

regions ; I mean such Jews as he would no doubt desire to find—Jews descended from the tribes transported by Shalmaneser ; but you may assure that gentleman that although there seems ground for believing that some of them were formerly settled in these countries, yet the whole population is at present either Gentile or Mahometan... There are, however, many signs of Judaism to be found in the country (Kashmir)the inhabitants in the frontier villages struck me as resembling Jews. Their countenances and manner and that indescribable peculiarity which enables a traveller to distinguish the inhabitants of different nations, all seemed to belong to that ancient people. You are not to ascribe what I say to mere fancy, the Jewish appearance of these villagers having been remarked by our Jesuit Father and by several other Europeans, long before I visited Kachemire." Bernier concludes his testimony by saying : " You will see then that I am not disposed to deny that Jews may have taken up their residence in Kashmire."⁵³

Despite the scantiness of information concerning the economic and cultural⁵⁴ structure of these Jewish newcomers from Persia to Moghul India—be it Lahore, Agra, Kashmir or elsewhere—it is amongst them that we must look for those learned Persian-speaking Jews who participated in the discussions and disputations at the court of Akbar.

THE PERSONALITY OF SARMAD

Although the presence of Jews at the court of the Moghul emperor, their participation in the religious disputations and the existence of synagogues are well borne out by available sources, not a single name of a Jew of the time of Akbar is mentioned in Persian or European sources. Unless or until Hebrew sources or new Persian chronicles are found, it is unlikely that more specific information about the Jews of that time will be obtained.

Forty years after Akbar, however, in the time of his grandson, Shah Jahan, a Jew appears on the scene in India who was destined to play a unique role and to assert considerable influence on the religious and

53. The problem of the Kashmir Jews is closely connected with that of the Afghan Jews. A vast literature was produced during the 19th century, trying to prove the Semitic origin of the Afghan-Pushto language and the Jewish origin of the Afghan tribes, hopelessly confusing linguistic and ethnological problems, which cause the scholars of today nothing but amusement. In this discussion participated " The Missionary to the Afghans," Isadore Loewenthal, an American Jew of Polish descent, who joined the Presbyterian Mission in Afghanistan and translated, among others, the Gospels into Pushto (London, 1864). For bibliographical references see the present writer's study on *Khorasan*, l. c., p. 40-42, and now M. Akram *Bibliographie analytique de l' Afghanistan*, I, Paris, 1947.

54. E. N. Adler in his *Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts*, Cambridge, 1921, lists, on page 70, under No. 181, a Juadeo-Persian translation of " Songs," " Azharot," etc., written by Manasseh b. Solomon Eleazar Jani of Kashmir." See also his *The Persian Jews, their Books and Ritual*, p. 13. Although this Judaeo-Persian manuscript has not been examined by the present writer it seems doubtful that the origin of this copyist was Kashmir. This, however, must be elucidated at a later stage.

intellectual life of India.⁵⁵ This Jew appears in Persian as well as in European sources under the name of Mohammed Sa'id or Sa'id Sarmad "Sai'id, the Everlasting." He was born in the first part of the seventeenth century and came from Kashan in Persia,⁵⁶ a well-known seat of an important Jewish community, half-way between Teheran and Isfahan. He was a descendant of a family of rabbis and a man of great erudition and learning and seems to have mastered the Hebrew language and the Hebrew rabbinical literature.⁵⁷ A merchant by profession and, it seems, a very prosperous one, his search for knowledge and wisdom brought him in contact with the leading Mohammedan scholars of his time, under whose guidance he studied Islamic philosophy, metaphysics and science, and under whose influence he was apparently induced to become a Muslim. His conversion was probably only nominal and superficial, since he himself later warned the Jews not to convert themselves to Mohammed's religion. "Once a Jew he remained ever a Jew," states one of his biographers.⁵⁸ In any case—with one exception⁵⁹—he is always referred to in the sources and in the literature as a Jew—"Sarmad the Jew," "the Jewish merchant,"⁶⁰ "the Hebrew pantheist,"⁶¹ "the Jewish mystic,"⁶² or "the Hebrew atheist."⁶³

Sarmad left his native town Kashan and, following the general trend of migration of Persian merchants, poets, painters and scholars of that time, emigrated to India by way of the known sea-route through the Persian Gulf and landed at Tatta in Sind, near the Karachi of today. In 1647 he moved from Tatta to Hyderabad and in 1654 he went to Delhi, which was then the capital of the Moghul Emperor, Shah Jahan.

