'ın-i Akbarı*, I (reprint, Delhi, 1965).

[63] S. A. A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (Delhi, 1975), pp. 203–22; F. Mujtabai, *Aspects of Hindu–Muslim Cultural Relations* (Delhi, 1978), pp. 60–91, for a brief description of Persian translations of religious texts.

proved of the '*Khurasanıı*' idiom and had noted that in India Persian was written and pronounced according to the standard of Turan.[64] The models in particular in prose then were the authors of Transoxiana. The writings of Rashıd-ud-Dın Watwat and Baha-ud-Dın of Khwarizm, for instance, were read and imitated by the Indian Persian writers. Khusrau then innovated a new Indo-Persian style.[65] To the pre-Mughal lexicographers the languages spoken in Shiraz, Mawara-an-Nahr and Farghana were just dialects of the same Persian tongue. They incorporated in their lexicons the words used in 'Fars, Samarqand, Mawara-an-Nahr and Turkistan'. They also give as a matter of routine their Hindavı synonyms.[66]

The Mughal court, on the contrary, was concerned with the purification of Persian (*tathır-i Farsı*). The objective of the lexicon Akbar asked Jamal-ud-Dın Husain Inju to prepare in his name was to clean the Persian of non-Persian words and expressions.[67] The drive at purification continued later. Inju's *Farhang* together with *Majma-ul-Furs Sururı* were taken as the sole standard lexicons in the first half of the seventeenth century. By the middle of the century Mulla 'Abdur-Rashıd Thattawı felt the necessity of compiling a new dictionary, among other things, because (a) in the existing two major dictionaries (*Jahangırı* and *Sururı*) certain Arabic and Turkish words were enlisted without clarifying that they were not Persian, and that (b) many words were wrongly pronounced by Inju and Sururı.[68]

If in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the most sublime and the best poetry of the time was produced in India, the eighteenth century was the richest in terms of the number and varieties of prose and poetic works in Persian. Take, for instance, the poetry. Seventy-seven of the Persian poets who lived during the earlier half of the century found the place of honour in the *tazkira*, titled as *Majma'-un-Nafa'is* of Siraj-ud-Dın 'Alı Khan Arzu who was the best and the most revered scholar, poet and critic of the period.[69] Many

[64] Amır Khusrau, *Dibacha-i Dıwan Ghurrat al-Kamal*, ed. S. Ali Haider (Patna, 1988), p. 92; Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amır Khusrau* (Calcutta, 1935), p. 160.

[65] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, p. 23. Later, however, Watwat's *Hadaiq-us-Sihr* inspired Warasta's *Matla'-us-Sa'dain*. Cf. Abdullah, *Adabıyat*, p. 144.

[66] Husaini, *Indo-Persian Literature*, pp. 201–26.

[67] Inju Shırazı, *Farhang-i Jahangırı*, Preface, p. 4.

[68] Zahuruddin Ahmad, *Pakistan men Farsı Adab kı Tarıkh* (Jahangır to Aurangzeb) (Lahore, 1974), p. 542.

[69] Cf. a selection (*intikhab*) of the work, India Office Library, London, MS., I.O. 4015.

tazkiras were written in this period. Among these, 'Alı Ibrahım Khalıl's (d. 1793) *Suhuf-i Ibrahım*, which was a most comprehensive one, at least, for the northern Indian poets, notes no less than four hundred and sixty poets from amongst those who lived in the eighteenth century and whose works he considered of any worth.[70] No less than fifty-six of them were non-Muslims.[71]

Much more significant was the height of excellence the Persian poetry scaled under the Mughals. The Mughal age signals a significant stage in the development of the Persian literary sensibilities. The poetry was marked by an outspoken spirit of innovation and experimentation, showing due regard to the past literary heritage of Iran as well as Central Asia. In Central Asia, at the court of the late Tımurids, Daulat Shah Samarqandı and 'Alı Sher Nawa'ı tried to establish a canon which, in a measure, was represented in the poetry of 'Abd-ur-Rahman Jamı (d. 1492) and which later was refined and reformulated by Babur. In this tradition emphasis was on rhetorical artistry, even as Babur pointed to the importance of meaning (*ma'nı*) and ecstasy (*hal*), together with colour (*rang*), in a good poetry. In Iran, too, there were attempts like the one by Sam Mirza to evolve the standards of literary criticism, close to Herat School. Simultaneously, however, Baba Fughanı Shırazı (d. 1519) made a plea for concerns in the poetry for the routine matters of love, but with an eye for new meanings of old words.[72]

