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**Incorporating of Sanskrit Text in the Persianate World:
From Al-Beruni to Dara Shukoh**

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Incorporating of Sanskrit Text in the Persianate World: From Al-Beruni to Dara Shukoh¹

Mohsin Ali

Abstract

The Persian translation of Sanskrit and other Indian literatures from the 2nd century A.H. onwards contributed significantly in developing transmission of ideas and cultural relationship. The creation of such texts based on Indian philosophy, culture, religious and other intellectual legacy reflects the richness of cultures in both India and the Islamic world.

The early reference of translations of Indian texts into Persian, Arabic and Turkish was found in the literary works of the Arabic scholar Al-Jahiz who composed the Kitab al-Bayan and, in the texts of Abu Raihan Al-Beruni, the Persian scholar. The Sanskrit fables Panchatantra, was translated into Arabic—Kalilah wa Dimna—by Ibn Muqaffa and later translated into Persian and European languages. In Mughal India, there were scholars from all specialties in the Mughal court who translated a number of texts in different languages. An outstanding translation during the Mughal period was Razamnama, the Persian version of the Mahabharata and the translations of Ramayana, Purana, Atharvaveda and Sinhasana dvatrimasati. The Muslim rulers of Kashmir and the Deccan also supported the translation of Sanskrit literature such as the historical chronicle Rajatarangini and the epic Mahabharata. Dara Shukoh supported and himself translated Sanskrit texts into Persian. The Indo-Persian literary relations on the basis of translations reached a pinnacle during his time with his translation of the sacred treatises, the Upanishads into Persian titled Sirr-i-Akbar from the original Sanskrit. According to him the Upanishads' monotheistic philosophy was consistent with the holy Qur'an and its interpretation.

Keywords: Persian, Sanskrit, Translation, Islam, Mughal.

¹ This paper is a revised version of the public lecture delivered at PMML, New Delhi on 14 November 2023

Introduction

Indian sciences have had a significant impact on the Golden Age of Islam (8th-13th centuries). The period saw the advancement of science, particularly mathematics and astronomy, especially between 9th-10th century. A significant development in the field of cross-cultural exchange was the advent of Muslim rule in India. In this period, Baghdad, under the Abbasid rulers was the leading center of intellectual learning in the Islamic world. The Abbasids' acquisition of Sind gave them a vital route to Indian science and culture. During this time, the court of Caliph Al-Mansur was visited by Kanaka, an Indian astronomer, mathematician, and diplomat from Sind (754–775). The Caliph became so enthralled with Indian astronomy and mathematics that he gave Ibrahim al-Fazari and Yaqub ibn Tariq the task of translating Brahmagupta's work *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* and *Khandakhadyaka*. The Islamic world was also introduced to Indian numerals through these translations into Arabic, and Al-Khwarizmi who lived in the ninth century, was instrumental in spreading the Indian numerical system throughout the world. Al-Kindi of Iraq who was a contemporary scholar introduced to the world the Indian number system through several of his works.² During this period in India, with the establishment of Delhi Sultanate, the Muslim interest in ancient Indian learning under court patronage produced valuable treatises. One of the prominent figures of the Sultanate period was Amir Khusro. In his magnum opus *Nuh Siphir* he extols the environment of India, Sanskrit language, its learning, arts, music, the people, even its wildlife.³ *Ghunyatu'l Munya*, a treatise on Indian musicology was authored by an anonymous person in 1374-75 and was based on Sanskrit authorities.⁴ Zia al-Din Nakhshabi's *Ladhdhat Al-Nisa*, a Persian translation of Sanskrit *Kok Shastra* was composed during the Sultanate period. *Dalail-e Firoz Shahi*, and *Ma'dan al-Shifa* ' on Physics and medical sciences respectively were based on earlier Sanskrit works produced in Persian during this period. During the Mughal period, Akbar ordered for the translation of *Ramayana* into Persian and the work known as *Razamnama* mentioned above, has its imprint on Akbar's polity and statecraft. However, it was Prince Dara Shukoh,

² Avari, Burjor. 2016. *India: The Ancient Past: A History of the Indian Subcontinent from c. 7000 BCE to CE 1200*. (2nd ed.). Routledge, p. 298

³ Habib, Irfan. 2007. *Medieval India: The Study of Civilization*. New Delhi: NBT. p.91.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 107-108.

who in the first half of the 17th century sponsored various translation projects under royal patronage culminating in the production of Persian texts *Majma al-Bahrain* and *Sirr-e Akbar*.

Literary relations between Indian and Persian literature, specifically the translation of Sanskrit literature into Persian as early as the 8th century and continued with the passage of time even after the Dara Shukoh era. There are four distinct phases to this translations journey—from the 8th century to the reign of Dara Shukoh. The first phase was when early Persian translations of Sanskrit scientific and cultural literature occurred during the zenith of Islam, mainly under the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad. The second phase began with the establishment of the Sultanate at Delhi where Persian and Sanskrit languages coexisted. A prominent translation of Sanskrit text into Persian was *Tuti Namah* by Zia Nakshabi; Amir Khusrau was a renowned poet and scholar who contributed considerably to Indo-Persian literature. The third phase was during the Mughal period, when Akbar gave noteworthy support to the Hindu intellectuals and famous epics, religious and scientific texts were translated into Persian although the principal aim was political aspiration. The final, fourth phase was during the time of Dara Shukoh who was interested in Hinduism and Indian philosophy. He translated and provided support to the Indian philosophical and mystical writings from Sanskrit into Persian. In order to present a comparative analysis of Islam and Hinduism, he composed a notable treatise *Majma ul Baharain*. All these phases in translations also witnessed the support of the Muslim rulers of Kashmir, Bengal, Gujarat, and Deccan. The purpose of this research paper is to provide fresh insights into the translation of Indian text into Persian through the different phases up to the reign of Dara Shukoh.

Muslim interaction with the outside world: a major catalyst for learning Hindu culture and adaptations from Sanskrit

The intense interest that Muslims have had in Indian culture, religion, medicine, and other fields goes back to the first half of the second century A.H. and with the zeal to conquer the outside world, the Arabs made contact with the oldest civilizations. The Arab rulers also placed emphasis on studying the intellectual and cultural achievements of the civilizations they had subjugated, and their administrative prowess allowed them to be integrated in *Dar-ul-Islam*.

The process of cultural interaction of the Arabs with the outside world, over the course of a century, culminated in the Arab Renaissance movement—with the establishment of a

center of Islamic study at Baghdad by al-Mansur in 750 A.D. The Abbasid Caliphate saw unparalleled enthusiasm by the Arab intellectuals in the sciences and religions of the non-Muslims. Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (754-775 A.D.) founded the Bait-al-Hikmah, a research and translation bureau where learned persons studied and translated works of other civilizations. Thereafter, during the period of Mamun (814-833 A.D.) and Harun (787-809 A.D.), the sciences and literatures of India and other civilizations were patronized.

Infusion of Indian thoughts into the Islamic world

Indian philosophy found its way through several paths to the early Islamic world. For example, during Al-Mansur's reign, the Iranian learned class, with a wealth of knowledge both from Persian and Indian philosophy and culture, converted to Islam. They carried the knowledge of Indian and Buddhist religions and traditions with them. Ibrahim Al-Fazari, a Mathematician in the court of Caliph Mansur, translated the *Brahmasiddhanta* of Brahmagupta into Arabic titled *As-Sind-Hind* in 771 A.D. Yakub Bin Tareeq translated the Sanskrit book *KhandaKhadyaka* into Arabic titled *Arkand*. Abul Hasan Ahwazee translated the book of *Aryabhatta* into Arabic entitled *Arajband*.⁵

Perhaps the greatest admirers of Indian culture and learning were the famous family of Barmak ministers who dominated the Islamic world for over fifty years (754-802 A.D.). Though the Barmaks were originally Indian Buddhists converted to Islam, it is likely, that Khalid bin Barmak might have been "induced by family traditions" to introduce Indian sciences into the Islamic world and it would be incorrect to presume that the whole intellectual fascination of the Muslims rested only on the official patronage of the Baghdad court. The Indo-Arab cultural relations continued even after extermination of the Barmaks by Harun al-Rashid. The Arab-renaissance movement was at the height of its glory and in the next few centuries, Arab scholars, historians and travellers visited India for first-hand information about Indian people, religion, medicines and sciences.

