

India - Iran Cultural Ties: A Re-Appraisal

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The Cultural and religious affinities and ties between India and Iran date from time immemorial. In fact they can be traced back to the Avesta and the Rig Veda which also had linguistic affinities. Both these cultures gave prominent place to the domesticated horse (*aśva / aspa*) and the chariot drawn by it. Archaeological information also supports this: we find it from Iran to Swat to Northeastern Baluchistan.

The common ancestry of both is also suggested by common geographical and product names. If we remember that in Avesta 's' is replaced with 'h', then we see that Sarayu (or Hari Rud) is '*Haroiva*'; and Sarasvati is '*Harakhvaita*'.

In both Rig Veda and Avesta there is reference to putting in the grain seed (*yavam krish* in Rig Veda and *yao karesh* in Avesta) and the resultant grain (*sasya* in Rig Veda and *hahya* in Avesta). For wheat we have *godhūma* in Sanskrit and *gantuma* in Avestan. In both however, there is no mention, or even a word, for towns. Bricks on the other hand were known: *ishtaka* in Sanskrit and *ishtiya* in Avestan.

There are also many affinities between the two as far as religion is concerned, specially between the pre-Vedic Indo Aryans and the pre-Avestan Iranians.

There were a nominal number of 33 gods, called *asura* who in Avesta are called *Ahura*. Deva of Rig Veda are called *daeva* in Avesta. They are the demons. However the principal *ahura / asura* deity is called Ahura Mazda in Avesta, where he becomes God; he is represented in the Rig Veda pantheon by the divine creator Varuna.

There is no indication of idol worship either in Rig Veda or Avesta. In both, the deities are anthropomorphic or zoomorphic.

The ties between India and Iran and the consequent influences of one over the other have been recorded since time immemorial. Dhavalikar has in fact argued that contacts between India and Iran had been since early historical period when some north-western regions of the

Indian sub-continent – Sindh and Gandhara – formed part of the Achaemenid Empire.¹ In fact these relations went further back to Dilman, Makan and Meluha, which have been identified respectively with Bahrain, Makran Coast and India (Harappan territory).² The Achaemenid Empire of Iran which was the first empire in the world containing multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-cultural elements, stretched from Greece to Hindukush. Gandhara was one of the satrapy of the empire and Indian soldiers served in the Persian army.³

An incomplete inscription in Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian, written on glazed bricks that belonged to a relief at Susa, belonging to the period of Darius the first, mentions:

I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of all nations, the son of Hystaspes, the Achaemenid.

King Darius says: Ahuramazda gave me this great kingdom, so full of men; he made me king in this earth.

By the grace of Ahuramazda these are the countries of which I became king: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Lydia, Greece, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Sindh, Thrace, Macedonia [remainder lost]

In yet another epigraph from Susa, Darius claims that the ivory for his palace was brought from Egypt, India and Arochasia. Another inscription of Darius, from Persepolis, mentions 3000 artisans from Sindh working on his monuments.

In the third century BC, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (270 – 234 BC) appointed a Hellenized Iranian (Yona) official Tushāsp to the office of governor of Gujarat. The dynasties of Shakas and Kushanas (first to third centuries AD), which held sway over not only Northeastern India but also the interior, belonged to peoples speaking Iranian dialects. When the Arabs occupied Sindh and southern Punjab, 712-14 AD, they found Iranian names in use for geographical features, e.g. ‘Mihrān’ (Persian for Great River), Brahmānābād (for Branbhanwā) and Multan (for Mulasambhapura). In Indian inscriptions the Arabs of Sindh were for this reason called Tājīkas (Tājīk or Tāzīk, the common name in Western and Central Asia for Persian-speaking people). The Ghorians, whose conquests led to the

¹ M.K. Dhavalikar, ‘India-Iran Contacts in Pre-History’, in Irfan Habib (ed.), *A Shared Heritage The Growth of Civilizations in India and Iran*, Tulika, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 1-14

² Romila Thapar, ‘A Possible Identification of Meluha, Dilmun and Makan’, *JESHO*, vol. 18, pp. 1-42

³ Abhay Kumar Singh, ‘Persian: A Fountain of Inspiration for Ancient India Kings’, in AK Sinha & AK Singh (eds), *Dialogues Between Cultures: India and Iran*, Delhi, 2005, pp. 102-05

establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206) spoke an Iranian dialect of Western Afghanistan; and in the 13th century there was a sharp distinction between the Turkic and Tājīk (Iranian) sections of the nobility. As Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveller (c. 1340) noted, there was continuous migration from Khurasan of persons seeking their fortunes in India.

Iranian-Achaemenid influences thus are visible in India from the Mauryan period onwards. There was no precedent in India before the Mauryan Age of the extensive use of stone and the lustrous polish, both of which bear hallmarks of Achaemenid monumental art. The bell-shaped capitals of the Asokan pillars, as well as the free-standing pillars themselves, with their smooth cylindrical, not fluted, shafts, and the bell feature, transferred from the base to capital were under Achaemenid influence as witnessed at Persepolis.

Two other important Achaemenid influences on Mauryan Architecture were:

(a) The conjunction of the sculpture with architecture (e.g. at Persepolis and Susa) which is so firmly found in Mauryan and Kushan period, say for example at the railings and Toranas of Sanchi and the Stupa of Bharhut. This was one of the hall-mark features of the Achaemenid architecture. And

(b) The hypostyle halls of the Mauryans, for example, the Pillared Hall at Kumrahar at Patliputra. Spooner found eight rows of 10 stone columns each, which included one complete shaft polished to base. The arrangement of its pillars is identical to those of Achaemenid halls. It is considered a derivation of the Apadana in Persepolis and Susa.⁴ The columns, moreover, showed a technique in their polished surface which is not only acknowledged to be not known in India, but identical to Persepolitan workmanship. The lithic art was itself a Persian inspiration.

The Iranian influence on Mauryan architecture was comprehensive: the use of stones for columns and pillars, the methods of sculpting the animals on the capitals, the choice of decorative motifs like acanthus, palmette, rosette, bead and reel motif and rope design; the lustrous polish application, and even the engravings of edicts on rock surfaces were all typical borrowings from the Achaemenid Iranian Art.

The finely finished surfaces of several stone sculptures of the Mauryan period have also been compared with Achaemenid sculptural traditions.⁵ According to Sir Mortimer

⁴ B. & FR Allchin (eds.), *South Asian Archaeology 1995*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 203, 236-38

⁵ SL Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India. Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, New York, 1985, pp. 43, 46

Wheeler, artisans working for the Achaemenid workshops may have emigrated to the Mauryan Empire after losing their jobs due to the collapse of the Achaemenids.⁶

With the rise of the Sakas, the Iranian influence continued to hold its sway over Gandhara during the first century BC, and in western India from 1st century AD. The tumulus burials at Barrow Cemetery at Qandahar, attributed to Sakas probably influenced later funerary customs in some Indian regions.⁷

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The next phase when the Iranian influences in India were at prominence was the Medieval period.

The architecture of Medieval India was a combination of two basic templates or moulds, the *Indian* and the *Saracenic*. The architecture which had been prevalent in India since the Mauryan period was quite robust but based on a technique known as *trabeate*. Large monumental temples had been produced from 5th and 6th centuries onwards, both in the North and peninsular India, which were marked by their high *shikharas* and stone craftsmanship. Indian architecture was distinguished by its substantial use of sculptural decorations and carvings: Sculpture and Architecture were indistinguishable and seamlessly blended into one.

