



Literary Contributions under the Mughal Empire From 1526 to 1707: A Historical Study

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Abstract

The Mughal Empire (1526-1857) was a pivotal period in the Indian Subcontinent's cultural history. Babur established the Mughal Empire in 1526 after defeating the Sultan of Delhi Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat. During this time, the arts like painting, textiles, literature, poetry, and architecture thrived. Numerous works of literature were created by a wide range of artists, including Mughal rulers and nobles. Because Persian was the official and courtly language throughout the Mughal Empire, many literary works were written in it. Other regional languages saw literary growth as well. Many causes contributed to this, one of which being the Sufi and Bhakti saints who preached in local languages. Another aspect was that many Mughal emperors were patrons of literary works. Emperor Babur authored various poetry, and his narrative Baburnama has been much praised by academics. It was originally written in Turkish but was later translated into numerous languages. Many writers and poets emigrated from Persia to India, which was also a significant factor in the development of literature.

Keywords: The Mughal Empire, Subcontinent, Battle of Panipat, Sufi, Bhakti Saints, Baburnama



Introduction

During the reign of the Mughals, literature advanced dramatically. A great number of original and translated works were produced. Furthermore, literature developed not only in Persian but also in Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, and other regional languages. Akbar made Persian the state language, which aided in the development of its literature. Furthermore, with the exception of Akbar, all Mughal rulers were well-educated and supported learning. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the Mughal Empire ruled over a large portion of South Asia.¹

Literature in Babur and Humayun's Reign

Babur was a learned man. His autobiography Tuzuki-Babri was written in Turki and was so eloquently written that it was translated into Persian three times. He also penned poems in Turki and Persian, and his collection of Turki poems, Diwan (Turki), became well-known. Humayun was fluent in both Turki and Persian literature. In addition, he was well-versed in philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. He was a patron of scholars of many disciplines. Although Akbar was not educated, he provided the conditions that aided the blossoming of literature throughout his reign. The Persian language was encouraged, and great works in other languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, Turki, Greek, and others were translated into it. For this reason, he formed a distinct department. He kept a library full of books on diverse subjects and enjoyed the company of academic poets and philosophers who read books to him aloud, allowing him to get acquainted with Sufi, Christian, Zoroastrian, Hindu, and Jain literature.”² Under his support, several scholars came to prominence. Jahangir was well-educated as well. For the first seventeen years of his reign, he personally wrote his biography, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, while the remainder was compiled by Mautmid Khan.³ During Jahangir's reign, the Mughal Empire was built on a solid basis and gained the ability to survive successful rebellions and wars.⁴

Despite the fact that the Mughal empire was founded and perpetuated by military force, it did not actively repress the cultures and peoples it came to dominate; rather, it equalized and placated them through new administrative methods.⁵ Babur was a well-educated guy. Tuzuk-i-Baburi, his autobiography, was published in Turkish and was so skillfully written that it was translated three times into Persian. He also wrote poetry in both Turkish and Persian, and his collection of Turkish poems, Diwan (Turkish), rose to fame. Humayun succeeded him to the throne. Around the same period, his sister Gulbadan Begum penned “Humayunnama.” Humayun



also created a massive library. Humayun had a refined intellect and, like his father, was not only a fan of poetry but also penned enjoyable lines. His taste for other people's poems was likewise strong."⁶ "He perished as a consequence of a fall from his library's stairwell. Hundreds of millions of people were governed under the Mughal Empire. During the Mughal era, India was unified under one authority and had exceptionally flourishing cultural and political years. There were many Muslim and Hindu kingdoms scattered across India until the Mughal Empire's founders arrived..."⁷

Literature in Akbar's Reign

Emperor Akbar was also a fan of the arts, amassing a collection of over 24,000 manuscripts. Many scholars, poets, and authors were patronized, resulting in an increase in the production of creative works. During Akbar's reign, authors like Abul Fazl, Abul Faizi, Nizamuddin Ahmad, Abbas Khan Sherwani, and others wrote historical works. Abul Fazl, also known as Abu'l-Fazl bn Mubarak, was one of Akbar's Nine Jewels (nine remarkable members of the royal court).⁸ He penned Akbarnama, or the Book of Akbar, the regal chronicle of Akbar's reign. Abdul Hamid Lahori, Abul Fazl's disciple, composed the majority of the Padshahnama, the official chronicle of Shah Jahan's reign.

