CHAPTER V

A BRIEF SURVEY OF HINDUS' CONTRIBUTION
IN THE PRECEDING CENTURY

History is a continuous stream of events in human affairs, ideas and ideals, society and culture including literature, philosophy, religion and art. The periodisation of it is bound to be somewhat arbitrary and inadequate. It will not amount to be a futile attempt to know the activities of the Hindu scholars and men of letters who had contributed a lot so far the Indo-Persian literature of the seventeenth century is concerned. An attempt has been made here to give a brief survey of the literary activities of the Hindus during the period.

The seventeenth century started with the last few years of the reign of the great Mughal Emperor Akbar (A.H. 963-1014/ A.D. 1556-1605). The period saw a vast majority of people living together peacefully, sharing each other's feelings and ideas, making no unwanted moves to cause unnecessary ill-feeling. Persian as a language was accepted by both Hindus and Muslims, more so because, his free and encouraged patronage boosted the spirit of the learned scholars both from inside and outside the country. Although the study of Persian which
was not very popular and so very current amongst the natives of India from the time of the Mahmud's conquest of India till the reign of Akbar when it received a fillip in A.H.990/A.D. 1582 with the enactment that all Government record should be written in Persian that a vast number of people of both Hindu and Muslim started learning the language more than they did before.¹ Many translation works of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sinhasan Batisi, Lilawati, Nal-Daman etc were translated into Persian by Hindu scholars.

The real contribution of the Hindus towards the Indo-Persian literature began from the reign of Jahangir (A.H.1014-1037/A.D.1605-1628). During his reign, there had been a very cordial relations between all sections of people. Jahangir's relation with the Hindus was very satisfactory. Hindu officials manned many of the important offices. Rai Ghansur was one of the trusted Diwans whom the Emperor relied most. It is recorded in history that none was converted into Islam during his rule. Like his great father, Jahangir had all the respect for men of letters and the Hindu scholars of both Persian and Sanskrit had a field day during the entire period of his reign. He used to reward scholars and poets for their works or poems. ² Once Raja Suraj Singh brought one Hindu poet to the Royal court who read a verse in Hindi. The Emperor was pleased so

¹ Indo-Iranica: Vol.XV, No. 4, 1962, p. 50
² Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri: p. 205
much so that he gave him away with an elephant." Jahangir was more a mixture of opposites than not. He is credited by the orthodox Muslims with restoring the festivals and fairs of the Muslims. He used to celebrate Muharram, Ramzan, Sab-i-Barat as well as that of Rakhibandhan, Shivaratri, Dusseran and Deepawali festivals in which he used to take part. His period so far the Indi-Persian literature is concerned, is called the period of translations.

Though the period of Shahjahan (A.H.1037-1078/A.D.1627-1657) is admittedly the most flowering period of the Mughal rule, yet the first ten years of his reign were decidedly marked by orthodoxy and events moved on the theological lines. He revived the pilgrim-tax though it was remitted at the instance of the Kavindracarya of Benares whom he revered so much. His reign is marked for his constructive achievements, yet he was nevertheless than that of his forerunners in respect of educational and literary achievements. During the whole history of India, his reign had been described as the most peaceful and prosperous period. The abundance of Maktabs and Madrassas, effectiveness of art and literature and gathering of men of letters speaks clearly that behind all these activities, Shahjahan played a very vital role. If we cast a

3. Abdullah : p. 46
4. The Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress : 1946, p. 289
glance on the contents of Shahjaha-Namah and 'Aml-i-Saleh in which poets, scholars and literary persons are described, we come to know that his period was admittedly the flowering period of the Mughal rule. Mahapatra and Ram Vas were two famous musicians who adorned his court. A multitude of new words and impressions, specially from Arabic and streamed into the language and considerably enriched even the national vernaculars and speech. Many Hindu poets both major and minor wrote their verse in Persian. Many Insha works were written by Hindu Munshis during this period. Dara Sikuh, the eldest son of Shahjahan was a patron of men of literature and beside being profound in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, he himself brought a good number of works and verses in Persian. Many Hindu religious works were translated into Persian due to his encouragement.

The period of Aurangzeb (A.H.1069-1119/A.D.1658-1707) was neither very bright nor gloomy so far the cultural and artistic output of the Persian scholars are concerned. An air of decline had certainly set in. The period might be termed as a beginning of the end so far the Persian literature, Mughal architecture and fine-arts are concerned. Abolishing the post of Poet-laureate, he further pushed the position of Persian poetry into the back-scene. His stoppage of patronage to literature was another nearer step to the end of what
otherwise termed the glorious chapter of Indo-Persian literature
With the death of Aurangzeb, "the Persian poetry in India was
demoted to secondary rank when India ceased to be the el-
Dorado of Persian Emigration, for two obvious reasons, the
denial of patronage of poetry and the discontinuity of
cultural contacts between India and Persia." Yet the later half
of the seventeenth century marked the beginning of some of the
manifest characteristic of Persian poetry. The sophisticated
approach towards life revealed in their compositions, the poets
of this period set a new trend in the Indo-Persian poetry.