Between 8th to 10th centuries a new type of architecture made its appearance in the northern regions, especially Sind and Punjab. Having its origins in the Crusades, this style, nomenclated as “Saracenic” or “Muslim” or “Islamic”, connoted architecture of the followers of Islam who conquered Persian, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Arabia and Spain.⁸ The Saracenic Architecture was chiefly architecture of temples and mosques. Based on arcuate technique, characteristic features included the pointed or horse-shoe arch, domes, minarets, coloured surface decorations with geometrical polychrome patterns and designs – usually red, blue, green, and gold, an emphasis on arabesque and total absence of sculptures. The term ‘Saracenic’ presently is not generally in use, it having been replaced by ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’.

⁶ Sir RE Mortimer Wheeler, ‘The Transformation of Persepolis Architectural Motifs into Sculpture under the Indian Mauryan Dynasty’, *Acta Iranica*, Tehran & Liege, 1974, pp. 249-61; See also *idem*, ‘Iran and India in Pre-Islamic Time: A Lecture’, *Ancient India* 4, 1947-48, pp. 85-103

⁷ M. Taddei, ‘A Note on the Barrow Cemetery at Kandahar’, in M. Taddei (ed), *South Asian Archaeology 1977*, Naples, 1979, pp. 909-16

⁸ The term ‘Saracenic’ was sometimes used in the pejorative sense. Fergusson used the term as an all purpose name for the Muslim Architecture, whether in India or outside. (James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London, John Murray, 1867, pp. 45-46). Havell on the other hand placed all ‘Saracenic Symbolism’ within India, Persia and Byzantium. (See E.B. Havell, *Indian Architecture: Its Psychology, Structure and History from the First Mohommadan Invasion to the Present Day*, London, 1913, p. 4)

The Medieval period in India saw the coming together of both these styles, the Indian and the Muslim (the Saracenic, also known as Islamic) giving birth to a new style generally known as Indo-Muslim (or Indo-Saracenic / Indo-Islamic) Architecture.

Historically speaking, there were two *genera* (or groups) of arcuate styles, the Roman and the Parthian, which heavily influenced the emergence of the Saracenic or Islamic Architecture. A sub-genera of the Parthian genus, the Iranian style became a matrix for the Turkish and Indian regional architectural styles, of which the Mughal or ‘Pan-Indo-Islamic’ variant was the most developed.⁹

The Indo-Muslim (the Indo-Saracenic) Architecture as it developed in Medieval India heavily borrowed stylistic, idiomatic, axiomatic and aesthetic traditions from Iranian, Trans-Oxanian and regional Indian styles. This borrowing was much heavier after the establishment of the Mughal dynasty.¹⁰ The Mughal architecture has in fact been defined as a synthesis of a number of foreign and indigenous styles: the Turkish, Ilkhanid, Timurid, Post Timurid, Safavid, as well as Tughluq, Syed, Lodi, apart from the styles of Jaunpur, Gujarat, Malwa, Bengal and Rajasthan.¹¹ Not one architectural feature was singularly ‘Mughal’.

The constructional principle applied in India before the Turkish Conquest was Trabeate, in which all spaces were spanned by means of beams laid horizontally. Through this technique, the resultant structures would be flat-roofed and low. No tall building or open-hall structure could be constructed.¹² Further, they would be pillared structures. Built of heavy building material, generally stone, they would also not be in need of mortar or cementing material: the law of gravitational pull would help in holding them together. However, as the weight of the beams and lintels forming the ceiling rested directly on the walls, resulting in a vertical downward push, the structures were not very durable. To attain the spire of the temple, the same technique would be staggered and involve putting one stone on top of the other to form a heavy pyramidal roof, the *sikhara*. This was the ‘corbelling’.

The monopoly of this traditional and well established system of construction was challenged between 10th to 13th Centuries by a new technique, the arcuate. With the

⁹ See Jose Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture: A Stylistic History*, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 4-5

¹⁰ Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, ‘Iranian Influence on Medieval Indian Architecture’, in Irfan Habib (ed.), *A Shared Heritage The Growth of Civilizations in India and Iran*, Delhi, 2002, pp. 127-49

¹¹ See for example Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture: An Outline of its History and Development (1526-1858)*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1991 (re-edited Primus, New Delhi, 2014); Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, OUP, 1995

¹² This technique of upright posts supporting the horizontal lintels or beams was basically derived from timber constructions. To make the construction more firm, brackets were employed. See Charles Fabri, *An Introduction to Indian Architecture*, Bombay, 1963, p.13

advent of ‘Medieval’ there was also the introduction of new types of building material and concept of architectural planning. Stone was gradually replaced with bricks and brick-tiles, and lime mortar and gypsum¹³ to bond these bricks, was used for the first time. The use of gypsum and lime along with *surkhi* (pulverized brick mixed with lime) appears to have become common after this period.

The need for these new building materials had arisen due to the introduction of the arcuate technique of construction. It was a system in which the enclosed space is roofed and vaulted with the help of an arch. The arch itself is a structure, especially one of masonry, forming the curved, pointed, or flat upper edge of an open space and supporting the weight above it, as in a bridge or doorway. This arch when in its true form (the ‘arcuate’ system) is constructed with the help of wedge-shaped stones known as voussoirs and a key stone. Two spans are constructed, each springing from the imposts on the wall, pier or pillar. At the point of their contact a triangular key stone is added to hold them together. In this technique the durability of the enclosed space was guaranteed till the ‘keystone’ was in place. Secondly, the voussoirs ensured that the weight of the stones radiated in different directions, leaving the ceiling almost weightless. Thus the structure roofed by such a ceiling could be larger and higher. Thirdly the angle or slant of the voussoir could help in getting the desired breadth of the building. In this system, small medium of construction provided flexibility of attaining the myriad shapes and sizes. Thus brick was more suited which in turn needs a good binding material like lime mortar and gypsum.

Since the construction of the *Qubbatul Islam* Mosque, all the structures had one thing in common: the intermixing of ‘Islamic’ / ‘Saracenic’ with the ‘Indian’. A large number of Iranian architectural features are perceptible in Indian architecture since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the twelfth century. The first monumental Sultanate structure, the Qutb complex, comprising the *Quwwatul Islam* Mosque, the *Qutb Minar* and the *Alai Darwaza*, reflect Iranian concepts and origins. Modelled after the Ghurid period mosques, the *Quwwatul Islam* follows the Seljuqid Iranian plan of the four-aiwan courtyard mosque, with certain modifications.¹⁴ The four-*aiwan* courtyard mosque plan was one in which an integrated enclosed space was created by the symmetrical repetition of *aiwans* (portals) and arcades on the main and transverse axes, thus creating a structure with a centralized court-yard flanked by cloisters and portals on three sides and a prayer chamber and a portal on the side facing the *qibla*. At the *Quwwatul Islam* Mosque (c. ad

¹³ Gypsum is a common white or colourless mineral (hydrated calcium sulphate) used to make cements and plasters

¹⁴ Tokifusa Tsukinowa, ‘The Influence of Seljuq Architecture on the Earliest Mosques of the Delhi Sultanate Period’, *Acta Asiatica*, No.43, 1982, pp. 54-60.