The scholarly interest of Arabs in Indian sciences

In the eighth century A.D., Muslim intellectuals from Baghdad and intellectuals from other communities frequently participated in religious discussions where many Hindu Pandits

⁵ Nadvi, S. S. 1930. *Arab aur Bharat ke sambandh*. Allahabad: The Hindustani Academy. p.112.

participated under the patronage of Barmaks and, a few Muslim scholars were sent to India to study Indian sciences.⁶ In Arabia, during the time of Al-Beruni there were groups of scholarly persons who were interested in translating the scientific works of India into Arabic.⁷ But concurrently Indians had not shown sufficient inclination in acquiring Islamic culture, religion, philosophy and social customs. Their response to the enthusiasm shown by the Muslim scholars in Indian culture and sciences was marginal. Some sporadic interest was shown, for example, by a Hindu ruler during the rule of Harun al-Rashid (787-809 A.D.), when he sent a message to Baghdad that a Muslim theologian may be sent to acquaint him with Islam. And in the first half of the 4th century A.H., the ruler of Alra named (Mahrug?) wrote to the governor of Mansura in Sind to send someone to initiate him into Islamic religion.⁸ The holy Quran was also translated into Hindi (Sanskrit? or Sindhi?)⁹ on the orders of a certain Hindu ruler in 893 A.D.¹⁰

Early references to translation of Indian works

The early reference to translation of Indian literature and sciences in Arabic was found by an eminent Arabic scholar Al-Jahiz (b. 776) who composed the *Kitab al-Bayan*, a treatise on the 'Principles of Indian Rhetoric'. A list of Indian books translated into Arabic had been compiled by historian and geographer Ahmad bin Yaqub bin Jafar.¹¹ Muhammad bin Ishaq Ibn al-Nadim has cited several Arabic translations of Indian religion, medicine, astronomy, and other subjects in his encyclopedic work *al-Fihrist*.¹²

The Indian sciences including medical sciences were also found in the early Arabic texts, for example, a chapter had been devoted to Indian sciences by Qadi Said Andulusi in his *Tabaqat-ul-Ummam* and a chapter dedicated to Indian physicians had been written by Ibn Abi Usaybi'a's in *Uyun al-Iba fi Tabaqat al Atibba*.¹³ There are several works in Arabic and Persian

⁶ For details of many religious discussions at Baghdad and in India and description of Indian religious customs, etc. *vide*. Kamil Ibn al-Athir (Account of the year 148 A.H.); Masudi's *Kitab Muruj al-Dhahab wa maadin al-jawhar* (ed. Barbier de Meynard), Vol. I. pp. 162-63, 253-54, 298, 327-28; Al-Baladhuri's *Futuh al-Buldan*, p. 446 etc.

⁷ Edward, C. Sachau. 1914. *Alberuni's India*. London. p. xxiv.

⁸ *Ajaib al-Hind* cited in Hasrat, Bikrama Jit. 1953. *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. Allahabad. P. 177

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² Fluegel, G. (ed.) and Leipzig. 1871. *Kitab al-Fihrist*.

¹³ Vol. II. p. 33. sq. cited in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works* by Hasrat, B.J., 1953. p. 178

languages that make reference to, translate, and even make attempts to create glossaries for ancient Sanskrit literature.

Muslim travellers and historians in India: their understanding of Hinduism and borrowings from Sanskrit literature

There were a number of great Arab travellers and also scholars who came to India from the second century A.H. onwards. To name a few—Abu Dulaf Musar bin Muhalal Yanbui (943 A.D.); Buzurg bin Shahryar (913 A.D.) the well-known author of the *Ajaib al-Hind*; the explorer Masudi (916 A.D.); and Iban Battuta who showed great interest in Indian culture, history, philosophy and social practices.

Many of them visited India, and their writings mostly discussed Indian geography, history and natural sciences. Like, Indian coasts and customs were included in Ibn Khurdadhbah's *Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik* (written in 864 A.D.). In his work *Silsilat-ut-Tawarikh*,¹⁴ Sulaiman Tajir (d. 852 A.D.) provided information about Indian social life and the governance of the coastal kingdoms. And he claimed that "India is the cradle of medicine, astrology, and philosophy, as well as the origin of the Chinese religion, which is centered on the worship of Buddha's statues."¹⁵ In his Supplement to Sulaiman Tajir's *Safarnama*, Abu Zaid Sirafi (878 A.D.) discussed Indian religious ideas, practices by the Buddhist monks, and the *Devadasi* custom found in South Indian temples.¹⁶

Early Arabic literature on Indian religion

There are not sufficient instances of Muhammadan literature on religious practices in India. The now-extinct *al-Diyanat* by Abu Abbas al-Iranshahri barely provided an insight into the contemporary religious practices of Hindus and Buddhists. In a similar vein, Zurqan wrote an unidentified work on the religious practices of Buddhism which was contemporary to Al-Iranshahri and the literary work in Arabic on world history was known as *Kitab al-Bilad wal-Tarikh* by Matahhar b. Tahir Muqdisi¹⁷ The only book in the ancient period with a mention and

¹⁴ Ed. by Langles, Paris, 1845. cited in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 178.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Sirafi, A. and Sirafi, S. 1733. *Silsilat-ut-Tawarikh* . The Second Book. London. pp. 60-1, 77-79, 93-101, 119-22, 126-130, 138-39, 145-47.

¹⁷ Paris, 6 Vols. in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p . 179.

dedicated chapter on the Indian religious system was *al-Millal wal-Nihal*, which al-Shahristani wrote in the fourth century A.H.

Developments in Indian medical system translated into Arabic

India made great contribution to the medical field from ancient times. But very few of these books on medicine were translated into Arabic. The two Sanskrit texts on the Indian medical system that were translated in Arabic by Ibn Dhan and characterized by Yaqubi were titled *Sindhshan* and *Istangir*. The Sasuruta's *Manual* on medicine was translated into Arabic by Manka which was titled *Sasru*.¹⁸

Abdullah bin Ali translated Charaka's book on Indian medicine from its Persian original translation into Arabic and his compilation *Firdausul Hikmat* contains a short account on medicine by Ashtangahridaya, Charaka, Sushruta and Nidana.¹⁹ At Sulaiman bin Ishaq's request, Manka the famous physician translated a Sanskrit text on pharmacology. Al-Khwarazmi, a Persian polymath claimed that one text on veterinary science by Shanaq (Chankya) was translated into Arabic.²⁰

Arabic translations of texts on astrology, astronomy and other sciences

The Muslims in the ancient period have given Indian astronomy, astrology, and sciences significant attention. Kanka Pandit was the most well-known Indian astrologer at the Baghdad court and had four of his works translated into Arabic.²¹ These were entitled *Kitab al-Namudar fi al-Amar*, *Kitab al-Asrar al-Mawalid*, *Kitab al-Qiranat al-Kabir* and *Kitab al-Qiranat al-Saghir*. Manka introduced the *Brahma-Siddhanta*, the Indian astronomical treatise written by Brahmagupta, to the Muslims and it was translated into Arabic by Yaqub al-Farazi and was titled *Sindhind*. His other work *Khandakhadayaka* was translated with the title *Alarkand* and Aryabhata's work in Sanskrit was translated into Arabic by al-Farazi entitled *Arjaband*.²²

¹⁸ Vol. I., p. 105 Ibn al-Nandim (p. 303) calls the first work as *Sindstug*. in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 181.

