

Strength and Role of Persian Immigrants in the Politics and Administration of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir

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Abstract

This study twigs specifically from the strength of Persian immigrants in the politics and administration of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, in order to underline its strength in Mughal nobility. Persian intelligentsia played indeed a vital role in the establishment and durability of the Mughal Empire. The tradition of migration from Muslim lands never came to an end. Many talented and distinguished personnel and families hailed from Persia received encouragement and high honours from the Mughal Emperors and the Mughal nobles. Since the establishment of the Mughal Empire, a large number of men of sword and pen, the people of excellence, quality and learning, and eminent persons from the cities of Persia came to this splendid Empire with great hopes and anticipations. They entered this bountiful kingdom, which was a sort of asylum for the people of the world. Persian immigrants accounted for a high proportion of personnel in all branches of the Mughal Empire. Persian intelligentsia certainly played a crucial role in the organization and sturdiness of the Mughal Empire.

Introduction

During the early sixteenth century, India and Persia became great powers under the rule of two outstanding dynasties. Shah

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Ismail-I established Safawid Empire in 1501 A.D. which was the first native dynasty to rule over the whole of Persia since the overthrow of the Sassanid Empire by the Arabs in the Seventh century.¹ While two and half decades later, Babur became the founder of Mughal Dynasty in India in 1526 A.D. On the eve of the accession of Aurangzeb Alamgir to the throne, Shah Abbas-II was the Safawid sovereign in Persia. Indo-Persian relations were far more complicated than any other contemporary powers. With India, the Persians had a contention over the disputed territory of Qandahar that led to situations ranging from a cold war to armed struggle,² and caused perpetual wars between the two empires.³ Even though, the enduring effects of Mughal deference to Persian or Safawid prestige can be seen in an account by French traveller Francois Bernier in the mid-seventeenth century who recorded that “only Persian ambassadors were allowed to salute the Mughal emperor ‘according to the custom of their own country’ or to deliver their letters to him ‘without the intervention of an *omrah*’ (an *amir* or noble)”⁴ However, the Mughal sovereign demonstrated the feelings of harmony and goodwill and to some extent though the same manner was reciprocated by the Safawid monarchs, but, there are sufficient indications to show that they were envious and suspicious of each other. The Court of Persia, on its parts, so far as possible, never recognized the high-sounding titles of the Indian rulers, and displayed, as it were, a patronizing attitude towards them. Similarly, the Mughal Emperors regarded themselves as superior to the Shahs, because the extent of their territories was larger, and by reputation their wealth was greater.⁵

There was a continuous movement of peoples between Mongolia, China, Central Asia, Persia, Turkey and India. Ever since

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- 1 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Tarikh-e-'Alamara-ye-'Abbasi* (Eng Tr.) Roger M. Savory *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, Vol.I (Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), p.xxi.
 - 2 Mansura Haider, *Indo-Central Asian Relations: From Early Times to Medieval Period* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2004), p.86.
 - 3 Ludwig W. Adamec, *Kandahar and South-Central Afghanistan* (Austria: Akademische Druck-u-Verlagsanstalt, 1980), p.263.
 - 4 Francois Bernier, *Travels in Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668* (Eng Tr.) A. Constable (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1968), p.120.
 - 5 Banarsi Prasad Saksena, *History of Shahjahan of Dehli* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1962), p.210.

the much traversed Silk Road had provided the opportunity for frequent intercourses and exchanges of commodities and ideas; emigrations had become common phenomena, and people migrated in waves and new settlements sprang up.⁶ Actually, Central Asia and especially Persia are the ingredients which make up the genesis of Indian civilization.⁷ Historians from Persia have, over a long period, been interested in understanding the process of this migration. Several historians saw this just as an inter-court migration. Their analysis virtually begins and ends with the observation that the Indian rulers offered better opportunities than those available in Persia, to administrators, scholars and people with diverse skills. Many historians have sought to see in migration just an assertion of ‘age-old connections’, or the result and extension of the presence of the Persians already in India.⁸

This research paper is consisting over an endeavour for looking at the strength of Persian immigrants in Mughal politics and administration during the regime of Aurangzeb Alamgir. It is very difficult to conduct this investigation bearing in mind the multifarious positions and portfolios occupied by the Persian immigrants in all administrative segments of Mughal Dynasty. In addition, it is rather not easy to find out the relevant statistics to underline Persians’ strength in Mughal politics and administration along with the comparison and portrayal of other nations that comprised the Mughal nobility during the Shah Jahan’s reign.

