Jews in Mughal India: Historical Perspectives and Cultural Interactions

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Abstract

This article delves into the intricate history of Jews in Mughal India, shedding light on their presence, cultural entanglements, and socio-political standing during this captivating era. Examining migration patterns, settlement trends, and interactions with Mughal emperors, particularly Emperor Akbar, the narrative navigates the multifaceted relationship between the Jewish population and the Mughal Empire. Drawing from historical documents, accounts by court historians, Indian and Jesuit priests, European travellers, and cultural artifacts, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interaction between Jews and the Mughal Empire. Major themes explored include the role of Jewish communities in the vibrant tapestry of Mughal society, economic pursuits, and the dynamics of religious tolerance. Within the intricate mosaic of Mughal India, this investigation provides a rare window into the interwoven history of two distinct cultures.

Keywords: *Mughal Empire, Jews in India, Jewish settlements.*

Introduction

As Judaism is the oldest religion from the other Abrahamic religions (Christianity and İslam) in the same way India is one of the oldest civilizations of the entire world. This vast country has set itself apart from other civilizations on earth with its unique spices, food, rivers, forests, fruits, animals, history and civilization. In General, India is a hot region. In fact, the temperature can exceed 50 degrees Celsius in the southern regions during the summer season. Some regions in the north such as Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir are cold even in summer. Although India consists of a flat geography, there are many mountains and valleys. One can see four seasons in India at the same time. An important feature of India's geography is that it is rainy. India itself is place of birth of four big religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism) of the world and a huge number of the people following these religions all over the world. Indian subcontinent is not just unique due to its quite large earth or spices but also its place of the world where all religions of the world find out space for living according to their own religions all over the history. As

other ancient religions we also find that Jews were also living and doing business in India.

India according to the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the word "India or Indian" appears three times directly and several times indirectly. At the beginning of Esther, written in the middle of the 4th century BCE, the Persian king Ahasuerus' state borders are described as "*This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush*"[1]. Elsewhere in the same book motioned India in these words "*Everything was written exactly as Mordecai ordered for the Jews, to the satraps, the governors, and the officials of the 127 provinces from India to Cush*"[2]. Another book in the Old Testament, 1 Maccabees, says, "*On the elephants were wooden towers, strong and covered; they were fastened on each animal by special harness, and on each were four armed men who fought from there, and also its Indian driver*"[3]. Apart from these three places, the word India is not mentioned in any book of the Old Testament. However, at some points in the books there is indirect information about India. The book of 1 Kings, the history of the famous Jewish king Solomon, who is held in high esteem by Christianity[4] and Islam[5], describes a voyage of Solomon's naval officers to the port of Ofir in India. Verses in the book *"King Solomon also built ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. And Hiram sent his men—sailors who knew the sea—to serve in the fleet with Solomon's men. They sailed to Ophir and brought back 420 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon*"[6]. The fact that Ophir is Sopheir/Sophara in the oldest surviving Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew, that Sophir means India in Coptic, and that gold is abundant in the mountains

[1] Esther, 1,1-2
[2] Esther, 8.9
[3] 1 Maccabees 6.37.
[4] Matthew 12.42.
[5] Surah al-Naml, 27.15-16.
[6] 1 Kings 9:26-28.

north of the Punjab in north western India strengthens the claim that Ophir was a port in India[7].

The History of Jews in India before the establishment of Mughal Empire

The advent of Islam and the establishment of an Arab state in India opened a new chapter in Indian history. Islam made its way into the Indian subcontinent's interior during the 7th century, when the Arabs overran Sindh (712 AD). The Arabs effected Indian culture, religious life and the thinking way of local people as well. Although the Jews were not unknown by the Arabs because a huge number of Jews were living in different place of Muslims Umayyad dynasty already. But due to less of documentation it's hard to put forward that how many Jews were living under the Arab empire in India and their relationship in India. İt's interesting that when Arabs were conquering India and question were reside about the states of Buddhist and Hindus as they are *not Ahl al-Kitāb,* (People of the Book), the young commander of Muslim armies Muhammad bin Qasim (695-715) considered the Buddhist like Jews and their temples like synagogues[8].

