

Culture - Foundation for forming lasting Indo-Iranian Relations based on mutual trust and peace

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Abstract

Human being, over the centuries, have learned from the historical experiences that cultural and civilizational growth and development are in conflict with cultural stagnation and senility. The civilizations and cultures are the product of the common efforts of human beings. And no culture and civilization has been established without the use of the experiences and knowledge of other societies beyond the boundaries. Indo-Iran relations are a successful example of human relations based on the mutual trust and aspiration for cooperation and relations between the two nations. These close and deep ties are structured on the basis of a common culture and mutual understanding rather than on the basis of material and commercial needs or political interests. Therefore, one of the most important consequences of these interactions and communications has been the formation of basic trust as well as positive and reciprocal mental imagery among the people of these two nations, which throughout history and centuries have provided suitable bases and capacities for preserving the ancient and the common heritage. The multiple and diverse capabilities existing in the two cultures of Iran and India, throughout the history of relations between the two countries, could play a constructive role in the fields of human civilization and the emergence of a huge and common cultural heritage. Even today keeping in view the strategic partnerships and the necessities and benefits related to the utilization of common cultural and historical heritage and to expand the relations between Iran and India, revisiting the historical experiences of the ties of these two countries is important in order to strengthen the durable and constructive Indo-Iran relations.

Keywords: Culture, History, Relations, Iran, India,

Introduction:

The cultural relations of nations are formed on the basis of positive mental and psychological sense and reassuring each other and overcoming threats and negative mental imagery. The system of human interaction can be a system of "trust" when its

relations are based on a sense of security of peaceful coexistence and the desire for stability and continuity through the normalization of social, economic and especially cultural relations.¹

The spirit that governs relations between nations is either political, economic or sometimes conflict and war prevail over the relations of the countries and also the basis for relations between some other nations is culture. The relations between Iran and India have since time immemorial had a special feature and that is the dominance of the cultural and literary aspect in the relations between these two ancient and great Asian civilizations. For poets, writers, mystics and people of culture and art have had a significant role in establishing the consistent relations between the two countries, in the same fashion as during the past centuries, the political and economic relations of these two country had been influenced by the contribution of poets, writers and mystics in the path of better cooperation and bilateral relations.²

Another important aspect is that although relations between the two nations are based on the need for trade and fulfilment of material needs, it is necessary to understand three basic points.

First, the formation of these relationships is also based on positive mentalities and images and in an atmosphere of tolerance and friendship, free from war and conflict. Providing appropriate, sustainable channels and expanding political and economic relations requires the formation of appropriate cultural understanding, rationality, friendship and cooperation instead of hatred and divergence, and the creation of capacities free from clash and conflict. It increases the impact of culture on the mind and conscience of nations along with strengthening the resisting capabilities from obstacles and challenges, as well as external divisive elements. It boosts the cooperative atmosphere to discover the common values and interests, and results in having greater understandings along with the emphasis on common benefits. Certainly, presenting a positive image to create consensus on cultural elements are among the main achievements of this trust-based and culture-based interaction.

Secondly, using the capacity of trade exchanges to trans-bound the cultural values, and to create areas of mutual understanding and commonalities of cultures have been a major achievement and long-term and common benefit have mainly been important in these exchanges.

¹ . Milton Cumming), 2006),Cultural Diplomacy ,Washington DC center for arts and culture.

² . See, S. A.H. Abidi (2019), Indo –Persian Literature, Departmant of Persian university of Delhi.Muzaffar Ali Alam, (2011),Indo-Persian Travls in the Age of Discoveries ,Cambridge University Press.

Thirdly; what is left today, after centuries of interaction and trade between societies, are common cultural values and symbols of civilization, which are manifested in the form of common traditions, symbols, art, literature, etc., and make culture a lasting feature of these interactions and domains. It has become the main and effective principle. This experience reminds us that culture as an internal category is closely related to the value system in human being; it constitute the innermost and most basic element of culture and all the behaviors and states of the individual and society are rooted in them. It is in the values found in culture that a person regains his value and position and pays due attention to his choices when faced with different situations. In fact, culture is the intellectual and spiritual continuation of human survival and some of its dimensions are manifested in a material and tangible way. Human life in the present age, more than any other period, is related to the phenomenon of culture.³

Interactive capabilities of Iranian culture in interaction with other nations

Iran and India have always been considered as the main pillars and mediators of cultural elements throughout the world. The most famous and efficient cultural elements of the world easily entered the cultural territory of Iran and India and conversely the material and spiritual foundations of Iranians and Indians also have been sent to other cultures with the same proportion and speed.