Main Reasons of the Arrival of Persian Immigrants

The reasons of the arrival of Persian immigrants in Mughal India during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir were as under:

A significant reason for this relocation seems to have been that “these kings (Safawid Shahs), by reason of their political aims and strong antagonism to the Ottoman Empire, devoted the greater part of their energies to the propagation of the Shi’a doctrine and the

6 Mansura Haider, p.81.

7 A. Walter, and J.R. Fairservis, *The Roots of Ancient India* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), p.380.

8 Iqtidar Alam Khan, “The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of his Religious Policy, 1560-80,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Nos.1 and 2, London: 1968., p.29.

encouragement of divine learning in its principles and laws.⁹ In fact, Tamerlane's (Amir Timur) imperialism simply created a political and social vacuum in south-western Asia. This vacuum eventually drew the Ottomans and the Safawids into a collision which dealt the Persian society its death.¹⁰ This hostility and specific political aims caused a great political instability in Persia. Furthermore, in pursuing the same political policy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries leading nobles and men of pen were frequently executed and deprived of their posts. Consequently, a good number among them proceeded to India in search of security.¹¹ Another factor of the migration of the Persian immigrants was the unfavourable religious atmosphere in Safawid Persia. In this regard, Irfan Habib says; "the sectarian divide could not prevent the intellectual interchange between the scholars of India and Persia; and for this the generally tolerant policy of the Mughal Empire must receive its due share of credit."¹² A large number of them, who in Persia refused to accept the *Ithna Ashariyah* Faith, were forced and a lot of them had to go into exile. Some went to Turkey and Central Asia, but many came to India.¹³ Since Emperor Akbar, Mughal Empire remained richer than any of its contemporary empires prevailing in the seventeenth century. The achievement of this unparalleled prosperity mainly lies in making astute use of a major shift in the balance of world trade¹⁴ which occurred specifically during the Mughal regime. Lack of proper patronage by the Safawid Persia was another important cause of the fortune seekers for better economic prospects in Mughal India.

There were also some Persian nobles who for some reasons incurred time to time the personal displeasure of Safawid monarchs,

9 Abolghasem Dadvar, *Iranians in Mughal Politics and Society [1606-1658]* (New Delhi: Cyan Publishing House, 2000), p.201.

10 A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Ed.) D.C. Somervell (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.345.

11 Abolghasem Dadvar, p.137.

12 Irfan Habib (ed.) "A Shared Heritage: The Growth of Civilizations in India and Iran", *Aligarh Historians Society* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2002), p.xxx.

13 M. Abdul Ghani, *A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court, Vol.II* (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983), pp.174-75.

14 Roger M. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.192-93.

and therefore, they had no other way left them to escape Mughal India to salvage their lives.¹⁵

Racial and Religious Groups of Nobility at the Mughal Court

The Mughal nobility, after its first phase of development up to the reign of Akbar, began to include certain well-recognized racial groups. Iranis/Khurasanis (Persians), Afghans, *Sheikhzadas* (Indian Muslims), Rajputs, and the Hindus were among the prominent racial groups during Aurangzeb's time. An interesting explanation of Mughal Emperors was their proclivity towards deputing *Ithna Ashari* Prime Ministers throughout their mainstream administration.¹⁶ As Manucci says that "(they) are famed for favouring their own nation in the Mogul (Mughal) Empire, and the larger number of nobles are Persians."¹⁷ Accordingly, there was a rivalry between Persian (*Ithna Ashari*) and Central Asian (Sunni) nobility. The nature of their nobility shows that the Mughals were great believer in merit, and they established a high standard of religious tolerance too.¹⁸ That's why many Persians along with numerous natives of other areas, occupied positions of prominence in Aurangzeb's administration in view of their merit.