1197), however, the Iranian *aiwan* is replaced by a central ogee-shaped arch flanked by two lower arches. At the *Arhai din ka Jhonpra* Mosque at Ajmer, constructed two years later (i. e. in ad 1199), we get three engrailed ogee-shaped arches instead of *aiwans*. Over a century later, in the more authentic Iranian fashion, an *aiwan* replaced the central arch. The first example of such a construction is the *Jahanpanah* Mosque at Delhi (c. ad 1343). In the Delhi Sultanate version, the atrophied *four-aiwan* mosque appears to have been preferred, since the tendency was to retain only one of the four *aiwans*, that of the western *liwan* (ante-chamber). This modified *four-aiwan* Iranian mosque plan appears to have been followed throughout the Sultanate period in India.

In elevation, the medieval Indian mosques were more templar in form, however, deriving from the well-established temple architectural traditions of the country where they were being constructed. The four-centred Iranian arch, nevertheless, found ready acceptance among the early medieval architects of India from the Khalji period onwards. Similarly, the arabesque patterns were also readily imbibed by Indian masons. The medieval Indian arabesque carvings, first exemplified on the *maqsura* (screen) of Qutbuddin Aibak at the *Quwwatul Islam*, are much more naturalistic than what is found in their Ghurid Iranian homeland, where they were flatter and abstract. The *Shah-i Mashhad Madrasa* in Gharjistan (Afghanistan) appears to have inspired the Indian masons who carved the *maqsura* of the *Quwwatul Islam* Mosque added by Sultan Iltutmish. The carvings and arabesque patterns on the Tomb of Sultan Iltutmish too appear to have been inspired by the *Shah-i Mashhad Madrasa*. The Tughluq period saw the profuse use of rubble stone as the basic medium of construction, and thus stone carvings and arabesque patterns were not generally resorted to. However, the Mughal period marked their reappearance. The Delhi Sultanate tomb plans too appear to have followed the Seljuqid and Iranian traditions. The domed square-chamber Tomb of Sultan Iltutmish, which was one of the first extant tomb structures to be constructed under the Delhi Sultans (ad 1236), appears to have followed the traditions which were finally established at the Tomb of Shad-i Mulk at Samarqand (ad 1371-83). The Iranian paradisaical imagery in funerary architecture, which became so forceful later, was also introduced from Iranian traditions into India during the reign of Iltutmish. Subsequently, the Tughluq tombs of Muhammad bin Tughluq and Firuz Tughluq were also in the same tradition.

The Iranian impact on medieval Indian architecture was much more forceful after the establishment of the Mughal empire. A study of the Mughal architecture reveals that the Mughals, who considered themselves to be the heirs of the Timurid tradition, borrowed heavily from the Iranian style which had developed under the Ilkhanids, Timurids and Muzaffarids. When Babur marched into India, he brought along with him two Iranian

architects, Ustad Mir Mirak Ghiyas of Herat and Ustad Shah Muhammad of Khurasan.¹⁵ According to Lisa Golombek, the Shaibanids of Bukhara were a conduit for the transmission of Timurid architectural forms to the Mughals.¹⁶ It should be borne in mind that much of the synthesis of the Iranian style with the Indo-Muslim style of architecture in India took place only till the reign of Akbar. The reign of Shahjahan is marked by the heavy influence of indigenous styles on Mughal architecture.

Idiomatically and axiormorphically, one of the most important marks of Iranian influence on the Mughal architectural tradition was the *chaharbagh*, the four-quartered paradisaical garden with its intersecting water channels lined with walkways (*khiyabans*), platforms, water chutes, tanks and fountains, flower-beds, fruit-bearing trees and foliage, all surrounded by screen walls and gateways.¹⁷ These *chahar-bagh* gardens were to become the standard setting for Mughal tombs. In these gardens, the focus was the centre, marked by the construction of a large platform. Typical examples of funerary gardens from the Mughal period are Humayun's Tomb at Delhi, the Tombs of Akbar and 'Madam' at Sikandara (Agra), the Tomb of I'timadud Daulah at Agra, and the Tomb of Jahangir at Shahdara, Lahore. In the Taj, the focus was shifted from the centre to the periphery, namely, the riverfront, where the mausoleum was constructed. Further enhancement of the riverfront was provided by constructing octagonal bastions flanked by a mosque (west) and a *mehmankhana* (east) in the corners. The mausoleum and the main gateway are on the main axis, while the terminals of the transverse axes are marked by a pavilion on each side. The structures on the terminal points of the axes of the garden result in a cruciform shape which is similar to the plan of the cruciform (*chahartaq*) tombs and mosques of Iran, such as the Musalla of Gauhar Shad, Herat (1417-38) and the Jami' Masjid Turbat-i Shaikh Jam (1440-43). This shift of emphasis from the centre to the terminus is, however, first seen in the Tomb of I'timad-ud Daulah where, although the mausoleum was retained in the centre, a riverside decorated pavilion was added.¹⁸ A forecourt (*jilau khana*) with a series of cloistered cells was also added to the *chaharbaghs* in the Tomb of Jahangir and in the Taj Mahal.

The *chaharbagh* was first introduced in India by Babur who constructed a number of them at Agra and nearby places. One of the earliest gardens on the *chaharbagh* pattern to

¹⁵ *Baburnama*, (tr.) A.S. Beveridge, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 343, 642.

¹⁶ Lisa Golombek, 'From Tamerlane to the Taj Mahal', pp. 43-50.

¹⁷ For a study and survey of Mughal gardens, see S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Exploring the Mughal Gardens at Fathpur Sikri', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Indian History Congress, Bangalore session, 1997.

¹⁸ For further such examples from the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, one might refer to the *Buland Bagh*, *Bagh-i Nur Afshan* and *Bagh-i Jahanara*, all situated on the left bank of the Yamuna at Agra. For the *Bagh-i Jahanara* (*Zahra Bagh*) see Ebba Koch, 'The Zahara Bagh (Bagh-i Jahanara) at Agra', *Environmental Design*, n.d., pp. 30-37 (special issue on 'The City as a Garden').

be laid out by Babur was the *Bagh-i Fath* situated between the lake and the ridge at Fathpur Sikri. Rectangular in plan, it comprises intersecting water channels and *khiyabans*. In the centre is constructed an Iranian-inspired pavilion (*baradari*). Aligned on an east-west axis, it is surrounded on all sides by a cloistered *riwaq* (verandah) pierced by an entrance in the north. The water channels, which are provided with *mahi-pusht abshars* (fish-scaled chutes), are connected with a stepwell (*baoli*) in the west and a well (*chah*) in the east.¹⁹ A more elaborate *chaharbagh* of Babur, the *Bagh-i Nilufar* (Lotus Garden), survives at Dholpur (Rajasthan). Two other gardens of his which have been identified are the so-called *Ram-bagh* (*Aram Bagh* or *Bagh-i Gul Afshan*, later renovated by Nurjahan and thus renamed *Bagh-i Nur Afshan*), and the *Bagh-i Hasht Bihisht*, which are located on the left bank of the Yamuna at Agra.²⁰

The *chaharbagh* introduced by Babur not only became a major element of urban landscape under the Mughals, but also inspired the lay-out of the Mughal cities themselves. The centripetal symmetry of the *chaharbagh* was invoked in the planning of the Mughal city. The organizing instruments of the garden, such as the axes, joints defined by pavilions, platforms and walkways, were transformed and enlarged architecturally into roads, caravanserais, monumental structures and quarters.²¹ Examples of such town planning on the *chaharbagh* pattern are provided by the towns of Fathpur Sikri and Shahjahanabad (Delhi). The cross-shaped or quadripartite symmetry encountered at Shahjahanabad and, to an extent, at Fathpur Sikri, reminds us of Isfahan of the Safavid period with its *maidan* (promenade) and *chaharbaghs*. The use of the *chaharbagh* as an instrument of Urban landscaping and town planning involves the Iranian imagery of paradise which is central to the Parthian genus of architecture.

