

Decline of Persian Language and the Old Glory of Persian Heritage During Dogra Period

NAHIDA FIDA*¹, SHADAB ARSHAD² AND SHAFaat HUSSAIN³

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Assistant Professor and ³Ph.D. (English)

¹University of Kashmir, Kashmir (U.T.) India

²Department of Persian, University of Kashmir, Kashmir (U.T.) India

³Amity University, Amity (Rajasthan) India

ABSTRACT

The Shah-Miri dynasty (1349–1561) brought Persian to Kashmir, where it flourished under Sultan Zayn-al-Abidin (1420-70). Later Mughal, Afghan, and Sikh ruled, and finally the Dogras (1846-90). Unfortunately, Persian was replaced by Urdu, another language, not native to the region, in the course of general reform in 1889, which resulted in the loss of Persian's superior position in the administration of Jammu and Kashmir. A lot of Kashmir's legacy is embedded in Persian, Kashmir produced nearly 1700 Persian poets and thousands of manuscripts in Persian. People of Kashmir were not only influenced by language and literature but they were also influenced by Persian culture, especially in the field of art and crafts. The purpose of the present research study is to explore the role of the Persian language during the Dogra period in Kashmir, and a gradual decline in the prominence of Persian as a court language and in official administration.

Key Words : History, Heritage, Language Influence, Decline

INTRODUCTION

The present research work is an endeavor to bring to light the Persian sources which are the basic source for the study of medieval history of Kashmir. The Persian chronicles written during the different times and the different spheres of the Muslim invasion on Kashmir circulates the evidences of the history. These sources are broadly classified into several categories, such as the eye-witnesses, contemporary records, and subsequent compilations and so on. Indeed, Kashmiri language and literature is one of the important and recognized branches of the study of language sciences. In this field, many excellent works have been studied and most of them by authors from the advanced countries of the world.

The influence of Persian on Kashmir has been profound and far-reaching, spanning various aspects of

the region's culture, literature, and language. Persian has greatly influenced the Kashmiri language, particularly in terms of vocabulary and literary expressions¹. Many Persian words and phrases have been assimilated into Kashmiri, enriching its linguistic repertoire. Additionally, Kashmiri poetry often incorporates Persian poetic forms and meters, showcasing the influence of Persian on poetic traditions. Persian poetry's focus on love, nature, mysticism, religion, and human emotions has resonated strongly with Kashmiri poets, contributing to the development of a rich poetic tradition in the region.

Persian served as a medium of intellectual exchange and cultural communication in Kashmir. Persian styles and motifs influenced the design and ornamentation of historical buildings, gardens, and shrines in Kashmir. Calligraphy and miniature painting techniques were also adopted by local artists, leaving an indelible mark on

1. Zutshi, Chitralkha (2003). Languages of belonging: Islam, regional identity, and the making of Kashmir. Orient Blackswan.

Kashmiri art and craftsmanship.

Persian mysticism and Sufi teachings played a vital role in shaping Kashmiri mystical and spiritual traditions. Sufi poets and their works, such as Rumi, Hafiz, and Attar, were revered and widely studied by Kashmiri mystics, influencing their spiritual practices and poetic expressions².

The researcher claims genuineness, simplicity, and clarity of presentation by the use of wide-variety of connotations. This study has been accomplished after studying relevant Persian and Kashmiri literature. Nevertheless, Kashmiri fondness for versifying routine expressions is so strong that one can encounter poetry in almost every classical work, whether from Persian literature, science or metaphysics. George Grierson writes, "Kashmiris are proud and justly proud of the literary glories of their land"³. However, during the period of 19th century, Kashmiri (Koshur) literature experienced drastic rather dramatic changes due to the impact of Persian. As a result, it entered into a new era, which exemplified and understood through the various intellectual movements associated with many different foreign and Kashmiri poets.

From the 14th century on, Persian exerted enormous influence on the intellectual elite and literacy in Kashmir and the surrounding highland area. Having been the vehicle for the introduction of Islam in the valley, the Sah-Miri sultans made it the official court language. For five hundred years thereafter, Persian was the primary medium for literary production in all fields of learning. Persian has kept its status as a highly prestigious language up to the present time. Hence, in 1980 Haji Qodrat-Allah Beg in Hunza could reasonably justify the publication of his local chronicle, *Tarik-e ahd-e atiq-e riasat-e Honza*, in Persian.

