

**From Editor-in-Chief Desk**

The cultural relations between Iran and India date back to ancient times when there were large migrations from North-Eastern Iran to the Indus region. Among historians, they are known as “the Indo-Aryan migrations.” Since then, the relations have more or less continued, and politics despite its hegemonic effects at various times, could not disrupt it. There are references to India in Achaemenid inscriptions and the kingdom of Darius the Great had extended beyond the Indus civilization. The relations continued in later periods, as the Persian language moved to India during the Ghaznavid period and became the language of literature, poetry, culture and science. In India, several great poets, including Bidel Dehlavi and Amir Khosrow Dehlavi wrote their poems in Persian. The Indian style of poetry was born in the same language. Perhaps late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’s famous quote can best reflect these long-standing ties. The “Relations between Iran and India are an ancient story in the history of the world,” he said. “We have to rewrite this ancient story on the pages of the universe with the ink of determination and stability and the quill of the coalition” added the former late Indian Prime Minister.

The three essential aspects of the relations include the historical-mythical, the literary-linguistic and the exchange of written thought in books and magazines. Mythical history is the first aspect. Myth has played an essential role in shaping the metaphysical worlds of the two nations, and subsequent developments are rooted in the same mythical context. For instance, Iranian *haoma* and Indian *soma* are among the oldest mythological elements of the two ancient civilizations. In ancient mythology, haoma (or soma) was a sacred plant, from the extract of which Iranians and Hindus made a healing and energizing syrup. In the Rigveda and the

Avesta, there are eloquent and passionate prayers about this plant. Obtaining its extract is considered to be one of the best human conducts. Haoma was used in performing religious rites and ceremonies in Iranian Mithraism, which was considered Christianity's counterpart for four centuries. After consuming haoma, practitioners entered a world of ecstasy and complete inattention to the world for hours. Several studies have reported similarities between Indian soma and Iranian haoma. In later periods historical, religious and commercial communications introduced the Iranian arts into India. Iranian art was rooted in mythical ideas, especially those produced in the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid and even Islamic periods.

The second factor, namely the language has been of great significance in the relations between the two countries since ancient times. On the one hand, language, as the main element in shaping different cultures has a pivotal role in cultural relations. On the other hand, given the similarities between Avestan and Sanskrit, the ancient languages of Iran and India, the two nations have been closely related from the beginning.

Iranians were always interested in Indian culture. The Indian writers, poets, and thinkers' also passionately followed Persian literature. Their active participation in Iran's cultural and national events demonstrates the strength of these relations. For example, the visit made by late Rabindranath Tagore (a critical literary, cultural and political figure known to the whole world following his receiving of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913) to Iran in 1932 was the most important indication of the cultural interactions between the two nations in the contemporary era.

Since the formation of the Indo-European hypothesis in the nineteenth century, Iranian and Indian nationalists and European anthropologists and linguists have pointed to the cultural ties between the two nations in the pre-Islamic period. It seemed that, apart from their linguistic links, a common religious history was also connecting Iran and India together. Persian poetry also had an active presence in the subcontinent. This presence dated back at least to the Mongol period. All of this reveals the deep literary and linguistic relations between the two nations, continuing up to this day.

The third side of these relations is exchanging written ideas in books and manuscripts. Among the various cultural apparatuses, the written culture and above all, books and manuscripts have played a key role in consolidating and continuing these relations. Travelers also played a crucial role in realizing these cultural exchanges and merchants who were constantly traveling between the two countries brought several cultural goods, particularly books. For example, Iranian travelers brought several manuscripts from India, and Indian merchants brought books and techniques to promote intellectual power. The story of the exchange of Nard (backgammon) and chess games between the Iranian and Indian courts is a historical manifestation of the same cultural and intellectual interaction.

As revealed in the exchange of the strategic games of chess and nard, the two cultures have influenced each other in various fields. For example, Islam took on an Iranian spirit in India. Iranian art, literature, mysticism, philosophy and Sufism are also very close to the Indian intellectual tradition since both nations are of the same race, language and origin. Politics overshadowed the relations between the two countries at some points in history. Still, since politics is always a guest and the host is culture, politics could not disrupt their relations altogether.

In continuing the third aspect of the cultural interactions between the two countries, the Journal of Indo-Iran Cultural Dialogue is dedicated to studying the scientific and cultural relations between the two countries. The journal started with the initiative of Iran Culture House, New Delhi, and in cooperation with Allameh Tabataba'i University (Iran) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (India). The main themes in this journal include Literary and Linguistic topics, Anthropology, Women's Studies, Cinema, Art, Music, Architecture, Philosophy, Sociology and Culture.

I hope the prominent scholars in these areas will present their valuable research articles to the journal and help to strengthen the bilateral relations in the new round of activities.

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