In 13th century after the weakness of Arab Abbasid caliphate, Turks and Afghan Muslims become the conquers and political rulers of India and established the Delhi Sultanate in 1206. There were Jewish communities residing in various parts of the Indian subcontinent under the Delhi Sultanate, which lasted from the 13th to the 16th century. Despite their modest size, these Jewish communities were well-represented in Delhi and other large cities. It's probable that Jews engaged in commerce, finance, and other economic endeavours during the Delhi Sultanate era. But here is again problem of fewer documents as we couldn't find the written documents which can give us a clear picture of Jewish in India under the Delhi Sultanate. Al-Biruni (973-1051) is the only Muslim scholar to provide information about the presence of Jews in India before the Mughals in the medieval time. al-Biruni mentions in his famous book "*Kitāb al-Hind*" (The Book on India) that in ancient time's foreigners were

[7] Thundy, India and the West in Antiquity, pp. 212–267.

[8] Al-Baladhuri, *Futuh Al-buldan*, Dar Wa Maktabat Al Hilal, 1988, pp. 422-423.

allowed in the Kashmir region and those who were allowed were usually Jews. But al-Biruni adds that in his time (1030s) the Hindus did not allow any foreigner to enter their country. In his words "*In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people*"[9]. Although he gave information about the arrival of Jews in India since ancient times, but he did not give any information about why they came to India. But given the historical role of the Jews, it is highly probable that they came to India for trade purposes.

It is regrettable that, except from al-Biruni, no other Muslim historian of the Delhi Sultanate era provides any information regarding Jews in his book. If someone makes a harsh remark about Jews, it's most likely the result of how Muslims generally thought about Jews throughout the middle Ages. Jews are a nation with more enemies than friends throughout history, as is widely known. For instance, Ziauddin Barani(1285–1357), the most well-known Medieval Muslim historian from India, gave the Jews bad treatment and hurt those who were kind to them. His nephew, the son of low Alauddin Khilji, killed King Jalaluddin Khilji, as he recounts in his narrative. "*Alauddin Khilji's treatment of his patron was such that not even a Jew would act in such a manner*[10]". Barani's such comments shows that in Delhi Sultanate area usually Muslims Indian scholars think Jews unfaithful people and most properly he never meet any Jews haham. Middle Ages' forgeries visitors who were well known about Judaism and Jews they also don't give any information about Jews in India. Like Italy's Marco Polo who visited India at the end of 13th century he gave the very detailed information that Arabs Muslims and Christians visit the shrine of St. Thomas in Chennai[11]. But he doesn't give any information about Jews in India. İn the same way another famous Arab traveller Ibn Battuta who arrived India in 1333 and remained in Delhi for the next eight years as chief judges, he also don't give any information about Jews of India. Emption of Indian historians and foreign visitors information about Jews in

[9] Al-Biruni, *Alberuni's India* , Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., at the Ballantyne Press, 1910, p. 206.
[10] Barani, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi* (S. M. Moin-ul-Haq, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Urdu Science Board, 1991, p. 318.
[11] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Edinburgh Oliver & Boyd 1844, pp. 320-304.

India shows that they were in very less population and have no too much effect on India culture at least in early Muslim period of domination.

Jews and Mughal Empire

The 16th century is significant not only for Indian or Islamic history, but also for world history, as evidenced by the rise and emergence of the Safavid dynasty at the beginning of the 16th century (1501), the Portuguese arrival and strengthening on the west coast of India (1510). the Ottomans' conquest of the Arabian Peninsula and the establishment of the Mughal reign in India (1526), the Ottoman army's victory in the Battle of Mohács in just four hours, and the overthrow of the Hungarian monarchy that same year. The new Mughal state established in India, with its rapprochement and tolerant policy towards non-Muslims, ensured the presence of non-Muslims in the bureaucracy. Also the state tried to ensure Islamic-Indian cultural commonality by translating the sacred and important books of non-Muslims into Persian, the official language of the state. However, research on the history of the Jews in India has been inadequate compared to the cultural heritage they left in the region, and even today it has not received sufficient attention from local researchers.