The Mughal poetry signified a fine blending of the two, with judicious balance (*tawazun*) between the rhetorical excellences (*mazaya-i balaghat*) and the grandeurs of thoughts (*jala'il-i ma'anı*).[73] The thought was to occupy a distinct and uncontested superior position; and while Abul Fazl emphasized the splendours of ideas, his poet brother, Faizı advocated their sublimity and emotional texture:[74]

Gar durd nıst dar sukhan-i man 'ajab madar
kın bada ra ba parda-i dil saf karda-ım
(Do not be surprised if there are no dregs in my poetry
because I have refined this wine by filtering it through the heart)

[70] Cf. *Suhuf-i Ibrahım* (portion dealing with the accounts of the twelfth century AH), ed. A. R. Bedar (Patna, 1981).
[71] S. Abdullah, *Adabıyat*, pp. 169–84.
[72] Abdul Ghani, 'Tanqıdı Shu'ur ka Irtiqa' in Maqbul Beg Badakhshani (ed.), *Tarıkh-i Adabıyat-i Musalmanan-i Hind-o-Pak* (Lahore, 1976), pp. 455–61.
[73] Abul Fazl, *Akbar-nama*, II (Calcutta, 1879), p. 381.
[74] Faizı, *Dıwan*, p. 405.

Elaborate style and ornate phraseology with artistic devices and sensuousness both in words and meanings together with magnificent and sublime thoughts thus symbolized the Mughal poetics. The following verse of Ghanı Kashmırı (d. 1688) perhaps best expressed the all-sided splendour of the Mughal poetry:[75]

Jalwa-i husn-i tu awurd mara bar sar-i fikr
tu hina bastı wa man manı-ye ranqın bastam
(With the brilliance of your beauty I began to think
You applied the henna and I created the colourful meaning)

The resplendent thought or the serious philosophical reflections expressed in pleasingly florid diction was a marked feature of what has been noted as the *taza-gu'ı* (speaking the fresh) of the Mughal poets. *Taza-gu'ı* was the major tenet of the Mughal poetry.[76] The call for new and fresh meaning is reiterated throughout the Mughal age. Faizı detested imitation (*taqlıd*).[77]

Qasd-i khayal-i dıgaran ta ba kai
jud ba mal-i dıgaran ta ba kai
(How long will you look to others for ideas?
How long will you be generous with the wealth of the others?)

He then invited his audience to rise to break from the past.[78]

Biya wa raunaq-i bazar ba-shikan
ba chashm-i baghbanan khar ba-shikan
za had ba-guzasht naz-i kaj-kulahan
ba-shukh gosha-i dastar ba-shikan
qadah nushan za pısh-i Ka'ba ba-guzar
za bad mastı dar-o-diwar ba-shikan
(Come, destroy the glitter of the bazaar.
Extricate the thorn with the eye of the gardeners
Exceed the limits of the beloved's coquetry
Defiantly tear the loop of the turban
Go across the Ka'ba, sipping the goblet
Pull down the structures in drunkenness)

Poetry and the poetic imagination to Faizı was something beyond this world. The poet was to scale the heights, insurmountable for an average human soul.[79]

[75] Muhammad Tahir Ghanı Kashmırı, *Dıwan* (Lucknow, 1931), p. 101.
[76] Nihawandi, *Ma'asir-i Rahumı*, p. 848; Shibli Numani, *Shi'r-ul-'Ajam*, IV, p. 21; Abdullah, '*Taza-gu'ı*: Ek Adabı Tahrık' in *idem*, *Farsı Zuban-o-Adab* (Lahore, 1977), pp. 114–26.
[77] Cited in Safa, *Tarıkh*, V, p. 852.
[78] Cited in Nabi Hadi, *Mughalon ke Malik-ush-Shu'ara* (Allahabad, 1978), p. 150.
[79] *Ibid*., p. 90.

Man ba-rah-i mı rawam k-anja qadam na-mahram ast
az maqam-i harf mı guyam ki dam na-mahram ast
(I walk where steps hesitate treading
I speak from a place where breathing is stifled)

With his poetry the Mughal poet thus aspired to unearth 'the secret treasures of the unseen world' (*ganjına-i asrar-i ghaibı*).[80] The poetry to Nazırı was divine.[81]

Tu ma-pindar kın qissa ba-khud mı guyam
gush nazdık labam ar ki awaz-i hast
(Do not think the story I tell you comes from within me
Come close to me, and you will hear a voice (divine)