Literature in Jahangir's Reign

Emperor Jahangir was interested in art and architecture, and he, like his great-grandfather, Babur, authored an autobiography called Tuzk-e-Jahangiri or Jahangirnama. During his reign, he wrote notable literary and historical works such as 'Iqbalanam-i-Jahangiri' and 'Maasir-i-Jahangiri.'

Literature in Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb's Reign

Dara Shikoh, Shah Jahan's son, wrote extensively on Sufism. 'Majma-ul-Bahrain,' or 'The Confluence of the Two Seas,' was one of his main writings, in which he discussed the diversity of faiths and the concord of Islam, Hinduism, and other religions. Dara also worked on the translation of the Bhagavat Gita and Upanishads into Persian. "Padshahnama" was written by Abul Hamid Lahori, a courtier to Shah Jahan. "From the eleventh year of his reign, he abandoned the practise of Jharoka darson, by which his 28 predecessors appeared every morning on the balcony on the wall of the palace to take the salute of the people, who then assembled on the ground in front," writes R.C. Majumdar. In the same year, he banned music at court and fired the veteran musicians and singers."⁹



The amount of Sanskrit works created during this time period is amazing. The majority of the works were created in south and east India under the patronage of local monarchs, as previously, but the primary center was Banaras, where intellectuals from all over the nation used to assemble. Brahmans, who worked in the translation department of the Mughal rulers, created a few works.¹⁰ Although hardly much translation work was done during his reign, a few reputed original works were published. Scholars were likewise protected by Shah Jahan. Dara Shikoh, his son, was likewise well-educated and arranged for the Persian translation of several Sanskrit literature. Aurangzeb was also a scholar, but he despised poem writing and historical texts. Persian was the court language from the reign of the Later Mughals until the reign of Muhammad Shah. Urdu eventually took its place. Despite this, many Persian intellectuals continued to value good works. As a result of the Mughals' dominion, Persians had the greatest motivation to expand and achieved excellent growth. History Writing in Persian. The majority of good works produced in Persian were either memoirs or histories. Gulbadan Begum's Humayun-Nama, Abul Fazl's Akbarnama and Ain-i-Akbari, Nizamuddin Ahmad's Tabkat-i-Akbari, Jauhar's Tazkiratul-waqiat Tuhfa-i-Akbarshahi, also known as Tarikh-i-Sher Shah of Abbas Sarwani, Tarikh-i-Alfi, which spanned approximately a thousand years of Islamic history and was authored collaboratively by several academics, During Akbar's reign, the books Muntkhabut-Tawarikh of Badayuni, Tarikh-i-Salatin-Afghana of Ahmad Yadgar, Tarikh-i-Humayun of Bayazid Sultan, and Akbarnama of Faizi Sarhindi were written. Tuzuk-i-Jahangir was Jahangir's biography. Mautmid Khan finished it, and Ikbarnama-i-Jahangir finished it. During Jahangir's reign, the following works were written: Massara-Jahangir of Khawja Kamgar, Makhzzan-i-Afghani of Niamatullah, Tarikh-i-Farishta of Muhammad Kasim Farishta, and Massare-i-Rahini of Mulla Nahvandi. Among the important works written under Shah Jahan's reign were Amini Qazvini's Padshahnama, Inayat Khan's Shahjahanama, and Muhammad Saleh's Alam-i-Saleh. Aurangzeb forbade the writing of history. Nonetheless, a few pieces of art were created under his reign. Among these were Muntkhab-ul-Lubab, Mirza Muhammad Kazim's Alamgirnama, Muhammad Saki's Nuskha-Dilkusha, Iswar Das' Fatuhat-i-Alamgiri, and Sujan Rai's Khulasa-ut-Tawarikh. Historical works were written with the support of both the later Mughals and regional rulers. Among them were Gulam Hussain's Siyarul-Mutkharin, Muhammad Ali's Tawarikh-i-Muzaffari, and Harcharan Das' Tawarikh-Cahar-Gulzar-i-Suzai.



Translated Literature

Many Sanskrit texts were also translated into Persian, including the Mahabharata and Ramayana, two great Sanskrit epics. Another well-known writer from this period is Jagannatha Panditaraja, a Telugu poet and literary critic notable for works such as Rasa Gangadharam and Ganga Lahari, among others.