In order to uncover the Mughal State's relationship with the Jews, the works and biographies written by the official historians of the state, the edicts of the sultans, and the information between the lines in the memoirs of Muslim and Christian European travellers who came from abroad can shed light on the dark history of India and the Jews. In recent years, thanks to advanced technology and translations, this has become possible and several studies have been conducted on this subject. There are no written records pertaining to the Mughal State's interactions with Jews from its early history. Researchers have clearly pinpointed the state's first-ever encounter with Jews, which occurred during the reign of Akbar, the third Mughal emperor. The Mughal kings and the Jews of India had no communication of any type during the reigns of Babur and Humayun (1525–1556), the first two Mughal emperors. Babur's renowned bibliography, "Baburnama" similarly contains no information about Jews. None of the information regarding the existence of Jews in India was provided by his daughter Gulbadan Begum, who penned the "Humanumnama" a bibliography of her stepbrother King Humanyun. The most appropriate explanation was that the first two emperors were preoccupied with battling their enemy Muslims and Hindus. Babur himself stated that there were seven rulers in India at the time of his conquest: two

Pagans (kâfir) and five Muslim kings (padshah)[12]. After the death of Babur his successor and son Humanyun has to fight with brothers and after them with Muslims and Hindus rivals. Due to this reason the government could not make any contact with Jews and all book of the time main focus on these issues.

Jews in the Akbar area

In the time of Akbar the Great (1556-1605), when a large part of India has been conquered and government staled that time we can find Jewish in court and European scours as well. During Akbar's reign, Muslims were given state positions and benefits, as well as Hindus, Jain, Zoroastrians and Christians. Thus, Akbar gave equal rights to the followers of all religions and ended the four centuries of Muslim supremacy at the state level. Especially after the building of *Ibadat khana* (house of worship) in 1575, Akbar commissioned translations of the holy books of all religions to increase his own knowledge and concentrated on debates. Between 1575-84, with Akbar's personal participation, listened the debates and discussions with the great scholars of all religions on different religious topics. Thus, Akbar's divan (court) began to be used as a meeting room for scholars of all religions. It's very interesting that when Emperor Akbar was giving these rights to the followers of all religions on a massive scale, the same time Europe were busy in killing the Jews and Muslims by the using of horrible institution of Inquisition. Less than a century before in 1492 "*about 70,000 Jews converted to Christianity, and stayed on to be plagued by the Inquisition; the remaining 130,000, as we have seen, went into exile*"[13]. Even the related of the same religion but the followers of different sects like Sunni Ottoman and Shia Safavid, Catholic and Protestant were killing and burning each other at the name of religion.

Persian works written during the reign of King Akbar contain a great deal of information about Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, but very little about Jews. The court historian Abu al Fazl lists the names of the great scholars of all religions during Akbar's reign, but no Jewish scholars are mentioned in this list. Likewise, while describing the founders, customs, and foundations of other religions, he gives a five-line introduction to the Jewish religion and history. In Abū al Fazl's words

[12] Babur, *Baburnama*, Luzac & Co 1922, p. 481.
[13]Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2000, p. 17.