This *taza-gu'ı* was inspired in a measure by the poetry of Baba Fughanı;[82] but its most distinguishing feature in our period was its humaneness and here its achievements were unprecedented. While Faizı gave a call to go beyond 'the limits of the beloved's coquetry', 'Urfı celebrated the enlargement of self where the line between the success and failure of the individual on the one hand, and his concerns for humanity, on the other, blurs:[83]

Dar dil-i ma gham-i dunya gham-i ma'shuq shawad
bada gar kham buwad pukhta kunad shısha-i ma
(The worries of the world turn in my heart into the ones
for the loved one.
If the wine is unripe, it matures in our goblet)

The sufferings of others the poet thus narrated with the same intensity as he lamented the afflictions of his heart. Then poetry did not simply echo the zest of the conqueror, offering a way out from the prevailing social turmoil; it gave expression to the susceptibilities of others as well.[84]

Hamısha girya-i talkhı dar astın daram
ba nirkh-i zahr firosham gar angbın daram
kas-e ki khana ba hamsayagı-ye man darad
madam khush-dil-ash az nala-i hazın daram
za dair ta but-o-butkhana mı burad ishqam
khajalat az rukh-i mardan-i rah-i dın daram
(I have nothing but tears of distress in my sleeves

[80] Badakhshani (ed.), *Tarıkh-i Adabıyat*, p. 467.
[81] Muhammad Husain Nazırı Nıshapurı, *Dıwan*, ed. Mazahir Musaffa (Tehran, 1340), p. 101.
[82] For a discussion around this view, see Razia Akbar, *Sharh-i Ahwal-o-Asar-i Baba Fughanı Shırazı* (Hyderabad, 1974), pp. 133–49; see also Abdullah, '*Taza-gu'ı . . .*'.
[83] 'Urfı Shırazı, *Dıwan*, p. 4.
[84] Nazırı Nıshapurı, *Dıwan*, p. 294.

I sell it as a poison [even] if have honey
Whosoever has his house in my neighbourhood
I keep him happy with my cries of woe.
My love takes me from temple to the idol and idolhouse
I am ashamed over the attitude [lit. face] of the people who follow the path of Faith)

The wounded ego of the vanquished in this poetry then found consolation for what they lost, and, more than that, an exaggerated appreciation for the things of their world.[85]

Rumuz-i atish mihrı ki brahman na-shigaft
za ahl-i dil na-shunıdam ki nam mı guftand
(The mysteries of the fire of love which the brahman did not disclose
I did not hear from the people of heart any [other] name [competent to unveil them])

Throughout the Mughal age, the poet thus showed awareness of the fact that the realm of the new poetry expanded much beyond its erstwhile frontiers. In relation to their predecessors, they saw themselves collectively as original, creative and innovative, even though each of them diverged from the other and experimented with new images and tropes in his/her own individual style. Enthralled with the poetry of his own time, the Mughal poet is obsessed with a sort of collective ego. Mirza 'Abd-ul-Qadir Bıdil (d. 1712), for instance, had not much in common with 'Urfı, and yet he seems to be conscious of the fact they both belong to the same group.[86]

Ba fikr-i taza-guyan gar khayalam partav andazad
par-i taus gardad, jadwal-i auraq-i diwanha
(If my fantasies radiate the vision of the fresh-speakers
The pages of the *divans* become [colourful like] the wings of the peacock)

Nasir 'Alı Sirhindı (d. 1696), sensitive to the accomplishments of the Mughal poet, emphasized the difference between the Indian diction and the one popular with the Iranians and declared boastfully that 'The Iranian nightingale possessed little [similar] to the grandeur of the Indian peacock'.

Bulbul-i Iran nadarad jalwa-i taus-i Hind[87]

Still, the Iranians' enviable strength enabled them to dictate terms in Mughal India as much as in their own home in Iran. The incomparable accomplishments of hundreds of Indian Persian writers and

[85] 'Urfı Shırazı, *Dıwan*, p. 87.
[86] Mirza 'Abd-ul-Qadir Bıdil, *Kulliyat* (Kabul, 1341), p. 81.
[87] Badakhshani (ed.), *Tarıkh-i Adabıyat*, p. 465.

poets and the enthusiasm of thousands of their audience apart, the Iranians generally rejected outright the Indian usages (*istimal-i Hind*, *tasarruf-i Hind*), following the Indians' centuries-old contact with, and command over, Persian. This was the case not simply with the Indian words and phrases; Indian ideas translated into Persian, Indian pronunciation and spellings of certain words were also unacceptable. The principal Persian philological works of the period, including *Siraj-ul-Lughat* of Arzu, *Mir'at-ul-Istilahat* of Anand Ram 'Mukhlis', *Mustalahat-ush-Shu'ara'* of Siyalkoti Mal 'Warasta' and *Bahar-i 'Ajam* of Munshi Tek Chand 'Bahar', were all oriented to update the language in the light of the current usages in Iran.[88]