¹⁹ Husain and Subhaktha. 2000. Ayurveda during Abbasid's Period. *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of History of Medicine*. Vol. XXX. pp 27-34

²⁰ Sakaki, Al and Ali, Abi Yaqub B. 1900. *Kitab Miftah, al-Ulum*. Al-Matba'a al-Bahiyya. Cairo. p. 186.

²¹ Ibid, p. 270.

²² *Tabaqut-i-Ibn Bakuya*, Paris, 1914, p. 44. cited in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 181.

Muqaffa's translation of *Panchatantra*

Ibn Muqaffa, an Islamic scholar during the reign of al-Mansur had translated the *Panchatantra* into Arabic known as *Kalilah wa Dimna* and this Arabic version was later translated into European and Persian languages.

The second phase of Indo-Muslim cultural relations

The Muslim conquest of Sind by Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 A.D. marks a new era of Indo-Arab relations both politically and culturally. This continued until Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's invasions in the northwest towards the end of the 10th century A.D., which led to a drastic decline in interest in Indian sciences and religions by the ruling elites.

The Ghaznawids and the Delhi Sultanate showed little interest in Indian literature, although they were keen advocates of learning and culture. Abul Ma'ali Nasr bin Abdul Hamid Mustaufi, the chief secretary in the Dar ul-Insha during Sultan Ibrahim's reign, translated the Arabic text of Ibn Muqaffa's *Kalilah a Dimna* into Persian during the reign of Behram Shah (1117–1152 A.D.). It is recorded²³ that in 1322 A.D., Sultan Feroz Shah discovered 1,300 rare Sanskrit manuscripts at the Jawalamukhi temple and got them translated into Persian. On the order of Sultan Feroz Shah (1351–1381 A.D.), a work on Indian astronomy titled *Brahat Samhita* was also translated into Persian under the title *Tarjumai Barahi* by Shams-i-Siraj Afif.

A major figure in the scholarly world of this period was Amir Khusrau (1253-1325 A.D.). He extols in *Nuh Siphir* the climate, languages, learning, arts, music, people and even animals of India. Around the same time, an anonymous scholar²⁴ translated a book on Indian music called the *Ghunyut al-Munyat*.

Zia al-Din Nakhshabi was the first scholar to translate a series of Sanskrit tales from *Shuka Saptati* into Persian which was known as *Tuti Nama* (book of parrot); this was during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq. *Tuti Nama* became so famous that it was translated into Turkish and many European languages. Nakhshabi also translated Indian folk tales into Persian and Islamic literary idioms. His *Ladhdhat Al-Nisa* was a Persian translation of the Sanskrit erotic manual, the *Koka Shastra*.²⁵

²³ Badauni, Abdul Qadir. 1865-69. *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. Kolkata. Vol. I, p. 249.

²⁴ *Fihrist*. Vol. I. p.330.

²⁵ Mehdi, M.A. 2015. *Socio Religious Arena and the Relationship among various communities during Mughal Period*. Aligarh. p 71.

During the reign of Sikandar Lodhi (1489–1517 A.D.) Varahamihira's book on astronomy *Brhatsamhita* was translated into Persian with the title *Tarjuma-e-Barahi* by Shams-e-Siraj Afeef who also authored *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi*.²⁶ Mian Buhwat during the same period oversaw the compilation of a text on Indian medicine from Sanskrit sources into Persian known as *Tibbi-Sikandari* or the *Ma'dan ush-Shifa'i Sikandari*. This work was superior to all earlier translations of Indian medical texts since it included the most thorough and in-depth description of therapies (*Sutra-Sthan*), structure of human body (*Sarirak-Sthan*) and the diagnosis and treatment of diseases (*Nidana Chikitsa Sthan*).²⁷ He, after years of systematic research, had brought out a treatise on musicology containing seven chapters and their further sub-divisions under the title *Lahjat-i Sikandar Shahi* in 1514.²⁸

Support to Persian translations of Sanskrit literary works: The Muslim kingdoms of Kashmir, Bengal and Deccan

In 1400 A.D., the rulers of Golconda, Bijapur and Kashmir encouraged cross-cultural exchanges that involved Sanskrit literature. Similarly, Bahmanid and Qutubshahi rulers of South India encouraged the development of Sanskrit literature. Muhammad Shah I of Bahmani Sultanate had written *Sangeet Malika* in Sanskrit and Akbar Shah composed *Sringaara Manjari* in Sanskrit. *Abdullah bin Safi* translated the ancient Indian Sanskrit text *Salihotra Samhita* on horse breeding and veterinary medicines titled *Tarjuma-e Salihotra* in 1457.²⁹ Narhari, a court poet of Ibrahim Adilshah II (1580-1627 A.D.) of Bijapur, wrote *Navarasamanjari* on *Alankara Shastra* in about five hundred verses, divided into six chapters.³⁰

The author of *Raga-Manjari*, *Raga-mala* and *Sadragachandrodaya*, Pundarika Vitthala, was a Sanskrit scholar who was under the patronage of Burhan Khan of the Farrukhi dynasty (1370-1600 A.D.).³¹ He also wrote an analysis of Indian *ragas* and Persian *maqam*.

²⁶ Ghani, A. 2020. *Contribution of Muslims to the Sanskrit Literature*. Delhi. p. 15.

²⁷ Rieu, Charles. 1881. *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts*. Vol. II. p. 472.

²⁸ Hadi, Nabi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*. p.624.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.15.

³⁰ Lalye, P. G. (ed.). 1979. *Navarasamanjari*. Hyderabad: Lalye. p.208.

³¹ Choudhury, J. B. 1954. *Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning*. Kolkata: Pracyavani. Part-I. p. 76.

He stated that ancient Indian *ragas* were the source of the Persian *maqams* that were in use during that period and he precisely identified more than a dozen *maqams*.³²

Burhan Nizam Shah-I (1510 - 1553 A.D.) of Nizam Shahi dynasty patronised many Sanskrit poets. The *Rasika-jivana* by Gadadhara Bhatta, *Sabhyalamkarana* by Govindajit, *Padya-veni* by Venidatta, *Padyamrta-tarangini* of Haribhaskara, *Subhasita-haravali* by Hari Kavi and *Subhasitasara-samuccaya* containing about 160 verses by Bhanukara were composed during this period. The *Padyaracana* published in the Kavyamala series alone contains 180 verses many of which are not found in the above mentioned six published anthological works.³³

The court of Qutubshahi ruler Abdullah Qutubshah (1626-1672 A.D.) was studded with Sanskrit luminaries including Gananatha Pandit and Tulasi Murty. Qutubshah was also a patron of Muhammad Quli Jami who in 1646 A.D. made a versified Persian translation of Sanskrit text, *Kok Shastra* of Koka Pandit of Kashmir entitled *Lazzat-un-Nisa*.³⁴

Nawab Sikander Jah Nizam-III of the Asaf Jahi dynasty of Hyderabad patronized Sanskrit scholars and made efforts to incorporate ancient Indian learning into Islamic tradition. His courtier and minister, Rai Swami Pershad wrote some *Skandhas* of *Sri Bhagawat Puran* in Persian with the assistance of Lala Hukumat Rai and his son Narahari Pershad. This *Bhagawat Puran* contains 600 folios and is yet to be published. It is available at the Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad.³⁵

The Muslim rulers of Kashmir also provided considerable support to Indian learning during this time. There were two notable scholars of Kashmir, Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah (1534 A.D.) and Zain al-Abidin Shah (1420–1470 A.D.). Zain al-Abidin Shah ordered the translation of numerous Arabic and Persian works into Sanskrit. Similarly, he ordered the translation of numerous Sanskrit works into Persian, among them the well-known dynastic history of Kashmir, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Rajatarangini*. Jonaraja, the court pandit to Zain al-Abidin Shah authored the *Dvitiya Rajatarangini*. Another highly acclaimed Sanskrit scholar in the court of Zain al-Abidin Shah was Srivara. Srivara composed *Jaina Rajatarangini* also known

³² Gautam, M.R. 1993. *Evolution of Raga and Tala in Indian Music*. Munshiram Manoharlal. and Jairazbhoy, Nazir Ali. 1995. *The Ragas of North Indian Music: Their Structure & Evolution*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan. (First revised Indian ed.)