"*Begins with the creation of Adam. Their years are natural, solar: their months, artificial, lunar. They reckon their months and days like the Arabians according to an intermediate system. The year is of two kinds, viz, Simple, which is not intercalary, and Composite, in which an interpolation is affected. Like the Hindus they interolate a month every three years*"[14]. The terms Abū al Fazl uses in his narratives (e.g. Abor, Lund) suggest that he obtained this information from a Jew or a person familiar with Judaism as these terms were Unknown to the Muslim scholars of that time. All the same, it is clear from his scant narrative that Jewish relations with the Mughal government were minimal. The principal works of non-Muslim religions and their translators who were not Muslims are listed by two court historians of Akbar's reign, Abū al Fazl and Mawlānā 'Abd al-Qadir Badayuni; nevertheless, the list does not include any references to Jewish works or Jewish translators. Although, Abū al Fazl reported that there were Jewish scholars among the worshipers in the house of worship. In his words "*the wide capacity and the toleration of the Shadow of God unveiled. Sufi, Philosopher, orator, Jurist, Sunni, Shia, Brahman, Jati, Siura, Carbak, Nazarene, Jew, Sabi, Zoroastrian and others enjoy exquisite pleasure by beholding the calmness of the assembly*"[15]. Abū al-Fazl even says that the Jews not only came but, like scholars of other religions, they freely participated in the debates in order to prove the information about their religion. This statement of Abū al Fazl is proved by the events and debates which were have been described by the writer of "*Dabistan-e Madahib*" (School of manners). For example, in the debate between a Sunni and a Shi'ite scholar about the innocence of the prophets in "*Dabistan-e Madahib*" in which Akbar participated, he reports that a Jewish scholar was present and answered whether some events were mentioned in the Torah or not. Likewise, he says that he debated with a Shi'i scholar about whether the Torah had been tampered with[16]. The same source describes another occurrence that took place in Akbar's court where Jewish and Christian intellectuals debated whether Jesus is mentioned in the Pentateuch and whether his mother was a virgin. The author claims that at the conclusion of the discussion, the Jewish rabbi prevailed over the

[14] Allami, *The Akbarnama*, The Asiatic Society 1891, pp. 21-22.
[15] Allami, *The Akbarnama*, p. 253.
[16] Kashmiri, *The Dabistán, or School of manners* (Vol. 3), Oriental Translation Fund 1843, pp. 50-51.

Christian priest[17]. These events show that Jewish scholars, like scholars of other religions, were present at Akbar's court, independently defending their faith and answering questions about the sacred texts of their religion.

The writings of members of Akbar's inner circle reveal that Jews came to Akbar's divan, informed him about their religion and asked for his help. For example, Abdul Qadir Badauni, has declared an edict issued by Akbar in 1002/1594. "*if any of the infidels chose to build a church, or synagogue, or idol temple, or Parasi "tower of Silence," no one was to hinder him*"[18]. The fact that Akbar named the Church and the Synagogue separately in this edict and that Badauni compiled it in this way reveals that Akbar and his inner circle saw the Church and the Synagogue as separate and that permission was granted for the construction of each sanctuary. This edict also shows that there were Jews in India during Akbar's reign and that they informed Akbar about their religion when they met him. Along with these facts, it is also understood that Akbar and his Muslim advisors were aware of the terms Church and Synagogue and the conflict between Christians and Jews. Given all this, it is highly likely that Akbar's advisors such as Badauni had personal relations with Jewish scholars. Persian sources of the period, as well as European travellers' clear statements about synagogues and Jews, confirm the presence of Jews in the major cities of the Mughal state even government protected them like the people of other religions. For example, in a letter written in 11 February 1616 in Agra, the capital of the state, Sir Thomas Roe refers to that King Jahangir told him that he is king of all people and under his kingship people of all religions live with peace. On a question which Sir Roe asked from King Jahangir and answered in the words of Thomas Roe was that "*he turned to me and said, 'Am I a king? You shall be welcome.' Christians, Moors, Jews—he meddled not with their faith. They came all in love, and he would protect them from wrong. They lived under his safety, and none should oppress them*"[19].

Akbar wanted to have Persian translations of the sacred texts of the Jews as well as the sacred texts of other religions in his library. To this end, he wrote a letter to the king of Spain and commissioned Abū al Fazl to translate these books into Persian. Giambattista Vechiete, a Christian scholar and traveller from Florence, came to Iran and obtained a Persian

[17] Kashmiri, *The Dabistán, or School of manners,* p. 69.
[18] Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* (2nd ed., Vol. 2). Atlantic Publishers & Distributors 1990, p. 406.
[19] Foster, *The Embassy Of Sir Thomas Roe To India*. Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 345.