Persians in the Politics and Administration of Aurangzeb Alamgir

The events at the end of Shah Jahan's reign did not augur well for the future of the Empire. In the war of succession Aurangzeb rallied the Sunnis against the *Ithna Asharis*, but there is really no basis for this assertion. Out of 125 nobles of the *mansab* of 1,000 and above who are known to have supported up Aurangzeb to the battle of Samugarh, 28 were Persians, 4 of them holding *mansab* of 5,000 *zat* and above. Whereas, 23 supporters of Dara Shikoh were Persians. After all, Mir Jumla and Shaista Khan, the leading Persian nobles, were Aurangzeb's partisans. Similarly, some historians says

15 *Ibid.*, p.205.

16 S.S. Abd-ur-Rehman, *Hindustan Kay Salatin, Ulemah Aur Mashaikh Kay Ta'aluqaat Per Aik Nazar* [Urdu] (Karachi: National Book Foundation, 1990), p.11.

17 Niccolao Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor* (Eng.Tr.) William Irvine 'Mogul India,' Vol.I (London: John Murray Albemarle, 1906), p.177.

18 I.H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire* (Karachi: The Director of Publications, University of Karachi, 1966), pp.252-53.

that Prince Shuja was unanimously supported by the Persians, but, the fact that only one of his ten known supporters, holding rank of 1,000 *zat* and above, was Persian.¹⁹ Hence, with much more better support of Persian nobility he could execute his ambitions to snatch throne from his other confronting brothers. Thus, Aurangzeb's victory did not affect the position of the Persians in any way at the Mughal Court. Table A²⁰ is showing the additional statistical facts about the supporters of contending Princes in the War of Succession.

Table A

Supporters of the Contending Princes in the War of Succession during 1658-1659.

Racial Category	Dara Shikoh			Aurangzeb			Shah Shuja			Murad Bakhsh		
	Above 5000 and 4500	1000 to 4500	Total	Above 5000 and 4500	1000 to 4500	Total	Above 5000 and 4500	1000 to 4500	Total	Above 5000 and 4500	1000 to 4500	Total
Persians	3	20	23	4	24	28	0	1	1	0	1	1
Turanis	1	15	16	1	19	20	1	2	3	0	0	0
Afghans	0	1	1	0	23	23	0	1	1	0	1	1
Other	0	23	23	1	32	33	0	5	5	1	6	7
Total	4	59	63	6	98	104	1	9	10	1	8	9
Rajputs	2	20	22	2	7	9	0	0	0	0	2	2
Marathas	1	1	2	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Hindus	3	21	24	2	19	21	0	0	0	0	2	2
Grand Total	7	80	87	8	117	125	1	9	10	1	10	11

However, the names of those Persians who supported the main competitors Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb Alamgir in the war of succession are being shown in the following Tables B²¹ and C²²

19 M. Ather Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.19.

20 *Ibid.*, p.96.

21 *Ibid.*, pp.113-20.

22 *Ibid.*, pp.121-31.

Table B

List of the Persian Supporters top Dara Shikoh in the War of Succession during 1658-59.

Sr. No.	Name	Rank/Mansab
1.	Shah Nawaz Khan Safawi	6000 <i>zat</i> 6000 <i>sawar</i>
2.	Qasim Khan	5000 <i>zat</i> 5000 <i>sawar</i>
3.	Khaliullah Khan	5000 <i>zat</i> 5000 <i>sawar</i>
4.	Ibrahim Khan	4000 <i>zat</i> 3000 <i>sawar</i>
5.	Mughal Khan	3000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
6.	Zafar Khan Ahsan	3000 <i>zat</i> 1500 <i>sawar</i>
7.	Abdullah Beg Ganj Ali Khan	3000 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
8.	Iradat Khan	2000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
9.	Faizullah Khan	2000 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
10.	Abdullah Khan (Najm-i-Sani)	1000 <i>zat</i>
11.	Husain Beg Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
12.	Mir Miran	1500 <i>zat</i> 500 <i>sawar</i>
13.	Mir Rustam Khwafi	1500 <i>zat</i> 500 <i>sawar</i>
14.	Ghazanfar Khan	1000 <i>zat</i> 900 <i>sawar</i>
15.	Imam Quli	1000 <i>zat</i> 800 <i>sawar</i>
16.	Muhammad Salih Wazir Khan	1000 <i>zat</i> 800 <i>sawar</i>
17.	Asfandiyar Beg	1000 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
18.	Maghol Khan	1000 <i>zat</i> 700 <i>sawar</i>
19.	Khwafi Sultan Husain	1000 <i>zat</i> 500 <i>sawar</i>
20.	Fakhir Khan Najm-i-Sani	2500 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
21.	Ismail Beg	1000 <i>zat</i> 300 <i>sawar</i>
22.	Ishaq Beg	1000 <i>zat</i> 300 <i>sawar</i>
23.	Muhammad Sharif Qulij Khan	1000 <i>zat</i> 200 <i>sawar</i>