In addition to original work, books in other languages have been translated into Persian. Among the Sanskrit texts, Mahabharat was translated collaboratively by Naqib Khan, Badayuni, Abul Fazal, Faizi, and others. The Ramayana was translated into Persian by Badayuni. He also began translating the Atharvaveda when Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi was finishing it. Faizi was the translator of Lilavati. Lilavati was introduced to the Persian-speaking world through Faizi's rendition.¹¹ Shah Muhammad Sahabadi was the translator of Rajtarangini, Abul Fazl was the translator of Kahilya Dimna, Faizi was the translator of Nal Damyanti, and Maulana Sheri was the translator of Hari-Vansha. All of these texts were translated during Akbar's reign. During Shah Jahan's reign, his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, encouraged this endeavour by having fifty-two Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita, and Yagavasistha transcribed. He published a unique dissertation named Majma-Bahreen in which he explained that Islam and Hinduism were merely two ways to the same God. During the reign of the Mughal emperors, much literature written in Arabic, Turkish, and Greek was also translated into Persian. The Bible was translated into Persian, as were several Koranic interpretations. Aurangzeb created a book on law and justice in Persian called Fatwahi-Alamgire with the assistance of various Arabic books.

Regional Literature

Regional languages like Bengali, Gujarathi, Oriya, and Rajasthani had also evolved via translations during this time period. One illustration of this evolution was the translation of Bhagavat Gita tales into regional languages. Urdu became a common language for people of various dialects to connect with one another. Furthermore, the general public contributed to the advancement of regional languages. These literary developments elevated ordinary languages to the status of literary languages.

Poetry

Poems in Persian were also composed during this time period, albeit they did not meet the same standards as prose. Humayun composed some poems. At Akbar's court, Abul Fazl selected fifty-nine poets. Faizi, Gizali, and Urfi were well-



known poets. Jahangir and Nur Jahan were also interested in poetry. Jahan Ara, Shah Jahan's daughter, and Zebunnisa, Aurangzeb's daughter, were both poetesses. Letters written by emperors and nobility also play an important role in Persian literature during the period. Letters written by Aurangzeb, Abul Fazl, Raja Jai Singh, Afzal Khan, Sadulla Khan, and others have been deemed of literary worth.

Hindi Literature

Hindi poets were also included in the court of the Mughals. Tulsidas was the most famous Hindi poet, and his works were written in Sanskrit and Awadhi. He penned the Ramcharitmanas, an Awadhi rendition of the Ramayana. Sur Das, like Tulsidas, was a prolific writer. Sur was perhaps associated with Akbar's royal court and was known as the "blind poet of Agra." Surdas' poetry was produced in Braj Bhasha, a Hindi dialect, which raised the dialect's standing among the literary languages of Persian and Sanskrit. During this period, Muslim poets joined the world of Hindi literature and poetry. Poets like Abdul Rahim Khan Khana and Ras Khan wonderfully depicted Indian culture.

By the time the Mughal authority in India was founded, Hindi had developed as a literary language. But it received no support from Babur, Humayun, or Sher Shah. Nonetheless, many good writings were produced by individuals, such as Padmavati and Yugavata, which are recognized as works of renown. Akbar gave Hindi support, which aided its development. Furthermore, private initiatives contributed to its expansion. Among the notable court academics were Raja Birbal, Raja Man Singh, Raja Bhagwan Das, Narhari, and Hari Nath.

Nand Das, Vitthal Nath, Parmanand Das, Kumbhan Das, and many others. Independent of the court, he enhanced Hindi literature. Tulsi Das and Sur Das, however, were the most well-known Hindi academics of the period. Tulsi Das authored about twenty-five books, the greatest of which are the Ramcharitmansa and the Vinaypatrika. Tulsi Das had no more relation with the Mughal court. He spent the majority of his life in Banaras. Similarly, fierce Sur Das resided in Agra but had no direct link to the emperor's court. He was deafening nonetheless, he wrote hundreds of poems, many of which were in Hindi literature. Furthermore, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana and Rashan made significant contributions to Hindi literature via their writings. Rashkahn penned several love poems devoted to Lord Krishna, as well as a work named Prem-Vatika, while Abdur Rahim wrote hundreds of verses. Thus, the reign of Akbar was unquestionably the finest age of Hindi literature. Scholars of Hindi were likewise honoured by Jahangir and Shah Jahan.



Jahangir's younger brother used to write poems in Hindi, and Jahangir supported numerous Hindi scholars, including Buta, Raja Suraj Singh, Jadrup Gosai, Raja Bishan Das, and Rai Manohar Lal.