55. Efforts have been made by the writer to collect all available references to Sarmad in the contemporary Persian, Indian and European sources. There are a large number of important sources still inaccessible in manuscripts throughout Indian libraries which, if once available, may add considerably to our knowledge of Sarmad's personality and views.

56. Many Jewish scholars of the 17th century hailed from Kashan, foremost, Babai b. Lutf and Babi b. Farhad, the authors of a unique Judaeo-Persian chronicle, describing the persecution of the Jews of Persia under the Sefavid Shahs. Cf. W. Bacher, *Les Juifs de Perse*, Strassburg, 1907 and the present writer's study on "The Jews under the Sefavids" in *Zion*, Jerusalem, 1937, Vol. II, p. 273-293.

57. About Sarmad's Jewish origin see, foremost, *Dabistan*, vol. II, p. 194-198, the author of which was personally acquainted with Sarmad.

58. See the important study by Maulavi Wali Khan Sahib, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," in *Jour. of Asiatic Soc. of Bengal*, 1924, vol. 20, p. 111-122, and the same authors' study in *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, vol. 39, 1910, p. 121-122; also B.A. Hashimi, "Sarmad: His Life and Quatrains," in *Islamic Culture*, 1933, p. 663-672, and 1934, p. 92-104.

59. In one Persian source, "Ma'athir -ul-Umara," *Biblioteca Indica*, vol. 112, Calcutta, 1888, p. 226/7, Sarmad is referred to as an Armenian and also as a "Frangi," meaning "from Europe," which is, however, erroneous. This mistake entered T. W. Beale's *An Oriental Biographical Dictionary*, London, 1894, p. 353, where he is called "an Armenian merchant."

60. E. G. Browne, *Descriptive Catalogue*, I. c., p. 257-259. See note 67.

61. Maclagan, *The Jesuits and the Great Moghul*, I. c., p. 114.

62. J. Horowitz in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 4, p. 701; see also the only other reference to Sarmad in Jewish works in the article "Sarmad" in *Jewish Encycl.* vol. 11, p. 64.

63. N. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor* (transl. by W. Irvine), London 1907/8, vol. 1, p. 223; see also Bernier's *Travels*, I. c., p. 317.

These three cities were not just geographical stations for Sarmad, but milestones and turning points in his life, a life which conveys to us a most amazing story as regards the relationship between "Israel and India."

Only the salient points of this life-story can be presented at this juncture, with particular stress on Sarmad's influence on Persian literature and his place in Jewish history.

SARMAD'S PLACE IN THE ANNALS OF PERSIAN LITERATURE

Sarmad has entered the annals of Persian literature as a composer of Persian Sufic poetry, as the author of "Ruba'iyat." He is mentioned and quoted in the Persian literature of his time and became widely known and popular as one of the outstanding Sufi poets in Moghul India. "Ruba'iyat," always the typical vehicle of expression of Sufi poets, also became for Sarmad, following the example of Omar Khayyam, the form in which he expounded his Sufic philosophy and religious beliefs.⁶⁴

His Ruba'iyat, of which more than three hundred are ascribed to him, have been collected by his disciples. Manuscripts of his "Diwan" are listed in the catalogues of the libraries of India,⁶⁵ in the British Museum,⁶⁶ and in other collections,⁶⁷ and an Anthology of part of his poetry was edited and lithographed in Delhi (1897) and in Lucknow.⁶⁸ The manuscript in the Paris library,⁶⁹ from the pen of a Hindu scholar, is accompanied by a portrait of Sarmad, after a painting which is in the museum of Lahore, completely nude like a fakir, which indeed he was and for which he became famous.⁷⁰

64. Some of Sarmad's *Ruba'iyat* are rendered into English by B. A. Hashimi, *Islamic Culture*, l. c., see also Abdu'l Wali, J. A. S. Bengal. l. c., and *Indian Antiquary*, 1910, l. c. About the relationship of Sarmad to Omar Khayyam see Chr. Rempio, "Beitrage zur Hayyam-Forschung," in *Abhdlg. f. d. Kunde d. Morgenlandes*, Leipzig, 1937, Vol. 22, p. 154, No. 204; p. 160, No. 33.

65. W. Ivanow, "Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society in Bengal," *Biblioteca Indica*, vol. 240, p. 444, No. 11, Calcutta, 1927.

66. Ch. Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London, 1881, vol. 2, p. 547a and vol. 3, London, 1883, p. 1089b, with important references to contemporary Persian biographical works.