Table C

List of the Persian Supporters of Aurgangzeb Alamgir in the War of Succession during 1658-59

Sr.No.	Name	Rank/Mansab
I.	Mir Muhammad Saeed	6000 <i>zat</i> 6000 <i>sawar</i>
2.	Abu Talib Shaista Khan	6000 <i>zat</i> 6000 <i>sawar</i>

3.	Shaikh Mir Khawafi	5000 <i>zat</i> 5000 <i>sawar</i>
4.	Muhammad Tahir Mashhadi	5000 <i>zat</i> 5000 <i>sawar</i>
5.	Muhammad Beg Zulfikhar Khan	4000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
6.	Multafat Khan Azam Khan	4000 <i>zat</i> 2500 <i>sawar</i>
7.	Mirza Muhammad Mashhadi	4000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
8.	Mirza Sultan Safawi	4000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
9.	Mir Malik Husain Bahadur Khan	3000 <i>zat</i> 1500 <i>sawar</i>
10.	Murshid Quli Khan	3000 <i>zat</i> 1500 <i>sawar</i>
11.	Muftakhar Khan Sipahdar	3000 <i>zat</i> 2000 <i>sawar</i>
12.	Sadat Khan	2000 <i>zat</i> 1500 <i>sawar</i>
13.	Mir Shams-ud-Din Mukhtar	2000 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
14.	Muhammad Tahir Saf Shikan Khan	2000 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
15.	Mir Murad Mazandani Ghairat Khan	2000 <i>zat</i> 400 <i>sawar</i>
16.	Mir Masum Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 1000 <i>sawar</i>
17.	Rad Andaz Beg	1000 <i>zat</i> 400 <i>sawar</i>
18.	Mir Ahmad	1500 <i>zat</i> 800 <i>sawar</i>
19.	Mir Abul Fazi Mamuri (Mamur Khan)	1500 <i>zat</i> 500 <i>sawar</i>
20.	Mir Hoshdar (Hoshdar Khan)	1500 <i>zat</i> 700 <i>sawar</i>
21.	Hameed-ud-Din Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 200 <i>sawar</i>
22.	Mir Bahadur Oil Jan Sipar Khan	1000 <i>zat</i> 400 <i>sawar</i>
23.	Qazalbash Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 700 <i>sawar</i>
24.	Mir Askari Aqil Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 500 <i>sawar</i>
25.	Masud Yadgar Ahmed Beg Khan	1500 <i>zat</i> 600 <i>sawar</i>
26.	Niamatullah	1000 <i>zat</i> 200 <i>sawar</i>
27.	Hakim Muhammad Amin Shirazi	1000 <i>zat</i>
28.	Mir Muhammad Mehdi Urdistani	1000 <i>zat</i>

India was throughout attracted by the foreign immigrants since the establishment of Mughal Empire. It is also observed during Aurangzeb's era with frequent arrival of different migrants specially Persians. The Persians maintained their position in Mughal politics and administration partly because of the influx of Persians serving in the Deccan Kingdoms. Table D²³ is showing the list of those overall Persian asylum seekers along with their basic capabilities and positions;

Table D

23 *Ibid.*, pp.175-215.

Persian Emigrants during Aurangzeb's Reign Who were Assigned Ranks in Administration/Army