Persian prevailed as court language until the Jammu and Kashmir of the Dogra dynasty (founded 1846). It was finally replaced by Urdu in 1889, probably because of the growing number of Punjabis working in the administration. After the link between the study of Persian and occupation in the administration had been severed, Persian was removed from the curriculum in the primary

education system in 1911⁴. Even during the 20th century, it was still customary to copy Persian books by hand, a tradition apparently lost nowadays. Modern discourse in Kashmir centers on language politics, with a focus on the Kashmiri language for shaping a future Kashmir nation. As a result, Persian and its historical legacy is cherished mainly in the scholarly milieu for example, in the Persian Department of Kashmir University in Srinagar, which, since 1969, has published the annual periodical *Danes*, containing articles mainly on literature in Urdu, Persian, and English.

Furthermore, the Dogra period refers to the reign of the Dogra dynasty in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, which lasted from the early 19th century until the partition of India in 1947. During this period, Persian continued to be an important language of administration, literature, and intellectual discourse in the region. Under the Dogra rulers, Persian remained the official language of the court and bureaucracy, and it continued to be used in legal and administrative matters. The Dogra rulers themselves had a Persianized cultural background and maintained a strong connection to Persian literary traditions⁵.

In addition, Literature in Persian during the Dogra period in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed the continuation of various genres, including poetry, history, and prose. Persian poetry continued to flourish, with poets composing ghazals, qasidas, and other poetic forms. Many of these poems celebrated the beauty of nature, expressed themes of love and longing, or praised the rulers and their patronage. Historical works in Persian were also produced during this time. These writings documented the events, politics, and social conditions of the region. They provided valuable insights into the Dogra rule and the wider historical context of Jammu and Kashmir. Prominent Persian scholars and poets of the Dogra period include Mahjoor Chand Kalla, Deen Bandhu Sharma, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, and many others. Their works contributed to the literary and intellectual legacy of Persian in the region. It is important to note that alongside Persian, other languages like Urdu, Kashmiri, and Dogri also had their literary traditions during

2. Brown, P. (1924). *Indian Painting under the Mughals AD 1550 to AD 1750*. Clarendon Press.

3. G. Greison, *Linguistic survey of India*, vol. vii, Part 2, pp.240,253.

4. Bazaz, Prem Nath, *Daughters of Vitasta*, Srinagar, p. 215-216.

5. Munshi, Sadaf (2020). "Language, religion and identity politics in Kashmir 1." *Religion and politics in Jammu and Kashmir*. Routledge India, 176-194.

the Dogra period. These languages influenced each other and often interacted in literary and cultural exchanges.

After the partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent political changes in the region, Persian gradually lost its official status and prominence in Jammu and Kashmir⁶. However, it still holds a significant place in the literary and cultural heritage of the area. Today, while Kashmiri and Urdu are more widely spoken, Persian literature from the Dogra period continues to be studied and appreciated for its historical and literary value. The decline of Persian as a court language in various regions can be attributed to several factors, including political, cultural, and linguistic shifts. Meanwhile, some general reasons may be:

- **Colonial Influence:** In many cases, the decline of Persian as a court language coincided with the colonial era. European colonial powers, such as the British in India, sought to establish their own language and cultural dominance⁷. They often promoted their own languages, such as English, as the language of administration, replacing Persian.
- **Rise of Nationalism:** The emergence of nationalist movements and the desire to promote Urdu languages played a significant role in the decline of Persian as a court language. As regions sought to assert their cultural and linguistic identity, there was a shift towards using Urdu and local languages instead of Persian.
- **Modernization and Westernization:** As societies underwent modernization and adopted Western ideas, there was a tendency to adopt Western languages, particularly in official settings. The cancellation of Persian as a court language in Kashmir can be attributed to various factors, including political, cultural, and administrative changes. Here are some reasons that may have also contributed to it. With the arrival of the British in the Indian subcontinent, including the region of Kashmir, there was a significant impact on the administrative and educational systems. The administration favored Urdu as the language of governance and gradually replaced Persian with Urdu in official

settings⁸. This shift was part of a broader policy of promoting Urdu and English as a medium of communication and administration across India.