True, there were some attempts for Indian Persian to acquire an autonomous position, but these were feeble and exceptional. Arzu, for instance, defends the *tasarruf* of masters like Mirza Bidil. In fact, in a bid to legitimize the use of the Indian words in Persian he earned the distinction of being the first to discover and point out the correspondence (*tawafuq*) between Persian and Sanskrit. Besides *Siraj-ul-Lughat* and *Chiragh-i Hidayat*, he discusses this at length in *Musmir* to show how these two languages are identical. He is conscious of his achievement. He writes:[89]

> To date no one, excepting this humble Arzu and his followers, has discovered the *tawafuq* (lit. agreement, concord) between Hindi and Persian, even though there have been numerous lexicographers and other researchers in both these languages. I have based on this principle in assessing the correctness of some of the Persian words, which I have illustrated in my books like *Siraj-ul-Lughat* and *Chiragh-i Hidayat*.
>
> It is strange that even the author of *Farhang-i Rashidi* and those others who lived in India have neglected the *tawafuq* between these two languages.

However., Arzu's own writings are largely free from this *tasarruf*, implying, perhaps, that the ideal Persian was the unalloyed Iranian one.[90] Even if it may not sound very much relevant here, Amir Khusrau's pride in his Hindavi is noteworthy:[91]

Shakkar-i Misri na-daram kaz Arab guyam sukhan

[88] H. Blochmann, 'Contributions to Persian Lexicography', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (*JRASB*), vol. 37, pt 1 (1868–69), pp. 1–72.

[89] Siraj-ud-Din 'Ali Khan Arzu, *Muthmir*, ed. Rehana Khatoon (Karachi, 1991), p. 221; see also Abdullah, *Mabahis*, I, pp. 70–1. Interestingly, Arzu's theory of *tawafuq* is similar to, perhaps an earlier Indigenous of, William Jones's declaration of the relationship between the classical languages in 1785, which in turn laid the ground for the development of comparative philology.

[90] I.O. 4015, f. 44b.

[91] Mohiuddin, *Chancellery*, pp. 23 and 26.

Turk-i Hindustani-yam dar Hindavı guyam jawab.
(I have no Egyptian sugar with which to talk to an Arab,
I am an Indian Turk, I reply in Hindavı)

And he assertively boasted of the style mixed with the Indian delightful artifices, unmindful of how the Tranxonians and the Khurasanis reacted.

Possibly eighteenth-century social and political conditions had a bearing on Arzu's position, which can be called ambiguous. On the one hand, there was pressure from the high Mughal culture which was more in support of an unmixed Iranized idiom, on the other, as a reaction to this influence, the newly risen Indian 'upstarts' threatened, sometimes, to dislodge the established elite.[92] Arzu attempted a kind of a compromise. He discovered Hindi's affinity with Persian, which incidentally was not a mere political ploy, and thus satisfied the urge of the upcoming elite. But in practice he maintained a position close to the one favoured by the established elite.

Arzu also led a literary debate against Shaikh 'Alı 'Hazın' (d. 1766), the eminent Iranian poet who came and settled in India in the period and who was generally dismissive about the Indian Persian poetry just because in his assessment it did not come up to the contemporary Iranian linguistic standards. But, interestingly, here again, Arzu ventured to correct Hazın in the light of the old established Persian usages,[93] or he simply pointed out the illogicality of some of the expressions in Hazın's verses. At any rate, Hazın had many followers (*kasa-lısan* = cup-lickers) among the Indians. Some were unhappy with Arzu's criticism and wrote rejoinders in support of Hazın.[94]

Persian, Hindavı and the Mughals: Indifference and Appropriation

Persian in Mughal India, its wide use, long career and unparalleled contributions apart, continued to be taken as a foreign language.

[92] Compare, for some evidence, Khwushal Chand, *Nadir-uz-Zamanı*, British Museum Ms. Or. 1654, ff. 95b–96a and 111a–13a; see also M. Alam, 'Eastern India in Early 18th Century Crisis', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 28, no. 1 (January–March 1991), pp. 69–71.

[93] Compare, Arzu, *Tanbıh-ul-Ghafilın*, ed. S. M. Akram, 'Ikram' (Lahore, 1981).

