Introduction

Significance, Historiography and Sources

Recent scholarship on print culture is formed on themes like ‘Hindi Public Sphere’, and print in Bengal, Western and Southern India, but Persian print has not received the attention it deserves. Francesca Orsini in her book on the Hindi public sphere focuses on how histories in the Hindi language figured prominently in the making of cultural nationalism, and how history helped crystallize modern ‘Indian’ identity as being essentially the same as modern ‘Hindu’ identity. And also, the most recent work on print culture in India is Ulrike Stark’s history of the Nawal Kishore Press. Her argument is about commercialization of print and she applies Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘print capitalism’ to suggest it has been crucial in establishing the conditions for the creation of a national consciousness. While she treats the publishing house as an ‘institution’, she also discusses various ‘sub-institutions’ such as indigenous scholarship, literary associations, public libraries, the ‘vernacular’ press and colonial education as important elements that shaped the literary domain. Another study on Western India points out that print was not only a new communicative technology but it also changed the prevailing distribution of cultural and political power. The argument is that print initiated a shift in the relation between ‘high’ and ‘low’ languages in South Asia. This bilingual divide was a crucial factor structuring the options open to the new intelligentsia in their use of intellectual and cultural recourse to achieve a hegemonic position.

The definition of the term ‘Print Culture’ that informs this thesis is the culture created by the profound transformation that the discovery and the extended use of the new technique of printing for the reproduction of texts (as opposed to copying manuscripts by hand) brought to all domains of life—public and private, spiritual and

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material. After Gutenberg's invention of printing in late fifteenth century, all culture in Western societies can be held to be a culture of printed word, since what movable type and the printing press produced was not reserved for the administrative use of the ruler but penetrated the entire web of social relations. The term 'Print Culture' encompasses a number of things: it includes the processes of book production and distribution; it refers to the consciousness constructed through print; it involves an understanding of the social context in which the activity of reading takes place, and finally, it connotes a specialized field of study within the wider discipline of communication. Print culture can be characterized by the traits attributed to print—that when books were created, disseminated, and utilized, they were assumed to embody condition of standardization, dissemination, and fixity. Books could be reproduced exactly and repeatedly, in any location, utilizing standardized tools and techniques, thus eliminating the variations and errors inevitable in manuscript culture. 'Book History', on the other hand, is a field that concerns itself with 'the entire history of written communication: the creation, dissemination; and uses of script and print in any medium, including books, newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts, and ephemera...The social, culture, and economic history of authorship, publishing, printing, the book arts, copyright, censorship, bookselling and distribution, libraries, literacy, literary criticism, reading habits, and reader responses'. Book History, therefore, is located within print culture. Robert Fraser has argued that in the context of South Asia, the history of print can be traced in a continuous line from experiments conducted in late eighteenth-century Bengal by colonial scholars, in resulting transformation in modes of communication to the publication of the sacred books of many traditions, and the issuing of newspapers in very many languages from centres all over India. It enabled the dissemination of multiple literary and academic genres, and scholarly journal and monographs, across great distances.

7 Ibid, p. 16.
importance to the efflorescence of lithography (a technique which originated in Europe in the 1820s and migrated rapidly to South Asia and thence to the Middle East) and which drew on centuries-old indigenous traditions of calligraphy and manuscript production. The result, he says, was a revolution that was to give rise to cultural configuration, and to political alignments, of urgent relevance even today. Fraser identifies the ‘Lithographic evolution’ (c.1830) as an outcome of external (in the Indian case, colonial) intervention, and a development that had clear commercial implications. The perpetuation of oral culture through alternative technologies has been a major fact of South Asian cultural existence. The Mughals reinforced the Persian manuscript tradition to bear on courtly function and official bureaucratic dealings and the huge body of non-official writings on theology, etc. The intervention of the printing press, in turn had, according to Fraser, the effect of a range of articulated and preserved over centuries by script culture of the region. Fraser gives the example, of the history of transmission of the ghazal, whose origins lay outside India, and the transmission of which at first appeared to have been oral. Both in Iran and in Northern India, memorization of texts was the norm for imparting education. The ghazal entered Indian book history in the fifteenth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became the mainstay of the tazkirahs or script anthologies circulated in multiple manuscript copies in India and Iran. The form also entered international print history through the intervention of Western Orientalist. From the 1840s onwards, with the burgeoning of print technology (lithography) right across north India, printed tazkirahs, in Persian and Urdu or a combination of the two appeared. They have continued to be produced by this method ever since; signaling the perpetuity of the ghazal as a printed form. Fraser notes that with the birth of recording technology, the ghazal has continued to survive in its new form as a vocal and musical genre. Fraser takes this example to represent a vocal-cum-written-cum-published-cum-recorded tradition. The Fraser’s argument gives a general understanding of print culture.

