

PREFACE

The comparatively recent trends in Medieval Indian History have centered around a multidimensional research; with a shift from biographical, political and military themes to cultural, economic and institutional ones. Attempts are now being made to study major institutions like Nobility. Nobility as an institution was of tremendous significance, for the functioning of the Mughal Empire in India.

Nobility has been and continues to remain one of the most favourite themes of research among the historians of medieval India. As early as 1934, R.P. Khosla with his work, Mughal Kingship and Nobility, drew our attention to this important institution next only to Kingship. With the emergence of a "New History" of medieval India in the aftermath of the partition and Independence, a new generation of scholars led by Satish Chandra's seminal work, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740 (1959), have vastly enriched scholarship on this institution. It includes Athar Ali's Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb (1966), S.B.P. Nigam, Nobility under the Sultans of Delhi, (1968). P.S. Bedis, Mughal Nobility under Akbar, (1985), Rita Joshi's The Afghan Nobility and the Mughals (1985), M. Athar Ali., The apparatus of empire, Awards of Ranks, offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility (1574-1658) (1985).

Except Rita Joshi, no other scholar has exclusively dealt with a single racial group. Persian component of the nobility under the Mughals deserves a monograph on account of its contribution in varied and significant fields like military achievements administration, art, literature and fine arts. By sheer dint of their military ability and prowess in the battlefield they carved out a significant place for themselves in the politics

of the medieval period, so much so that they were the key players in the politics of northern India on the eve of Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739.

Though the two names 'Iran' and 'Persia' are not synonyms, as explained in the outlines of Chapters, for the sake of clarity and consistency, I have used the commonly accepted names 'Persian' and 'Persia'. The term Iran has been used under the Sassainans, who called their empire 'Iranshar' as well as in the recent times since 1935, under Shah's regime, to denote the earlier topography and linguistic distinction.

It is well known that relations between Persia and India are many centuries old. A mere mention of Persia is enough to recall in the mind of an Indian the ancient ties of fellowship and unity. In that hoary past, the dawn of history, our ancestors and those of the Persians belonged to the same family of Aryans.

There was great similarity between the old Persian language and the Vedic Sanskrit. Since those time there has been a regular exchange between Persia and India in the sphere of literature, art and culture. Right from the days of Darius the Great, to end of the Mughal rule in India, the two countries have been influencing each other through an exchange of ideas. Quite a number of Persian words have been absorbed in our languages and now form a part of the vocabulary. During Muslim rule in India, all administrative work was done in Persian. Persian was then the court language; it was also adapted as the language of day to day use by the educated classes. That is how a large number of Persian words have become current coin in the languages spoken in India. The culture of Persia has had its influence on Indian culture. Persian, again, was the vehicle of exchange on the cultural plane between the two countries during Muslim rule in India.

Reading of Firdausi's Shahnamah, Rumi's Masnavis, Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat, Sadi's Golestan and Hafez's Diwan became a mark of culture in India. Persian poetry too, found a congenial abode here. We are proud of a magnificent array of poets who sang in Persian - Amir Khosraw, Hasan Dehlavi, Urfi, Saib, Naiziri, Kalim and Ghalib. The close interaction between the Mughals and the Safavids created an Indo-Persian school in painting, music, sculpture and architecture. In the north, the 15th century king of the Sharqi Sultanate built magnificent buildings in the Iranian – Timurid style and proudly called their capital, Jaunpur, the 'Shiraz of India'.

The ties of trade between the two countries are no less ancient. Maritime operations between the two countries assumed significant proportions in the past. More important, however is the fact that these relations were never allowed to be a chapter of history only, but were nurtured by the fund of mutual goodwill and common beliefs that exist between the two peoples. The 'Parsis' of India are an example of it.

During the Mughal period the Persian nobility played a fairly significant role in contemporary politics. Persians, generally treated by the Mughals as an indigenous Muslim group. That is why Mughals sometimes gave them liberal treatment, and sometimes due to their growing influence, their power had to be curbed. Continuous change in the attitude of the Mughal rulers towards the Persian nobility presents a very interesting study. In the present thesis, a modest attempt has been made to present an objective analysis of the process that was developing and functioning during the period under study. Without the Persian nobility and its multifaced contributions in all the facets of the Mughal Empire — mostly positive and at times negative — the Mughal empire would never have been what it was, nor its legacy in cultural arenas, as it is.

I am deeply obliged to Prof. R.C. Jauhri of the Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh for having suggested the theme, as well as valuable suggestions given.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Kiran Pawar, Prof. Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, who, ungrudgingly guided me in the preparation of this work. She guided me throughout with great care and thoroughness.

I am appreciative of the comments of Prof. Indu Banga, Department of History, Panjab University Chandigarh on the synopsis of the thesis. My special thanks to Dr. Devi Sirohi, Lecturer, Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh for her constant support and encouragement during my period of study. I am thankful to my Principal Dr. S.P. Shergill and the Headmistress Mrs. Hem Lata, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sector 31-D, Chandigarh for their co-operation.

I must place on record the help and co-operation, I received from the staff of the various research libraries, where I worked for the collection of materials. The libraries of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, authorities of National Archives, New Delhi, Panjab University Library, Dwarka Dass Library Chandigarh, the Central State Library Chandigarh, Guru Nanak Sikh Studies Centre, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Departmental Library, Department of Fine Arts of the Panjab University, Chandigarh. Sh. Tilak Raj and Surjit Singh of the Departmental Library History, deserve special mention for they provided me with all the material that I requested.

I am thankful to my husband Dr. Madhukar Arya, Lecturer, Department of Persian, Panjab University, Chandigarh for his co-operation and help in my thesis work. I am sincerely thankful to my parents Mrs. and Mr. D.B. Harnal, my brother S.K. Harnal,

my sisters Rita and Daisy and brother- in- law Dilip Sawhney and Puneet Verma for giving me encouragement, constantly.

I owe thanks to Mr. Keshav Dogra for the neat Computer Typing of the Script.

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(Honey Harnal) 29/9/98