



PARTICIPATION OF INDIANS IN THE CONSTRUCTIONAL WORKS OF IRAN IN THE LIGHT OF SHAHNAMA

Tarannum Begum

Research scholar, Department of Persian, VNGIASS, Nagpur (India)

Dr. M. A. Siddiqui

Head, Department of Persian, VNGIASS, Nagpur (India)

Paper Received On: 10 JUN 2019

Peer Reviewed On: 23 JULY 2019

Published On: 1 AUGUST 2019

Abstract

Available literatures speak much about the Achaemenian (550-331 B.C.) influence on Indian architecture but there is no mention that in ancient times experienced Indian men went to Iran for participation in important constructional works. However, there are stories in Shahnama which reveal that in the Achaemenian and Sassanid period experienced Indian men went to Iran for the construction of dam, city and palace. Thus, in the absence of historical and archaeological source materials Shahnama occupies the place of primary literary source material by providing a new and a very important piece of information regarding presence of Indian men in the construction of Iranian dam, city and palace in ancient times which, in future, may lead to the research scholars in finding out Indian influence on Iranian architecture as well.

Keywords: *Construction, Darabgerd, Firdausi, Indian, Shahnama.*

Introduction

Shahnama is a poetical work of Firdausi which means “the book of king”. According to Dr. Zohra-e Khanlari Keya, the author of Farhange Adabiyate Farsi Dari the writing work of Shahnama commenced either in 370 or 371 A.H. (941 or 942 A.D.) and it was completed in 400 A.H. (971 A.D.) It is in verse and contains sixty thousand couplets and being divided into fifty chapters. It was completed in thirty long years and attributed to Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, the ruler of Iran (1005-1030 A.D). Shahnama begins with the reign of Kiumars, the first king of Pishdadian dynasty which, according to Firdausi is the first ruling

dynasty of Iran and it comes to an end with the defeat of Yazdgard –III, the last king of Sassanid dynasty in the battle of Nihavand, by the Arabs, in the year 641 or 642 A.D. Shahnama is regarded as one of the greatest epics of the world. However, apart from narrations of different battles it also contains love stories, social and political conditions of Iran, lively picture of Iranian culture and information about India and experienced Indian men taking part in the constructions of dam and city during the reign of Darius-II, the Achaemenian emperor and in the construction of palace at Madain during the reign of Khusrau-II, the Sassanid emperor. Shahnama is the work of Firdausi, a well-known Persian poet of 10th and 11th century of Iran. According to Nizami Oruzi Samarqandi, a native of Samarqand and the author of Chahar Maqala, Firdausi was born in 330 A.H. (901A.D.) at Baaz, a village situated near Tayeran in the province of Tus. Presently Tus is reduced to a small town and being situated at a distance of 23 km. north of Mashhad in the state of Khorasan, Iran. Firdausi died in 411 A.H. (1012 A.D.) at his native place and lies buried there.

Review of literature

Various articles and books have been written on Indo-Iran relations but so far, authors of this article have not come across a single article and book which speak about Indian influence on Iranian architecture or did not find any reference of Indian men going to Iran in pre-Islamic or ancient times. Shahnama is one of the primary Iranian literary source materials which contains a number of stories on Indo-Iran relations in various fields and even some of them have already been noticed by scholars like Prof. Amir Hasan Abedi and others. However, stories related to constructional works of Iran, in which Indian men were called by Iranian monarchs for construction of dam, city and palace are still un-noticed. Thus, this article is based on four stories of Shahnama which speak about the participation of Indian men in the constructional work of Iran in ancient times.

Case study

The first story is regarding (1)(construction of the city of Darabgerd by Darab.(1) In this story Firdausi has informed that after accession to the throne, one day, Darab, the Iranian monarch went to see the wild horses, coming from the low lands to the mountain. When monarch reached to the mountain, he saw a deep and boundless river. He ordered to call experienced men from India and Rome to build a dam on the river and send the water to each country.

Translation of Persian text

It happened that, one day for herds, came to see horses running wild, coming from the low land, reached to the mountain, where he saw a deep and boundless river he gave order that from India and Rome, experienced master workmen be brought, to construct a dam on the river and send a river in each country. (2)

As per the order of the monarch experienced men from India and Rome were brought and a dam was constructed on the river. When dam on the river was completed emperor ordered to construct a city which should be highly profitable.

Translation of Persian text

When the experts constructed a dam on the river, the monarch ordered to construct a very profitable city. (3)

When a city was built and it was surrounded with the four walls, the monarch named the city Darabgerd.

Translation of Persian text

When the walls of the city was completed it was named Darabgerd. (4)

According to R. Ghirshman Darabgerd was a provisional town in Pars and Ardshir (226-276 A.D.) the second son of Papak, the founder of Sassanid dynasty (208 A.D.- 656 A.D.) held a military post at Darabgerd. After becoming the king he built Gor Firozabad at the time when he was making his daring bid to seize the crown from Artabanus-V, the king of Arsacid dynasty. He copied its circular plan from the town of Darabgerd where he had previously held an official position. Darabgerd was built in the form of a camp, possibly in anticipation of struggle between the feudal families, clans or factions (5). The narration of Ghirshman points towards the antiquity of Darabgerd city during the time of Ardshir Papkan.

The second story is regarding construction of Madain palace by Khusrau. (6) This story informs that, when Khusrau, the Iranian monarch thought of constructing the Madain palace he sent men to Rome, India, China and other inhabited land to bring famous persons in the field of construction and thus, three thousand famed persons gathered for construction of the Madain Palace.