Idiomatically, apart from the *chaharbagh*, there appear to be a number of other Iranian features which are encountered in Mughal architecture. Some of them, like the double dome (which developed in Iran during the fourteenth century) and the squinches on which the domes are raised (Sassanid) had been introduced into India during the period of the Delhi Sultanate and are generally found in Tughluq monuments. The Iranian four-centred (as well as two-centred) pointed arch, as we have seen, was also known in India;

¹⁹ For the identification of this garden, its plan and its site, see S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Exploring the Mughal Gardens at Fathpur Sikri'.

²⁰ See, for example, Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, pp. 32-33; Catherine Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, pp. 22-24. See also Catherine Asher, 'Babur and the Timurid Char Bagh: Use and Meaning', *Environmental Design*, no. 11, pp. 56-73.

²¹ Attilio Petruccioli, 'The Process Evolved by the Control Systems of Urban Design in the Mogul Epoch in India: The Case of Fathpur Sikri', in *Environmental Design*, (ed.) A. Petruccioli, Roma, Italy, 1984, pp. 18-27; S. Ali Nadeem Rezavi, 'Town Planning under the Mughals', paper presented at the seminar on Urbanization in Medieval India, sponsored by Regional Institute of Archaeological Studies and Training, Government of West Bengal and Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1997.

but subsequently it came to be identified as the typical Mughal arch during the reign of Akbar. It was ultimately replaced during Shahjahan's period by the cusped (multi-foliated) arch which was ultimately derived from the Gandharan lobed arch. The bulbous double dome, on the other hand, is first encountered in a hesitant form in Humayun's Tomb and is subsequently perfected during the reign of Shahjahan when we find it in the Tomb of Taj Mahal.

India, however, showed less inclination to imbibe the distinctly 'Muslim' idiomatic forms of adornment, calligraphy, arabesque and *muqarnas* (stalactites). The use of the typical mosaic tile was confined to a handful of monuments under the Mughals. For example, it appears on the Tomb of Afzal Khan (*Chini ka Rauza*) at Agra in its most profuse form. At other places the use of coloured glazed tiles— so popular in Iran—remained confined to the outer facing of the domes (for example, *Nili Gumbad* and *Sabz Burj* near Humayun's Tomb, Delhi, constructed some time during the early sixteenth century). Brick-tile decoration is also found in the Lahore Fort. Calligraphic bands, so preferred in Iranian architecture, make their appearance under the Mughals but are generally confined to the rectangular panels encircling the arched openings of the gateways. Under the Mughals, the calligraphic decoration is accomplished with black-stone lettering inscribed on white marble bands (for example, *Buland Darwaza*, Fathpur Sikri; the gateway to Akbar's Tomb, Sikandara, Agra; and the entrance gate of the Taj Mahal). The most representative example of calligraphic decoration under the Mughals comes from the facades of the Taj Mahal.

The *muqarnas* pattern with its distinct Iranian and Tirmurid antecedents also appears in Mughal architecture, though it seems that it was not the preferred style. The *muqarnas* lozenges which were developed in ninth-century Iran have their best Mughal example in the tombs at *Khusrau Bagh*, Allahabad, built during the reign of Jahangir. The Mughals, however, employed the indigenous idioms of sculptural form of chiaroscuro effect which were based on offsets and recesses, layers of horizontal mouldings, columns and brackets, curved motifs like the pot, lotus flower and myrobalan (*amalaka*). Yet the typical Jahangiri *Chini khana* motifs based on stunted arch filled with embossed flower designs and wine goblets and *surahis* evoke the Iranian symbolism of paradise (see, for example, the Tomb of Itimad-ud Daulah, Tomb of Firuz Khan, gatehouse of *Surajbhan ka Bagh*, etc., at Agra.)

Aesthetically, the tile and faience mosaic of the Iranian style was replaced in Mughal India by the red and white bichromy or marble monochromy which is so typical of Akbari structures and monuments {for example, Humayun's Tomb; *Badshahi Darwaza*,

Jami' Masjid, Fathpur Sikri; *Jahangiri Mahal*, Agra Fort). The *Buland Darwaza* at Fathpur Sikri, however, depicts a red-yellow bichromy.

Two further Iranian idiomatic innovations, the 'arch-and-panel' articulation²² and the stellate vaults (the *chahartaq*) based on cruciform domed chambers, found wide acceptance under the Mughals. Iranian architects of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had imposed order on architectonic and decorative forms by a consistent system of articulation which had a five-fold relationship between arch and panel, and arch and arch. In this system the theme was primarily curved and arcuate (arch), and only secondarily rectangular or trabeate-based (panel). By repeating the identical arcuate patterns, the 'arch-and-panel' idiom aesthetically and idiomatically unified the surfaces and voids of a structure, while controlling the decoration covering its walls. The five features of its relationship—alignment (when the arch symmetrically alternates with a panel or an arch vertically or horizontally), empanelling (arch contained within a panel), multiplication (progressive increase upwards of arches, etc.), enframing (arch framed by arch) and intersecting (arch crossing arch)—initially found their way into, Sultanate architecture (for example, the Alai Darwaza at the *Quwwatul Islam*), but gained much greater prominence under the Mughals. The most prominent presence of this system is found on the facade and the side bays of the *Buland Darwaza* at Fathpur Sikri, the exterior facade of *Jahangiri Mahal* at Agra Fort and the exterior surface of the Taj Mausoleum. However, in these Mughal structures, the typical Iranian arch-and-panel system was modified by the traditional articulation of wedge-shaped fluted or octagonal shafts technically known as 'quoins', which are shaped like columns. These quoin shafts divided the whole area horizontally and acted as pivots for knitting together the planes of the facade.