This thesis examines an important link in the history of print culture in India, that of Persian print, in a time and context when it underwent great transformation itself, and

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9 Ibid, p. 23.
10 Ibid, p. 24, esp. figure 1.4 titled ‘The roots of print culture (South Asia)’.
in turn left a deep imprint on the history of print – and language itself. Recent works by cultural historians, book historians, anthropologists, and sociologists offers substantial research on the results of the collision between colonial powers and colonized groups in oral and print cultures. This research undertakes to study how the history of Indian written and print communication shifted in response to invasion and interaction with external culture and influence. This thesis is meant to supplement with regard to a hitherto under-researched language, Persian. Persian-in-print first appeared in Bengal under British patronage. Print became a means through which Indian native knowledge in the Persian language was used to create colonial knowledge of South Asia. This thesis traces the contours of the Persian publishing industry in India, with reference to books and print, henceforth called ‘Persian Print Culture’.

The question of print and power in the context of colonial Bengal has been discussed in yet another study which argues how print culture gave Indian groups the opportunity to consolidate power and how print played a vital role in shaping identities.\(^\text{12}\) One scholar who takes a very different position is Stuart Blackburn, who argues in his study of South India that the emphasis on ‘print culture’ is exaggerated as orality and print are not completely separate from each other.\(^\text{13}\) However, even Blackburn accepts that print is an important element if one wants to study social change in nineteenth century India. In the nineteenth century, the fragmented field of history was partly transformed and unified by Orientalists and by the shift from court, sect, and family to print and the public sphere.

The period (1780-1880) covered in this thesis begins with 1780 as the starting point as this was the year in which for the first time Persian nastaliq and naskh types were used in a revised version of Gladwin’s *A Compendious Vocabulary English and Persian*, printed at Malda (Bengal).\(^\text{14}\) Although the first printing press was established in


the mid-sixteenth century in Goa, it was only by c.1800 that the printing press was firmly established in the country and India entered a new era of communication. The study concludes at 1880 as its terminal point as this represents the phase when Hindi and Urdu took centre stage at the expense of Persian and when Persian printing showed a decline as the result of competitive printing in other languages and on account of the language controversy in India.

The long nineteenth century that this study surveys can be sub-divided into various phases on the basis of landmark events. For example, 1800 should perhaps be considered the most significant year in the history of printing and publishing in India. This is because a new Bengali typeface was created for a Bangla Bible in this year. Within a few years, a Devnagari font for the Sanskrit and Hindi testament, an Urdu font for the so-called Hindustani testament, and equivalent typeface for Persian, Arabic, Punjabi, Marathi, Oriya, Burmese, Tibetan and even Chinese were created and used. The proliferation of fonts continued till the mid-nineteenth century, by which time the ‘domestication of print technology to existing language systems of the subcontinent’ was almost complete.15

As primary sources I have used a whole range of Persian printed books published in the nineteenth century by reputed publishers of the time. I have collected and analyzed the information about the patron, the publisher, and the places of publication. I have also made use of colonial reports on ‘Native Presses in the North West Province’, available at the National Archives of India. In addition, I have analyzed the catalogues of Persian books available in different libraries (Fort William College Collection, Library of the Asiatic Society, Library of the India Office) to quantify the different genres of Persian books (Appendices I-III), their numbers and circulation, etc. printed in the nineteenth century.

Before explaining the scheme of chapters, it is useful to offer an overview of the literary lineage of the period under survey.