translation of the Old Testament from the Jews there and crossed from Iran to India in 1603. He first went to Lahore and then to Agra, the capital city where Akbar was present. Finally, in 1605, he was able to meet Akbar. This traveller, who devoted his life to collecting translations of the Old Testament books in different languages, was warmly welcomed and respected by King Akbar[20]. No source provides any information about what was discussed happened between Akbar and Giambattista Vechiete. But it is highly probable that the subject of the conversation was the translation of the Old Testament books and the information contained in the text. According to Father Xavier, Giambattista Vechiete obtained the Psalter among these translations in Persia at great expense and with great difficulty, but it was translated into the Hebrew alphabet. Xavier said that this translation was made 200 years ago and that during his stay in Agra he translated Old Testament books such as the Book of Ruth, the Book of Esther, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, etc. into Persian script[21].

During the reign of King Akbar, debates about the origins of the Kashmiri people resurfaced and European travellers and priests claimed that the Kashmiri people had a blood relationship with the Jews. For example, the priest Monserrate, who entered Lahore with Akbar's army, stated that Kashmiris and Jews were related by blood, as Kashmiris were engaged in commercial activities in Lahore and Jews in Europe, such as caravanserai trade, food trade and the purchase of second-hand goods. "*These Casmirini are bakers, eating-house-keepers, and sellers of second-hand rubbish, a type of trade which well suits their Jewish descent. The surrounding district is fairly fertile*[22]. According to Monserrate, in India, Jews had been craftsmen, goldsmiths and cloth makers since ancient times. They were engaged in trade, but not in usury, banking or animal husbandry. Jewish and Indians had a long-established trade and cultural relationship. Famous French physician and explorer François Bernier came in India in October 1658 and spent around 12 years there, ending his visit in 1670. Although he didn't see any Jew in Kashmir but he gave five reason that Jewish

[20] Fischel, Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India, *American Academy for Jewish Research*, *18*(1), 1948, p. 150.

[21] Hosten, The Marsden MSS and Indian Mission Bibliography. *Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental Studies London*, *3*(1), 1923, pp. 135-136.; Fischel, Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India, p. 151.

[22] Montserrat, *The commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J., on his journey to the court of Akbar*, Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 160.

should be here in ancient times. the sings which Bernier counts in his traveling are "Their countenance and manner, which shows that these are inhabitants of different nations, all seemed to belong to that ancient Jews, the prevalence of the name of Mousa (Moses), the third sign was a widely held belief that Solomon travelled through this region and that it was he who made a path for the rivers by removing the Baramoule mountain. their belief that Moses died here and his tomb also in here Kashmir, The fifth is the widely held belief that Solomon constructed the tiny, incredibly old structure visible atop one of the tall hills; for this reason, it is known as the Throne of Solomon[23]".

A Jewish Scholar in India

It is evident from Persian sources and accounts by European travellers and priests that during the Akbar and Jahangir periods (1556-1627), Jewish communities lived peacefully under the rule of the Mughal state. They were also enjoying freedom of religion and business like the people of other religions. But nor these Indian historians nor these European sources of Akbar and Jahangir period gave the name of any Jewish scholar. Sarmad Kashani emerges as the first erudite and controversial scholar, whose life and death are chronicled in both Persian and European Jewish accounts Sarmad was originally an Armenian and came from Faringistan (Europe), according to the author of "Mirat ul-Khayal". To specify further, Valah Daghistani asserts in 'Riaz ush-Shu'ara' that 'his native place was Kashan.' Although lacking additional evidence, we might infer that Mohammad Sa'id Sarmad's ancestors emigrated from Europe, settling in Armenia. Sarmad, subsequently, converted to Islam and resided in Kashan before his journey to India. All of these claims are non-contradictory[24]. But the true is that he was a Persian Jews as described by The Jewish Encyclopaedia. According to this Encyclopaedia Persian poet Sarmad died in 1661. Sarmad, who was born into a rabbinical family in Kashan in the early 17th century, converted to Islam, although Persian and European sources consistently refer to him as "Sarmad the Jew," "the Hebrew pantheist," or "the Jewish mystic"[25].

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[23] Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668*, Oxford University Press, 1916, p. 430.
[24] Hashmi, SARMAD: His Life And Quatrains. *Islamic Culture*, *7*(4), 1933, p. 666.