With the above discussion we have come to know that
under the different Mughal Emperors during the whole seventeenth
century, Indo-Persian literature in the form of poetry,
Epistolography, Historiography, Translations etc have
contributed a lot to enrich this rich language in India. A
brief account is given below as to the Hindus' contribution
to the different branches of prose works etc of the period.

Poets of the seventeenth century India.

By the time the Mughal rule reached the seventeenth
century, Persian as a language of culture reached a new dimension
with so many people both Hindus and Muslims took to it for
bettering their own position, inside or outside the Royal

The century saw some of the great men of learning who excelled not only in prose but also in versification. The present researcher has tried his best to give an account of some of the Hindu poets who lived during the period.

Banwali Das

He was in the service of Dara Sikuh. Banwali Das was basically a Masnavi poet of Delhi.

Bidil, Chandar Man

Chandar Man Bidil of Madhupuri had earlier composed the Ramayana in prose and he versified the same in A.H.1104/A.D.1692. The poem was called 'Nargistan' and is known as 'Ramayan-i-Bidil'. The Masnavi is divided into six daftars.

Brahman, Chandra Bhan

He was a great Calligraphist of Shikasta writing and his name is mentioned in Tazkirah-i-Khush-Nawisan. He was one of the greatest poets of the Shah Jahan's court. He hailed from Lahore but according to some Akbarabad. He was a great

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6. Etha: No. 1964
friend of Prince Dara Sikuh who introduced him to his father.
The first verse which Brahman recited before Shah Jahan was
the famous verse:

Towards the end of his days, he reclined to Benares
and dedicated the remainder of his days to religious practices
as a true Hindu devotee and died in A.H.1037/A.D.1627. He left
a Diwan, 'Munsha'i-t-i-Brahman'. He also left the following works.

1. Chahar Chaman
2. Guldasta-i-'Ishq
3. Tuhaftul Anwar
4. Nigar Namah
5. Tuhaft-u'1-Fusaha
6. Majma'u-Fukara
7. Nadirun-Nukat

Krishna Das

He was another renowned poet of the seventeenth century.
The following famous verse is attributed to Krishna Das.


Mathura Das

He hailed from Bengal and during the reign of Shah Jahan, he contributed works on Persian Calligraphy and on prose writing.

Mirza Manuhar Tusi

Although he was serving the great Emperor Akbar, yet he received recognition during the reign of Jahangir. He was the first renowned Hindu poet to achieve a prestigious position so far the versification in Persian poetry is concerned. He had a Masnawi to his credit.

Salim Kashmiri

He was a Kashmiri Brahman converted into Islam. He was in the service of Prince Muhammad 'Azam and he had a Masnawi, 'Azam Shah'. He died between A.H.1119-1130/A.D.1707-1717. Almost all the Diwans of the poet are preserved.

Sunder Das

He was one of the court-poets of Shah Jahan. He wrote

two remarkable books on poetry.

Some of the lesser known poets who were alive during this period are:

Bir Das, Bhushan Kavi, Chintamani Kavi, Raja Shambhu Nath.

Works on Epistolography

By the time India entered into the seventeenth century, Hindu scholars and Munshis became expert in Epistolography (Fann-i-Insha)." It must be noted that during the entire Mughal rule, Insha was considered as one of the important branches of literature and the age of Shah Jahan is specially characteristic of the development of this art-form for many reasons." A number of works of artistic prose by Hindu writers have come down to us, the account of which are given below.

Haft Anjuman

This is a very notable work on Insha written by Awadhi Raj Rustom Khan which was collected by his son Hamayat Yar in A.H.1110/A.D.1698. The author was a Hindu convert who served as a Secretary to Rustom Khan and Raja Jai Singh. He died in A.H.1068/A.D.1657.

Insha-i-Harkeran

Harkeran Das was the son of Mathura Das and was a Kamboi by caste. He belonged to Multan. He was the Chief Secretary of Nawab I'tabar Khan (A.H.1034-1046/A.J.1624-1638), the Governor of Akbarabad who was one of the most noteworthy nobles of Jahangir's court.

The work is a well-known treatise containing models of epistolary correspondence of letters in personal capacity, official documents with instructions as to how princess, nobles, merchants and others are to be correctly addressed. The work also contains specimens of letters of day to day business, legal documents, mandates, petitions, grants, arguments etc.

Karnama-i-Jethmal

It contains letters written by Jethmal on behalf of his master Mu'tabar Khan. The last date mentioned in the work is November 30, 1705.