15 Fraser. Book History through Postcolonial Eyes, p. 69.
Perso-Islamic Culture in India

In order to understand what is meant by Indo-Persian culture, we must first have a basic understanding of the Perso-Islamic civilization. Scholars of Indian Islam such as Richard Eaton and Francis Robinson have traced the roots of this civilization in a way that includes India as part of a larger culture world. Perso-Islamic culture formed the second important cultural nexus of the Islamic world after the Arab-Islamic culture. Robinson states that the latter covered, at various times, Spain, North Africa, the Fertile Crescent, Arabia and South-East Asia, while the former included the remainder of Muslim Asia, from the Aegean and the Euphrates in the west to Sinkiang and the Bay of Bengal in the east, from the Russian steppes in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south. Since the Persian language was a central component of this civilization, it would be correct to state that Persian has a long history in the Indian subcontinent. Sanjay Subrahmanyam reiterates the point expressed earlier by many scholars that the fusion of Indo-Perso-Islamic culture and the social intercourse between the Muslims and Hindus led to the emergence of a composite culture. In the context of Lucknow, Robinson defines the term ‘Perso-Islamic’ to include the work of ‘those Iranians whose contributions to Islamic scholarship in Arabic formed such a substantial part of the region’s educational system, those Turks who placed their own very distinctive mark on the development of Islamic mysticism, and those Hindus whose contributions to poetry and history in Persian were considerable.’

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16 Eaton suggests that the Perso-Islamic civilization was patronized by the several dynasties such as the Tahirids, the Saffarids, the Samanids, and the Ghaznavids at a time when Baghdad’s authority in its eastern domains was progressively weakening. Richard M. Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 28.


Persian culture in India, better known as Indo-Persian culture, developed over several centuries, and historians have traced at least four distinct stages in its development. The first phase started with the coming of the Ghaznavid dynasty in Punjab in the eleventh century when Persian culture was the successor to the one prevailing in Samanid Bukhara. It witnessed the development of a particular literary form ‘qasida’ with the *Shahnama* of Firdausi and the institutional innovation of poet laureate.20

The second phase began with the establishment of the Turkish sultanate (1206-1526) at Delhi in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, where Persian speakers as well as Persian scribes, writers and poets received the patronage of the Sultan and became part of their courts and literary culture.21 Indo-Persian culture received support from new migrants to India from Iran who brought their Persianized traditions with them, *sufi silsilas* also played an important role in popularizing the Persian language and encouraging the evolution of a Persian literary tradition through the *sufi* masters’ *malfuzat* (conversations). This was also the phase that witnessed the development of a new style of Persian poetry or *Sabk-i-Hindi*.22 The ‘Indian Style’ of Persian literature had some distinctive features: a highly intellectualized imagery and a mental withdrawal from the immediate physical environment.23 This has been taken by Francis Robinson as evidence of a proud governing elite concerned to preserve intact its high cultural tradition.24 Muzaffar Alam also has argued that *Sabk-i-Hindi* signified a dialogue between the Persian language and the Indian cultural ethos.25

20 Muzaffar Alam points to the earliest contact between the Indian civilization and an emergent ‘New Persian Culture’ some time around the third quarter of the ninth century, when Sind was integrated into the Saffarid Kingdom by Ya’qub bin Abi Lais. Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India (1200-1890)*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 115.
22 ‘Sabk-i Hindi or the ‘Indian Style’ is used generally as both a stylistic and a regional term, referring to the Persian poetry composed in India in a particular mode of expression during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
24 Robinson, ‘Perso-Islamic culture in India from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century’, pp. 110-11; See also Momin Mohiuddin, *The Chancellery and Persian epistolography under the Mughals, from Babur to Shah Jahan, 1526-1658: A Study on Insha, Dar al-Insha, and Munshis based on original documents*, Iran Society, 1971, pp. 24-28, for a more detailed description of the characteristics of *Sabk-i-Hindi*. He states that one feature of the Indianisation of Persian was the accumulation of loan-words from
The third phase of Indo-Persian culture followed under the Mughals. It was during Akbar’s reign that Persian was declared as the language of administration at all levels above the village (the village records were kept in local language). A large number of Iranian migrants contributed to the expansion of Persian. Persian lexicographies were compiled and Akbar ordered establishing madrasas in primary and advance levels. Akbar’s reform in the prevailing primary and secondary education was influenced by the Iranian noble Mir Fathullah Shirazi. Beahmans, Kayasthas (of the accountant and scribe caste) and Khatri’s (of the trading and scribe caste of the Punjab) in particular joined madrasas in large numbers to acquire training in the Persian language and literature, which now promised good careers in imperial service. Kumkum Chatterjee has argued that Persian represented: a ‘secular’, aspect of Islamic civilization, that provided a new sphere where both Muslims and Hindus could enter imperial service based on their proficiency in the Persian language. She added that Persianized culture in Mughal India was primarily a part of the political culture associated with the state and the ruling classes who embodied and/or served it on the one hand and functioned as a cosmopolitan, elite culture to which non-Muslim Mughal aristocrats subscribed on the other hand. Thus, the vernacular due to the natural linguistic development of Persian in a foreign land amongst foreign people, as well as the influence of Indian myths and legends.