Sr.No	Name	Nature of Basic Capability	Rank/Position
1.	Khalilullah Khan	Commander/ Administrator	6000 <i>zat</i> /6000 <i>sawar</i>
2.	Shaikh Mir Khwafi	Administrator	5000 <i>zat</i> /5000 <i>sawar</i>
3.	Muhammad Tahir	Commander/ Administrator	5000 <i>zat</i> /5000 <i>sawar</i>
4.	Mirza Muhamad Mashhadi	Administrator	5000 <i>zat</i> /4000 <i>sawar</i>
5.	Mulla Shafiq Yazdi	Administrator	5000 <i>zat</i> /2500 <i>sawar</i>
6.	Qawam-ud-Din Khan Esfahani	Commander/ Administrator	4000 <i>zat</i> /2000 <i>sawar</i>
7.	Abdur Razzaq Gilani	Administrator	3500 <i>zat</i> /2000 <i>sawar</i>
8.	Shaikh Mirak Harawi	Administrator	3000 <i>zat</i> /200 <i>sawar</i>
9.	Mir Taqi	Administrator	3000 <i>zat</i>
10	Sa'adat Khan	Commander/ Administrator	2500 <i>zat</i> /2000 <i>sawar</i>
11.	Mir Muhammad Mahdi	Commander/ Administrator	2500 <i>zat</i> /500 <i>sawar</i>
12.	Mir Muhammad Hadi	Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /2400 <i>sawar</i>
13	Qazalbash Khan	Commander/ Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /800 <i>sawar</i>
14.	Diyanat Khan Kashi	Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /700 <i>sawar</i>
15.	Mir Imam-ud-Din Rehmat	Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /600 <i>sawar</i>
16.	Mir Murad Mazandani	Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /400 <i>sawar</i>
17.	Mustafa Khan Kashi	Administrator	1500 <i>zat</i> /900 <i>sawar</i>
18.	Muhammad Beg Turkman	Administrator	1500 <i>zat</i>
19.	Imam Quli Qarawal Aghar Khan	Commander/ Administrator	1000 <i>zat</i> /800 <i>sawar</i>
20.	Mir Arab Bakhazri	Administrator	1000 <i>zat</i> /500 <i>sawar</i>
?1	Saiyed Mirza Sabzwari	Administrator	1000 <i>zat</i> /300 <i>sawar</i>
22.	Khwaja Ismail Beg Kirmani	Administrator	1000 <i>zat</i> /150 <i>sawar</i>
23.	Inayat Khan	Commander/ Administrator	2000 <i>zat</i> /2000 <i>sawar</i>
24.	Ahmad Beg Kamil	Administrator	<i>Court Noble</i>
25.	Hakim Daud Taqarrub Khan	Administrator/ <i>Hakim</i>	5000 <i>zat</i>
26.	Hakim Saleh Shirazi	Administrator/ <i>Hakim</i>	1500 <i>zat</i> /250 <i>sawar</i>

27.	Hakim Muhammad Amin Shirazi	Administrator/ Hakim	1500 zat/50 sawar
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Mansabdari System was introduced by Akbar who derived it from Sher Shah Suri's proficiency and practices in administrative system. Actually, this system was the result of Persian administration where government was divided in various *mansabs* under the supreme command of the Shah.²⁴ Afterwards, this *mansabdari* system remained continued as a key feature of Mughal administration in India. During 1658-78, as it was the early period of Aurangzeb's rule, out of his 486 *mansabdars* 136 were Persians with 27.98 percent strength, as compare with the Turanis, who were having 67 posts with the percentage of 13.79. During the years 1679-1707 Persians remained elevated by having 126 *mansabs* with 21.91 percent out of a total 575. On the top rung of ladder, 23 Persians held the rank of 5,000 and above by 45.10 percent during 1658-78 and 14 by 17.72 percent in 1679-1707, while the number of Turanis was 17.64 percent and 7.59 percent respectively. The Persians maintained their position partly because of the influx of Persians serving in the Daccan Kingdoms. Here the Persians had long been dominant and Mir Jumla provides an example of a Persian noble entering Mughal service through the Daccan. Aurangzeb is also said to have placed great confidence in officers from Khawaf, a province of Persia, who became recipients of considerable favours during his reigns.²⁵ These Tables E²⁶ and F²⁷ are reproduced below that are showing the total strength of different groups in statistical form within the Mughal nobility as per above mentioned two different periods during the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir.

Table E

Racial and Religious Composition of Mughal Mansabdars 1000-5000 and above During 1658-1678.

Racial Category	Mansabs 1000-2700	Mansabs 3000-4500	Mansabs 5000-above	Grand Total	%
Persians	81	32	23	136	27.98

24 Muhammad Zaheer, *Alamgir Aur Saltanat-i-Mughalia Ka Zawal* [Urdu] (Karachi: Educational Press, 2006), p.70.

25 M. Ather Ali, p.19.

26 *Ibid.*, p.35.