Translation of Persian text

A Persian shrewd of heart, over whom had passed years four times thirty said, Khusrau sent men to Rome, India, China and other lands inhabited, three thousand workmen reached from every country who were experts. (7)

Out of three thousand experienced persons one Roman who was the best in the world was selected and under his able guidance palace of Madain was constructed.

Translation of Persian text

From three thousand workmen gathered one Roman was selected, because he was the matchless in the world. (8)

Madain, a well-known ancient city was the capital of Persian empire under the Sassanid kings. It was here, at Madain that, according to Firdausi, Khusrau constructed a palace and for construction of the palace three thousand experienced persons were called from Rome, China, India and from all inhabited lands. Out of three thousand one Roman person who was unmatched in the world was chosen for the construction of Madain palace and the palace was constructed under his able guidance. At present the ruins of Madain palace lies at a distance of 20 miles to the north of Baghdad in Iraq. Khaqani (death 595 A.H.=1166 A.D.), the well-known Persian poet while on the way to the pilgrimage of Mecca visited the ruins of the magnificent palace of Madain and spontaneously composed one Qasida, (elegy) full of lamentations.

Translation of Persian text

Oh! Heart that learns out of (others) examples, see through your eyes, take the palace of Madain as mirror of example. (9)

The two above mentioned stories in which participation of experienced Indian workmen in the construction of dam, city and palace have been mentioned by Firdausi are associated with the reign of two different monarchs; the first being Darab and the second being Khusrau.

In two other stories of Shahnama Darab is identified as Darius-II, the Achaemenian emperor and father of Darius-III (336 B.C.- 330 B.C.), the last Achaemenian monarch. The Achaemenian dynasty ruled over Iran from 550 B.C. to 331 B.C. and left a deep mark in the field of art and architecture. Asoka, the great Mauryan emperor (268-226 B.C.) not only appreciated the art and architecture left by the Achaemenian rulers but also imbibed and employed their art and architectural techniques in India in the construction of palaces, pillars, script and coins etc.

Khusrau is identified as Khusrau -II (590-628 A.D.), the well-known king of Sassanid dynasty (226 A.D. – 656 A.D.) and is better known as Khusrau Pervez. He was the son of Hormuz- IV (579-590 A.D.) and grandson of Naushirwan or Khusrau – I (531-579 A.D.) the most famous king of Iran. The reign of Khusrau -II is also considered as golden age in the Indo-Iran cultural relations. The lovers of art are well aware that two paintings in the Cave No. 1 of Ajanta, the first being over the ceiling is said to be a representation of Khusrau-II, the Sassanid monarch and his beautiful consort Shirin and the second depicted on the wall of front

aisle is showing Pulakesin- II (610-642 A.D.), the great king of Chalukya dynasty (500-757 A.D.) receiving the return embassy from Persia. The above two paintings points towards the strong Indo-Iran relations during the period of Khusrau-II or Khusrau Pervez (10).

Result

Shahnama is broadly divided into two parts: one being legendary and the other historical. All the stories of Shahnama in which construction of dam, city and palace have got a mention are associated with the historical period. The first construction belong to the Achaemenian dynasty (550-331 B.C.) and the second to the Sassanid dynasty (226-656 A.D.) Both the above-mentioned dynasties of Iran have produced kings like Darius-I, the great and Naushirwan, the great respectively. Indo-Iran relations during the period of both the dynasties were strong and exchanges between the two countries in various fields were common. During Achaemenian period in India a number of small kingdoms existed and due to the lack of central power exchanges in various fields between Iran and small kingdoms of India were not common but with the foundation of Maurya empire in 323 B.C. by Chandra Gupta Maurya exchanges between the two countries got impetus and as it is inferred from the various historical sources, Achaemenian art, architecture and culture were imbibed by the Mauryan kings especially by Asoka the great (accession to the throne 274 or 273 B.C.) and for this reason Achaemenian influence on Indian art and architecture are more common during the period referred to above. Similarly, there are various historical references which suggest that during the Sassanid kings like Shapur –I, Naushirwan and Khusrau Pervez, Indian culture, medicines and books were imported to Iran but historical and Archaeological sources never speak about Indian experts going to Iran for construction of dam, city and palace. Hence, in the absence of historical and archaeological sources stories of Shahnama occupy the place of primary source material as these stories provide very important information on the participation of Indian experienced men in the important constructional works of Iran.

Conclusion

Though historical sources are silent on the participation of Indian men in the important constructional works of ancient Iran, on the basis of Shahnama of Firdausi it can be concluded that during the reign of Darius-II, the Achaemenian emperor and Khusrau-II, the Sassanid emperor of Iran experienced Indian men participated in the construction of dam, city and palace. Thus, Shahnama occupies the place of primary literary source material on participation of Indian men in the constructional works of Iran. Shahnama of Firdausi can be used by future research scholars as a primary source to find out other stories depicting the participation of

experienced Indian men and architects in other constructional works in ancient or pre- Islamic period of Iran which one day may lead towards finding out Indian influence on Iranian architecture as well.

Notes and References

- 1- Firdausi, H. A. Q. (1335),Shahnama Firdausi, (Ed.) Siyaqi, M. D. Vol. III, Tehran-1559
- 2-Ibid. P. 1560
- 3-Ibid.
- 4-Ibid.
- 5- Ghirshman, R. (1954), Iran, Penguin Book Publication, 272-273
- 6-Firdausi, H. A. Q. (1335), Shahnama Firdausi, Vol.111, (Ed.) Seyaqi, M. D. Tehran-249
- 7-Ibid.
- 8-Ibid.
- 9-Shafaq, R.Z.(1993)Tarikhe Adabiyate Iran, (Urdu tr.), Rafat,S.M.Delhi,276-77
- 10-Yazdani,G.The early History of the Deccan.Part-I-IV,P.127,Ajanta,Part-I