This cultural interaction, especially between Iranians and peoples of other lands, for centuries, has spread from Mesopotamia to Asia Minor, Greece, North Africa, and parts of Europe, and especially to the Indian subcontinent. This interactive capability in Iranian culture has been such that even the military conquest of Iran by the Greeks, Arabs, Turks and Mongols not only led to the cultural domination of the invaders, but the Iranians were able to overcome them with the power of their cultural interaction and converted them into propagandists and promoters of Iranian and Islamic civilization. The invading Arabs, who entered Iran in the cultural field with the intention of spreading the new religion of Islam and from there to all over the world, were influenced by Iranian culture and civilization and most of the responsibility for creating culture and producing and spreading cultural and civilizational elements fell on Iranians. When Iranians saw the resistance against the Turkish invaders, the Seljuks and the Mongols as useless, so based on the logic of "*ba dustan morawwat ba dushmanan modaara*" which means kindness with friends and tolerance with enemies", in the face of their pressure, they took the path of lenience with these nations. Through cultural power and the logic of tolerance and dialogue even with the enemies, they tried to protect their civilization and culture from

³.Khaneeki, Hadi, 2005, Guftguye Mafhumiye Zabani Ta Ma'ni Jahani, Journal of Sociology, Allameh Tabatabaie University, Tehran

the destructive flood of the Turkish and Mongol peoples by civilizing and Iranianizing some Turkish and Mongol leaders.⁴

Another prominent feature of Iranian culture has been constructive dialogue and give and take with other cultures. From the beginning of its formation, Iranian culture did not build a wall between its cultural sphere and the cultural sphere of other ethnic groups, but one of its missions and functions was to break down dividing walls of human cultures. It was always to mix and match different cultures, especially through interaction and dialogue. It has learnt from the cultures that were at a higher level and has given cultural education to the cultures that were on the contrary at a lower level. Dialogues & Learnings have constantly been part of the cultural history of Iran and have acted to enrich their own culture. According to Iranians, the establishment of a peaceful, secure and positive life requires a global attitude and, of course, a generalist approach. They also believed that humanity can achieve a peaceful life when it has a sense of shared destiny and universal responsibility for that destiny. As the great Iranian poet Saadi says:

چو عضوی به درد آورد روزگار

دگر عضوها را نماند قرار

When fate allots a member pangs and pains

No ease for other members then remains

The Persian poetry and mysticism, which expresses the most delicate, human and worldly dimension of the cultural realm of Iran, has drawn the most universal approaches based on mystical and philosophical values such as the unity of existence and the manifestation of love and enlightenment of the divine man. Through these mystical angles, Iranian culture gained the opportunity to interact and negotiate with other nations from Transoxiana to Asia Minor, the Indian subcontinent, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe. A poet went from Balkh to Konya and conquered the hearts of the people of Konya with Persian. Rumi, Hafez, Saadi, Khayyam, Ferdowsi are among the other cosmopolitan poets of Iran whose mental, taste and intellectual exudations originated from a cosmopolitan mind and considered the language of empathy and common understanding as the basis of human connection. Rumi describes this language of empathy as follows:

ای بسا هندو و ترک همزبان ای بسا دو ترک چون بیگانگان

پس زبان همدلی خود دیگر است همدلی از همزبانی بهتر است

⁴.Solasi, Mohsin, 1999, Jahan-e-Iani w Iran-e- Jahani, Centre for Publication, Tehan Pp. 200 - 245

There are many Hindus and Turks with the same tongue,
and oh, many a pair of Turks, strangers to each other.
Hence the tongue of intimacy is something else,
It is better to be of one heart than of one tongue.