27 *Ibid.*

Turanis	42	16	9	67	13.79
Indian Muslims	51	10	4	65	13.37
Afghans	31	9	3	43	8.85
Other Muslims	63	5	2	70	14.40
Total Muslims	268	72	41	381	78.39
Rajputs	54	11	6	71	14.61
Marathas	18	6	3	27	5.56
Other Hindus	5	1	1	7	1.44
Total Hindus	77	18	10	105	21.61
Grand Total	345	90	51	486	100%

Table F

Racial and Religious Composition Mughal *Mansabdars* 1000 – 5000 and Above During 1679-1707

Racial Category	Mansabs 1000-2700	Mansabs 3000-4500	Mansabs 5000-above	Grand Total	%
<i>Persians</i>	72	40	14	126	21.91
Turanis	44	22	6	72	12.52
Indian Muslims	41	18	10	69	12.00
Afghans	20	4	10	34	5.92
Other Muslims	66	13	13	92	16.00
Total Muslims	243	97	53	393	68.35
Rajputs	53	15	5	73	12.69
Marathas	62	18	16	96	16.70
Other Hindus	5	3	5	13	2.26
Total Hindus	120	36	26	182	31.65
Grand Total	363	133	79	575	100%

Several of Aurangzeb's leading ministers, including his first *diwan* Fazil Khan, were Persians and he continued to show favour to newly arrived Persians as well as to those already settled in India. But Aurangzeb's reputation for rigid orthodoxy and the general neglect of fine arts and belles-letters in his reign discouraged intending immigrants from Persia. Orthodox theological studies during his reign, naturally excluded Persians who mostly belonged to the *Ithna Ashariyah* sect. Thus, the infusion of fresh Persian blood into Indo-Muslim society, which had proceeded

uninterruptedly since the days of Emperor Babur, little bit decreased during Aurangzeb's regime, though it did not entirely cease.²⁸ In the early eighteenth century, which was the last era of Aurangzeb regime, two major groups among Mughal nobility emerged and played a vital role in politics, at least for the next forty years. Firstly, was the Persian group of Asad Khan and his son Zulfikhar Khan whom had already become *wazir-i-kul* and *Mir-bakhshi*, respectively up to 1702. The progenitors of this family left Persia after having some dissensions with Shah Abbas-I and therefore, migrated to India where Emperor Jahangir gave them appropriate *mansabs* and *jagirs*. Both father and son played an imperative role to counter Maratha power that was in confrontation with Aurangzeb since his accession to the throne. They often prided themselves as being Persian but born in Hindustan and were settled there for the last eight decades. They have got mammoth power in Mughal politics and administration. Another group was of Turanis or Central Asians, headed by Ghazi-ud-Din Feroz Jang and his sons, Chun Qulij Khan and Hamid Khan Bahadur along with a relative Amin Khan. It is said that Amin Khan gave an application to Aurangzeb for the post of *Bakhshi* and also pointed out that the existing incumbent Zulfikhar Khan is an *Ithna Ashari* and he may be partially towards other *Ithna Ashariyabs* too. Aurangzeb stoutly refused this application which also clears his partiality towards Sunnis, although, he was an orthodox *Sunni* himself.²⁹ These Irani-Turani controversies dealt a big blow to the solidarity of the Mughal Empire which was already involved in a quarrel with the Marathas.

The Persians monopoly continued under Aurangzeb's regime. There were numerous Persian Governors posted in various provinces, some of them were; Shahnawaz Khan and Mukhtar Khan as Governors Gujrat, Amir Khan as Governor Kabul, Fidai Khan as Governor Oudh, Arab Khan as Governor Bahraich, Muhammad Beg as Governor Doab, Kamgar Khan as Governor Sikandarpur, Tarbiyat Khan as Governor Orissa, Zabardast Khan as Governor

28 Riaz-ul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations* (Lahore: Iranian Culture Foundation, 1970), p.170.

29 Dr. Satish Chander, *Mughal Darbar Ki Groh Bandian Aur Unki Siyasat* [Urdu Tr. M.Q. Sadiqi] (New Dehli: Tarraqi-e-Urdu Bureau, 1987), pp.20-26.