25 The first major voice against sabk-i hindi on literary as opposed to personal of linguistic ground was that of Lutf ’Ali Beg Azar (d.1781) who in his Tazkira-i Atashkada (Fire Temple) of 1779 came out specifically against the Mughal poet of Iranian origin Talib Amuli and Sa’ib. Raza Quli Khan Hidayat echoed Azar’s sentiments about the Sabk-i Hindi style but again framed in the debate of the classical, middle period and modern poets in his Majma ’ul-Fusaha’ (Meeting Place of the Eloquent) of 1871. The hostility of Azar and Hidayat has also been attributed to the Iranian literary movement called Bazghasht-i Adabi or Literary Return with valorizing of the central Iranian lands and rendering the Central and South Asian Persianate world marginal and fragmented. Sunil Sharma, ‘Redrawing the Boundaries of ‘Ajam in Early Modern Persian Literary Histories’ in Facing Others: Iranian Identity Boundaries and Modern Political Culture Conference, eds. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, (forthcoming: Palgrave MacMillan). Also see, Shamsur Rahman Faruqui, ‘A Stranger in The City: The Poetics of Sabk-e Hindi’, The Annual of Urdu Studies, Vol. 19, 2004, p.72; Alam, ‘The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan’, pp. 177-182.


27 ‘Persianization was indeed perceived to be an aspect of Islam, though it represented the political culture of Islamic civilization, sometimes described even as the “secular” aspect of Islamic civilization’. Kumkum Chatterjee, The Cultures of History in Early Modern India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, p. 130.

28 Persian thus had a utilitarian appeal for many Hindu literate, gentry communities with traditions of bureaucratic service under various governments. Persian proficiency was in fact the necessary first step for a person with ambitions in administrative service at all levels in the nawabi administration and zamindari’s. The acquisition of Persian was tied to a formal education. Persian literacy also provided an avenue for
Persian was the most functional, pragmatic, and accomplished vehicle of communication. Many historians have also emphasized the important role of Persian in elite and court circles, to the extent that knowledge of Persian became a status symbol. Muzaffar Alam has emphasized Persian's status as the language of politics before, during and after the Mughal period. Persian, says Alam, became a crucial vehicle for the mode and idiom of politics that Mughal rule attempted to propagate. It was under the Mughals that Persian was revitalized ‘due to convergence of certain factors within the trajectory of Mughal politics.' Among these Alam includes the presence of a large number of Iranians who accompanied Humayun, and Akbar's interest in promoting social, cultural, and intellectual contacts with Iran. Akbar extended its appeal to non-Muslims by having parts of the great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, translated into Persian from Sanskrit. Persian poetry became an important vehicle to express the Mughal policy of accommodating diverse religious traditions. Mughal poetry signified a fine blending of rhetorical excellence and grandeur of thought, in which thought occupied a superior position. In this sense, under the Mughals' Persian became the language of the Hindu political elites and higher civil servants. By Jahangir's reign members of the Kayastha writer caste had attained proficiency in ornamental Persian epistolography. A remarkable form of cultural syncretism expressed through Persian was historical writing by Hindu historians in a Muslim idiom.

Kumkum Chatterjee states that in addition to its utilitarian and practical value, Persian literacy, together with a broader Persianized culture associated with it, had come to be regarded as a vehicle of refinement and sophistication essential for all those who sought to move in high political circles. She also talks about the connection between culture and the production of history—specifically, between a Persianized Mughal

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Ambitious gentry families to establish personal and social connections with aristocrats and even royalty. Chatterjee, *Cultures of History in Early Modern India*, pp. 219-221.


30 Alam, 'Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan', p. 158.


32 Alam, 'Culture and Politics of Persian in Pre-colonial Hindustan', p. 171.


34 Chatterjee, *Cultures of History in Early Modern India*, p. 228.
political culture and history writing during late eighteenth century Bengal (discussed in detail in Chapter V of this thesis).