[94] Warasta, for instance, wrote *Rajm-ush-Shayatın*; Azad Bilgramı was also critical of Arzu, cf. Ikram's Introduction to *Tanbıh-ul-Ghafilın*.

Indeed, it was through the vicissitudes of its growth under the Mughals that it acquired a rather unequivocal Iranian identity. And as Persian signified high culture, being a language alien to the vast number of people, it perpetuated the distance between the rulers and the ruled. The Mughals in their fascination for Persian failed to give meaningful patronage to any language of the land. It was only in the late seventeenth century, when the regions began to assert their autonomy, that there seems to be a kind of Mughal policy to learn and encourage Hindavı.

This is not to suggest that the Mughals were totally indifferent to the Indian languages. Far from it. In fact Babur mentions many Hindustanı words in his Memoir, and in a *dıwan* of his preserved in Riza Library, Rampur, scholars have also noticed a Hindavı couplet.[95] There is not much information for this purpose from Humayun's reign. Akbar grew up in India, married a Rajput princess and therefore it is not illogical to believe that he spoke good Hindavı, at least in its Rajputana form. Akbar's chroniclers attribute to him a large number of words and expressions, for almost every occasion, while many phrases in the Memoir of the next Mughal ruler, Jahangır, who was born to a Rajput mother, appear to be the obvious translations of Hindavı expressions.[96] Both Akbar and Jahangır were also fond of giving Hindi names to their pets and favourite animals. We come across elephants in the royal stable called Rup-sundar, Ratan-gaj, Ran-rawat, Gaj-raj, Fauj-singar, etc. A very special deer of Jahangır was called Hans-raj.[97] It is interesting to note that Jahangır sometimes distinguishes common Hindavı from the language of the Hindus.[98] Jahangır's successors, Shahjahan and then Aurangzeb, according to their court chroniclers, had full command over 'Hindustanı'.[99] With the Great Mughals are also associated the names of

[95] Denison Ross's edition of *Dıvan-i Babur Padishah* with comments and Introduction in *JRASB*, vol. 6, New Series (Extra number, 1910), pp. 1–43.

[96] Note, for instance, *zada zada* in *Tuzak-i Jahangırı*, p. 103: *wa zada zada an makhzulan ra dar mahall-i ki daira karda budand, dar mı awurdand*; and *surkh surkh* on p. 105; *waqt-i ki dar mastı ast, surkh surkh ast, guya ki tamam ra ba marjan-i murassa' sakhta*; and *kalan kalan* on p. 240; *wa mauja-ha kalan kalan ba-nazar dar-amad.*

[97] *Tuzak*, pp. 44, 66, 141, 167 and 189.

[98] *Tuzak*, p. 144.

[99] 'Abdul Hamıd Lahorı, *Badshah-nama*, ed. by Kabiruddin and Abdur Rahim, Bibl. Ind. (Calcutta, 1866) vol. I, p. 132; Muhammad Kazim, *'Alamgır-nama*, ed. Khadim Husain and Abdul Hai (Calcutta, 1873), p. 1095; for Aurangzeb's and his son Muhammad A'zam's interest in Hindi, see also Suniti Kumar Chatterji, 'A Verse by Guru Nanak in the *Adi Granth* Quoted by Emperor Aurangzib Alamgir', *Selected Papers*, II, New Delhi, May 1978, pp. 185–93.

some Hindavı poets and of a couple of Sanskrit lexicographers.[100] Further, the compositions of the Indian musicians encouraged so generously by the Mughals were, in general, in Indian languages.[101]

However, there is little in our sources to suggest if Hindavı at any stage in the seventeenth century was regarded as a language of the Mughal court or administration.[102] This was in sharp contrast to the developments in the regional Sultanates. Ibrahım 'Adil Shah, who ascended the throne in Bijapur, the Deccan, in 942/1535–36, is reported to have proclaimed Hindavı (in this case Marathi) as the language of his government, entrusting all the important administrative and financial offices to the Brahmans.[103] Further, from the Barıd Shahı Sultanate of Bidar (1503–1619), we have at least some inscriptions both in Persian and Marathi,[104] while local language had the honour of being the language of the Sultan in Golconda. Ibrahım Qutb Shah encouraged the growth of Telugu and his successor Muhammad Qulı Qutb Shah patronized and himself wrote poetry in Telugu and in Dakhni.[105] Abdullah Qutb Shah instituted a special office to prepare the royal edicts in Telugu (*dabırı-ye faramın-i Hindavı*). While administrative and revenue papers at local levels in the Qutb Shahı Sultanate were prepared largely in Telugu, the royal edicts were often bilingual.[106] The last Qutb Shahı Sultan, Abul Hasan Tana Shah, sometimes issued his orders only in Telugu, with a Persian summary given on the back of the *farmans*.[107]

[100] Compare, for instance, Keshavdas's *Jahangır Jas Chandrika* in *Keshavdas Granthavalı*, ed. V. P. Misra (V. Samvat 2026), and a Sanskrit–Persian dictionary by Karnpur prepared on Jahangır's order. The dictionary has been edited by Narharinath Yogi and published in 2009 Vikram Samvat from Gorakshpith, Nepal.