The arch-and-panel system without the modifying pivotal quoin system is represented in the *baradari* structure of Muqarrab Khan at Kairana (district Muzaffarnagar); the Tomb of Sultan Nisar Begum at *Khusrau Bagh*, Allahabad; the *Naulakha* Pavilion and *Shah Burj* at Lahore Fort; the upper portions of the interior walls of the *Diwan-J Khas*, Agra Fort; and the *Bhadon* Pavilion at the Delhi Fort. As far as the *chahartaq* is concerned, it was formed in Iran through intersecting arches. Generally, a square vaulted chamber spanned by four large intersecting arches, resting on massive wide piers, form a cruciform with an open square in the centre. This square is then turned into a polygon or circle with the help of smaller arches, supplemented by decorative ribs rising from the main arches. In this *chahartaq* plan, the Iranian architects improvised a new type of

²² For a discussion of 'Arch-and-Panel System', see Jose Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture*, pp. 249-50, also pp. 92, 100.

vaulting system, now generally known as the Khurasanian vault. The Khurasanian (multi-partite) vault was invoked by the Timurid architects by reviving the Ilkhanid and Seljuq stelliform vault on the system of intersecting arches. This type of vault consists of four large intersecting ribs which create a central vaulted area, four lozenge-shaped squinches and four rectangular fields. In this plan, the centre of each side of the square contains an arched recess, the width of which is equivalent to the diameter of the dome, supported by the four arches which in turn spring from the forward edge of the recess arches, each adjacent pair intersecting to form the square. The secondary ribs springing from the haunches of the arches converts the square into an octagon by a series of lozenge-shaped squinches. At the second stage of the phase of transition, sixteen fan-shaped pendentives complete the transition to the circular dome. With this system the vaulting techniques reach perfection. The need of supporting walls is eliminated and the dome now sits directly on the four arches. The first building based on this pattern was the twelfth-century Jami' Masjid of Ishaan. Under the Timurids, this type of vault was employed in the Bibi Khanum Mosque at Samarkand (1398-1405), the *Musalla of Gauhar Shad* at Herat (1417-38), the Mosque of Turbat-i Shaikh Jam (1440-43) and the *Madrasa at Khargird* (1442). In the Mughal empire, we find its occurrence in the imperial *hammam* (the so-called Hakim's Baths), the *private hammam* in the *daulatkhana*, the *hammam* attached to the *Haramsara* ('Jodhbai Palace'), all at Fathpur Sikri, as well as at Akbar's *Khilwatgah* in Allahabad Fort, the Barber's tomb in the garden of Humayun's Tomb and the Govind Dev Temple at Vrindavan near Mathura (1590s).

The Kabuli Bagh Mosque of Babur at Panipat and the *Kachh-pura Mosque* of Humayun at Agra, on the other hand, depict the arch-netted transition zones in pseudo-structural plaster relief work applied to the pendentives of the small domes of the lateral side bays. These are also later found in the central dome of Humayun's Tomb and at the Tomb of Tambolan Begum at *Khusrau Bagh*, Allahabad. This 'arch-net' or 'squinch-net' in the form of fake arches in plaster was also inspired by Timurid architecture. The corbelled pendentive concealed by elaborate plaster ribs is first found at the *Khanqah* (hospice) of Mulla Kalan, Ziyaratgah (1472-1501). Arch-netting similar to that on Tambolan Begum's tomb occurs at the *Khanqah* of Khwaja Zainuddin at Bukhara (sixteenth century).

The *chahartaq* plan was extensively employed by the Mughals in their mosque and tomb architecture. The naves of the western *liwans* of the Jami' Masjids of Fathpur Sikri and Shahjahanabad (Delhi), and the Badshahi Masjid of Lahore, are all constructed on the *chahar-taq* pattern. The earliest Mughal example is the *Kabuli Bagh Mosque* (c. 1527) of Babur at Panipat, where the *chahartaq* is employed on its central nave. The nave and

aisles of the central rooms of Muqarrab Khan's baradari at Kairana (district Muzaffarnagar) are also constructed on the *chahartaq* pattern. The square Mughal tombs, such as the *Khusrau Bagh* Tombs at Allahabad, are also *chahartaq* structures.

Axiomorphic borrowings from the Persian style are also quite prominent in Mughal architecture. They are in the form of gatehouses, portals (*peshtaq*), pillared halls (*aiwans*) and plans of tombs and mosques.

In Iran and Central Asia (Trans-Oxiana), masonry buildings were constructed with 'post-and-beam' (timber) porches. Two prominent examples are Ali Qapu in the *Maidan-i Shah*, Isfahan and the Balyand Mosque in Bukhara. Porched pillared halls raised on slender wooden pillars were known as *talar* in Iran and *aiwan* in Trans-Oxiana. In Iran, the term *aiwan* was used for an open-fronted room with a barrel vault. The use of the term *aiwan* to designate pillared constructions was adopted by the Mughals. Most such pillared constructions in India took place during the reign of Akbar. The *Badgir* ('*Hawa Mahal*') of the Jodhbai Palace, the *Chahar s'uffa* ('*Panch Mahal*'), the *Aiwankhana* ('*Diwan-i Khas'or* 'Jewel Treasury'), the entrance to the *Naqqarkhana* near Hathipol, the '*Rang Mahal*', all at Fathpur Sikri, and the inner quadrangle of the *Jahangiri Mahal* at Agra Fort, are examples of quadrangular *aiwans* inspired by Iranian prototypes. This building form was also sometimes adapted to an octagonal plan. The 'Qush-khana' near the *Ajmeri Darwaza* at Fathpur Sikri, the *Chihilsu-tun* in Allahabad Fort and the *Shah Burj* at Agra Fort are all octagonal *aiwans*.

Iranian architecture also initiated the expression of the aesthetics of the facade in its portal (*peshtaq*), an endeavour that was brought to fruition in Turkey and Mughal India. The construction of high *peshtaqs* and *aiwans* had long been established in the Iranian tradition.²³ The high *peshtaq* of the sanctuaries chamber was also an important feature of the Sharqi architecture of Jaunpur.²⁴ It has generally been argued that the high *peshtaq* of the Mughals, especially under Babur, was a result of the influence of Sharqi architecture. Parallels have been drawn between the facade of the Atala Masjid and Jami' Masjid, Jaunpur, and the facade of the Baburi mosques, the *Kabuli Bagh* Mosque of Panipat, the recently destroyed Mir Baqi's Mosque at Ayodhya and the Mir Hindu Beg Mosque at Sambhal.

²³ See, for example, Pinder-Wilson, 'Timurid Architecture', in *Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Period*, Vol. VI, (eds) Peter Jackson and L. Lockhart, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 729,731; D. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran, the Ilkhanid Period*, Princeton, 1955, p. 158.

²⁴ A. Fuhrer, *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur*, ASI, new series, Vol. XI, Calcutta, 1889; Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture, Islamic Period*, Bombay, 1958.

A closer look of our sources and a comparison of the plans of these mosques with Iranian-Timurid structures however unfold a different story. Before coming to India, Babur had briefly occupied Samarqand (c. 1501), and re-occupied it later (1507) and campaigned in Bukhara up till 1511. The Sambhal Mosque was constructed by one of his nobles in 1526. Soon after his victory at Panipat in 1526 Babur had ordered the construction of the *Kabuli Bagh* Mosque. In 1528-29, Mir Baqi had the Ayodhya Mosque constructed. In 1530, during the reign of Humayun (and with four years of Mughal conquest) the Kachhpura Mosque was constructed. It was too short a time for the Mughals to familiarize themselves with the regional architectural traditions of India. Further, as we have noted earlier, Babur had been accompanied to India by two master masons who were well-versed in the Timurid traditions of architecture.

If we compare the plan of the *Kabuli Bagh* Mosque and the Kachhpura Mosque with the *Namazgah* Mosque at Qarshi, a town southwest of Samarqand, we encounter a striking similarity of style and planning. In all the Baburi and Humayuni mosques, as in the Qarshi mosque, we find the high *peshtaq*, *chahartaq* nave and lower lateral wings with four domed bays. It is also interesting to note that in his memoirs, Babur mentions the town of Qarshi near Samarqand.²⁵ Coupled with the existence of the typical Timurid feature of arch-netted transition zones in pseudo-structural plaster relief covering the pendentives, we can safely assume that these mosques took shape under the Iranian-Timurid influence.

