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Development of the Scholarly and Literary Activities in Sindh under the Mughals : An analytical review

Introduction:

During the latter half of the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century, the scions of the great house of Timur were asserting a world fame empire of their ancestors, and the Sultans of Delhi were endeavoring for the survival of their authority and power. At the time, Sindh was under the control of the most prominent Samma ruler, Jam Nizamuddin Nanda (1461-1508 CE). The frontiers of his territories, "reached from the ocean to the Multan territory, above Bakhar, on the one side; and from the Rajput desert and Kach, to the Bolan Pass and Baluchistan on the other; comprehending, the Delta of the Indus and the country on the both sides of the river to some distance from its banks, especially Sehwan with Shikarpur, Kach-Gandava, and part of Siwistan." During this period, Sindh grew to be a prosperous and peaceful land. The rebellious Baloch tribes were successfully taken into control, the socio-cultural activities emerged progressively and harmonization bent among different sections of the society due to his hardheaded course of action. Sindh reached to its glory in terms of development and prosperity, and yet his period may surely be regarded as the twilight of the Samma rule in Sindh. After his death, the local tribes disintegrated and split into a number of groups, each section was struggling for securing the throne by any means of opportunity. The royal court had turned into a place of plotting conspiracies and misrule spread far and wide.

At this time, the Arghuns, a Turko-Afghan tribe established its rule in Sindh in 1520 CE. Shah Beg, the founder of the Arghun dynasty in Sindh, left Qandhar due to the growing pressure of Babur from the north-east. Emerging political turmoil gave him an opportunity to establish his rule in Sindh that was for almost three-quarters of a century remained under the Arghuns and their Tarkhan kinsmen. Afterward, for another quarter of a century, the land was under the over lordship of the great Mughal Emperors of India, also known as the Timurids. After the death of Mirza Ghazi Beg Tarkhan in 1612 CE, Sindh came under the direct control of the Mughal governors. Lastly, after the Nadir Shah's invasion of India in 1739 CE, the Mughal Emperor Mu-

hammad Shah (1719-48 CE) surrendered all his territories west of the Indus to the former in turn of a peace treaty. The last Mughal representative in Sindh, Mian Yar Muhammad Kalhoro, established his independent rule and became a vassal state of Iran.

However, throughout the Mughal rule, the whole region of Sindh was subdued into different stages. The main divisions were Thatta and Bakhar, excluded of Sehwan and Lahri Bandar which was under the imperial control. The unanimity of Sindh was destroyed by the Mughals who separately appointed the governors for Bhakkar, Thatta and Sehwan. All the high ranks and positions were conferred to the foreigners especially who migrated from Central Asia and the native Sindhis were completely deprived of their power and influence. Most of the influential native scholars and intellectuals started migrating to Burhanpur (C.P.) or the holy land of Arabia during the Arghun period due to the unfavorable circumstances. During the period of Isa Tarkhan, Sindh was destroyed by the Portuguese. Besides, the period of Mirza Baqi was full of atrocities and terror. The economy was not progressively increasing while the irrigation system was also under decline.

Literary and Cultural Progress: Its background:

The Arab rulers in Sindh had left a rich legacy of learning, education and literature. The record of the British Government also shows that the intellectual development in Sindh had produced the great number of scholars during the Muslim rule. The orthodox learning like logic, grammar, *hadith*, *tafsir*, history and biography developed during the Arab rule (712-1050 CE.). A highly devotional poetry in Sindhian dialects was composed under the Isma'ili influence by Pir Shams al-Din, Pir Sadr al-Din which greatly replaced the hymns and songs of the Pre-Muslim era. Sindh became the centre of literary activities during the reign of Nasir al-Din Qubacha, the governor of Sindh under the Sultanate of Delhi who greatly patronized the scholars and the literary men of his times migrated from Central Asia and Persia due to the Mongol invasion and settled mostly in his capital Uch.