The fourth phase of Indo-Persian culture can be said to be under the late Mughal-early colonial period. The end of the Mughal Empire was not the end of Indo-Persian culture. It flourished in the successor states to the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century. The British themselves used Persian as an official language in India until 1837-38. The records of Arcot revenue administration in the Supreme Court at Madras on 10 October, 1808 shows languages used at the Arcot court. Persian and English were used as the two main mediums for written correspondence, and also Persian along with Marathi were used as the principal languages for keeping accounts.\(^{35}\) In this context, Bengal is particularly important as Persian has a long history there, from pre Mughal times till colonial times. Bengal was also the place where the British first came into contact with Persian; and province became the laboratory where they conducted their experiments using Persian as the language of administration. We now focus firmly on the long history of Persian in Bengal, before moving on to the history of Persian in India in the eighteenth century.

**Persian in Bengal**

Persian language and culture played an important role in Bengal since the thirteenth century, when it was introduced in the wake of the invasion of Bakhtyar Khalji (a military officer of the newly implanted Turkish dynasty in north India) who overthrew the Sena dynasty of Bengal. Through this contact, according to Richard Eaton and others, Bengal inherited three elements of the Persian medieval world to establish itself as part of the Delhi Sultanate viz. the pre-Muslim Persian tradition of monarchy and statecraft, Turkish and Tajik military bureaucracy and army, and a monetized economy.\(^{36}\) Eaton argues that during the Sultanate period the independent sultans of Bengal articulated their

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claims to political authority in Perso-Islamic terms. They adopted an elaborate court ceremony modelled on the Sassanian imperial tradition, employed a hierarchical bureaucracy, and promoted Islam as a state-sponsored religion.\footnote{Eaton, \textit{Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier}, p. 47.} One of the wealthiest provinces in India, Bengal patronized a typical variety of Muslim religious institutions and Persianate literary and historical works, partly to demonstrate their continuing ties to the distant but still prestigious Perso-Islamic world. Sonargaon, Pandua, Midnapur, Jahangirnagar (Mughal), Murshidabad (late Mughal early colonial) and Hughli (British) were centres of Perso-Islamic sciences, language and literature in Bengal.

It is also useful to look at the spread of Persian in Bengal not only in literary terms, but in the context of geographical and economic networks. Sanjay Subrahmanyan explains how Persianized culture spread in the maritime regions of the Bay of Bengal when it became a part of what he terms an ‘Iranian world economy’.\footnote{Sanjay Subrahamanyam, ‘Persianization and ‘Mercantilism’ in bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700’, in Sanjay Subrahamanyam, \textit{Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to Ganges}, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 48.} In Husainshahi Bengal, in the early sixteenth century, Persian had unchallenged dominance as the official language of the court, even if ‘Bengali never lost its usefulness in social communication.\footnote{Ibid, p. 55. Illustrated classic Persian themes, such as Jami’s \textit{Yisuf wa Zulaikha}, or Nizami’s \textit{Sikandar Nama} were produced in Bengal under the Husain Shahis between 1507-1532.} Apart from trade, the Sufi presence in Bengal also helped the spread of Persian and Persianate culture. Later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries both Persian and varieties of Hindavi (such as Awadhii) were considered literary languages, and were associated with the Mughal political power.

Persianization in Mughal Bengal was different from that under the Bengal sultanate. One example can be given from apigraphy. By the Mughal period, the tendency towards greater use of Persian was increasing and even architectural inscriptions (which had been in Arabic in the pre Mughal period) were in Persian.\footnote{Eaton, \textit{Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier}, p. 171. The connection between Persian and Bengali has been explored in some detail by Eaton; he says that many poets translated Perso-Islamic romances into the Bengali language, and also attempted to adopt the whole range of Perso-Islamic civilization to the Bengali cultural universe. As a result of prolonged contact between Persianized Turks and Bengalis since the early}
change was that Persianization in Mughal Bengal spread among a much larger segment of the region’s literate gentry and landed aristocracy in comparison to that in Sultanate Bengal.\textsuperscript{41} Persianization in Bengali culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries functioned as the culture of the elites of Mughal Bengal, and particularly those associated with political system.\textsuperscript{42} Persian in pre colonial Bengal thus had a part to play in the political culture, and it was also used for writing histories.\textsuperscript{43}

**Persian in the Eighteenth Century**

Revisionist scholarship on Mughal India has argued for emphasis on communities, including cultural and linguistic communities, rather than class or personality as important themes for the study of Mughal and post Mughal India. This is particularly relevant for the eighteenth century since most post-Mughal states were based on ethnic or sectarian grouping, such as the Marathas, the Jats and the Sikhs.