The high *peshtaqs* subsequently emerged as the hallmark of Mughal architecture, not only in mosque but also in tomb construction. The earliest Mughal tombs with elongated *peshtaqs* are the *Sabz Burj* and *Nila Gumbad* near Humayun's Tomb.²⁶

As far as the ground-plan is concerned, the Mughal mosque closely followed the Iranian axiomorphic prototypes. By the fourteenth century, the Iranian architects had perfected the two- and *four-aiwan* (open-fronted construction with a barrel vault). The form of the two-*aiwan* mosque was achieved by having the sanctuary chamber with a high *peshtaq* preceded by an enclosed open quadrangle. The entrance portal (*aiwan* of the Iranian architecture) was constructed on the same axis as the *peshtaq*. The centrally located courtyard, which was also an indigenous idiom, was surrounded by double-storeyed cloisters (*riwaq*). Under the Mughals, this Iranian-Timurid prototype was used in conjunction with Delhi Sultanate elements to produce a new form. Thus, in the Khairul Manazil Mosque at Delhi we find that the tall *peshtaq* of the western *liwan* and the

²⁵ *Baburnama*, p. 84.

²⁶ For details on these tombs, see Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, pp. 36-37.

double-storeyed *riwaq* are typically Timurid. The single-aisled western *liwan* was itself built on Delhi Sultanate traditions. As in the Iranian examples, this single-aisled, five-bayed mosque has a single dome. In the Akbari Masjid near the Ajmer Dargah, the western *liwan* with multiple aisles and a dominant dome over the nave is Timurid, while the low single-aisle cloisters are typical of Delhi Sultanate architecture. The Jami' Masjid of Fathpur Sikri is again a *two-aiwan* mosque, which acquired its third portal (*Buland Darwaza*) at a later stage.

By the twelfth century the four- *aiwan* congregational mosque with domed chamber and cloisters had been perfected in Iran. In fact, it was the Jami' Masjid at Varamin (1322-26) which established the general plan for the subsequent Jami' Masjids of Iran.²⁷ In this type of mosque a harmonious synthesis of such traditional elements as the *aiwan*, the *four-aiwan* court and *aiwan-dome* combination was effected. The courtyard was framed by cloisters (usually double-storeyed) of equal height, on three sides, while the prayer chamber (western *liwan*) was given a heightened importance through its crowning dome and a higher *peshtaq*. In the middle of each of the other three arched faces of the interior court, an *aiwan* (in the form of an arched and vaulted niche) is introduced. As in the overall plan, these four *aiwans* can be seen as the arms of a cross. This type of mosque plan has been termed a cruciform plan.

The cruciform or *four-aiwan* mosque made its appearance in India during the Sultanate period (*supra*). Under the Mughals it is first encountered during the reign of Jahangir, but it became popular during the reign of Shahjahan. The first cruciform mosque constructed under the Mughals appears to be the Begum Shahi Mosque at Lahore (1611-14). The second mosque on the same plan is the Wazir Khan Mosque (1634-35), again at Lahore. Later, the Jami' Masjids of Agra and Shahjahanabad were also constructed on the same pattern.

Contrary to the Iranian *four-aiwan* mosques, these Mughal mosques emphasized the importance of the sanctuary by tending to isolate it from the cloisters of the courtyard and by diminishing the size and width of the latter. The Wazir Khan Mosque has two other changes. As at the Taj Mahal, this mosque has an additional court in front of the entrance (*jilaukhana*) which acted as a *bazar*. Secondly, the transverse *aiwans* of this mosque are no longer open-fronted in the Iranian manner, but are gate-houses with doors.²⁸

²⁷ D. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran*, p. 731.

²⁸ For the non-Iranian influences on the Mughal congregational mosques, see Jose Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture*, pp. 231-32.

Iranian architects and builders of the fourteenth century had also developed a technique for providing domed roofing to long rectangular structures. This was the technique of applying transverse arches and groin vaults.²⁹ In such construction the rectangular space to be covered was divided into square units by crossing it transversely from one longitudinal wall to the other. Short arches were applied to bridge the transverse arches, and provide the base for the domical vaults erected on the top. The in-filled spaces between the transverse arches were pierced with windows to let in light. This technique made its appearance in Eastern Iran where it was adopted in *Masjid-Kirmani* near the Tomb of Turbat-i Shaikh.³⁰ It is then found in such religious structures as the oratory near the Jami' Masjid at Yazd and the Tomb of Shaikh Ahmad Yasavi in Turkestan. In India we find one example of this kind of elongated vaulted structure from the reign of Shahjahan. But here it is in the form of a Safavid-inspired *bazar*, the *bazar-i musaqqaf*. This unique structure is the covered *bazar* adjoining the *Lahori Darwaza* of the Delhi Fort.

One of the most important axiomatic impresses of Iranian tradition on Mughal architecture was in the form of a plan which has been labelled *hasht bihishtor* noni-partite plan.³¹ In this plan the layout, which is preferably an irregular octagon (a chamfered square— *musamman-i baghdadi*), is divided by four intersecting constructional lines into nine parts, comprising a domed octagonal chamber in the centre, rectangular open halls in the form of either *peshtaq* or flat-roofed *aiwans* supported by pillars) and double-storeyed octagonal vaulted chambers in the corners. This plan provided the buildings a radial symmetry which hitherto was missing. The radial symmetry was further emphasized by the axial and radial passages which linked the nine chambers with each other. Typical Timurid examples of this were the Tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa at Balkh (c. 1460), the *Ishratkhana* at Samarqand (1464) and the Tomb of Sharif Abdullah at Herat (1487). A direct influence of the Tomb of Abu Nasr Parsa is found during the Mughal period in at least four tombs, three of which are in Delhi. The *Sabz Burj* and *Nili Gumbad* Tombs (c. 1530-40) near Humayun's Mausoleum, the *Afsarwala* Tomb (1560s), again at Delhi, and the Tomb of Shamsheer Khan at Batala (1588-89) have a noni-partite plan with angular units as semi-octagonal niches. As at the Abu Nasr Tomb, their central chamber is on a square plan.

²⁹ Pinder-Wilson, 'Timurid Architecture', p. 732; Lisa Golombek, 'Discourses of an Imaginary Arts Council in Fifteenth-Century Iran', in *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, (eds) Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny (being Vol. VI of *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture: Supplements to Muqarnas*), E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992, p. 5.

³⁰ Pinder-Wilson, 'Timurid Architecture', p. 732.

³¹ See Ebba Koch, *Mughal Architecture*, pp. 44-45; Jose Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture*, pp. 236-37.