However, the Samma rulers, particularly Jam Nizam al-Din Nanda (d. 1508) himself possessed an intellectual and scholarly mind also patronized such activities and scholars. From the Arab conquest of Sindh, the Arabic was the official and court language in which most of the literary work was compiled. Though, Sindhian dialects were also flourished side by side and Persian

also to some extent due to the migration of some scholars and men of pen from Persia and Central Asia to Sindh. Dr. Lakho opines that Arabic was the language of the court and kings during the Soomra and the Samma rulers. On the other hand, Dr. N. A. Baloch states that Persian had been the official language of Sindh from the beginning of the Samma rule due to the influence of the Sultanate of Delhi in the surroundings of the Samma kingdom and their relations with the Sammas, who were the great patron of Persian language and literature. However, Arabic did not lose its significance and prominence due to its religious importance.

The Samma period, particularly the period of Jam Nandah is also glorified for the development of literary activities. Mamui Faqir, Makhdum Ahmad Bhatti, Ishaq Aahingar, Shykh Hammad Jamali, Shykh Isa Burhanpuri Sindhi, Asir al-Din, Qazi Qadan, Makhdoom Bilal were some of the famous poets and scholars of the Samma period. Mostly their poetic compilations circulated among the people orally through Bhats and Charans in the form of folklore, epics and myths. These Bhats and Charans were the custodians of this semi-historical poetic heritage. The orthodox learning that had received a set-back during the Isma'ili rule, revived with the rise of the Sammas. Mawlana Abdul Aziz Abhari and his sons came to Sindh on invitation of Jam Nizam al-Din Nandah and settled here due to unfavourable political climate of their homeland.

The Mughal Period:

Glory and splendor of culture and literature:

Nevertheless, literary activities reached to their pinnacle and achieved full pace in Sindh during the Arghun period (1520-1555 CE), when a large number of the Persian scholars migrated from Iran and Central Asia to Sindh and settled in Thatta and other places. Affable atmosphere in this tangential region of the Muslim world, far-flung from the main centers of power attracted the people either escaping from antagonistic environment, official persecution or temptation for better economic prospects. Sindh served either as a temporary halting station in their journey further into South Asia or as a place of permanent residence. This large scale migration took place at times in the form of gradual entrance of individuals or single families and sometimes as a great influx of people, tribes or communities propelled by politi-

cal or ethnic havoc and quarrels from West into South Asia, including Sindh.

However, two major migrations took place during the medieval period towards South Asia. The first one was due to the Mongol invasion during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries that stimulated the newly emerging Muslim community of South Asia to counter admirably in creating mightiest and largest empire in South Asia and flourishing of its great Muslim Culture of the Sultanate era which in turn provided the groundwork for the mighty Mughal empire later on. The second great migration witnessed in South Asia including Sindh was that in which the great Timurids and their followers were driven out from Central Asia and Heart by the Uzbeks. Thwarted by the Safawids in the West, they were pressed on towards Kabul and Qandhar and thence spilled over into Sindh and other parts of South Asia.

This wave of immigrants brought about great changes, witnessed during the Imperial Mughal age. Its impact was also evident in Sindh where the Arghun and the Tarkhan chiefs, former vassals of the Timurids of Herat and a part of the great Timurid cultural and social tradition, conquered Sindh, introducing the three centuries of the Mughal rule in this region. A number of *ulama*' and *masha'ikh* came with the Arghuns who left Qandhar due to its occupation by Babur in 1520 CE. The Arghuns and the Tarkhans with their highly developed cultural background and wide contacts with the literary circles of Central Asia, Khurasan and Iran were able to attract a large number of foreign *ulama*', who greatly influenced the literary and intellectual development of Sindh.