³³ Op. cit, 2, 3.

³⁴ Ghani. *Contribution of Muslims to the Sanskrit Literature*. p. 66.

³⁵ Raj, Narayan. 2018. *Saga of Kayasthas*. New Delhi: Gyan Books. p. 55.

as *Tritya Rajatarangini* and translated Abd al-Rahman Jami's romantic Persian epic *Yousuf Zulykha* into Sanskrit as *Kathakautuka*.

Tarikh-i-Kashmir that depicts the history of Kashmir was written by Ajiz Narayan Kaul in Persian in 1710 A.D. and was based on Sanskrit sources. He composed poetry under the pen-name Ajiz and served as Munshi under Arif Khan and Deputy Governor of Kashmir in the reign of Alam Bahadur Shah I. At the instance of his master, Ajiz devoted his energies to survey the past of his native-land Kashmir and re-examined the original Sanskrit and other earlier works.³⁶

In Gujarat, at the instance of Sultan Muzaffar Shah II (1511-1528 A.D.), a book titled *Faras-namah* was written by Abul Hussain. It was a Persian translation of the original Sanskrit source.³⁷

The Muslim rulers of Bengal also patronized classical Sanskrit literature, though they normally translated them into Bengali language. Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1518 A.D.) and his son Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah (1518-33 A.D.) gained great popularity for their appreciation of the Bengali language and enriching it with translation from Sanskrit. At the instance of Hussain Shah, Maladhar Vasu translated *Bhagavad Gita* into Bengali titled *Srikrnavijaya*.³⁸ The *Mahabharata* was translated into Bengali under the patronage of Nusrat Shah titled *Bharat Panchali*.³⁹ Brihaspati Mishra was a great Sanskrit scholar of this time who wrote a commentary *Padacandrika* on *Amarakosha*. He also wrote commentaries on *Meghaduta*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Raghuvamsha* and *Shishupalavadha*. Kavindra Pramesvara translated the *Stri-Parva* of *Mahabharata* on the initiative of Paragal Khan, a General of Husain Shah. Similarly, Srikara translated the *Asvamedha-Parva* of the *Mahabharata* at the instance of Paragal Khan's son Chhuti Khan.⁴⁰

Al-Beruni and his translation works from Sanskrit

Abu Raihan Al-Beruni was highly esteemed among Muslim explorers and historians whose individual efforts introduced the knowledge of Indian sciences to the Muslim world. He

³⁶ Hadi, Nabi. 1995. *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*. p.57.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.34.

³⁸ Sen, Sukumar. 1960. *History of Bengali Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

³⁹ Hussain, S. Abid. 1978. *The National Culture of India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House. p.90. And Sen, Dinesh Chandra. 1896. *Bangabhasha O Sahitya*. Kolkata: Gurudas Chattopadhyaya & Sons. 7th and 1st edn.

⁴⁰ Choudhury, J. B. 1954. *Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning*. Kolkata: Pracyavani. Part-1. p. 85-86.

travelled to India to study Indian religious systems, philosophy, literature, chronology, astronomy, traditions, and laws. In exchange, he taught Indians the Islamic sciences. When Al-Beruni wrote, "one who wants to converse with the Hindus, and discuss with them the question of religion, science, or literature on the basis of their own civilization"⁴¹, he was expressing the unique love for his independent search for knowledge. He with assiduous devotion had studied Indian religions, philosophy, literature, sciences, and traditions from original sources and compared them with the beliefs of Greek writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and Ptolemy.

Al-Beruni's knowledge of Sanskrit literature that he had enumerated in the *Kitab al-Hind*⁴² was significantly comprehensive. His translation from Sanskrit works included *Patanjali*, a treatise on the *Yoga* and theistic philosophy developed by Patanjala; the *Sankhya* of Kapila; Brahmagupta's *Brahma Siddhanta* on Indian astronomy together with an original composition on *Siddhanta* proper into Arabic entitled the *Jwami al-Maujud bi-Khawatir al-Hunud*⁴³ along with Varahmihira's *Laghujatakam*; and a number of other translations from Indian sciences to Arabic.

Amir Khusrau's contribution to Sanskrit-Persian translations

Amir Khusrau was one of the most prominent scholars during the Sultanate period whose admiration for India, its sciences, religions and languages was boundless. He was a renowned Indo-Persian singer, musician and poet who composed poems in Braj Bhasa, studied Sanskrit, and developed remarkable proficiency in Indian music. The *Ma'athir-ul-Unam* details an incident how strategically he outwitted the great Indian musician Gopal Naik in the court of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khilji.⁴⁴ He is said to have invented the *tarana* style while attempting to imitate Gopal Naik's explanation in *raag Kadambak*. After secretly listening to Gopal Naik for six days, Khusrau recreated Naik's recital on the seventh day using meaningless phrases (*mridang bols*), which was how the *tarana* style was created.⁴⁵

Shibli Nomani, an Islamic scholar briefly discussed Khusrau's role in fusing Persian and Indian music and credits him with creating numerous Indo-Persian musical compositions

⁴¹ Alberuni's *India*. p. 246.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. xxxix-xli.

⁴³ Nadvi, Syed Suleman. 1933. Literary relations between Arabia and India. *Islamic Culture: The Hyderabad Quarterly Review*. January. p. 91.

⁴⁴ Calcutta, Vol. II, p. 479. in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 186.

⁴⁵ Misra, Susheela. 1981. *Great Masters of Hindustani Music*. Hem Publishers. p. 5.

in the form of *ragas* and *raginis*.⁴⁶ In one of his works, the *Nau Sipahr*, written in 1311 A.D., Khusrau bestowed upon India a great deal of praise and listed ten reasons supporting the superiority of Indians over all other peoples, in knowledge and in science. He briefly reviewed Indian astronomy, mathematics, physics, astrology, philosophy, logic, and metaphysics. Regarding the Hindus, he said ‘They are confused about divinity alone, but so are all other people. Many of their beliefs are similar to ours, even if they do not practice our faith.’⁴⁷ He also spoke many languages including Sindhi, Kashmiri, Dhur-Samudri, Gujari, Malbari, Bengali, Awadhi and Sanskrit.

Mughal court patronage to Sanskrit learning

Historical events similar to above that occurred during the Sultanate period, also occurred in the Mughal court in Delhi almost after a period of six centuries with Akbar's accession in 1556 A.D. and there was an unprecedented official support for Hindu scholars and translations of noteworthy Sanskrit writings on Indian religion and disciplines including the sciences—into Persian, Arabic and other languages.⁴⁸ Abul Fadl (Abul Fazl) claimed that his library held a sizable, well catalogued and diverse selection of literature in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Hindi (Sanskrit), and Kashmiri. "Those with experience bring them every day and read them in front of Akbar, who hears every word from start to finish."⁴⁹ Abul Fadl also stated that philologists in the imperial court on a regular basis translated literature from Persian, Greek, and Hindi (Sanskrit) into other languages.⁵⁰

The spirit underlying the translations made during Akbar’s time

Apart from the genuine interest in learning about Indian religion and science by the Muslims as discussed above, there was a clear political motive behind the translations done at the instance of Akbar. It had virtually no spiritual history and was not like the academic and

⁴⁶ Nomani, Shibli. 1920. *Shir-ul-Ajam*, Vol. I, p. 136-37.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 183.