Hoshangabad, Shaista Khan as Governor Bengal, Inayat Khan as Governor Orangabad, Saf Shikan Khan as Governor Kahni, Asad Khan and Bahadur Khan as Governors Deccan.³⁰

The racial composition of Mughal nobility was extremely diverse although the principal groups were clearly distinguishable: Turk and Persians whose ancestors had entered India with the Mughals or who had been tempted to seek service at the Mughal Court by the prospect of wealth and high office; Afghans, many of whom, were descended from families long-established in India, who tended to regard the Mughals as interlopers; native-born Muslims, descendants of converts or of Turkish invaders who had entered the sub-continent generations before and who had acquired Indian wives and ways; and Rajputs whose fathers or grand fathers had been drawn into the imperial orbit by Akbar's far-sighted policy of Mughal-Rajput partnership. To these were added, in the second half of the seventeenth century Deccani Muslims and Marathas as the frontiers of the Empire pressed steadily southwards.³¹ Divided by race, religion, language and manners, the Mughal nobility constituted a microcosm of the Empire itself, with Hindu pitted against Muslim, *Ithna Ashariyah* Persian against *Sunni* Turk, and both against Indian-born Muslims. Yet despite all these diversities, there were elements in the situation which contributed to a reduction of tensions: loyalty to the Mughal Dynasty which, from the seventeenth century onwards, acquired a potent charismatic influence as the fount of sovereignty and legitimate authority throughout the greater part of the Sub-continent; the emergence of genuine Mughal civilization which combined indigenous Indian with extraneous Persian and Central Asian elements and thereby helped to smooth over communal and regional antagonisms; and the Persian language and literature which got mastery in Mughal India.³²

Persian prestige often did offer benefits to ethnic Persians in service outside Persia. For example, although the army and administration of the Mughal Empire were made up of Persians,

30 M. Athar Ali, pp. 62, 105, 140, 152.

31 Gavin Hambly, *Cities of Mughal India: Dehli, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri* (London: Paul Elek Productions, 1977), p.104.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 104, 113.

Central Asian Turks, Arabs, Indian Muslims and even Hindus, the dominant group in terms of ranking was always the Persians, with Central Asians running a close second. Consequently, “there was usually a struggle of supremacy and was more of a rivalry than open conflict between Irani (Persian) and Turani (Central Asian) nobility, and generally the two factions shared their pre-eminence over the remainder of society.”³³ The Safawid held one grave threat over the Mughals that could not be countered. Persian nobles and administrators, forming one of the largest ethnic groups in the Mughal nobility, kept up close ties with their homeland. Besides, giving them sufficient encouragements, although, it was conceivable that Persian *mansabdars* might revolt, and bring on Safawid intervention. It is worth of noticing that no Indian held similar posts in Safawid Persia.³⁴

Shah Abbas-II had intrigued with Dara and Murad during the war of succession and had also written to the *Ithna Ashari* rulers of the Deccan urging to assert them while the Mughal Empire was torn by quarrels among the princes.³⁵ But when Aurangzeb made himself undisputed master of the throne, Shah Abbas-II sent a grand embassy under Bidagh Baig to Mughal Court to congratulate Aurangzeb Alamgir on the eve of his accession to the throne, and presented numerous precious gifts whose worth was not less than 423,000 rupees before the Emperor Alamgir. On his return from the Mughal Court, Bidagh Baig was rewarded with handsome money of 500,000 rupees along with expensive gifts and a reply letter for the Shah of Persia.³⁶ Although, in view of the continuous confrontation between Mughal and Safawid Empires over the possession of Qandahar, Aurangzeb was not interested in recovering Qandahar since his accession to the throne. Having personally led two unsuccessful campaigns against Qandahar in 1649 and 1652 A.D. he knew the futility of such an exercise. Aurangzeb had thus no

33 Richards C. Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.5.

34 John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2002), p.111.

35 Sir J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol.II (Karachi: South Asian Printers and Publishers, 1991), pp.68-69.