Shah Beg Arghun, the founder of the Arghun dynasty in Sindh was himself a highly educated person who had visited the courts of Heart and Kabul during his youth. He was greatly influenced by the literary atmosphere of the Timurid courts. During his period, *madrassahs* and *khanqahs* were flourished in Qandhar and Sindh. He was a poet as *Sipahi* as his pen name and composed poetry in Turkish and Persian. He wrote a number of books on *manqulat* (religious sciences) entitled *Sharh-i-Aqa'id-I Nasafi*, *Sharh-i-Kafiyah* and notes on *Sharh-i-Mutali'ah*. Shykh Mirak Purani and his relatives as Shykh Abdul Wahab Purani, Shah Qutub al-din, Syed Mir Kalan, Maulana Maslih al-din Lari, Maulana Yunus Samarqandi, Fakhri Harwi and some other scholars migrated to Sindh during his period. However, due to political

considerations, some of the local scholars such as Makhdum Bilal were dealt harshly. Later on, these local scholar and *sufis* also received congenial environment with the passage of time. Liberal attitude, lavish support and royal patronage introduced an era of great literary activity in Sindh during the Arghuns.

Shah Beg Arghun, a great patron of art and learning himself was a scholar wrote a commentary on the Holy Quran in Persian. His son Shah Hasan was also an author and a poet of considerable merit, patronized the learned and pious men of his time, and was much devoted to their company. During his period, Persian *madrasahs* and *maktabs* were flourished in Sindh and a considerable number of scholars, mostly migrated from Iran, engaged in teaching in various institutions. A large number of local people acquired the knowledge of Persian language and learning from them.

The Tarkhan rulers such as Isa Tarkhan and Baqi Tarkhan also grew up under the cultural and literary traditions of the Timurids and the Arghuns. They also patronized *ulama*' and continued to maintain them in their *jagirs*. Mawlana Abdur Rehman, Mawlana Karim-ul-din, Maulana Abdul Khaliq Gilani, Miyan Sayyid Ali Shirazi, Mawlana Yusuf, Makhdum Fadl Allah were some of new foreign and local *ulama*'. Mirza Jani Beg Tarkhan was also fond of poetry like his predecessors who took the title of *Halimi*. His son, Ghazi Beg's period marked the highest point in the development of art and literature in Sindh. He was also a good poet and had the pen-name of *Waqari*. Besides local scholars he issued lavish grants and huge sums to many renowned scholars from Iran and Khurasan such as Mulla Kashani Taklu, Mirza Fasihi Ansari etc. His generous patronage to poetry and literature stimulated interest among the people in literary pursuits and went a long way in development of local talent in Sindh.

The Arghun and the Tarkhan rulers were originally from the Mughal stocks who were Persian speaking and the men of literary taste and learning, so their courts naturally attracted the Persian scholars and intellectuals. During this period, development of Persian literature in prose and poetry had stricken off and its correlation with Sindhi was increasingly leaving its impact on the literature produced. Sindhi folklore was translated into Persian such as Mir Abul Qasim Sultan ordered Idraki Beglari to compile the story of Leela- Chanesar in verse that is entitled '*Chanesar Namah*'.

Sindh became a part of the Mughal Empire in 1591-92 CE during the period of Akbar. It gained political and administrative stability and organization in all fields including the field of literary pursuits. Akbar was also a great patron of learning, art and literature who provided economic support to the scholars, *ulama* and *sadats* etc. The Mughal Emperors bestowed stipends on learning the merits of some scholars. Some of the scholars from Sindh visited the Mughal court in person during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, consequently contacts between Sindh and Imperial court gradually grew closer. Makhdum Rahmat was invited and rewarded suitably by Aurangzeb due to his merits and command over *mathnavi* Mawlana Rum and was appointed *sadr* of Thatta.

Likewise the Arghun and the Tarkhans, the Mughals also patronized the intellectual and literary activities. The lavish patronage of learning and education brought forth a great literary outburst during the Mughal period. Sukumar Ray writes that "when Emperor Humayun went to Persia after his dethronement by the hands of Sher Shah Suri in 1540 C.E, he created cordially relations with the Persians. This was followed by the visit of Persian scholars to India." However, the warm appreciation of the Mughal emperors of Delhi for the men of letters attracted the latter, in large number during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Their courts were a place of gathering of the scholars, intellectuals and the poets from the other parts of the subcontinent and outside especially from Persia and Central Asia. Some Persian scholars also accompanied with Nadir Shah at the time of his invasion of India in 1738 C.E, and his stay in Sindh during the days of Miyan Noor Mohammad Kalhora. These scholars were very much impressed by the hospitality and loving and sophisticated nature of the people of Sindh.