Perhaps, Persian poetry and mysticism can be considered as the most obvious manifestation of Iranian interaction and language of dialogue with the nations of the Indian subcontinent. Persian language, which carried human feelings and emotions and Islamic and mystical teachings in word and meaning, in the form and content, was the nature of many nations and was according their taste. Poets with Persian poetry style were scattered in a wide area of the world. From Transoxiana to Asia Minor and India, Southeast Asia ... they composed poetry in Persian. Even the most remote parts of the world, such as China, were not outside the sphere of influence of Persian poetry and it was common in the court of kings. The cosmopolitanism and lack of attachment to their homeland and presenting poems that are compatible and pleasing to the cross-border audience have made Persian classical poetry universal. That is why, no poet from other country has been welcomed as much as Iranian poets and very few nations can be found whose works of great poets have been translated into various languages, including European, as much as Iranian poets.⁵

The reason for the attention of mystics and Sufis to the spread of Persian language in other nations is due to the capacity of Persian language to effectively transmit spiritual values and create a common understanding and culture. Persian is a language which could pass many achievements and creations from one generation to other generation and societies. Although Persian poetry has been influenced by the poetics forms of Arab, but in terms of content, concepts, similes and ideas, it does not unlike Arabic poetry have a local and ethnic character and is not specific to a particular ethnicity, region and race and most of its descriptions, similes and messages have a transnational and global character. Iranians who have had a continuous linguistic continuity throughout its history for several millennia, their cultural language has been an open and receptive to the linguistic experiences of other cultures. And it reflects all the exchanges and relations and extensive cultural relations of the tribes related to Iranian culture and the bitter and sweet events of Iran's cultural life. It has kept its doors open to all languages and cultures of the world, but has maintained its identity, nature and independence.⁶

Another factor in the mobility of Iranians in the wider world was Iranian Sufism and mysticism, which not only believed in the unity of existence in the world, but were

⁵ . Nasr, Hussain, 2003, *Sunnate Aqlani Islami Irani*, Tehran, Qaseedah Sara

⁶ . Azar, Ameer Esmacil, 2016, *Adabiyat Iran Der Adabiyat Jahan*, Tehran, Sohkan Publication, 5th Edition. Zameera Ghaffarwa, 2018, *Persian literature in Khashmir during 16th & 17th Century*, Persian Research Centre, AMU

constantly accompanied by long journeys to visit the *Aqtaab* and *Mashayekh* scattered throughout the Islamic world. Iranian Sufis and mystics were cosmopolitan and did not consider themselves related to any place and basically considered it a journey to travel on one of the mystical paths. This feature made the school of thought of Iranian mystics a drift and there was less of a place in the east and west of the Islamic world that was empty of *Khanqaahs* of Iranian mystics. The founder of the Sufi order of Khorasan, Ibrahim Adham 165 AH 100 was born in Balkh but died in Syria. He was born in the east but died in the west. Ibn Khafif was born in the third century AH in Shiraz and moved to Baghdad. He traveled to Egypt and Central Asia and died in 371 in Baghdad. Hussein Ibn Mansour Hallaj was born in 244 AH in Beyza, a city in Iran, studied in Baghdad and made many trips to Central Asia and India. The great Iranian poets migrated to Kashmir like Khawaja Moinuddin Cheshti, the founder of the Cheshtia order, from Sistan, and Sadid al-Din Awfi, one of the famous mystics and scholars of the sixth and seventh centuries AH, was born in Bukhara, Transoxiana and traversed many lands of India, Transoxiana, Samarkand and Herat. Fakhruddin Iraqi, a famous poet and mystic of the eighth century AH, was born in Hamadan in 610 AH and went to Multan at the age of eighteen. He traveled to Egypt and Syria and was buried in Damascus next to Ibn Arabi's grave. Many other Iranian scholars did not stay in their homeland and left for another country after intellectual maturity. Tabari, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Imam Fakhr Razi and tens of other are exemplary evidences of Iran's cosmopolitan figures who did not confine themselves to the borders of Iran and by migrating and communicating with other nations played an important role in the development and expansion of human civilization.⁷

Iranian culture through interactions with the culture of other nations, which by creatively adapting the cultural and civilizational elements and themes of others has flourished itself. It took the lead and cultural guidance and influence over the centuries in the culture, remaining away from war and bloodshed, in a peaceful environment and friendly atmosphere in the material and spiritual fields and has served the human civilization. Among other things, interactive and constructive interactions emerged between the spiritual dimensions of Iranian and Indian cultures whose flow continued uninterruptedly for many centuries.