[25] Fischel, SARMAD, MUHAMMAD SAʿID. In *Encyclopaedia Judaica: Vol. 18 (San–Sol)*, Keter Publishing House, 2002, p. 57.

The most oldest and reliable source of information about Sarmad is "*Dabistan-e Madahib*" because the writer of the book himself met Sarmad in Hyderabad (Sindh) in the year 1647. According to the information which the write of Dabistan and Sarmad's friend gave that he came from a family of erudite Jewish, a class known as Rabánián (Rabbins), and after studying the Mosaic texts and conducting research into the Rabbins' beliefs, he became a Muslim. After falling in love with a Hindu kid named Abhi Chand, he abandoned everything and knelt down in front of his beloved's door, nude as he had come from his mother. This Hindu young boy was also attached with him and he read book of Moses, the psalms of David, and other books with Sarmad[26]. After giving this information about Sarmad, the writer of Dabistan gives some his poetry, about belief of Jewish about Jesus and Muhammad, some information about Pharaoh, Abraham, David and Solomon. The writer also gives information that Abhî Chand, having translated a part of the Mosaic book, the author of this work revised it with Sarmad; they corrected it completely, affixed their mark to it, so that it became a correct copy[27]. The writer gives Persian translation of a part of the Genesis book but he don't till from Hebrew original, or from the Arabic, or any other language. The other contemporary Persian books narrates that after falling in love with Abhî Chand, Sarmad always remain naked even become famous with *"naked faqir*", gave all his wealth to the people even faces openly.

Following his victory in the 1658 War of Succession over Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb assassinated his brother and took the crown of the Mughal Empire. Sarmad was a companion of Prince Dara Shikoh and had similar views, therefore following Sarmad's execution; Sarmad was apprehended and put on trial for heresy. At the behest of King Aurangzeb, Sarmad was executed by beheading in 1661 after being charged with atheism and practicing unorthodox religion. His cemetery is in Delhi, India, close to the Jamia Masjid. According to Tahir Naṣrābādī, a contemporary writer from the Aurangzeb period who provided information thirteen years after Sarmad's demise, According to him, King Aurangzeb gave Mullah Abdul Qavi chief justice of Delhi in Mughal empire duty to wear the dress to Sarmad. Sarmad put to death after the refusing of dress by the advice of Mullah at the order of King[28]. Another historian of Aurangzeb time Ameer

[26] Kashmiri, *The Dabistán, or School of manners,* p. 294.
[27] Kashmiri, ibid, pp. 297–298.
[28] Naṣrābādī, *Taẕkira-yi Naṣrābādī,* Armaghane Publication, 1317, pp. 310-311.

Sher Ali Khan Lodi, he also told that Sarmad was an Armenian who came from Frangistan (Europe) and kill due to his remain always undressed and atheist views[29]. Due to word of "Armenian" in Mir'aat ul-Khayal some Christian scholar thinks that Sarmad is an Armenian merchant from Iran[30]. Other all historians tell us that he was a Jews as he himself told this thing to the writer of *Dabistan-e Madahib*. Even when writer of the Dabistan asked Sarmad "why he always naked"?. The learned rabbis say that according to their belief, among the sons of Israel it was not required cover seventy with a dress, and Sarmad said that Ishâiá (he was referring to Isaiah 20:1-4) the prophet, himself used to go naked in his last days[31]. All these refers with his own statement about himself confirms that he was a Jewish who came to India and converted to İslam and killed at the order of King Aurangzeb.