The Mughal period correspondingly that of the Arghun and the Tarkhan is also regarded as the era during which Persian was further developed and established as an official and court language of Sindh. Persian soon secured the important position among the cultural activities and became popular among the intelligentsia. The Mughal rulers of Sindh invariably encouraged the Persian literature and showed respect for the Persian scholars. These scholars were granted stipends sanctioned by the rulers. For this reason, this period may be regarded as the Golden age in terms of development of Persian poetry and prose.

During the Mughal period, Sindh had its close cooperation and cultural links with Iran and Central Asia. Persian language and literature developed and became popular among the local people. Sadarangani writes in this regard that “the Sindhis rapidly acquired complete grasp over the language and Persian became a meritorious vehicle of expression for the thoughts and emotions. Almost all the histories of Sindh e.g. *Tarikh-i Masumi*, *Beglar Namah*, *Tarikh-i Tahiri*, etc. were written in Persian and a few *diwans* of *ghazals* were also produced.” As a result, intellectual and literary activities started to flourish in Pat and Darbella as well. Despite of the departure of some native scholars, the standard of literary activities bequeathed to them was maintained which also contributed to raise the standard.

However, the historical evidences prove that besides other literary activities, the religious studies also had strong hold in Sindh during and before the Mughal period. Thatta was regarded as one of the greatest centre of learning in the Islamic world and was known as ‘Iraq the second’. Sehwan, the second greatest town of Sindh also enjoyed this high status in terms of scholarly activities. Mir Masum writes that Qadi Dito Sehwan, a scholar of Persian and Arabic, who had distinction in acquiring knowledge from such illustrious predecessors as his father Sharf al-Din alias Makh dum Rahu, Makh dum Bilal, Makh dum Fakhur Pota and Abdul Aziz Harvi (of Heart). He was a leading scholar of his times. Shah Hassan was one of the pupils of Qadi Dito and Mir Masum Bakhari also had the distinction of being his pupil.

A substantial quantity of literature associated with different branches of learning and science was produced. Scholars from other regions of India further enlarged the scope and extent of literary activities. Besides *sharahas* (commentaries), *manqulat* was another notable contribution made in *tafsir*. Mawlana Maslih al-Din Lari wrote a *hawashi* on the famous *Tafsir-i-Baydawi*. Makh dum Ruknual-Din Matu, a distinguished scholar wrote a *sharaha* on the *Shama'il-i-Nabwi*, a famous book on *sirah*. A number of books were composed dealing with religious beliefs and practices including sufistic literature. *Adab-i-Muridin* was written by Syed Ali Thani Shirazi, *Anwarar al-Asrar* by Isa Jand Allah, *Jawahar al-Awliya* and *Baqar al-Anwar* by Syed Baqir were written on mystic orders. *Hizar al-Bashar* was compiled by Mir Zayn al-Din dealt with religious invocation and amulets.

In the field of *ma'qualat* as well, a number of works were produced. A booklet on logic in Persian entitled *Sharah-i-Mantiq*

was composed by Mawlana Maslih al-Din. A famous book on medicine entitled *Mafradat-i-Nami* (also *Tib-i-Nami*) was written by Mir Masum. The *Rashhat al-Funun* (an encyclopedic work dealing with the traditional *chahardah 'ulum*) and *Ma'lumat al-Afaq* discussing wonders of the inhabited regions of the earth said to be ¼ of the total area by Amin al-Din Khan Amir Khani were some of other notable works produced in Sindh during the Mughal period.