⁴⁸ For a preliminary account of these translations, their origin and history vide *The Journal Asiatique*. 1895. Tome VII; Blochmann, H. 1872-77, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 104 cf.; and Ghani, Abdul M. 1930. *History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court*. Allahabad. Part III. p. 33-35.

⁴⁹ Blochmann, H. 1872-77. *Ain-i-Akbari*. Kolkata. Vol. I. p. 110.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 111.

philosophical atmosphere of inquiry into the sciences and ancient religious faiths that started at the Baghdad court in the seventh century A.D.

In the preface of *Razamnama*, Abul Fadl explained why Akbar was given the authority to translate Indian religious texts. Speaking of Akbar's liberal outlook, Abul Fadl stated that the Akbar wished to eradicate mutual ignorance by making Hindu texts accessible to Muslims. Akbar observed the intense hatred between Hindus and Muslims and was convinced that this hatred stemmed only from ignorance. Initially, he chose the *Mahabharata* for translation as it had the most authority on Hindu culture and philosophy.

The evolution of a new cultural synthesis

The soul of inquiry that Akbar fostered was a precursor to the gradual development of Indo-Muslim philosophy over the course of the following several centuries. The Muslims' interest was academic in the field of literature, but a new cultural synthesis was gradually and subtly brought about by the psychological environment that was formed by the different uniform spiritual aspects of *Sufism* and *Vedantism*, as well as by the joint efforts of Hindu and Muslim saints.

Comparison between Abul Fadl's and Al-Beruni's contribution

When it comes to teaching Hindu religious and philosophical beliefs, Abul Fadl seems to be the only teacher after Al-Beruni. His comprehensive descriptions of Indian sciences, religious cults, and philosophical systems of thought were infused with an authentic spirit of exploration and quest for knowledge. He and Al-Beruni were quite similar in a number of ways. Both were equally fond of drawing comparisons between Hindu philosophy and Greek and Muslim doctrines. They were also affiliated with scholars of Sanskrit literature and leaders of contemporary Indian religious thinking.

The Persianate Hindu court nobility was among the readers of Abul Fadl's texts and in anticipation of the concerns that he expected from his readers, he wrote the Preface of his work *Ain-i-Akbari*, addressing all of these, outlining the factors that contribute to contention and hostility between Hindus and Muslims in India. Al-Beruni's *Kitab al-Hind* seems to be spontaneous and outspoken in criticism, unfettered by any political objective. While in India, Al-Beruni dedicated himself to studying Sanskrit texts in their original, which helped him

develop a critical mind and stop accepting customs from the past at face value. Conversely, Abul Fadl struggled with his limited understanding of Sanskrit. He acknowledged that he had limited knowledge of Sanskrit technical terms and that he was even unable to engage a qualified interpreter; he had to face the difficulty of repeated translations.⁵¹

Abul Fadl asserted that there were 360 systems of Indian philosophy and conduct, and he had interacted with numerous intellectual luminaries and had been somewhat familiar with the debates of various schools. While studying the origins, growth, and impact of the teachings of various Indian philosophical schools, such as the *Nyaya*, the *Vaisesika*, the *Vedanta*, the *Mimamsa*, the *Sankhya*, the *Patanjala*, the *Jaina*, the *Buddha*, and the *Nastika*, he noted that these were laying down a number of fundamental systems for the benefit of the real knowledge seeker.

The Sciences of the Hindus as discussed by Abul Fadl

Among the eighteen sciences of the Hindus that were discussed by Abul Fadl were: *Vedas*, *Purans*, *Dharma-Sastras*, *Siksha*, *Kalpa*, *Vyakarana*, *Nirukta*, *Jyotisha*, *Chandas*, *Ayurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharva-Veda*, and *Artha-Sastra*. In addition, he also discussed *Rajniti* and *Sangita*.

Apart from the above Hindu sciences, Abul Fadl had reviewed briefly the following arts and sciences cultivated widely among the Indians: *Karma-Vipaka*, *Samudrika*, *Garuda*, *Indra-Jala*, *Rasa-Vidya*, *Ratna-Pariksha*, *Kama-Sastra*, *Sahitya*, *Gaja-Sastra*, *Salihotra*, *Vastuka*, *Supa*, *Rajaniti*, and *Vyavahara*.

Only two of Abul Fadl's great translations from Sanskrit to Arabic have survived. These were *Iyar-i-Danish* which was a modernized version of the Indian *Panchatantra* with a few additional chapters and a Persian prose version of the *Bhagwatgita*. The Preface to the book *Razamnama* which was written by Abul Fadl, was literally translated into ornamental and enriched prose a few years later, in 1589 A.D., by his brother Faidi⁵²

⁵¹ *Ain-i-Akbari*. III. p. i.

⁵² *Ain-i-Akbari*, op. cit.

Mullah Abdul Qadir Badauni

Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni (1540–1615 A.D.) was Akbar's principal Sanskrit translator of Hindu religious texts. Akbar was very impressed with his translations and would have none but him even though he considered him "a sundried Mulla."⁵³ His aversion for the task done at Akbar's request was matched by his deep knowledge in Sanskrit language.

A noteworthy Sanskrit text translated into Persian during Akbar's reign was the *Tarjuma Mahabharata* in 18 *Parvas* entitled *Razamnama* by Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni,⁵⁴ Abdul Latif al-Husaini known as Naqib Khan,⁵⁵ Muhammad Sultan Thanisari⁵⁶ and Mulla Sheri.⁵⁷ However, it was a challenge to establish the precise contribution made by each scholar to the Persian translation.⁵⁸ Badauni started translating Valmiki's *Ramayana* into Persian language in 1584 and finished it in 1588. He was paid 150 Asharfis, and 10,000 Tanghas for translating 24,000 slokas, of the *Ramayana* from Sanskrit to Persian.⁵⁹

Apart from Badauni's translation of *Ramayana*, there were at least four contemporary shortened Persian translations of the *Ramayana*. The *First* was a simplified prose translation written in 1686 by Shandraman Kayath bin Sri Ram during the reign of Alamgir.⁶⁰ This version of the *Ramayana* had two additional versions. The *first* comprises (a) a type of appendix to the *Ramayana* attributed to Valmiki, dated June 12, 1696 and (b) a Vyasa attributed *Mahabharata* story concerning Sri Krishna.

The *Second*, entitled the *Mathnawli Ramayin*, was completed in 1624 and presented to Emperor Jahangir. It was a simplified Persian translation of Girdhardas Kayath's 5900 *mathnawi* poetry. The *Third* was a shortened poetic version of the *Ramayana*, known as *Ram*

⁵³ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II. p. 401.

⁵⁴ Mulla Abdul Qadir the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, was an eminent scholar, historian, astronomer and musician at Akbar's court. He translated the *Ramayana*, and 2 *Parvas* of the *Mahabharata* into Persian.

⁵⁵ Naqib Khan is the title of Mir Giath-ud-Din Ali and he arrived in India with his father and at Akbar's accession, he distinguished himself in many battles. He was much favoured by the Emperor and soon "become his personal friend." For details, *vide*, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, p. 23, 281 & Vol. III, p. 165, 293; also Badauni's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 278.