36 Muhammad Saqi Mustaid Khan, *Ma'asir-e-Alamgiri* (Urdu Tr.) M. Fida Ali Talib (Karachi: Book Land, 1961), pp.31-32.

reason, at least for the time being, to carry favours with the Safvis. Nevertheless, on the arrival of the embassy from Shah Abbas-II in 1661 to the Court of Alamgir, Muhammad Amin Khan a noble was sent with one thousand soldiers to receive the ambassador and to find out the purpose of his mission. All bazaars and streets were decorated and music was played. On his appearance he made obeisance in the Persian manner, while officers of the court forced him to bow in Mughal style. He handed over the letter from the Shah, which was taken by Shah Alam the son of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir, and read out in a loud voice. He was awarded *Khil'at* (robe of honour) by the Emperor and then the gifts were presented before the Emperor, consisting of horses, camels, rose-water, and carpets.³⁷

Afterwards, Aurangzeb's relations with Persia received a setback. His embassy which was sent to Persia in November 1663 A.D. under the supervision of his envoy Tarbiyat Khan, was miscarried.³⁸ Shah Abbas-II's conduct towards the Mughal ambassador had been highly objectionable and inappropriate. He had derided the envoy and had made insulting remarks about Aurangzeb in his presence. The Shah had even threatened to invade India, and sent his reply in March 1666 A.D. with following humiliating letter along with the same Mughal envoy "recently we have learnt from comers and goers that at many places in Hindustan refractory and seditious people, considering that Solomon-like monarch (Aurangzeb) to be impotent and resource-less, have raised the dust of disturbance, and having taken possession of some parts of the country are giving trouble to the inhabitants and travellers of that kingdom."³⁹ Thus, by the end of Aurangzeb's reign, the Mughal Empire had no diplomatic relations with Persia. Though Aurangzeb was not responsible for the breach with Persia in 1666 A.D. he was certainly responsible for the continuation of the breach. The state of diplomatic isolation in which Aurangzeb left the Mughal Empire was by no means enviable⁴⁰ during the reigns of his successors i.e.,

37 Mubarak Ali, *The Court of the Great Mughuls* (Lahore: Book Traders, 1986), p.40.

38 Riaz-ul Islam, *A Calendar of Documents on Indo-Persian Relations*, Vol.1 (Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation, 1979), p.446.

39 Naimur Rehman Farooqi, *Mughal-Ottoman Relations* (Dehli: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Dehli, 1989), p.146.

40 Riazul-Islam, p.134.

Bahadur Shah (1707-12), Jahandar Shah (1712-13), Farrukhsiyar (1713-19), Muhammad Shah (1719-48) and later on, up to 1857 Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last ruler of the dynasty.

Conclusion

Persians indeed were fortune-seekers, who had accompanied the ranks of Babur and his successors in large number, and their success at the Mughal Court had induced many others to follow in their foot-steps. Although in the lower cadre of *mansabs* in nobility, Persians remained lesser than *Turanis* (Central Asians) almost throughout the Mughal regime, but their ability and fidelity had recommended them to the highest posts of trust and importance in greater number. Aurangzeb's sovereignty was a period of many domestic problems in view of his confrontation with Maratha power and numerous other rebellions. In his reign, Persians were still in dominant position in Mughal nobility like the previous Mughal ones in India. After becoming Emperor says Bernier; "the 'greater part' of Aurangzeb's foreign nobility consisted of Persians."⁴¹

Indeed, it is a fact that the activities of these Persian immigrants gave strength and power to the Mughal politics and administration and proved themselves as a vital segment of Mughal nobility and provided a ground root of the ecstasy and zenith of Mughal rule in India. They were good politicians and dominated the Mughal Court and State as much as they did noticeably in the sphere of the fine arts. The domination of Persian immigrants in Aurangzeb's reign continued almost in each and every segment of Mughal politics and administration. Indeed, among the many immigrated peoples and races who have come in contact with and influenced India's life and culture, the oldest and most persistent have been the Persians. India has a special relation with Persians, because the Persians came to India, stayed here and served the country in different ways. They became a part of Indian society and later merged in that society, and finally become completely Indianised.⁴² As in his *Discovery of India*, Pandat Jawaharlal Nehru rightly observes that "few people have been more closely related in origin and throughout history than the people of India and the people of Persia."⁴³

41 Francois Bernier, p.3.

42 Nalinee M. Chapekar, *Ancient India and Iran: A Study of their Cultural Contacts* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1982), p.14.

43 J.L. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Penguin Books India, 2004), p.152.