A booklet was composed on *manazrah*, the art of religious debates by Mir Abdur Rashid entitled the *Rashidi*. He was a prolific writer during the seventeenth century. Mir Kamal al-Din wrote *Islahat-i-Ridwiyah*. He also compiled a *sharah* of *Diwan-i-Hafiz*. Mir Shah Wali wrote a book on different *'ulum* entitled *Tuhfat al-Majalis*. On the other hand, a significant achievement of the period was the composition of two famous *lughats* (lexicons) of Persian and Arabic which are known as *Farhang-i-Rashidi* by Abdur Rashid Thattavi.

In Bubak, Makh dum Abd al-Karim alias Miran bin Ya-qub, was another leading scholar, under whom guidance a number of pupils in his *madarsah*, after having acquired education became ultimate researchers, scholars and heads of educational institutions. The most outstanding students amongst them were Maulana Qasim Diwan and Makh dum Jafar, the son of Makh dum Miran. These people had no parallel in *Ilm-i Ma'qul wa Manqul*. Sultan Mahmud of Bakhar studied Quran, *tafsir* and other books under their guidance.

Makh dum Jafar of Bubak was not only a great scholar of his times but also a promising intellectual, research scholar, distinguished *faqih*, and an educationist who paid great attention towards intellectual and literary activities in Sindh. He wrote a number of books and pamphlets in Arabic and Persian on various social and cultural issues of daily life. Dr. N. A. Baloch has mentioned the names of his nine books which still subsist. Five out of these books are related to the matters of Muslim jurisprudence. He was the first great scholar of Sindh who gave impetus to the research of theological and juristic issues in the light of the socio-cultural conditions.

The Mughal period witnessed the men of great genius and very high caliber with profound scholarship and dedication to duties which is exemplary and inspiring. Makh dum Bilal of Talti, Qadi Dito of Sehwan, Qadi Qadin of Thatta, Makh dum Miran,

Maulana Yunus Samarqandi, Shah Jahangir of Khurasan and Makhdum Jafar (Sehwan) of Bubak were some of them. During the Mughal period, Thatta in the south and Bakhar in the north occupied very important positions in the field of intellectual development of Sindh, and excelled Granada, Cordova, Baghdad and Basra. These two cities became the centers of culture and civilization in Sindh that made great strides than ever before in the fields of Quranic studies, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqah*, Logic, Calligraphy, Mathematics and Astronomy.

Shykh Abdul Wahab Purani, and Qadi Niamat Allah were the most distinguished scholars of *fiqah* in Thatta. The latter also had a great command over logic and wrote a marginal commentary on the well-known book of logic viz: *Al Zubdah* of Allah al-Din Mainglori, which was one of the prescribed books on the syllabus for the educational institutions of Thatta at that time. On the same pattern, Mir Najm al-Din Thattawi also wrote a marginal commentary on *Al Zubdah*. Shykh Abdul Wahab Purani, who was elevated to the position of *Shykh al-Islam* during the period of Shah Hasan Arghun, made great efforts for the propagation of Islamic law and detailed exposition of problems of *fiqah*, his *fatawas* were considered most authentic subsequently compiled in book form entitled '*Jam Fatawa Purani*'. This was the first book of its type in Sindh on subject of *fatawa* and was widely acclaimed. The *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri* which was compiled during the reign of Alamgir also had a notable contribution by Sindhian scholars as Abu al-Khayr and Makhdum Nizam al-Din Thani.

Mirak Abdul Baqi and Mirak Abdul Rahman distinguished themselves not only in the field of religion or *fiqah*, but in the field of arts and intellect. They occupied an enviable position by the virtue of their depth and subtlety. Mirak Abdul Rahman was an expert of astronomy and philosophy. Maulana Abdul Khaliq Jilani also acquired proficiency in the field of astronomy. Mirak Abdul Rahman has distinction of having acquainted the Sindhis with the geometric figures. In addition, a great number of works in Persian and Arabic prose and poetry were also compiled during the Mughal period in Sindh. However, the progress in this particular field had been started from the Arab rule, but it secured the highest degree during the Mughals.