At his court, Shah Jahan also supported several Hindi scholars. Sundar Kavi Rai, the author of *Sundar-Srangar*, Senapati, author of *Kavita Ratnakar*, Kavindera Acharya, author of *Kavindra Kalpataru* in Avadhi mixed with Braj-Bhasa, Siromani Misra, Banarsi Das, Bhusan, Mati Rai, Vedang Rai, Hari Nath, and others, were present at his courts. Many more Hindi academics prospered outside of the court as well. Many religious poems were written by Kavi Deva, and Bihari, a well-known Hindi poet, also penned couplets during this period and earned the patronage of Raja Jai Singh.

Keshava Das, a great Hindi poet, resided in Orcha and composed several books, including *Kavi-Priya*, *Rasik-Priya*, and *Alankar-Manjari*, which are major works in Hindi literature. Aurangzeb did not support Hindi literature. Nonetheless, Hindi literature grew as a result of both private initiative and the patronage of Hindu kings. The Mughals lacked an organised method for delivering education. Most Mughal rulers and their ladies were educated. Gulbadan Begum was a well-educated woman. She scribbled the *Humayun Namah*. Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal, Jahanara Begum, and Zeb-un-Nisa all had advanced educations.

Haji Ibrahim Sarhindi translated the Atharva Veda during the Mughal Empire. The Akbar Era was often regarded as the "renaissance of Persian literature." During Akbar's reign, all translation work was completed. The *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Atharva Veda*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and *Panchatantra* were all translated from Sanskrit to Persian. Mulla Abdul Qadir Badayuni translated *Ramayana* and *Singhasan Batisi* into Persian. Faizi translated *Panchatantra* into Persian. Maulana Shah Mohammad Shahabadi translated *Rajatarangini*. *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbar Nama* were written by Abul Fazl.

Shah Jahan's court historian was Abdul Hamid Nagori. *Padshahnama*, a book chronicling Shah Jahan's reign, was written by him. Muhammad Hashim was also known as Khafi Khan. *Muntakhab-al Lubab*, a Persian language book about Indian history, is his work. He was a patron of Aurangzeb. Malik Muhammad Jayasi was an Indian Sufi poet who liked to write in Awadhi, the ordinary people's language, in the 15th century. During the Mughal reign, Persian, Sanskrit, and regional languages evolved.



Other literary contributions of Mughal Empire

- Persian was the administrative language of the Mughal Empire.
- During the Mughal era, the most significant contribution to literature was the establishment of Urdu as a common language of communication for individuals speaking diverse languages.
 - In Turki, Babur penned his autobiography, Tuzuk-i-Baburi.
 - This narrative describes the flora and fauna of India.
 - Abdul Rahim Khan wrote Babarnama (translation of Tuzuk I Baburi) in Persian.¹²
- Abdul Fazl is the author of Akbarnama (Akbar's History) and Ain-i-Akbari (administration book).
 - Jahangir wrote his memoirs under the pen name Tuzuk-i-jahangiri.
 - Mutamid Khan wrote Jahangir's biography, Iqbalnamah-i-Jahangir.
 - Padhanamah, Shahjahan's biography, was authored by two authors. Abdul Hamid Lahori and Inayat Khan were their names. Shahjahan Namah was written by Inayat Khan. Finished his opus Padmavat.
 - Translations of Sanskrit writings improved Persian literature.
 - The Mahabharata was translated under the direction of Abul Faizi, Abul Fazal's brother and Akbar's court poet.
 - Dara Shikoh translated the Bhagavat Gita and the Upanishads into Persian. Majma-ul-Bahrain, his most renowned masterpiece.
 - Badauni was a harsh critic of Akbar. As Razanamah, he translated the Mahabharata into Persian.
 - During this time, regional languages like Bengali, Oriya, Rajasthani, and Gujarathi emerged.
 - Hindi poets were associated with the Mughal court from Akbar's reign. Tulsidas, who composed the Ramcharitmanas, the Hindi version of the Ramayana, was the most prominent Hindi poet.
 - Jaganath Pandithraya, Shahjahan's court poet, wrote two Sanskrit works, Ganga Lahari and Rasagangadharam.

According to scholar Audrey Truschke in her book 'Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court,' Mughal rulers patronized Sanskrit literature in their courts, particularly between AD 1560 and 1660, and also took on Persian



translations of epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as ambitious projects.