Khulasat-ul-Makatib

This is an epistolary work of Sujan Rai written in A.H. 1110/A.J. 1698. The work is important as a guide to correspondence.
Majmu'a-i-Munshiyat

The work contains a collection of letters written by several Munshis on their behalf and on behalf of their masters. Rai Kunjmal, Munshi Balkrishna Mehta, Udai Raj, Rai Sobha Chand are some of the writers whose letters are included in this work. The work was of the Aurangzeb's period.

Nujidul-Insha

It is the work of Lekh Raj Munshi and it contains the correspondences of Kamgar Khan and Ali Quli Khan. It was collected and edited by Champat Rai in A.H.1110/A.D.1698 with Sayed Ashraf Nazandaran, the teacher of Princess Zin-un-Nisa.

Munshat-i-Brahman

Chandra Bhan Brahman was the greatest Hindu scholar of the reign of Shah Jahan who was a native of Lahore.

The present work is a collection of letters issued to ministers, nobles and eminent men by the author. The work is useful for the reign of Shah Jahan.
Nigar Nama—i—Munshi Malek Zada

It was compiled in A.H.1095/A.D.1683 jointly with his son Meghraj. It contains letters, official correspondences and warrants of appointments and patents of office. It is very useful for a study of the revenue practices of the reign of Aurangzeb.

Some of the other Hindu writers whose epistolary works adorned the seventeenth century are:

Works on Historiography

The habit of writing history in a systematic manner was introduced in India by the Muslims. Later on, the Hindus developed the taste and in course of time a large number of remarkable and useful works in Persian came to be written by Hindu historians which occupy a special place so far the history and historiography of medieval India is concerned. Below is a list of such works written by Hindu historians or scholars during seventeenth century.

Chahar chaman

It was written by Chandma Bhan Brahman in A.H.1057/A.D.
1647. The work is divided into 4 parts. Parts 3 and 4 contain among other things letters written by the writer to his Emperor Shah Jahan, some of the high officials at court and his own relatives. The writer also gives his own autobiography and records of some wise proverbs, moral dissertations on certain subjects etc.

**Khulasat-ul-Tawarikh**

It is a general history of India coming down to the death of Shah Jahan written by Sujan Rai of Batala in A.H. 1107/A.D. 1695 after a labour of two years.

The work is divided into two sections besides some introductory chapters which contains:

(a) a detailed description of the Hindus, their customs, manners, castes and sciences.

(b) a vivid geographical account of the 20 provinces of India during the reign of Aurangzeb.

The work besides giving economic description of the country, also makes a mention of contemporary saints, scholars and teachers. His description of the Punjab and his references of the Sikhs form a very valuable part of the work.
Lubb-ut-Tawarikh

It is a general history of India abridged from the work Tarikh-i-Farishhta and enlarged from other sources with a supplement. It was compiled by Rai Hindraban, son of Rai Bharamal (or Biharmal) in A.H.1101/A.D.1689.

The work begins with the reign of Shihah-uddin Shuri up to the 33rd year of Auranzeb’s reign (A.H.1191/A.D.1289) and the work was dedicated to the Emperor. The work is a historical survey of India and is divided into ten chapters.

Rajawali

It is a history of ancient Hindu kings of Delhi written by Banwali Das Wali in A.H.1060/A.D.1650. It is a standard book and quoted by reliable historians.

Shah Jahan Namah

It is an abridgement of the history of India compiled in the reign of Shah Jahan by Bhagwan Das. As a general history of India which contains account from the time of Adil to the reign of Shah Jahan, the book is important and often quoted by others while describing the medieval period.

Translation works of the period

Translation is the easiest form of literature by which one's understanding of a particular language is recognised. This is the best way to unite the cultures of different nations. Therefore it is not surprising that by the time the Mughal reign entered the seventeenth century, many Hindus have learnt the Persian language by heart and became master over the language. As Dr. F. Mujtabai says:

Persian translation of Hindu literature and Persian writings on Hindu thought and practice should not be regarded simply as fragments of the past history of Hindu-Muslim relationship. They are of a living significance and reveal an existing human situation which constitutes a part of the history of our age. These writings are, in fact, the meeting place of two different world views, two distinct spheres of language and thought each trying to know, understand and explain the other. It is here that the dialogue between Islam and Hinduism actually takes place. These writings are vivid reflections of how the two great religions with different traditions and backgrounds, with equal potentialities to resist and to survive, but, at the same time with the wealth of their spiritual and humanistic values came together and without losing their identities, joined hands to build up the Medieval Indian civilization, with its richness and all its achievements. 10

10. Mujtabai, F.: The aspects of Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations, p. 91
It is no surprising that the translation works by the Hindus of some of their religious works and books into Persian gives an idea of the scope and extent of the Persian works which were the result of the translation during this seventeenth century. A list of such works are given below.