- **Rise of Urdu and Kashmiri:** Urdu, as a language with a strong Persian influence, gained popularity in Kashmir during this period. It became a preferred language of communication and literary expression, gradually replacing Persian in many spheres. Additionally, the emphasis on promoting regional languages, such as Kashmiri, also contributed to the decline of Persian as a court language.
- **British Influence:** The Dogra rulers had a complex relationship with the British colonial administration, which exerted considerable influence over the region. The British favored English as the language of administration and introduced administrative reforms that sought to replace Persian with English in official settings. This shift was part of a broader policy across British India to promote English as the medium of governance.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Shifts:** The cancellation of Persian as a court language in Kashmir reflects the broader cultural and linguistic shifts occurring in the region. As Kashmiri and Urdu gained prominence, there was a natural inclination to use these languages in official and everyday contexts, replacing Persian. It's important to note that the cancellation of Persian as a court language in Kashmir was not unique to the region and was part of a broader trend across British India, where Persian was gradually replaced by Urdu and other regional languages in official settings.

Conclusion:

Persian language and culture held significant influence and prestige. Persian had been the court language in Kashmir for centuries, and its use extended beyond the court to administration, literature, poetry, and intellectual discourse. During this time, Persian literature flourished in Kashmir, and the region produced numerous renowned poets, scholars, and intellectuals who composed

6. J&K file no.27z6 of 1967 Sampvat

7. Brinkman, Arther (1868). *The Wrongs of Kashmir*, London, 1868, p.42.

8. Saad-ud-din shawl at the second Annual session of the Anjuman-i-Nustatul Islam, Halat-o-Rou-i-dad p.63.

beautiful Persian poetry and engaged in literary and intellectual pursuits. Persian poetry, with its rich imagery, metaphors, and lyrical beauty, became an integral part of Kashmir's cultural fabric. The Persian language also played a crucial role in shaping Kashmiri culture, literature, and intellectual traditions. Many historical and literary works were written in Persian, documenting the history, social conditions, and cultural developments of Kashmir. The region's rulers and nobility were patrons of Persian literature and culture, supporting poets, scholars, and artists. Persian was considered a symbol of refinement and sophistication, and its use was associated with elite circles and courtly life. However, despite the decline in its use, the legacy of Persian in Kashmir remains significant. Persian literature and cultural influences from the past continue to be appreciated, studied, and celebrated in the region. The old glory of Persian in Kashmir serves as a testament to the historical and cultural depth of the region, showcasing its connection to a wider Persianate world.

REFERENCES

- Anant Rām, *Riport-e majmu'i-e entezām-e qalamrow-e Jammunwa Kašmirwa Aqsā Tabbathāwagayramamāl ekbābat-e do sāl-e sambat [19]39 wa 1940 [= 1882 and 1883 CE]*, Jammu, n.d. (Urdu; No. 10344).
- Bhag Ram (1891). *Report on the Administration of the Jammu and Kashmir State for 1889-90*, Jammu, (No. 15334).
- British archives. Anonymous, *Ahkāmātwaparvānājāt-e Rāja Golāb Singh, n.d. (John Rylands Library, Manchester, Pers. Manuscript, 444)*.
- Calvin R. Rench, Sandra J. Decker, and Daniel Hallberg (1992). *Sociolinguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan, 5 vols.*, Islamabad.
- Ch. Girdlestone (1874). *Memorandum on Cashmere and Some Adjacent Countries during 1871*, Calcutta.
- Charles E. Bates (1980). *A Gazetteer of Kashmīr and the Adjacent Districts of Kishtwār, Badrawār, Jamú, Naoshera, Pūnch, and the Valley of Kishen Ganga*, Calcutta, 1873; repr., New Delhi.
- Christopher A. Bayly (1996). *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge.
- Edmund G. Barrow (1888). *Gazetteer of the Eastern Hindú Kush, in four Parts: Part I. Wakhán, Ish-Kásham, and Zébak. Part II. Dárdistán. Part III. Káfiristán. Part IV. Routes in the Hindú Kush*, Simla.
- F. M. Hassnain (1978). *Gilgit: The Northern Gate of India*, New Delhi.
- G. K. Cockerill (1895). *Appendix to Barrow's Gazetteer of Eastern Hindu Kush*, Simla.
- Ghulam M. D. Sufi (1949). *Kashmīr: Being a History of Kashmir from the Earliest Times to Our Own*, 2 vols., Lahore.
- H. L. O. Garrett, ed., *Press List of Old Records in the Punjab Secretariat*, 29 vols., Lahore, 1915-33.
- Hāji Qodrat-Allāh Beg (1980). *Tārik-e 'ahd-e 'atiq-e riāsat-e Honza (hessa-ye awwal)*, Baltit.
- Harkan Dās Kanboh Multāni (1804). *Ensā'-e Harkarn*, Delhi, 1286/ 1869; ed. and tr. Francis Balfour as *The Forms of Harkarn*, Calcutta, 1781; repr. as *Ensāye Harkarn: The Forms of Herkern*, London.
- Henriette M. Sender (1988). *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, New Delhi.
- Idem (1986). Aspekte der Oralität und Literalität: Ihre Implikationen für das Geschichtsbewußtsein der muslimischen Nagerkuts in Nordpakistan. *Anthropos*, 81, pp. 567-82.
- Idem (1986). *A Further Appendix to Barrow's Gazetteer of Eastern Hindu Kush*, Simla.
- Idem, *Indeks-e motafarreqa-ye rekārd-e fārsi-e riāsat-e Jend, Patiāla, Lodhiāna, Kaḍmirdarbār, Lāhurwagayr*, n.d.
- Idem (1895). *Report on the Administration of the Jammu and Kashmir State for the Hindi Year 1949 (1892-93)*, Jammu, (No. 15837).
- India Office Library and Records (IOL), London.
- International Council on Archives, ed. (1990-93). *Guide to the Sources of Asian History 8. Pakistan*, 2 vols., Islamabad.
- Irmtraud Müller-Stellrecht (1981). "Menschenhandel und Machtpolitik im westlichen Himalaja: Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte Dardistans (Nordpakistan)," *Zentralasiatische Studien* 15, pp. 391-472.
- Jammu State Archives and Repository (1942). Anonymous, *Persian Records: His Highness' Government, Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Secretariate General Records, Index of Records. 1724 A.D. to 1892 A.D.*, Jammu.
- Janet Rizvi (1999). *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*, New Delhi and New York.
- John Biddulph (1880). *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, Calcutta.
- Jürgen W. Frembgen, *Zentrale Gewalt in Nager (Karakorum)*:

politische Organisationsformen, ideologische Begründungen des Königtums und Veränderungen in der Moderne, Wiesbaden, 1985.

Kashmir main Farsi Adab ki Tarikh.

Kaumudi (1952). *Kashmir: Its Cultural Heritage*, Bombay and Calcutta.

Kirpa Ram (1929). *Administration Report, samwat [= 1872 CE]* (No. 15030).

Lahore Secretariat (Anarkali Tomb). Anonymous, *Indeks-e fârsirekârd*, 5 vols., n.d. [vols. 1 and 2 are handwritten, vols. 3-5 are the typed version of the previous].

M. K. Parmoo (1969). *History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir*, Srinagar.

Mirzâ Mohammad Gofrân, *Na'ita'rik-e Citrâl*, Peshawar, 1962.

Mirzâ Sayf-al-Din, *Morâsalât-e molkiwasiâsiba 'ahd-2 Mahârâja Golâb Singh*, 13 vols. [alternative titles: *Akbâr-e darbâr-e Kasmir* or *Akbârât-e darbâr-e Mahârâja Golâb Singh*].

Mohammad Ali Kashmiri, *TuhfatulAhab*

Mohammad Azam, *Waqat-i-Kashmir*.

Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *Perspectives on Kashmir: Historical Dimensions*, Srinagar, 1983.

Mumin Mohiuddin (1971). *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals, from Bâbur to*

ShâhJahân, 1526-1658, Calcutta.

Nabi Hadi (1995). *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature*, New Delhi.

Patiala State Archives. Anonymous, *D/Classified List of Documents: Accession Register* [handwritten registry of the Persian Documents from 1959 onwards]. *Chattar-Singh-Collection*.

Prithivi N. K. Bamzai (1962). *A History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Delhi.

SafaqatJahânKattak, *Dastur-nevisi-e fârsidarðebh-e qârri-ye Hendwa Pâkestân*, Tehran, 1997.

Sâpur Râsek, "Zabân-e fârsidarkârbord-e edâri," *Râhnemâ-ye ketâb* 15/1-2, 1972, pp. 3-16.

Sardar Karim Nawaz, ed., *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: Collection of Treaties, Sanads, Letters, etc., which passed between the East India Company, Sikhs, Afghans, and Other Notables*, 3 vols., Lahore, 1972-85.

Siegfried Weber (2007). *Die persische Verwaltung Kaschmirs (1842-1892)*, 2 vols., Vienna.

Wolfgang Holzwarth (1999). *Materialienzur Geschichte des Karakorum und östlichen Hindukusch. 1500-1800*, (unpub. typescript, dated 1999).