67. E. G. Browne, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts belonging to the late E. G. Browne*, ed. by R. A. Nicholson, Cambridge, 1932, p. 25 ff. He describes the "Ruba'iyat of Sarmad, the Jewish merchant who migrated to India," according to a manuscript and a lithographed edition.

68. The present author saw a printed copy of Sarmad's *Ruba'iyat*, edited by Nawab Kishor of Lucknow, in the Library of "Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes," Paris.

69. E. Blochet, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Persans*, Paris vol. IV, p. 374, No. 2468; see also Suppl. Vol. 2003. This manuscript contains an anthology of 179 quatrains of Sarmad, followed by a hundred and eightieth, which was written after his death by one of his admirers. The anthology of the work of Sarmad was made after the edition of Delhi by Serdar Omraosinga Sher Ghil of Majitha, Punjab.

70. Sarmad's *Ruba'iyat* are well-known and popular even today. One of my Indian students from Delhi, when asked about Sarmad, was most anxious to quote a number of Sarmad's *Ruba'iyat* by heart.

SARMAD'S SERVICE TO THE JEWISH CAUSE

Sarmad deserves also a place in the annals of Jewish thinking on account of a distinct constructive contribution which he made to the learning of his time by collaborating with the author of one of the most outstanding works which has ever been produced in the Persian language on comparative religion, and by thus disseminating the knowledge of Judaism among his Persian-Indian contemporaries.

In order to evaluate this intellectual service which Sarmad had rendered the following remarks might be sufficient.

Despite the association of Jews with Muslim Persia over a period of more than thirteen hundred years, Judaism, in its real significance and in its basic teachings, never penetrated into the fabric of Persian thinking. It is amazing how little Persian literature knows about Jews and Judaism. None of the great classical Persian poets, Firdusi, Sa'adi, Hafiz, and others have anything substantial to offer in this respect. The little they knew about Jews or Judaism was derived through the medium of the Qoran or through the distorted picture of Pahlevi polemic works such as the "Shikand" and similar works.

True, there were Muslim scholars of Persian origin, such as al-Isfahani, al-Biruni, al-Kirmani, ash-Shahrastani (to mention but a few), who made the study of Judaism their task, but they wrote their works in Arabic and not in Persian. Yet in recent decades some scholarly treatises became known, written in the Persian language by Muslim scholars in medieval Persia, which show a serious attempt to present Judaism in its basic tenets, institutions and beliefs.

The earliest of these Persian-written treatises has as its author Abu Ma'ali Mohammed ibn 'Ubaidallah, a Sunni Muslim who lived in the eleventh century at the court of Sultan Mas'ud in Ghazna (1089-99), and is entitled "Bayan al-Adyan," "Treatise on Religions," written probably as a result of a theological disputation at the court of the Sultan in Ghazna.⁷¹ It is not only the most ancient treatise on comparative religions in the neo-Persian language, but is also the first comprehensive study which does not limit itself to Islam but encompasses all religions of the world, Judaism included.

71. The complete Persian text was first published by Charles Schefer, "Chrestomathie Persane" (in *Publ. de l'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes*), Second Series, vol. 7, Paris, 1883, vol. 1, p. 132-181. On the basis of the same unique manuscript in Paris, the text of *Kitab Bayan al-Adyan* was published again in Teheran with a foreword by Abbas Iqbal, Teheran, 1933. There exist various translations of this treatise—(1) In Danish, by A. Christensen, in *Studier fra Philol. Hist. Samfund*, No. 101, 1911; (2) In French by H. Masse in *Revue de l'Histoire de Religion*, Paris, 1926, vol. 94, p. 17-75; (3) In Italian by F. Gabrieli in *Rendiconti della R. Accad. dei Lincei*, Roma, 1932/33, Vol. 7/8, p. 587-644. For further references see also I. Pizzi, *Atti della R. Accad. delle Scienze di Torino*, 1902/3, vol. 38, p. 224-238; A. Christensen, in *Le Monde Oriental*, Upsala, 1911, vol. 5, p. 205-216; E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, New York, 1906, vol. 2, p. 288; E. Blochet, *Le Messianisme dans l'Heterodoxie Musulmane*, Paris, 1903, p. 147-154; H. Ethe, in *Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie*, Strassburg, 1895/1904, vol. 2, p. 366; E. Fritsch, *Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter*, Breslau, 1930, p. 124; G. Vayda in *R. E. J.*, vol. 90, p. 65-70.