11. Bada'i'ul Funun

The name of the translator is given both as Midni Mal or Dharam Narain. This is a translation of the Sanskrit work 'Lilavati' which was translated into Persian in A.H. 1074/A.D. 1663.

14. Gulzar-i-Hal

It is the translation work of Krishna Misra's famous philosophical drama 'Probodhacandradrya'. It was rendered into Persian by Banwali Das Wali who was the Secretary of Dara Shikuh in A.H. 1073/A.D. 1662. The work was lithographed in Lucknow in A.H. 1294/A.D. 1877.

Hansa-i-Jawahir

This is a translation in verse of the work 'Kalopakhyara'.

12. Ibid
13. Ethe : p. 2259
into Persian by the Hindu poet Jaisukhlal 'Zirak'. It was rendered into Persian during seventeenth century.

Masnavi-i-Ramayana

it is the Persian translation of the Ramayana in Masnavi form by Girdhari Das of Delhi. It was translated into Persian in A.H.1036/A.D.1626.

The Ramayana was translated into Persian prose by Chandra Man, son of Sri Ram Bidil in A.H.1097/A.D.1685. It was also translated by Debi Das Kayastha and Gopal son of Sri Govind in A.H.1093/A.D.1681.

Nazuk-i-Kheyalat

This is a translation of the Sanskrit work 'Atma Vilas' by Chandar Bhan Brahman.

Shams-ul-Ashuat

This is a work on Indian music compiled in A.H.1139

15. Rieu : Vol.1, p. 56
16. Abdullah : p. 88
17. Ivanow, W.: Nos. 682 and No.683
A.D.1697 during the reign of Aurangzeb. The author is said to be Ras Baras who translated it from a Sanskrit work 'Sangit'. The work is divided into six chapters.

Sinhasan Batisi or Dwatrimsati

This work was translated into Persian by Bharu Mal Khatri during the reign of Jahangir. Interestingly, both the writers of the work, "Abdiyat-i-Farsi men Hinduon ka hissa" and "Hindu efforts in Persian Studies", Dr. S. Abdullah and Dr. S.N. Gorekar respectively have written that the work was translated into Persian for the first time in A.H.1119/A.D.1707 by Bharu Mal Khatri during the reign of Jahangir. Incidentally, the year mentioned above was but the last year of Aurangzeb and not of Jahangir.

The same work was translated into Persian by another two translators, namely Kishan Das Maluk Chand Lahuri during Jahangir's reign and Lonkiran Harkiran in the year A.H.1061/A.D.1650.

Miscellaneous works written during this period

Some of the miscellaneous works of the Hindus of the

18. Abdullah: p. 88. But according to Dr. S.N. Gorekar, his name was Bharu Mal Khatri. See: Indo-Iranica: Vol. XV, No.7, 1962, p. 22
period are given below.

20

Badai-ul-Funun

This is a treatise on arithmetic on Lilawati composed by Dharam Narayan, son of Kalyan Mal Kayastha in A.H.1074/A.D.1663 and the work was dedicated to Aurangzeb.

21

Damishq-i-Khayal

It is a Sufistic work written by Bal Krishan Brahman of Hisar in A.H.1085/A.D.1674. It is written in a flowery style interspersed with verses partly by the author himself and partly by other prominent Sufi workers.

Farhang-i-Kardus

This is a miscellaneous work written by Jagat Rai which contains accounts of mathematical calculations about areas, provinces, land revenue etc.

20. Ethe: No.2259. But according to Ivanow, the name of the author is Kind Mal, son of Dharam Das Narayan Kayastha. See, ASB: Vol.I, No.1497.
21. Ethe : No.1897
Guldasta-i-Saltanat

It is the work of Chandra Bhan Brahman. It describes the daily life of Shah Jahan and the court ceremonies.

Qasaish Namah

The work consists of wonderful escapes. The authorship and the year of composition of the work is conflicting. Rieu and Ivanow have mentioned Khwaja Raj Karan whereas Ethe has ascribed Raj Karn and Bakran Kayastha as its authors. The later has given A.H.1101/A.D.1689 as the date of composition. The main work is divided into seven chapters, each called Qasaish. The style is ornate and decorated.

Karnamah

This is a work on stories written by the author of Nigar Namah, Munshi Malik Zada.

Matacharra

It was written by Lal Bihari, son of Kahed Singh, an

23. A.S.B.: Vol.II, No.113
24. Ethe : No. 825
inhabitant of Bhojpur of the Shahabad district. The author was a friend of Amirullah, who was a courtier of Aurangzeb.

The work deals with Hindu sociology, customs and beliefs.