The most famous Mughal monumental funerary structures constructed on this Timurid plan are the Humayun's Tomb at Delhi and the Taj Mahal at Agra. The plan of Humayun's Tomb also appears to have been inspired from a 'boat-house'¹ which, according to Humayun's court historian, was contrived on the orders of the emperor himself. Khwand Amir writes:

Of all the wonderful innovations (*ikhtam'at*) prepared in that time on the Imperial orders, which owing to their novelty (*gharaib*) and beauty (*nazahat*) have spread to all parts of the world was the one which on royal directions, the royal carpenters constructed with the help of four boats in the river Jamuna (*Jayhun*). On each of these (boats) were constructed platforms (*saffa*) which are double-storeyed *chahartaqs* of elegant style. These four boats were joined with each other in such a way that these *chahartaq* (platforms) face each other. And in between each two of the four boats, another apartment (*taq*) was produced. Consequently an octagonal tank (*hauz*) resulted in the middle. And these *chahartaqs* were decorated with fine cloths and other valuable objects, due to which the mind of the intelligent (*aql-i darrak*) would be amazed by its beauty and magnificance.³²

If we compare the plan of Humayun's Tomb, which was designed by Mirza Ghiyas, the master architect who had accompanied Babur to India, the tomb appears to be a copy of Humayun's boat-house. The *chahartaqs* of the boat pavilions were transformed into stone double-storeyed vaulted octagonal corner chambers. The four 'apartments' connecting the boats were transformed into rectangular side chambers, and the central octagonal tank was now transformed into the octagonal domed sepulchral chamber. The Taj Mahal, on the other hand, is a single *baghdadi octagon* (chamfered square) laid out in the typical noni-partite plan. The Iranian axiomatics are brilliantly coupled with indigenous idiomatics and aesthetics.

Another example of a noni-partite tomb is the Tomb of Anarkali at Lahore, which, again, is one of the most ingeniously planned of Mughal structures.

The noni-partite plan was also applied by the Mughals to tombs which were regular octagons. The Tomb of Shah Quli Khan at Narnaul, the Tomb of Haji Muhammad at Sirhind and the Tomb of Qutbuddin Muhammad Khan at Vadodara are some of the funerary structures of Akbar's reign which were regular octagons with noni-partite plans.

This plan was applied to palace buildings like Akbar's Pavilion at the Ajmer Fort and the *Buland Darwaza* at Fathpur Sikri, and *Rani ka Mahal* at Allahabad Fort. Pleasure

³² Khwand Mir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, (ed.) Hidayat Husain, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1940, p. 52.

pavilions and water palaces like the *Hada Mahal* at Fathpur Sikri, Shah Quli's Water Palace at Narnaul and I'timad Khan's Water Palace (popularly known as *Burhia ka Tal*) at Etmadpur (Agra) were also constructed on this pattern.

The noni-partite plan was also applied to square structures. Akbar's Ajmer Pavilion and Shah Quli's Water Palace were square structures. The best example of this type is, however, the Tomb of I'timadud Daulah at Agra. These square noni-partite structures were probably constructed in the style of the *Khanqah* of Qasim Shaikh at Kermin, Bukhara and the Tomb of Ulugh Beg and Abdur Razzaq in the vicinity of Ghazni.

This plan was applied to a large number of Mughal *hammams*, for example, the *hammarn* of Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan at Burhan-pur and the imperial *hammams* at Fathpur Sikri.

From the above description it thus appears that the Indian architects and planners, especially those of the Mughal period, heavily borrowed their idiomatic, axiomorphic and aesthetic traditions from Iran. The beauty and uniqueness of the medieval Indian and Mughal architecture, however, was owing to these inspirations being intelligently synthesized with older indigenous elements. This synthetic tendency is seen at its best in the Taj Mahal, making it one of the best architectural achievements of world civilization.

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The first sizeable exodus of the Iranians in the Mughal Empire appears to have taken place with the return of Humayun from Persia in 1545; and now West Iranians began to predominate among the immigrants. A number of Iranian scholars, nobles and soldiers migrated to India along with him and joined his service.

If we consider the ethnic composition of the Mughal nobility from the reign of Akbar down to Shāhjahān, we notice immediately a high and disproportionate advancement granted to Iranis over the others throughout the period in the higher echelons of the Mughal nobility. The Persians and the Turanis on the other hand in the medium range of Mughal hierarchy remained largely equal in number.

It is generally held that this large-scale migration of the Iranians to India after the establishment of the Mughal Empire was a direct result of the unfavourable religious atmosphere which they faced in a resurgent Safavid Iran. According to a contemporary account, even the 'Tafzili Sunnis' (i.e., those Sunnis who give precedence to the Household of the Prophet) found it quite difficult to survive in the Safavid empire of Shah Ismail. But this reason for migration from Iran to India would imply that a majority of the Iranians who entered the Mughal service were Sunnis. However we have evidence

that most of the Iranians who joined the Mughal service were known Shi'ites or Tafzilis. Émigrés like Qāzi Nurullah Shūstari, Shah Fathullah Shirāzi, Hakīm Abul Fath Gīlāni and his brothers, and 'Urfī Shirāzi and Sharīf 'Amulī were known Shi'ites and religious persecution could not have been a reason for their departure from Iran. Mulla 'Abdul Qadir Badauni alleges that the 'Iraqīs' (i.e., the Shi'i Iranis) achieving great favour at Akbar's court had in fact become predominant (*ghālib*) over the Sunnis who had turned into a subjugated clan (*maghlūb*). Abul Fazl too alludes to the same allegation when he says that 'wicked people' allege that Akbar had himself become a Shi'ite. In fact, during the whole reign of Shāhjahān we do not come across any single instance of a noble who came to India due to religious persecution in Iran. Almost all these émigrés openly professed Shi'ism and yet were accorded high honours at the court of Shāhjahān.

The actual reason for the migration to India appears to be two-fold: On the one hand the Shah followed a repressive policy towards his nobles; on the other hand, Akbar initiated a policy which welcomed these émigrés with an open arm. The leading nobles of the Safavid court were frequently dismissed from their positions or even in certain cases executed. On the other hand in the Mughal administrative system even dismissal from service was a rare event. The Mughal policy is apparent in a letter sent by Akbar to his Iranian counterpart, Shah Abbas. In this letter to the Safavid monarch, Akbar advises him to 'practise endurance of burdens and the ignoring of the mistakes of the hereditary servants and new employees'. Akbar further cautions him of the dangers of executing nobles. Contrary to this behaviour of the Safavids, Muzaffar Alam has shown how the great Mughal sought to attract the talent from Iran to his court.

It was probably due to this large number of elites and scholars that another profound change occurred in the Mughal Empire. We know that under the Timurids at least till the reign of Humayun the spoken language of the court was the Chaghtai Turkish. It was not only the language in which Babur wrote his memoirs, but a language which was generally understood and spoken in the court. We have the testimony of Bāyazīd Bayāt that most of the nobles during this period conversed in Turkish and not Persian. But then need arose that the crucial documents like the *farman* and the *fathnama* before and after the Battle of Kanwa fought between Babur and Rana Sangram Singh be issued in Persian. The need also arose that a translation of the Indian portion of *Baburnama* be made in Persian. The audience of these documents was probably not only the erstwhile ruling classes (the Afghans) but also the new emigrants who were now heading towards the newly emerging empire. By the reign of Akbar, Persian emerged as the lingua franca of the court and the elites. By Shāhjahān's reign, we are informed that when a noble encountered a *mulla* delivering his lecture in *hindavi* at a madrasa he had to get it

translated into Persian in order to understand what was being taught. The elite nature of the Persian however becomes apparent from an anecdote narrated by Shaikh Farid Bhakkari: Mirza Ruhullah, a confidant of Jahāngīr was once passing through the territory of Jitpura which was under the charge of a Raja (a Hindu chieftain). The Raja hastened to receive him once he entered his area and threw a feast for him in an orchard. During the feast, Mirza Ruhullah saw a snake crawling from a tree near him and shouted '*mār! mār!*', which in Persian means 'snake, snake' but in Hindavi meant 'Kill! Kill!' The Mirza's soldiers thinking he was ordering them to kill the Raja pounced upon the hapless host and cut his throat.