Although Persian was so closely associated with the heyday of Mughal rule in India, it would be incorrect to assume that the decline of Mughal power also meant an automatic decline of the language.\textsuperscript{44} In fact, there was enough patronage for and creativity within the Persian language in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for this period to be regarded as the period of the ‘highest refinement’ of Persianate culture.\textsuperscript{45} In fact, some scholars hold that in the eighteenth century Persian came to be more widely used than before as this was the time when involvement of Hindus in the language reached its peak. As evidence for this, Francis Robinson points to the patronage of

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\textsuperscript{41} Chatterjee, *Cultures of History in Early Modern India*, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 235.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{44} According to the literary historian of nineteenth century Lucknow, Abdul Halim Sharar, the knowledge of Persian language in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was greater in India than in Iran itself...this was particularly the case in the last [nineteenth] century when Lucknow was famed throughout the world for its progress and education, when every child could speak Persian, when ghazals [lyric poems] were on the lips of all, even the uneducated, courtesans and bazaar workers, and when even a bhand [entertainer] would jest in Persian. Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of Oriental Culture*, translated and edited by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994 (first published 1975).

\textsuperscript{45} Robinson, ‘Perso-Islamic culture in India’, p. 113.
Persian by the Hindu Raja of Benaras, expression of Hindu religious themes through the genre of the mathnawi, the Kayasth monopoly of insha writing, Persian lexicographies compiled by Hindus, and the involvement of Hindus in Persian history writing.46

By the end of the eighteenth century, not only was there a large corpus of Indo-Persian literature, but many Persian poetic forms and themes had also been adopted in various other languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, and of course, Urdu. In the nineteenth century, Calcutta (the then capital of British India) was an important administrative cultural and commercial centre. The city, with its Madrasa 'Aliya (also known as Calcutta Madrasa; established by Warren Hastings in 1781) and the Asiatic Society of Bengal (founded by Sir William Jones in 1784), became seats of oriental learning in India and led to the growth of greater interest in Persian studies.

Hence, although it is true that patronage for Persian at the centre declined with the decline of the Mughals, it is equally true that regional kingdoms still promoted the Persian-Islamic culture. Persian was the language of administration for many regional powers, including Murshidabad, Hyderabad, Arcot, Mysore, Awadh, Shajahanpur, and Rampur. It was also used under the Sikhs and the Marathas kingdoms. As Robinson puts it,

All these successor governments rested on the established systems of Mughal administration and the skills of its service classes. Thus, there continued to be a substantial Persian-speaking bureaucratic class. Indeed, the British were in the forefront of maintaining government-sponsored learning for this class when in 1781 they set up the Calcutta Madrasa. Gifted administrators and artists could find positions throughout the land: Men from the great service families of northern India traveled to Calcutta. Hyderabad and Arcot, Men from Kashmir, Brahmin pandits and Muslims forced out by Afghan or Sikh rule found work in northern India.47

46 Ibid, pp. 113-14.
The nineteenth century witnessed the growth of Persian prose due to various reasons, such as the increasing demand for more reading material, the sudden proliferation of magazines, periodicals, journals and newspapers in various languages and the growth of religious, political and educational institutions and societies. These themes will be explored in the relevant portions of the thesis.

Much has also been written about the response of Muslims in India to British rule and Western education. The period from 1857 to 1885 represented a time of gradual reconciliation of the Muslim community with the British education and culture, and also a period of transition of Urdu from its medieval period to modern. At the same time, there was also a growing demand for vernacular education breeding further tension between English and the Indian languages. It has also been argued that tension existed between Sanskrit or Persian on the one hand and other Indian languages on the other, the former two being the language of the elite and the ruling power. But since English was a symbol of foreign authority, its status was different from that of Sanskrit and Persian.

**Persian and Colonial Power**

The East India Company was the most important force behind and patron of Persian printing in India. This changed when private—initially British and later Indian—publishers got involved. We ask questions about the role of Persian print in a multilingual society, about the patrons and the commercial viability of publishing Persian printed works even after the language was replaced by English as an official language. To answer these questions we rely on British government surveys and reports, which comprehensively list Persian titles as well as printing presses.