⁵⁶ For his life, *vide*, the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. II, p. 278.

⁵⁷ Mulla Sheri was a renowned theologian at Akbar's court. According to Abdul Fadl, he presented in A.H. 992 a poem to Akbar entitled the *Hazar Shuaa* which contained 1000 *qatas* in praise of the sun (Vol. I, p. 679 ff.). He is also said to have translated the *Haribansa*, a book describing the life of Sri Krishna (*Ibid*, I, p. 112). He was killed in A.H. 994 along with Raja Bir Bar in the Khaybar expedition sent by Akbar against the Yusufzais.

⁵⁸ Rieu, C. 1879. (*Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I, p. 57) observes that the principal translator was Naqib Khan (*supra*).

⁵⁹ *Mir at-ul-Alam*. cited in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 201.

⁶⁰ Hasrat. *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. Allahabad. p. 202.

wa Sita, and was written by Shaikh Sadullah Masih of Panipat. Jahangir oversaw the completion of this translation and was praised in the work.⁶¹ The *Fourth* was a lengthy, although not comprehensive, poetical translation of the *Ramayana* by an unknown author.⁶²

The translation of the *Atharva veda*

According to Badauni,⁶³ a learned Brahman from the Deccan arrived in the year 1575 A.D. after converting to Islam and took on the name Shaikh Bhawan. In the same year, Akbar gave Badauni the order to transcribe the *Atharva veda*. "Several of the religious precepts of this book resemble the laws of Islam" he discovered when translating the text, although his interpretation was complicated by a number of difficult passages. He sent Shaikh Bhawan these portions, but Bhawan was not able to interpret them either. After learning about the issue from Badauni, Akbar instructed Shaikh Faidi and Haji Ibrahim to translate. Despite their willingness, they did not write anything.

Various Persian translations of *Sinhasana dvatrimasati*

In 1574 A.D., Abul Qadir translated the famous *Sinhasana dvatrimasati* or *Singhasan Battisi* into Persian. This translation in Persian as *Khiraad Afza* was done with the assistance of a scholarly Brahman at Akbar's request.⁶⁴ Another version of the same composition was titled *Shahnama* and was done by Chaturbhujdas bin Miharchand Kayath.⁶⁵ There are still several additional Persian translations of the *Sinhasana dvatrimasati* that exist, although with various titles.

One Bharimal bin Rajmal Khatri translated *Singhasan Battisi* during the reign of Jahangir (1610 A.D.).⁶⁶ Kishandas bin Mulukchand completed another translation of *Singhasan Battisi* known as *Kishan-Bilas* also during Jahangir's reign.⁶⁷ During the reign of

⁶¹ Ethe. 1903. *Catalogue of Persian MSS in India Office*. Oxford. Vol. I. No. 1967; Rieu. *Catalogue of Persian MSS in the British Museum*. Vol. III. col. 1078b; also *Bodelian Catalogue*. Oxford. No. 1315.

⁶² Ethe: Vol. I. No. 1970.

⁶³ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. Vol. p. 212.

⁶⁴ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. Vol. I, p. 67.

⁶⁵ *Catalogue of Persian MSS in the Bodelian Library*, MS. No. 1324.

⁶⁶ W. Pertsch: *Berlin Catalogue*, p. 1034, in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 204.

⁶⁷ Ethe. *Catalogue of Persian MSS, in India Office*. I. 1989.

Shah Jahan, one Bisbarai bin Harigarbdas combined the two earlier translations by Chaturbhujdas and Bharimal."⁶⁸

There were the following four additional versions of *Sinhasana dvatrimasati*:

- (1) by Chand bin Maduram⁶⁹
- (2) by an anonymous author with the title of *Gul A fshar*⁷⁰
- (3) by an anonymous author without any title⁷¹, and
- (4) a modern version written by two authors namely, Sayyid Imdad Ali and Shiv Saha I Kayath⁷² in 1845 A.D.

The translation of *Rajatarangini*

As per Badauni, Sultan Zain al-Abidin Shah (1395-1470 A.D.) of Kashmir had ordered the translation of the *Rajatarangini* which is a historical chronicle of rulers of Kashmir. And this incomplete manuscript, known as the *Bahar al-Asmar*, was written in the Old Persian language. Initially, the Emperor asked Badauni to finish the job by translating the final two chapters that the *Bahar al-Asmar's* author had left out.⁷³ He finished the entire translation of 60 *juz* in a short period of five months. According to Ethe, Akbar ordered Mulla Shah Muhammad, not Badauni, to translate the work from the original Sanskrit in A.H. 998 and the latter only made revisions to the above translation in A.H. 999.⁷⁴

The majority of translations in Persian was adaptations of the oldest translation from the original Sanskrit and was re-translated by Mulla Badauni. One such literary work was the history of Kashmir titled *Baharistan-i-Shahi* by an anonymous writer in 1614 A.D. during the reign of Jahangir⁷⁵ and another translation beginning with the earliest times and ending in the twelfth year of Jahangir's reign was called *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Haider Malik bin Hasan Malik and was based on the *Rajatarangin*.⁷⁶ There was one other translation with the same title the *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Narain Kul Ajiz in 1710 A.D.⁷⁷ *Waqi at-i-Kashmir* (written about 1704

⁶⁸ Rieu. *Catalogue of Persian MSS, in British Museum*. II. p. 763a.

⁶⁹ *Vide*. A.F. Mehrn, p. 29. in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 204.

⁷⁰ Rieu. Vol. I. 230a.

⁷¹ Browne, E. G. *Cambridge Catalogue*. p. 398.

⁷² Rieu. Vol. III. 1006b.

⁷³ *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*. Vol. II. p. 401-2.

⁷⁴ Ethe. *Cat. of Pers. MSS, in India Office*. Vol. I. No. 58 ff. also Rieu. I, p. 296.

⁷⁵ Rieu. I. p. 227.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, also *vide*. Bod. Cat. Nos. 316-17.

⁷⁷ Flugel G. II. p. 191 also Rieu. I. p. 298.

A.D.) was a translation work by an unknown author with many chapters of which have been translated from Kalhana's original Sanskrit text.⁷⁸

Abu al-Faiz (Faidi) and his translations from Sanskrit

Faidi, the elder brother of Abu Fadl was a versatile and an accomplished poet-laureate in Akbar's court.⁷⁹ He was also in constant association with court translators. The *Mahabharata*, inspired his creative brilliance with material of genius unpaired romantic attractiveness and within a short duration of five months composed the narrative of Nala and Damyanti in *Mathnavi* style of Persian literature titled *Nal wa Daman* comprising 4,200 verses in 1595 A.D.

The fact that Faidi translated the *Bhagwatgita* into Persian and enhanced the prosaic translation of the *Mahabharata* that contributed to the translation of the two *parvas* to the *Razamnama*⁸⁰ showed his interest in Sanskrit literature. He also translated *Lilavati*,⁸¹ and *Katha Sarit Sangra*⁸² in Persian.

Shariqal-Marifat, also known as the Sun of Gnosticism, was a book in Persian on the *Vedanta* philosophy which was based on the Sanskrit texts *Yoga-Vasishta* and the *Bhagwat-Purana*. *Shariqal-Marifat* divided into twelve enlightened rays (lam'aat) was considered Faidi's most innovative work on Indian thoughts.

Translations of the *Puranas* and other Hindu religious books

There are a number of literary works on Indian religion and science that Muslims have produced or translated. A few of these are mentioned here: translation of *Haribansa-Purana* by an anonymous author⁸³; *Maha-Visnu Purana*, which includes dialogues between Parasara and Maitereya;⁸⁴ the *Bhagwata-Purana* written by Tahir bin Imad in 1602 A.D.; translation of

⁷⁸ Ethe. I. No. 513.