[101] *Dhrupad* and *Khayal* compositions, for instance, from Shahjahan's time.

[102] Some historians of Urdu language, however, claim that in Shahjahan's time familiarity with Urdu (Hindavı) was an essential requirement for state service. Cf. Jamil Jalibi, *Tarıkh-i Adab-i Urdu*, reprint (Delhi, 1989), I, pp. 69–70.

[103] Muhammad Ibrahım Farishta, *Tarıkh-i Farishta* (Lucknow, 1281/1864), II, p. 49; see also Muhammad Hashim Khafı Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, ed. K. D. Ahmad and Woseley Haig (Calcutta, 1925), III, pp. 206–7.

[104] G. Yazdani, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, pp. 140–203, cited in P. M. Joshi and H. K. Sherwani (eds), *History of Medieval Deccan* (Hyderabad, 1973), I, pp. 395–6.

[105] H. K. Sherwani, *Muhammad Qulı Qutb Shah: Founder of Haiderabad* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 44–55.

[106] Mirza Nizam-ud-Dın Ahmad al-Sa'idı al-Shırazı, *Hadıqat-us-Salatın*, ed. S. Asghar Ali Bilgrami (Hyderabad, 1931), pp. 36 and 41; see also Joshi and Sherwani (eds), *History of Medieval Deccan*, I, pp. 40 and 48.

[107] Andhra Pradesh State Archives, *farmans* dated (a) 1088/1677 about a land grant; (b) 1090/1679 pertaining to the weekly marts of Wanepur, Ibrahimpattan; (c) 1093/1682 about a land grant; and (d) 1087/1676 about the construction of a temple at Wanipur, Ibrahimpattan.

On the contrary, the memory about the Great Mughals in the regions was that they discouraged the local languages. Legend goes that when Akbar conquered Gujarat, all the poets and writers of the local language of the province fled to, and took shelter in, the courts of the Deccan Sultans.[108] However, the compilation of *Tuhfat-ul-Hind* by Mirza Khan later in Aurangzeb's reign possibly signified a serious and organized effort to persuade the Mughal elite to learn the local language and script. The book, divided into seven chapters dealing with different popular branches of Indian sciences, begins with an analysis of Hindi alphabets, script and essential grammar. At the end of the book (*khatima*) is a detailed glossary of the words, phrases, idioms and similes used by the people of Hind.[109] Mirza Khan wrote the book for the princes with an intention to inspire them and equip them to learn current traditional Indian sciences (*'ulum-i mutadawila-i Hindıyya*). The noted late seventeenth–early eighteenth-century Hindi poet, Vrind, was reportedly among the teachers of Prince Muhammad 'Azım.[110] Again, the preparation of formal Hindi–Persian dictionaries, in particular *Ghara'ib-ul-Lughat* by Mır 'Abd-ul-Wasi' of Hansı, at this stage was also perhaps an attempt in this direction, even though the principal objective of these dictionaries, as their compilers stated, was to provide Persian equivalents to the Hindavı words in common use.[111]

There is evidence of increasing interest of the Mughals in Hindavı/Braj poetry in the early eighteenth century. Aurangzeb's grandson, Prince Muhammad Rafı-ush-Shan wrote poetry in Hindi under the pen-name of 'Nyayi'.[112] 'Abd-ur-Rahman Premı, a well-known *Reetikal* poet, was patronized by the Emperor Farrukh Siyar (1712–19).[113]

[108] Cf. Abdul Majid Siddiqi, *Tarıkh-i Golconda* (Hyderabad, 1964), p. 395.

[109] Compare, for instance, the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris MS., Blochet I, 235. Nurul Hasan Ansari edited the Introduction first five chapters and published the book from Tehran, 1536. In this edition, however, the first part, Introduction (*muqaddima*) is not printed in full. The Hindi alphabets in Nagrı character have invariably been omitted.

[110] Compare Vrind, *Vrind Satsai*, ed. Bhagwandeen (Allahabad, 1908), editor's Introduction; see also R. C. Shukl, *Hindı Sahitya ka Itihas* (Kashi, Samvat 2035), p. 225.