Chapter I of the thesis is a study of the politics of the British treatment of Persian. As a successor state to the Mughals, the British found that they had to learn Persian in order to rule India. In the eighteenth century, British officials were learning the ‘classical’

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languages of India (Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) as well as many of the ‘vernacular’ languages. In this context, the study of Persian and the written records of the Mughal Empire made Persian relevant as a means of understanding the Indian “constitution”.

Persian was a chief language of transition between the information and knowledge regimes of pre-colonial and colonial political system.

Although the British set up a variety of new intermediary relationships, their interlocutors remained in large part the indigenous ‘under civil servants’—land-revenue officials, minor judges, and police officials inherited from the Mughal and other princely administration. In addition to taxation and law, the British were interested in acquiring knowledge about natural history and antiquities, local customs, diet, and general living conditions. Naturally, they sought as informants and privileged interlocutors their Indian counterparts—those of Brahminical background who had mastered Sanskrit, and maulvis (Muslim law-officer) and munshis adept in Arabic and Persian.

Many colonial officials and scholars themselves mastered Persian and Arabic, the court languages of Mughal India and with the help of Persian munshis compiled bilingual dictionaries and translated texts. Another group, that of Baptist missionaries was also busy discovering the languages of the subcontinent’s inhabitants. The impetus for printing in India, also, came from Christian missionaries. In Chapter II, we discuss the impact of the Serampore Mission Press. Not only did it print translations of the Bible (into different Indian languages) and text-books prepared by the teachers of the College Fort William but also published literary journals and newspapers as well as edited classics of earlier centuries. Under William Carey (whose career is discussed in Chapter II), the missionaries tried to introduce the Bible to Indians in ways that made its message

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more palatable, and indeed, comprehensible. Developments at the turn of the nineteenth century were to bring these different British groups and their respective indigenous collaborators together in a formalized institutional context as the East India Company set up a college at Fort William in Calcutta in 1800. Newly arrived officers studied Hindu, Islamic, and English law; civil jurisprudence, political economy, general history, world geography, and mathematics. These groups and initiatives are discussed in some detail in Chapter II.

We fined ourselves in agreement with Bernard Cohn’s argument that the British successfully appropriated the Indian languages to serve as a crucial component in their construction of the system of rule. But we also go beyond this argument. Persian was not merely an instrument of rule. It was a language taught in village schools, and one of the many languages in which Indians living under colonialism communicated ideas and information. As a famous British report on the state of education in Bengal – that of William Adam (1835-1838) – showed that Persian was a language used not only by colonial officials. Thus, there emerged a genre of Persian textbooks, some of which were used in village and urban schools, and others at Fort William College to teach Persian to colonial officials. We examine in detail the genres of these Persian text books which formed an important part of the Persian book printing industry, and also examine the publishers who published these books, and the patronage system under which they were usually published.

Books are written and read by individuals, who leave their own imprint on them. We therefore also pay attention to both the British scholars who provided patronage to the translation and creation of Persian works, as well as the Indians who gave their expertise to this exercise. We also study the career of British Orientalist scholar Francis Gladwin in some detail, as his contribution to Persian studies was remarkable. In his recent work, Michael Dodson states that ‘at the most basic level, Orientalist research served to provide the colonial state with cultural information by which to rule the Company’s territories authoritatively, and with a strategy it conceived conducive to a
minimum of disruption to existent cultural and social structures'. In this sense Orientalists’ reliance upon informants and Persian sources is quite noticeable. The practices and work of Orientalists was utilized by the colonial state to consolidate and authorize its rule over the subcontinent. Simultaneously, Orientalism also depended to a large extent upon the social standing and cultural expertise of one of the state’s principal sets of Indian interlocutors, such as Persian munshis.

The Dynamics of Persian Publishing House

In Chapter III we discuss the history of the Persian printing press in India. There were many metropolitan centres where Persian publishing flourished. Calcutta was a major centre for the publication of Persian books of all genres. Using the work of Clark, the catalogue of printed books from Calcutta compiled by Shaw, as well as othersources, we sketch a brief history of Persian printing in Calcutta. Graham Shaw has recovered the names of nearly forty printers, 'amateur as well as professional', in at least seventeen presses around 1780. The General Committee of Public Instruction of the Government of India, the Calcutta School Book Society, the Calcutta Madrasa, and private printers brought out a number of Persian books between 1800 to 1837. The chapter analyzes the various genres of Persian books, which ranged from music, art and religion, to dictionaries, histories, religious commentaries and other subjects. The relative popularity of genres gives us an insight into the interests and priorities of the Persian reading public.