⁷⁹ For his life and works, vide, the *Ain-i-Akbari*, (Blochmann), I., p. 490 sq., 548 sq., *Ouseley: Biographical Notes*, p. 171-75; Elliot: *Biographical Index*, I., p. 255 and other poetical *Tadhkira*, particularly the *Shir-ul-Ajam*, Vol. III, p. 31-81.

⁸⁰ Faidi evidently polished the prosaic version of (the first) two *parvas*, each called a *fan*. See also *Razamnama* (*supra*).

⁸¹ Faidi's translation of *Lilavati* has been published at Kolkata in 1828. For the merits of the work as translated by Faidi, vide Colebrooke, H.T. 1873. *Miscellaneous Essays*. Volume II. pp 419-450.

⁸² Ethe. *Cat. of Persian MSS in the India Office*. No. 1987.

⁸³ Ethe. I. 1851.

⁸⁴ *Bodleian Catalogue*. 1318-19.

Shiva-Purana;⁸⁵ the *Skanda-Purana*, also known as *Kshetra Mahatam*;⁸⁶ and the *Purantha-prakasa*. Persian translations of the *Amritkunda* and books on Hindu religious and philosophical theories, such as Muhammad of Gawaliar's⁸⁷ *Bahr-ul-Hayat*, were among other works. Taj-ud-Din⁸⁸ translated the ancient Sanskrit text *Hitopdesa* into Persian language.

A code of Hindu laws from original Sanskrit sources was compiled by Zain-ud-Din Ali Rasal;⁸⁹ the *Haft-Tamasha*, a comprehensive account of the beliefs, customs, and sects of Hindus (and Muslims) in India by Muhammad Hasan Qatil, and the *Khub-Tarang*, a Persian translation of a Sanskrit poetic work on Islamic theology and science, was compiled in A.H. 984 by Shaikh Kamal Muhammad.⁹⁰

The other noteworthy translations include *Bijagunita*, written by Ata-ullah Rashidi in 1634 A.D. and the Persian translation of the *Tajak*, an astronomical work, by Mukammal Khan Gujrati. The *Dastur-ul-Atibba*, compiled by Muhammad Qasim Farishta was the most significant text on the Indian medical system.

Translations of treatises on Indian Music

Muslim writers took special interest in Indian music. Both Akbar and Shah Jahan were avid music enthusiasts, and on Shah Jahan's instruction, all of the authentic *Dhurpads* of the well-known Indian musician Bakshawa of Gawaliar were made into a compilation known as the *Raghai Hindi*. Faqirallah translated Indian musical modes and melodies from the *Raga-Darpana*, the original Sanskrit text, into Persian in 1665 A.D. During Alamgir's reign, Mirza Raushan Damir translated the *Tarjuma i Parijataka*, a Sanskrit text on Indian music into Persian.

The *Tuhfat-ul-Hind*: A presentation of Indian Arts

The encyclopedic work *Tuhfat-ul-Hind* was an authentic attempt by Mirza Fakhr-ud-din Muhammad during the reign of Alamgir to present Indian arts in a scientific manner. It examines the Indian system of writing, the principles of orthography, prosody (*pingala*), rhyme

⁸⁵ W. Pertsch *Berlin Catalogue*, p. 1028. cited in *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*. p. 208.

⁸⁶ Ethe. 1860.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 2002.

⁸⁸ Tassy, Garchin de M. 1839. *Histoire de la literature Hindoui et Hindoustani*. p. 188.

⁸⁹ Rieu. I. 63b.

⁹⁰ Ethe. I. 2006.

(*tuk*), rhetorics (*alankara*), love and lovers (*sringara-rasa*), music (*sangita*), science of sexual enjoyment (*kok*), physiognomy (*simudrika*) and an Indo-Persian lexicon of terminology.

Abdur Rahim Khan-e Khana and the Sanskrit knowledge tradition

Khan-e Khana (1556-1627A.D.) was a Sanskrit and Hindi poet. He is acknowledged as the forerunner of Indian cultural coordination. There are several works authored by Khan-e Khana in Sanskrit such as *Khetakoutukajatakam*, *Gangashtak*, *Madanashtak*, *Sringara-Sortha*, and *Raheem-Kavya*.⁹¹

Kheta-Kautukam was an astrological work composed in the mixed language of Sanskrit and Persian. *Kheta* means ‘*Graha*’ or planet, and their *Kautukam* or influence upon human beings in fashioning their destiny is the subject-matter of the work. In pure Sanskrit verse he stated at the beginning of his *Khetakautukam* that he was following the footsteps of earlier writers who composed their works with an admixture of Persian vocabulary.⁹²

The Mughal emperor, Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D.), was a scholar of Persian learning and was influenced by his mentor and tutor Abdul Raheem Khan-e Khana. The two Ramayana translations by Masih Panipati and Girdhardas were considered to be among the literary masterpieces of Jahangir's reign. Born in Kairana, Mulla Shaikh Sadullah was also known by his pen-name Masih, became known as Panipati, since Kairana is located on the border of Panipat. The poet believed that love transcends all boundaries of faith and religion, and he viewed the Ram-Sita story as a story of love. In his preface or *debacha* of the Ramayana translation, Masih started with *Bismillah ir-rahman-ir-raheem* a Quranic verse followed by the description of the prayer in Persian and further explained the praise of the Prophet.

Rama-Nama, a Persian translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* was done by Giridhar Das during Jahangir's reign. Rupagoswami was another Sanskrit scholar who had 39 similar works to his credit and some of them were written during Jahangir's reign.⁹³ *Sangitadarpan*, a treatise on music and dance was written by Jahangir's courtier Damodara. Another courtier, Kavi

⁹¹ Chaudhari, Jatindra Bimal. 1954. *Contribution of Muslim to Sanskrit Learning*. Kolkata: Pracyavani. Vol. II. pp. 8-10.

⁹² Shastri, S. V. 2007. *Sanskrit Studies New Perspectives*. Delhi: Yash Publications. pp. 13-14.

⁹³ Sharma, S. R. 1998. *The Religious policy of Mughal Emperors*. New Delhi. p.102.

Karnapur, compiled a Sanskrit-Persian lexicon mainly explaining particular terminologies of both the languages, naming it as '*Sanskruta Parasika Pada Prakasha*'.⁹⁴

The reign of Shah Jahan (1628-1658 A.D.) was considered as the golden age of the Mughal Empire. Some of the prominent Sanskrit scholars during his reign were Panditraj Jagannatha, Kavindracarya Sarasvati and Vedangraj. Panditraj Jagannatha wrote *Rasagangadhara* on poetics and *Bhaminivilasa*, and erotic elegy. He received the title 'Panditaraja' for his work *Asafavilasa* in praise of Nawab Asaf Khan, the brother of Nur Jahan.⁹⁵ Another Sanskrit luminary of Shah Jahan's court was Kavindracarya Sarasvati.