Islamic philosophy, which has emerged from the combination of all schools of thought and philosophy of the civilizations of the Islamic world and owes most of it to Iranian thinkers, which has been another opportunity for interaction and dialogue between Iranians and all other nations. Iranians' spirit of tolerance and reconciliation towards nations and cultures were based on their wisdom, logic and philosophical thought. Persian poetry, which is one of the most prominent and effective elements of Iranian

⁷. Solasi, Mohsin, 2000, *Jahan-e-Iani w Iran-e- Jahani*, Centre for Publication, Tehan

culture, has had a strong connection with philosophy, wisdom and intellectual sciences and, unlike Greek culture, is not a separate field and there is not much gap and difference between the poet and the philosopher. Except in the fourth and fifth centuries AH, when philosophy, science, poetry and literature were relatively separate, in most of the period of Iranian cultural evolution, many Iranian poets were philosopher, and many philosophers and scholars and especially mystics were poets.⁸

Thus, this cultural exchange that was there throughout the world, the Iranians were the chief intermediaries and transmitters as well as the recipients of this cultural spread in the world. Despite the bitter historical events and destructions such as the Mongol invasion and the devastation and burning of culture they brought; Iranian mystics and poets by contacting and migrating to other lands, including India, and exercising their cultural and civilizational power re-emerged, and they turned these virulent periods, resulting from the bloody assault of the Mongol invaders with the help of other nations especially India, into the golden age of poetry, mysticism, Islamic and Iranians philosophy.⁹

Distinct Features of Indo-Iran cultural relations

Trust Based Interaction and Relation

Due to the trans-ethnic, trans-geographical and human-centered as well as love-oriented approaches in mysticism and literature, especially in Persian literature, the cultural relations between Iran and India have been initiated by creating a positive and reassuring sense of close proximity with each other and overcoming negative image and threats. Therefore, the basis of human relations between the two countries throughout history has been a system of "trust based" the relationships that are based on a sense of security of coexistence and the desire for stability and continuity through the normalization of social, economic and especially cultural interactions. In the meantime, the contribution of poetry in building trust and understanding has been important. The field of literature and culture is the field of imagination, beauty and a quest for the absolute truth. Poetry and art are considered as a permanent and complementary part of cultural relations between two nations, and the possibility of interaction based on the language of dialogue, communication and mutual interests is better provided and through this a good understanding and exchange of ideas and settlement of differences over the political and economic spheres were formed.

Multi-directional and dialogue-based relations

Another instructive point in these relationships is that Indo-Iran ties in the past have been based on a two-way, multi-directional and dialogue based. Iranian and Indian poets and

⁸. Nasr, Hussain, 2003, *Sunnate Aqlani Islami Irani*, Tehran, Qaseedah Sara

⁹. Zarrin koub, Abdul Hosain, 2006, *Aashnaie Ba Tareekh-e- Iran*, Tehran, Sokhan Publication

mystics have learned over the centuries from their historical experiences that the cultural and civilizational growth of Iran and India contradicts the stagnation about civilization within borders. Cultures are the product of the joint efforts of human beings, and no culture or civilization can grow and prosper without benefiting from the experiences and transnational knowledge of other societies, and without having connections with others. Therefore, part of the growth and development of Persian language and culture and the formation of Indian poetic styles and the production of valuable sources of poetry and literature has been the product of this two-way interactions.¹⁰

Another important feature that should be considered in this historical interaction and experience is the element of dialogue. Iranian and Indian poets, mystics, artists, religious scholars and writers paid special attention to dialogue as a special human advantage. They considered interaction the main conduit for transmitting a lot of knowledge and partaking others in progress and development, and this sharing devoid of any geographical, ethnic and religious considerations has been taken into account, and extremism and extremist reactions have played less role. These facts can be clearly found in poems and travelogues which are valuable treasures and useful information from the past to the present generation. Through dialogue, they provided a space for communication and mutual understanding to present a positive image or enhance the level of cooperation. Imagination and presentation of a positive image and efforts to create consensus on cultural components are other achievements of this trust-based and culture-based interaction.