[111] Compare Masud Husain Rizvi Adeeb, 'Urdu kı Qadım Lughat', reprinted in the *Journal of the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library* (Patna, 1993), Special No. *Intikhab az Risala Hindustanı* (Allahabad, 1931–48), p. 18, for the Preface of *'Aja'ib-ul-Lughat*, which Ajmerı Palwalı compiled, based on 'Abd-ul-Wasi's *Ghara'ib*, sometime in the early eighteenth century.

[112] Muhammad Hadı Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-us-Salatın Chaghta*, ed. Muzaffar Alam (Bombay, 1980), p. 157.

[113] 'Abd-ur-Rahman Premı, *Nakh-Sikh*, ed. Iqbal Ahmad (Bombay, 1959), editor's Introduction. For an analysis of his poetry, see also Sandhya Sharma, 'Aspects of

One of his nobles patronized Nawaz, a Braj poet, who rewrote *Shankuntala*, adapting from both the story of the *Mahabharat* and the drama of Kalidas. Nawaz then earned the coveted title of 'Kabishwar' or poet laureate from the Emperor.[114] The title, in contrast to the one of *Kab-rai* awarded by Shahjahan, assumes special significance in view of the fact that at Farrukh Siyar's court there was no poet laureate in Persian. Later, Emperor Shah Alam II (1761–1818) composed poetry in Hindi, using both the Nagri and Persian scripts.[115] All this must have affected the dominance of Persian. A simultaneous drive at Persianization of Hindavı, however, offset the balance.

In the face of the asserting regional forces in the eighteenth century the Mughals accorded a respectable position to Hindavı by admitting it in their *sarkars*, but many of them also saw to it that it was heavily Persianized. In the first place, even as Mirza Khan prepared a manual for the Mughal elites to learn Hindi script, Hindavı, if it was to be a language of this class, was to be written only in Persian script. Secondly, it would thenceforth be given the name of the language of the imperial camp (*zuban-i Urdu-i mu'alla*, *zuban-i Urdu-i Shahı*). In other words, it was the language that evolved at the Mughal camp, and not the language of the region, which the Mughals recognized and appropriated.

Both these positions have been argued out fairly cogently in the writings of Arzu, which represented best the Mughal stand during the period. He prepared his own Hindi–Persian dictionary, *Nawadir-ul-Alfaz*, and even if he based it on Mır 'Abd-ul-Wasi''s *Ghara'ib*, he dismissed many words used by him as the ones belonging to 'the tongue of the illiterates (*zuban-i juhhal*)'. While 'Abd-ul-Wasi' characterized as correct and lucid (*fasıh*) in Hindavı many of the Indianized or rather locally corrupt spellings/pronunciations of the Persian words, Arzu insisted on their original Persian forms. In a discussion on Persian, Pahlavı and Darı, Arzu says that the most accurate and elegant form of a language is the one spoken at a royal camp. For it

Society and Culture in *Reeti* Poetry', unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi, 1991).

[114] Nawaz Kabishwar, *Shakuntala* (Varanasi, 1924). See also an Urdu prose version of the same prepared by Kazim Alı Jawan in 1801, reprinted with Introduction and notes by Muhammad Aslam Quraishi (Lahore, 1963); Masud Hasan Rizvi Adeeb, 'Nawaz aur Shakuntala Natak', *Nuqoosh* (Lahore, June 1963).

[115] Compare Shah Alam II, *Nadirat-i Shahı*, ed. Imtiaz Ali Khan Arshi (Rampur, 1944).

is the language of the camp which the king and his nobles speak, and which is distinctly different from the language of the villagers and the people of petty towns. Prose and poetry of high standards are written only in this language.[116]

Again, Hindavı poetry was made to conform to the Persian standards. The transition in the poetry of Walı Dakkanı (d. 1712), which was composed earlier, dominantly in 'Indo-Aryan traditions', to a diction full of 'Persian subjects and themes', illustrated the extent of Persianization of Hindavı.[117]

By Persianizing Hindavı, the Mughals intended to purify the language and thus raise it to a level commensurate with their culture and life-style. We have seen how Arzu refused to incorporate in his 'language of the royal camp' the Hindavızed Persian words. Here, again, Arzu's position deserves special notice. In the matter of Persian he defended, even if with a reservation, *tasarruf-i Hind* or Mughal Indian Persian in the face of the onslaught against it by the Iranians and their Indian 'cup-lickers' and thus asserted the sovereignty of the Mughals. In the matter of Hindavı, he took a position of reconciliation and, having done assiduous research on *tawafuq* and thus legitimating his stand, adjusted to the demands of the rising regions. None the less, he firmly declined to compromise on the supremacy of the culture of the Mughal court.