Kavindra Candrodya who was a Sanskrit anthologist had developed a good relationship with Shah Jahan and thereafter with Dara Shukoh. He was highly esteemed at the Mughal court and Shah Jahan conferred upon him the title 'Sarvavidyanidhana'.⁹⁶ Two other Sanskrit scholars Vamshidhara Mishra and Hari Narayana Mishra had also composed verses in praise of Shah Jahan. The verse of Hari Narayana Mishra is preserved in *Padyaveni*.⁹⁷

In 1643 Vedangraj, an eminent Sanskrit scholar and poet in the court of Shah Jahan wrote *Parsi Prakasaka*, a vocabulary of Persian and Arabic terms used in Indian astronomy and astrology.⁹⁸ At the same time, Kavi Braj Bhushan wrote on the same subject titled *Parasivinod*.⁹⁹

Munshi Banwali Das Wali was among several Sanskrit scholars whom Dara Shukoh took personal interest in. Das was a scholar both in Persian and also Sanskrit. A scholar named Nityananda was a disciple of Asaf Khan and wrote a couple of discourses on astronomy probably *Ista kaala shodhana* and *Sarvsiddhaantaraaja* dated 1629 and 1640 respectively.¹⁰⁰

Dara Shukoh's approach to Indian philosophy

Dara Shukoh was unorthodox, liberal-minded and was interested in Hinduism and Indian philosophy. His support and encouragement saw a number of translations of Sanskrit and Persian in the 1640s and 1650s. A review of his discourses on Hinduism and Sanskrit

⁹⁴ Tripathi, R. 1986. *Sanskrit Sahitya ko Islam Parampara ka Yogdan*. p.188.

⁹⁵ Ghani. *Contribution of Muslims to the Sanskrit Literature*. pp. 26-27.

⁹⁶ Hasrat, B.J. 1982. *Dara Shikuh: Life and Works*, Delhi. p.215.

⁹⁷ Choudhuri, J. B. 1942. *Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning*. p.110.

⁹⁸ Sharma, S. R. 1998. *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*. Delhi, p.105.

⁹⁹ Tripathi, R. 1986. *Sanskrit Sahitya ko Islam Parampara ka Yogdan*. p.188.

¹⁰⁰ Sharma, S.R. 1972. *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*. p.119 & 124. Cf. Khan I khana Sanskrit Learning, p.113.

translations reveal his spiritual background and also that he pursued Indian religious thinking intuitively; it was not intellectual or academic, nor was he politically motivated, like some believe. As per his own words,¹⁰¹ "it was a part of his drive to learn the truth." He translated the *Upanishads* verbatim for the benefit of seekers of Truth and for his own spiritual pursuits. According to him, the *Upanishads'* monotheistic philosophy is consistent with the holy Qur'an and its exegesis.

Dara Shukoh's expositions on Hinduism and translation from Sanskrit

Dara Shukoh's command over the Sanskrit language seems to be fairly extensive although he had translated the *Upanishads* with the help of a number of Sanskrit Pandits. Scholars such as Nizam Panipati, Sufi Qutb-i Jahani and Mir Findiriski have translated the *Upanishads* earlier than Dara.

Dara Shukoh translated important Sanskrit texts in Persian, including the *Upanishads* entitled *Sirr-i-Akbar*, the *Bhagwatgita*, and the *Yoga-Vasistha*. His other writings on Hinduism were the *Mukalama* or 'Seven Dialogues' on comparative mythology with a Hindu saint Lal Das, and the *Majma'-ul-Bahrain* which is a comparative study of Hinduism and Islam.

Despite being a treatise on Sufi rituals, the *Risala' i Haq Numa* by Dara Shukoh unambiguously showed the influence of Indian Yoga philosophy. Before 1658 A.D. when he commissioned a re-translation of the text, Dara Shukoh had claimed to already have read a Persian translation of the *Yoga-vasistha* by Shaikh Sufi, most likely by Sufi Sharif Qubjahani titled the *Tuhfa' i Majlis* which was based on the *Yogavasishthasaras*. He found that the Hindu Tantric meditations were similar to some of the physical exercises described in the *Risala*, such as the *Habs-i-dam*, the *awurd-burd* etc. In his translation, he compared the Indian *Avasthatman* or the four worlds of *Jagrat*, *Swapna*, *Susupati*, and *Turiya*¹⁰² to Salik's journey through the four worlds of *Nasut*, *Jabrut*, *Malakut*, and *Lahut*.

Even prior to the *Upanishads'* translation, Dara Shukoh had gained a great deal of knowledge about Hindu-Yogic and Vedanta philosophy, as well as the Sanskrit vocabulary of technical terms of Indian mythology and cosmology. This knowledge enabled him to compare these ideas with their equivalents in Islamic thought, as evidenced by the *Majma-ul-Bahrain*,

¹⁰¹ *Sirr-i-Akbar*. Preface.

¹⁰² Mahfuz-ul-Haq, M. 1929. *Majma-ul-Bahrain: Text and Translation*. Kolkata. p. 46.

which was written in 1655 A.D. As a result of this he was able to address the same ideas found in both religions on the elements, senses, devotional exercises, soul, air, sound, vision of god, skies, earth, resurrection, etc. The *Mukalama Baba Lal wa Daru Shikuh* exhibited the same spirit of comparative analysis, as well as his familiarity with Hindu theoretical philosophy and Indian mythology.

Conclusion

The Golden Age of Islam witnessed significant advancements in Indian sciences and from the early ninth century A.D., Muslims have had a keen interest in Indian philosophy, culture, religion, and other subjects. The advent of Muslim rule in India also led to cross-cultural exchange with Baghdad and there were a number of translations of Indian sciences into Arabic and Persian languages. The Barmak were the pioneers to introduce Indian sciences to the Islamic world and even Arab scholars visited India for first-hand information about India. Though the Indian rulers' interest in Islamic way of life was less than significant, there was a translation of the holy Qaran in 280 A.H. on the instance of a Hindu ruler.

The early reference to translations of Indian sciences in Arabic was found in texts of Al-Jahiz and Abu Raihan Al-Beruni. The ancient Indian system of medicine found an extraordinary place in the translated literature such as, the Persian original of Charaka's book on Indian medicine was translated into Arabic by Abdullah bin Ali. The Muslim scholar Ibn Muqaffa had translated the *Panchatantra* into Arabic as *Kalilah wa Dimna* and later on this Arabic version was translated into European and Persian languages.

The Muslim incursion of Sind by Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 A.D. marked the beginning of the next phase of Indo-Muslim literary relations. In 1322 A.D., Sultan Feroz Shah with the assistance of Hindu pandits translated 1,300 rare Sanskrit manuscripts into Persian. The Muslim rulers of Kashmir and Deccan also illustrated significant support for Indian learning during this time with the translation of *Mahabharata*, and *Rajatarangini*. Al-Beruni translated the Sanskrit text *Patanjali*, *Sankhya*, *Laghujatkam* and a number of other translations from Indian sciences to Arabic.

The Islamic world was introduced to the Indian number system through the translation of Brahmagupta's *Brahma-Siddhanta* and *Khandakhadyaka* into Arabic namely *Sindhind* and *Arkand* respectively. Abul Hasan Ahwazee translated the book of *Aryabhata* into Arabic

entitled *Arajband* while Shams-e-Siraj Afeef translated *Brhatsamhita* into Persian titled *Tarjuma-e-Barahi*. Al-Khwarizmi was instrumental in spreading the Indian number system throughout the world.

In the Mughal court, the philologists on a regular basis translated literatures of different languages. The distinguished Muslim scholars and historians, who translated Sanskrit works, were Abul Fadl, Faidi, Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni, Naqib Khan and Mulla Sheri. They were assisted in their work by an equally large number of pandits who were well-versed in Indian religion, philosophy and the sciences. The remarkable translation during this period was *Razamnama* which is the Persian version of *Mahabharata* and the translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* along with translations of *Yogavasistha*, *Purana*, *Atharva veda* and *Sinhasana dvatrimasati*.

Dara Shukoh's contribution to Islamic and Indian philosophy may be seen against a plethora of historical and literary sources. He promoted a number of translations of Sanskrit and Persian. His famous philosophical translated works are *Sirr-i-Akbar* and *Majma-ul-Baharain*. According to him, the monotheistic philosophy of *Upanishads* was consistent with the holy Qur'an and its exegesis. The Mughal chroniclers also revealed that many distinguished Sanskrit scholars were employed in Mughal courts and honoured by the Mughal rulers.