From European travellers Bernier just gave his name and told that he was killed due to remain always naked[32]. Manucci, gave some more detailed about him. According to this information Sarmad was a Hebrew and very near to prince Dara Shikoh, even he prophesied that he will be king after his father. After the killing of his brotherDara Shikoh, King Aurangzeb asked him where was his faithful prince?. Sarmad replied that "*he was then present, but you cannot see him*"[33]. One of the 18th century Mughal court poets also described this even with other words. According to Dagestani, when King Aurangzeb inquired about the veracity of his prophecy concerning Dara Shikoh. Sarmad replied that *"he has giving eternal kingship, so my prophecy is not false*"[34]. All these Persian and European sources shows that Sermad was a Jew and one of the coolest friend of Prince Dara Shiko. His killing was purely political and unjustified. But this shows that some Jews were came from outside and stared living under the Mughal Empire. According to these events and information from contemporary sources, even if the Mughal State did not have contact with the Jews at first, during the reign of Akbar, the state communicated directly with the Jews and granted them the right to build places of worship and to

[29] Lodi, *Tazkira e Mir'aat ul-Khayal*, Rozeneh Publication, 1377, pp. 124–125.
[30] Lakhnawi, *Christianity in the Moghul Empire*, Punjab Religious Book Sociey, 1970, p. 320.
[31] Kashmiri, *The Dabistán, or School of manners*, p. 294.
[32] Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668* , Oxford University Press, 1916, p. 317.
[33] Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor: Or, Mogul India, 1653-1708*, John Murray Albemarle Street, 1907, p. 384.
[34] Dagestani, *Tezkire-i Riyad ul Suara* , Asatir Publication, 1386, p. 1015.

come to the divan to defend their religion. But are the Jews in India indigenous? Or did they come from outside and settle in India? What is the number of Jews in India? What are their occupations? Persian sources do not provide any detailed information on all these important issues.

Different Groups of Indian's Jews

Considering today's researches and the writings of travellers and foreign writers who came to India at that time, the Jews living in India can be divided into three groups;

1) First, Beni Israel: The group of Jews living in and around Bombay were called Beni Israel (the children of Israel). In the same region, in the city of Kochi, white and black Indians were also called Beni Israel. Although the exact number of Beni Israelites is not known, the Paradesi Synagogue was built in 1578 in the name of the Beni Israelites[35].

2) European Jews: This group of Jews settled in Goa and other coastal cities in India after the rise of the Portuguese in the coastal regions of India in order to live in comfort and with wide trade opportunities. Some of them returned to Europe after completing their trade or other business, while others preferred to live in India. Among the Jews who came from abroad were those from Ottoman provinces such as Istanbul, Jerusalem and Baghdad. François Bernier, the famous French traveller, wrote about a Jew who came from Constantinople and settled in the city of Surat in the Indian province of Gujarat, and commented, "*This conduct was worthy of a Jew, whose love of money generally exceeds his love of life*"[36]. European Jews, together with the Beni Israelites, began to live only in the coastal regions of India. In general, Hindus or Christians are the dominant class here.

3) Lastly, Jews living alongside Muslims: Another group of Jews lived in the interior or Northern region of India, in large Muslim-populated cities such as Lahore, Agra, Delhi and Kashmir. In general, Jews from Iran, Afghanistan and Khorasan, who lived in the inner cities of India, were integrated with Persian language and culture. During the rise of the Mughal State, this group of Jews must have been influenced by Akbar's policy of Sulh-u Kul (peace with all) and came to India due to the abundant opportunities for trade in a vast country like India and their familiarity with Persian, the official language of the state. The fact that Jews left Iran and

[35] Henry Lord, *The Jews in India and the Far East*. The Mission Press, 1907, p. 15.
[36] Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire,* pp. 189–190.

Khorasan region and came to India shows that the state provided all opportunities to Jews as well as other religions. Because since the establishment of the Mughal State, India had been a very attractive place for all kinds of people such as Shiites, Sunnis, Sufis, scholars and commanders who had a cultural background with Persians. Many Shi'ite and Sunni Sufis, scholars and commanders came from Iran and Khorasan and became important officials of the state in a short time. Mawlānā Badayuni even noted with regret that Indian viziers were liquidated due to the constant animosity among themselves, while viziers from outside helped each other and became important in the state in a short time[37].