The Mughals are sometimes acclaimed as a Persian-medium monarchy, a rather misleading designation that has led many researchers to underemphasize Mughal literary culture's multilingual character. In 1582, Emperor Akbar (1556-1605) made Persian the official administrative language, and he dedicated unprecedented imperial resources to developing Persian-medium literature, including poetry, philosophy, and history. Persian was the language of governance and culture throughout most of the larger Islamic world at the time. As a result, the Mughals gained prestige, rank, and access to an intellectual and literary sphere shared by Safavid Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and most of Central Asia. Despite the fact that Akbar and his successors valued Persian literature above all other written traditions, Mughal commitment to Persian was never exclusive. The Mughal rulers, beginning with Babur (1526-1530), learned Turkish and patronized Arabic-speaking intellectuals and religious philosophers. Furthermore, the Mughal kings, beginning with Akbar, spoke a dialect of Old Hindi known as Hindavi and supported Hindi literary works. The Mughals exhibited a strong and continuous interest in Sanskrit literature, which was as significant but considerably less well-known.

Akbar, Jahangir (1605-1627), and Shah Jahan (1628-1658) all supported Persian translations of Sanskrit classics, such as story collections and many versions of the two great Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. These three emperors also drew Sanskrit intellectuals to their courts, funded the development of scores of Sanskrit literary works, and occasionally welcomed Sanskrit scholars.

Educational

Akbar (1542-1605), a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth I of England and unquestionably the greatest of Mughal kings, is credited for arranging education on a systematic basis. He treated all of his subjects equally and established a vast number of schools and institutions for both Muslims and Hindus across his kingdom. He also implemented a few curriculum revisions based on pupils' particular requirements and life's practical necessities. The curriculum was expanded so that each student may get instruction based on his or her faith and worldview. The use of Persian as the court language encouraged Hindus and Muslims to study Persian even more.

Akbar's policies were carried out by his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahn. However, his great-grandson Aurangzeb (1618-1707) reversed his policies toward Hindu education. In April 1669, for example, he directed provincial governors to destroy Hindu schools and temples under his control while simultaneously



supporting Muslim education with religious fervour. Following his death, the Mughal empire's splendour began to fade, and the entire country was invaded by warlords.

During the Mughal period, females obtained their education at home or at the home of a nearby instructor. There were specific provisions for the royal household women's education, and several of the princesses were excellent academics. A Vocational based education system was introduced by the Mughals.

The Muslim kings of India were also major supporters of literature, providing significant fuel to its growth. Various Hindu texts and history were translated into Persian by Akbar. A number of Greek and Arabic literature were also translated into Persian. Even throughout the difficult reigns of succeeding kings, literary efforts did not cease totally. Emperors like Bahadur Shah and Muhammad Shah, as well as other provincial leaders and landlords, supported men of letters. This is the background of Muslim education in India. It resembled ancient Indian education in many ways: instruction was free, the relationship between professors and students was amicable, there were large learning centres, the monitorial system was utilized, and people were focused on religion and moral behaviour. However, there were numerous distinguishing elements of Muslim education. First and foremost, education was democratized. As in mosques, all were equal in a Maktab or Madrasa, and the notion that the impoverished should also be taught was established.

Second, Muslim dominance affected Hindu basic education, which had to adapt to changing conditions by adopting a new teaching technique and employing textbooks full of Persian terminology and references to Muslim usages. Third, the Muslim era introduced various cultural influences from other countries. Courses of study were broadened, and humanistic influences were included. Finally, Muslim rule produced a cross-cultural influence in the country by establishing an educational system in which Hindus and Muslims could study side by side, as well as compulsory Persian education, cultivation of Sanskrit and Hindi, and translation of great classics of literature into different languages. It eventually led to the emergence of Urdu as a widespread medium of expression.

Conclusion

Literature advanced greatly under the rule of the Mughals, with an abundance of original and translated works published. Along with Persian, literature was created in Sanskrit, Hindu, Urdu, and other regional languages. Other languages' significance was also raised as a result of new literary works and techniques. The



support of Mughal rulers and princes, authors, and regular people enabled this cultural advancement. This literary gem paved the path for future writers, which we all enjoy whether we pick up a book or listen to an audiobook. In the Mughal period, literature, arts, architecture, etc., are important progress in the history of India.

End Notes

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