Arzu found strong support for this in Shah Hatim, another notable Mughal writer and poet of the period. In 1755, Hatim laid down principles to replace the local words by Perso-Arabic ones with their original spellings.[118] Arzu and Hatim's positions echoed the deliberations of the meetings which used to take place at the *havelı* of Amır Khan (d. 1744) and where a number of nobles and notables assembled to listen to Persian poetry and consider 'reforms' of Hindavı poetry and prose.[119] Amır Khan, it may be noted, was a patron of Persian poets and an important leader of 'the Iranian lobby' in Muhammad Shah's reign (1719–48). It was Amır Khan who first welcomed Hazın and arranged his *jagır* on the latter's arrival from Iran.[120] As the Persianized Mughals adopted Hindavı, they

[116] Arzu, *Muthmir*, p. 9; Abdullah, *Mahahis*, pp. 59–82 and 76–7.

[117] For a discussion on Persianization of Hindavı, see Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavı* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 226–84. Amrit Rai's argument is, however, centred on cultural (read religious) factors only.

[118] *Ibid*., pp. 249–50.

[119] S. Nasir Husain Khan, *Mughal aur Urdu* (Calcutta, 1933), pp. 50–61.

[120] Ahmad Alı Sandılavı, *Makhzan-ul-Ghara'ib*, ed. Muhammad Baqar (Lahore, 1968), I, p. 801.

changed its direction as well. From the language of a region it turned to be the language of the royal camp.

Conclusion

There may have been many reasons for the unprecedented rise of Persian in Mughal India—a desire on the part of Akbar to pay off the debt the Mughals owed to Iran, the necessity to counteract the ambitious Chaghtai nobles and thus promote Iranians in Mughal service, an urge to compete with and excel the Iranian Shah, among other things by encouraging the Iranian intellectuals and poets to come over and settle in India, the sheer force of the Persianized Muslim civilization of Central and West Asia and its inevitable and logical extension to Mughal India. All of them may have influenced the trajectory of the development of the language; or just one of them or a combination of two or three would have been decisive for its dominance at a given stage. It is a moot point if Akbar by patronizing the Iranians could neutralize the awe the Iranian Shah had exercised over the Mughal household in the early phase. In his regime, certainly, a process set in to rapidly Iranize the Mughal literary culture. However, the choice of Persian, as the language of the empire was, in a very large measure, also in consideration of the specific Indian conditions. The non-sectarian and liberal feature of Persian made it an ideal forum through which the Mughals could effectively negotiate the diversities of the Indian society. The culture and the ethos of the language matched with their vision of an overarching empire. Persian became a particularly useful instrument for political manoeuvrability, also because pre-Mughal India had developed familiarity with the language.

A large part of the long spell of Mughal rule saw the evolution of the language from a merely state-building tool to a social and cultural signifier, and eventually to a major definer of Mughal identity. Knowledge of Persian, to begin with, remained confined to the court, from the exalted portals of which it demarcated the conquerors from the vanquished. But soon it moved beyond and percolated down to the lower rungs of administration.

With the popularization of Persian along the chain of administrative and political command also continued its Islamic overtone. Persian, like Arabic, was seen as the language of Islam. The elite Mughal identity which was not necessarily religiously defined then

came to acquire an Islamic tinge as well. However, in the Mughals' efforts to purge Persian from the non-Persian, including the Arabic, words, conflict between the Indian and Iranian diction and in the eventual domination of the latter over the former one could also see a continuous endeavour to define their power and political identity in non-religious idioms.

Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century politics brought to the fore a serious threat from the region to the central elite identity. The initial Mughal response to this danger was one of modifying the provincial institutions. Soon, however, the increasing cultural affirmation of the region expressed in its linguistic diversity had to be accommodated in more meaningful ways. They recognized the need to culturally integrate and accommodate with, and not simply to dominate, the regions. This could be illustrated from the interest they showed in Hindavı. Yet Hindavı was first Persianized before its entry into the charmed circle of the Mughal echelons. The linguistic contestations had no religious bearings; they reflected, however, once again the tensions between the peoples in the regions and the Persianized Mughal elites. It is difficult to say if it was because of the intrinsic strength of the language or just in consideration of its association with power and prestige that the indigenous subordinate ruling groups and 'bureaucracy' appropriated Persian.