Another group of émigré professionals was that of the artists and painters. It appears however that till the reign of Shāhjahān, the Imperial atelier had only a few from Central Asia or Persia. Of the known foreigners in the Mughal atelier only eight painters are mentioned in our sources or their works along with their places of origin. (See Table I)

Table III
Racial Origins of Painters

Place of Origin	Total Number	Humayun	Akbar	Jahāngīr	Shāhjahān
Herat	3	-	-	2	1
Shiraz	1	1	1	-	-
Tabrez	1	-	1	-	-
Central Asia / Samarqand	2	-	1	1	1
Kabul	1	-	1	-	--
Abbyssinia	1	-	1	-	-
Gujarat	12	-	12	-	-
Kashmir	12	-	11	2	-
Gwalior	1	-	1	-	-

Thus we hear of Aqa Riza Herati who joined service of Prince Salim. His son Abul Hasan, like his father served Jahāngīr. Another of his sons, Muhammad Abid served the

Mughal atelier under Shāhjahān. Abdus Samad of Shiraz, Mir Saiyid Ali of Tabrez, Farrukh Qalmaq, Muhammad Nadir of Samarqand and a painter identified only as Habshi (Abbyssinian) were some of the other non-Indian painters serving at the Mughal court.

Khwaja Abdus Samad, a native of Shiraz joined the Mughal service during the reign of Humayun and attained high position under Akbar. During the reign of Akbar he attained a mansab of 400 *zat* and given a number of administrative responsibilities. Thus in the 22nd Regnal Year (that is 1578) he was appointed as the *darogha-i dār uz zarb* (Superintendent of the mint) at Fathpur Sikri. In 1583 he was given the charge of 'leather articles' due to his honest dealings. The very next year, that is 28th Regnal Year, when the charge of the Imperial household was given to Prince Murad, Abdus Samad was appointed as one of his deputies. His son Muhammad Sharīf, a painter in the Imperial atelier under Akbar, rose under Jahangir to a very high position. In Akbar's reign he enjoyed the rank of 200 *zat* which was enhanced by Jahāngīr soon after his accession to 5000 / 5000. He was also awarded the title of *Amir ul Umara*. During this reign he was not only enjoying a high position in the court but was also sent to command an army to the Deccan.

Aqa Riza of Herat, who joined the atelier of Prince Salim when the prince was at Allahabad, was another Iranian painter enjoying imperial offices. According to an inscription, Aqa Riza Musawwir was also appointed as the *darogha-i im arat* (superintendent of construction) of the mausoleum complex of Khuldābād (Khusraubāgh, Allahabad). His son Abul Hasan, according to Jahāngīr, far excelled his father and was awarded the title of Nādir ul 'asr (unique of the age).

Like the painters, singers (*goyinda*) and musicians who played various instruments too were men derived from varied backgrounds. It is interesting to note that only 33 % of these court musicians were of foreign origin (see Table II).

Table IV

Musicians and their Racial Origin

	Indian	Foreigners	Hindus	Muslims
Total	24	12	11	25
Percentage	66.7	33.3	30.6	69.4

A majority of the foreign musicians and singers (two-thirds), in the court of Akbar, hailed from Persia, while only a third came from Central Asia. Thus we find the mention of Usta

Dost, Mir Saiyid Ali, and Sultan Hashim, all from Mashhad; as well as Qasim Kohbar and Tash Beg Qipchaq both Central Asians, amongst the others in the list provided by Abul Fazl.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also witnessed a spurt in the migration of a large number of merchants to India because of the bright prospects there. Some of them were inducted into the Mughal nobility and rose to eminent positions. We have already mentioned the example of Ali Akbar Isfahāni. Another such person was Mir Jumla who first reached Golconda and from there migrated to the Mughal court under Shāhjahān. It was therefore quite natural for the Iranian merchants to flock to India in large numbers. Tavernier thus observes that:

...there are in Persia as in other kingdoms people having the spirit and the knowledge, but whose merit is not recognized and cannot find the patronage of the court. Angry by this or reduced to a secluded life and deprived of the means to make a fortune, they move out to India and offer their services either to the great Mughul, or to the King of Golconda or to the King of Bijapur.

It also appears from the available evidence that these merchants maintained notable contacts with the political authorities of both Iran and India. Thus Haji Rafiq, for example was particularly close to both Jahāngīr and Shah Abbas I. Jahāngīr himself mentions that Rafiq ‘frequently visited Iraq (Iran) and became an intimate of my brother Shah Abbas’. He was also awarded the title of *malik ut tujjar* by Jahāngīr.

Thus we see that the Iranian who migrated to the Mughal Empire were not only members of the ruling class but belonged to such social groups as painters, physicians, artists and merchants. They migrated to the country of their choice generally not to avoid religious persecution in their home country but to look for better opportunities which were on offer in the Mughal Empire. The Mughals on their part kept the doors open to the new talent they could draw from Iran. The Mughal Empire owed much to the work of these émigrés and they contributed much to the cultural renaissance that the Mughal Empire witnessed. The theme can be best summed up by quoting a dialogue which took place between Zainul Beg, the Persian envoy to the court of Jahāngīr and Abdul Latif Abbasi the protocol officer who received the Persian Ambassador and took him around the tomb of Akbar during the former’s official visit to that mausoleum:

(Then) he (Zainul Beg) asked: “Where do you hail from?” I said, “I am a Baghdadi (by origin), but my birth place is India. And Khwaja Muhammad Mirak is a Mashhadi”. He said, “Baghdad is called ‘Iraq-i

‘Arab and (the term) ‘two Iraqs’ is well known. Are you too in fact from Iraq?’ To this my reply was, “Yes! The country of Iraq also belongs to His Majesty Jahāngīr Padshah and the Shah (of Iran) also does not consider himself to be different from him. We are also among you and you also from among us”.

Despite this display of cosmopolitanism, it must be noted that so far as we can see from the mentions of marriages contracted by Iranian émigrés it would seem that generally a kind of endogamy was practised. One may take as an illustration the family of I’timad ud Daulah, the great minister of Jahangir and the father of his celebrated queen Nūr Jahān. But for three marriages (of Nūr Jahān, Mumtāz Mahal and Lādli Begam), all with members of the ruling family, all the known marriages contracted by this large family till the death of Jahangir were either within the family itself or with Iranians, those of Istajlu and Anju clans and the families of Khwāja Abul Hasan, Nūruddin Muhammad Kāshi and Ahmad Beg Khan Kābuli – all Iranian, except the last who could be a Khurāsāni. Further research on these lines into marriage-connections among other Iranian families is yet to be undertaken but will probably lead to a similar result. These assisted to help the Iranian immigrants to maintain a separate identity and ethnic reputation within the larger Indian society for a very long period.