Participation, acceptance and understanding of others

Other lessons and teachings related to this historical experience are accepting and understanding others, accepting diversity and differences, recognizing and understanding the truth, in an attempt to gain a deep and broad awareness of other cultures and different traditions. One should have a broad and unbiased view of the culture and traditions of others and seek the truth through differences that make common language and the opportunity for growth, excellence, interaction and empathy possible. We sought the truth that makes possible a common language and the opportunity for growth, excellence, interaction and empathy. Our ancestors have shown us that one can be Iranian, but he may live in India and compose poetry for the people of India; while an Indian poet may compose his poetry in Persian and address the Iranian audience with love. The formation of literary styles and the production of thousands of literary works that exist today in libraries of both Iran and India are the product of an ambition to understand and accept each other.

¹⁰ . Will Durant, 1991, Mashriq Zamin Gahwaraye Tamaddon, Tehran, Islamic Revolution Publication

The Nationalistic interactions of Indo-Iran relations

The main actors in the history of Indo-Iran interactions were mainly the people. The interactive capacities and the acting power of non-governmental organizations were more than governmental institutions. Therefore, these relations are more stable and durable and the share of language and literature in cultural and social relations has been very decisive. Thus, in order to develop communication networks between the two nations, they opted for a common language that provided them with interaction and communication capabilities. Using the capacity of Persian language, in addition to forming a common language of communication, could also help Indians in promoting Persian language and reproducing valuable literary and cultural resources.

Remarkable role of travel in the Exchanges

The journey is all about departing from oneself to other. It is a kind of otherology or cultural self-recognition in the mirror of others. It is a kind of comparative intercultural study and is a sign of the peak of cultural and civil development of nations. Travel and migration have outstanding capability of the exchange of cultures and the transfer of experiences and imagery. Therefore, one of the main spaces in the cultural and literary interactions of Iranians and Indians have been the migration and travel of Iranian poets and mystics to India and in some cases the vice versa. Although some Iranians traveled to India in the past in the form of migration and escape from the difficult conditions of Mongol times, but mainly the travels and migrations of poets and mystics in peaceful atmosphere of India with the desire to live in the diversified cultural and religious surrounding of this country of coexistence as well as due to the kind hospitality of the Indian people to Iranian thinkers and poets have occurred.

Historical past experiences and lessons that can be learnt today

These experiences teach us that even today we must use the positive and high potential of the element of culture as a fulcrum and a strong factor for the development of durable relations between Iran and India. Because even today, culture has a dimension of a lasting value and all phenomena even affect political behaviors in some way. Today, the factor of language, poetry and literature, mysticism and philosophy, which are considered the pillars of culture and play an influential role in the formation of common consciousness and way of life, it can be effective to play role in creating a sense of lasting trust and friendly communication, as in the past, within the common and original moral and cultural values and ideals of the two nations. In the current complex international situation where extremist approaches have led to the formation of regional and international conflicts, certainly taking advantage of this historical experience and expanding the approach of dialogue and interaction, especially between the cultural elites

of the two countries can contribute to establish lasting and effective communication between two nations.

Need of talks between intellectuals of Iran and India

In the age of knowledge, in which knowledge and wisdom are the main manifestations, cultural relations are considered as a kind of alliance based on knowledge and are the most important capital and the most effective bridge between nations. Another key point is that the cultural relations of societies have long been reciprocal and multifaceted and dialogue-based. Another important area to consider in this historical experience is the element of dialogue. Communication as a special human advantage along with intellect is a distinct aspect of man with animal because man is called a talking animal, that is, a dialogue that also has the privilege of intellect and wisdom. Speaking and listening has been the main channel for transmitting a lot of knowledge and partaking others in the development and progress of knowledge and civilization in this direction. Of course, this statement does not mean dissolving and being absorbed in another culture, but accepting the rainbow of cultures and entering into dialogue with other nations and using it to create and expand human civilization. In this dialogue, reading and publishing the cultural and civil advantages and transferring them to the body of the target society took place. This trade has been regardless of geographical, ethnic or religious factors and has been considered less prejudiced and extremist and monopolistic.