In this chapter we bring into focus also the North Western Provinces, which was another traditional centre of Persian book printing. We discuss how with the development of lithograph printing throughout North India, commercial publishing emerged. The study brings to life the world of writer-publishers. Most publishers belonged to the traditional scribal classes with a history in services and a cultural background in the Indo-Persian

tradition. In territories belonging earlier to the Mughal Empire upper class Muslim and Hindu scribal caste such, Kayasthas, Khatris, and Brahmins were involved in the new print culture. Some of them were essentially those who drawn into the realm of print through the newspaper business. For various reasons, the colonial government maintained detailed records of Persian books and the printing presses that published them in the North Western Province in the nineteenth century, and we have used the reports and records, specially the ‘Notes on Native Presses in the North Western Provinces’ for empirical research.

While Benedict Anderson saw the advent of print as a development that led to the emergence of one single form of the vernacular as the commonly accepted, ‘official’ form, Francesca Orsini, in her study of nineteenth century Banaras, complicates this picture. According to Orsini, the coming of print culture led to the diversification, and not simplification, of the forms of language. Orsini’s focus is less on colonial or royal patronage of publishing, but on its commercial aspects, dictated by market demands. Our analysis of Persian printed books confirms Orsini’s view that commercial aspects of printing led to its rapid growth, and that commercial printing for the market was much larger than printing under patronage. The Najaf Kishore press was perhaps the most renowned of all the Persian printing presses in India, and is the subject of an immensely rich and detailed work by Ulrike Strark. In this chapter, our focus will be on a lesser known Persian printing press that had branches all over North India, and whose contribution to Persian Print was no less than that of Najaf Kishore. This was the Mustafa’i Press.

Subjects and Readership

The scheme of subject-and readership will also be discussed in Chapter III. In the year 1849, for instance, the majority of books were in Persian, Urdu and Arabic languages,

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57 See, Imtiaz Ahmad ‘The Ashraf-Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Social Structure in India’ Indian Economic and social History Review, 1966, pp. 268-78
and consisted chiefly of reprints and translations into Urdu of Persian and Arabic works, among which treatises on medicine and editions of the Quran appeared to command the readiest sales. Persian printed books were issued from most of the important cities of northern and central India such as Agra, Delhi, Meerut, Benares, Bareilly, and Indore.

The existence of a multilingual society necessitates multilingual printing. In late Mughal and colonial India a large corpus of grammatical, lexicographic and commentarial literature appeared. Literate audiences crossed over religious boundaries, which made multilingual publishing necessary as Hindus made up a significant part of the Persian-educated service elite. At the top of the literati stood a cross-communal class which was educated in Persian and found in Urdu a flexible medium for literary and non-literary communication. The large number of Persian printed works show a vigorous tradition of Persian scholarship and its continuing importance in Indian intellectual culture, and also reflects the literary tastes of educated Indians.

In Chapter IV we discuss the theme of print culture with reference to Indo-Persian historiography and translation. Chapter V looks at the issue of Persian lexicography and debates around the usage of 'pure' Persian, in which Ghalib became central figure. Finally, in Chapter VI we analyze the complex process of the replacement of one language by another. Taking colonial education policy as the context (Anglo-Vernacular), this chapter focuses on the marginalization of Persian on account of the new education policy of the British government in India. This chapter explains the process by which Urdu replaced Persian not only as the language of official business, education and communication, but also as the language in which religious texts were written and theological controversies and debates conducted.

This thesis is a detailed study of the production of Persian books in India over a hundred year period of political and social change. It deals with a period of transition and flux that get reflected in the history of Persian print as well. My concern with this topic was informed by the question: what was the fate of Persian with the coming of print?

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While other vernacular languages like Urdu adapted themselves to the new technology of print, could Persian also do this? If the arrival of print encouraged vernacular languages, was Persian able to compete with them? Did it lose its importance, or did it carve out a space for itself in the nineteenth century? These are the questions which this thesis explores, and hopes to answer.