A new sort of text that developed and came into trend during the Mughal period was story writing. It is evident that this art of literature writing was brought in to Sindh from Persia by the Mughals as Mirza Jani Beg and Ghazi Beg termed as *qissah-*

khwani. Muqim, one of the noble of Mirza Jani Beg and Mulla Murshid and Mulla Asad, the companions of Ghazi Beg were some renowned *qissah-khwans* of that era. Moreover, Khwajah Aman Sayfi composed seven stories entitled *Haft Akhtar* in prose and seven stories in poetic form entitled *Bahman Namah* during the reign of Shahjahan. Abu'l Fath Qabil also compiled his famous story as *Qissah-i-Kamrup*.

The appointment of different Mughal governors in Sindh by the centre not only provided an opportunity to the Indian scholars and poets to introduce themselves in Sindh but also to share their literary contribution with the people. Many Urdu speaking poets and scholars came into the contact the native people of Sindh and inspired them by their work. Muhammad Saeed Rahbar Gwaliari, Mir Jaffar Ali Khan Benawa, Sayyid Fazail Ali Khan Beqayd, Mohsin al-Din Shirazi, Imad al-Mulk Nawab Ghazi al-Din were some of them. Following this emerging trend of Urdu poetry, some Persian speaking Sindhi poets such as Shaykh Waroo, Abdus Subhan Fa'iz Thattawi, Makhdum Muhammad Moin Beragi and Mir Hyder al-Din Abu Turab Kamil also composed verses in Urdu.

Conclusion

Since the Mughals were Persianized Turks who had overrun from Central Asia and asserted descent from both Timur and Chingis Khan, they, in fact, strengthen Persian culture in India. Apart from a number of Persian nobles, administrators, and soldiers, there were painters, calligraphers, architects, musicians, poets, physicians, historians and other people with diverse skills who migrated to India during the Mughal regime from Tabriz, Shiraz, Herat, and other cities of the Iranian plateau.

The Mughal period, striking for impressive progress in almost every department of human life, and its cultural development was escorted by substantial growth in all forms of art. In Mughal culture, Central Asian 'Turko-Persian' versatile impact is also incorporated; indeed Bukhara and Samarqand, the civilization of Babur's land, represents a standing example of it. It cannot be denied that the Mughals, the last of the Muslim dynasties of India, had remained a sufficient time in Transoxiana and Persia, to have acquired all the civilization of these two countries, long before they attempted to perform conquest in India. They carried with them the full benefit of the Persian arts and knowledge,

when they established themselves in India. Therefore, combined with the local traditions, Central Asia and especially Persia are the ingredients which made up the genesis of not only the Indian society and civilization but the historiographical traditions as well.

The restoration of the Mughal Empire after Humayun's return from Persia established a tradition of migration from Persian territories, which continued until the Muslim states of India could no longer offer prospects of employment. Persia contributed a good deal to the Indo-Muslim cultural heritage; its share among the immigrants was significant. Prof. Sukumar says that "the exile of Humayun in Iran, though humiliating and painful, was not altogether barren in its results." Humayun's stay in Persia not only established diplomatic relationship between the Safawid and Mughal Courts, it also led to closer contact between India and Persia. During the Akbar's reign, when the Mughal Empire was consolidated, a general immigration of nobles and generals as well as men of arts and letters from Persia deeply molded the Indo-Muslim civilization. During the Mughal period, these ties between India and Persia were not only political but were also remarkably cultural. A strong cultural influence was the fact that Persian was the language of the court.

The Mughals changed not only the political but the social and cultural structure of Sindh to the highest degree. Persian started to flourish as the official and court language in Sindh likewise the other parts of India, which was the language of the elite and the rulers. In the following passage, an account of literary activities is being given during the Mughal period. The literary contribution of the Mughals in Sindh comprises of some outstanding historical compilations which are not lesser significant than the work compiled in other parts of the Mughal Empire. However, among the other disciplines of knowledge, historiography is supposed to have enjoyed a degree of popularity beginning from the Mughal rule.

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