Besides this, Conversation is a kind of cultural otherology or self-recognition. It is a kind of intercultural comparative study and the attention to another.¹¹ Hence, the growth of dialogue usually occurs in the period of cultural and civilizational peak of nations. It is a kind of departure from oneself and looking at others, and this is the basis of the development in any country, because stopping itself is an obstacle to progress and development. Encounter with other is a kind of self-knowledge and encounter with cultural self and cognitive knowledge and comparative study with another. It is a search for lost selfness and liberation from stereotypes. It is all about accepting and understanding others, accepting diversity and differences, recognizing and understanding the truth, and striving for a deep and wide awareness of other cultures and different traditions. And of course, In the case of the culture and traditions of others, one should have a broad and unbiased view and seek the truth through differences that make common language and the opportunity for growth, excellence, interaction and empathy possible.¹²

¹¹ . Isacs William, 2009, Dialogue and the Art of thinking to gether, London ,Routledge

¹² . Maqsoodi, Maneejeh, 2011, Tarh-e- Rawish Shenasi guftgu der Pajooish hay farhangi, Tehran, Social studies of Iran

Today, the "dialogue" has become an indicator of world peace, and pacifism and pacifism is the most appropriate platform for the flourishing of cooperation and the growth of cultures.¹³ Because both the cooperation and synergy of cultures is a process during which each of the cultures becomes more rich and mature after the stage of contact with another culture. The discourse of the "cultural dialogue of the elites of Iran and India" can contribute to the realization of the idea of "peace and justice", which is an essential need of our challenging world, by providing a model of positive and constructive interaction based on mutual respect. The main benefit and function of cultural dialogue is that cultures on the world level interact constructively in such a way that promotes non-violence and tolerance of each other as a constructive and dynamic global achievement by spreading a culture of tolerance. And this provides a great foundation for achieving lasting peace in today's world. Therefore, envisaging appropriate mechanisms for the procedure and continuation of cultural dialogue between the intellectuals of the two countries can be considered as an attempt to highlight the constructive and effective role of culture and cultural elite. Fortunately, in the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, intellectual interaction and cultural dialogue between the elites of Iran and India has been a priority, and so far several rounds of religious and cultural talks have been held with the presence of professors and elites and officials of scientific and cultural institutions of Iran and India. The agreement to form the Secretariat of Cultural Dialogues between Iran and India can be an effective and useful step in expanding understanding and interaction in order to establish some joint scientific and academic cooperation and other joint cultural cooperation, including the publication of quarterly journals, periodic meetings, and exchange of delegations. Moreover, it can strengthen the role of the elites and thinkers of the two countries in strengthening the deeper ties in these fragile and anxious international environments, to activate a set of academic and cultural capacities in the direction of cultural interactions and cooperation.

¹³ . Salehi, Ameer, Sayed Reza, 2016, Cultural Diplomacy, Tehran Poinix Publication, wa kavi Masalyey Guftgu, Naqd-e-Ketab, 2014, Cultural Research Academy.

Conclusion

Culture has always been considered as a requirement for a stable and constructive bilateral interaction between the nations and in the historical experience of the relations between the two great nations of Iran and India, in which poets, writers and artists of the two countries have had an important role. Iranian and Indian thinkers, devoid of individualistic and nationalistic affiliations and identities, tried to create a favorable and stable atmosphere in the formation of common values and as a result, peace and friendship between the two nations.

Cultural dialogue is one of the fields of human relations that have the capacity to become a discourse and paradigm in the relations between the two great countries of Iran and India due to historical, cultural, geopolitical and geostrategic commonalities, common issues and challenges, and some other similarities. These continuous and culture-oriented dialogues between elites can be formed by using valuable treasures from elements such as myths, ancient texts, rituals, customs and cultural traditions. Discourse analysis and the meaning of cultural dialogue in the development of cultural diplomacy between the two countries Iran and India can be analyzed in the context of strengthening the role of reason and rationality in the relations between the two countries and emphasizing the common moral duties in promoting peace and the formation of a world free of violence and injustice prevailing in the international system.

Due to the role and function of cultural and religious dialogue between the elites of Iran and India in providing mental security and friendly and peaceful action in the relations between the two nations, it is important to pursue appropriate mechanisms to establish communication networks between the elites of the two countries, to support the production of literature and theoretical sources of dialogue, and to adopt strategies and set thematic priorities for cultural and religious dialogues and recognize opportunities for joint cooperations.

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