Jews living in Iran also benefited from the commercial, religious and cultural opportunities that the Mughal State provided to members of all religions. In the 16th century, Jews, who had been oppressed in Europe, lived their religion freely in India. Since the Jewish religion was not a religion of proselytizing, but was passed down from a Jewish mother, there was no need to openly proselytize. However, the state allowed it for the trade and temple needs of the Jews living in India. The state even issued an edict that if anyone tried to prevent the Jews from building a new temple or synagogue, he would be punished by the state. Despite the state's provision of so many opportunities, no Jewish scholars are mentioned in the sources of Akbar's reign. However, during the reign of Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan, a great scholar like Sarmad Kashani came from Iran and became the closest friend of Shah Jahan's son, the prince Dara-Shiko.

As time passed, the number of Jews settling in the interior of India increased and by the time of the partition of India in 1947, this group of Jews was said to number 28,000[38]. In short, it can be said that the state removed all obstacles and created a prosperous environment for the members of the Jewish religion, as well as other religions, to live comfortably in India. With the strengthening of the state, the opportunities of trade also expanded and the Jews also had their share in these opportunities. Although there is no mention of any Jewish scholar in the official historical works of the state, it is certain that Jews lived in the Mughal country, even if not intensively. The state did not levy any special *jizyah* (poll tax) on Jews and did not enact any rules against them.

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[37] Badauni, *Muntakhabu-t-tawarikh* (Vol. 3). Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1925, p. 139.

[38] Weil, The Bene Israel Indian Jewish family in Transnational Context. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *43*(1), 2012, p. 71–80.

The following is a summary of the rights that the Mughals accorded to Jews:

i. Freedom of Religion, Commerce, and Culture: Everyone living in the nation was allowed to follow their own religion, conduct business, and engage in cultural pursuits.

ii. Preservation of Synagogues: Synagogues were shielded from demolition or conversion into mosques in newly or previously captured territory.

iii. Absolution from Poll Tax: All individuals, including non-believers, were exempt from poll taxes, providing monetary assistance to every community.

iv. Elimination of Religious Requirement: To promote inclusivity, it was eliminated that one must be a Muslim in order to engage in important official functions.

v. Right to Freedom of Religion: Everyone was allowed to publicly practice their religion without interference, regardless of whether they were book readers or not.

vi. Freedom of Religion Conversion: People were allowed to convert to any religion they choose, and the state made sure that those who did so would not face any consequences.

vii. Allowing non-Muslims to perform holy ceremonies, weddings, and funerals in an open manner promoted religious expression and cultural diversity.

viii. Availability of Islamic Sciences: In order to promote intercultural education and understanding, non-Muslims who wished to study Islamic sciences were allowed to enrol in Muslim madrasas.

Conclusion:

The historical account of Jews in Mughal India concludes as an engaging tale that is frequently disregarded in more general debates. The available data emphasizes how much the Jewish population contributed to the Mughal Empire's economic and cultural landscape. It becomes clear that the Akbar era was a turning point in history, marked by religious tolerance and cross-cultural exchange that helped to create an atmosphere in which many cultures, including the Jewish community, flourished.

It is clear from studying this historical landscape that Akbar's rule served as a spark for the development of an inclusive culture. This research challenges us to acknowledge the diversity of Mughal India and forces us to reconsider our historical viewpoints. A story of cultural symbiosis, where several populations, including Jews, found a favourable climate to flourish, is revealed in the elaborate tapestry of Mughal India.

An atmosphere of religious freedom and cross-cultural interaction was greatly promoted by the Mughal emperors, especially Akbar and his grandson Prince Dara Shikoh. The Mughal state accepted different religious communities and aggressively promoted their integration into the social and economic life of the empire through programs like Sulh-u-Kul (universal peace). Furthermore, the Mughals gave Jews complete freedom of religion, trade, and culture, which established a model for peaceful coexistence of many populations.

Essentially, the narrative of the Jews in Mughal India offers us an insightful perspective that helps us understand the diverse culture of the empire. We may better understand an age characterized by acceptance, tolerance, and the shared wealth of many cultures when we acknowledge the complex nature of Mughal India. The significance of accepting the complex historical narratives that add to our comprehension of the vast fabric of human civilization is emphasized by this investigation, which calls for more study and reflection.