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Persian Studies in India and the Colonial Universities, 1857–1947

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Abstract

The establishment of the colonial universities in India was a watershed moment for the history of Persian studies on the subcontinent. Despite the rise of English and vernacular literatures in the nineteenth century, Persian remained an essential language of instruction in colonial colleges, with generations of Indian students studying Persian to pass university examinations. By closely studying university calendars and courses, this article demonstrates that the colonial universities created and sustained an ecosystem for Persian studies throughout the colonial period, as Orientalists and increasingly Indian Persianists continued to invest in Persian instruction and curricular development. The breadth, diversity, refinement, and expansion of Persian college curricula—which included texts from the classical Persian canon and contemporary literature written by Iranians and Indians—testify to the continued fluidity and dynamism of Persian studies throughout the period. Such a phenomenon demonstrates that the debates and engagement around the Persian language in colonial India contradict its depiction as an obsolete or entirely classical language, and also that colonial college curricula influenced which texts were edited, compiled, printed, translated, and commented upon.

Keywords: colonialism; education; India; nineteenth century; Persian studies

The founding of the colonial university in British India in 1857 was a watershed moment for the history of education on the subcontinent. For the first time, colleges were affiliated with a central examining body, degree programs and curricula were standardized, and Indian students and teachers across imperial British India and the princely states studied the same corpus of prescribed literature in preparation for the university's examinations. The transformations wrought by the rise of the colonial university have been studied as the outgrowth of early colonial knowledge systems and as mechanisms of colonial and imperial power.¹ These studies have chiefly focused on Orientalist scholarship, British imperial policy, and English literary education. Far less attention has been paid to the ways in which the curricula of colonial universities influenced the study of what were called classical languages and literatures—such as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit—in colonial India.

The foundation and incorporation of the colonial universities also brought widespread changes to the study of Persian in India. The uniformity of the university curriculum contrasted sharply with the variable corpuses of texts and methods that characterized the

¹ For an outdated yet useful English-language overview of the foundation of the colonial universities, see Ashby, *Universities*. For Orientalist scholarship and the university, see Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture*. For the university as a mechanism of imperial power, see Allender, *Ruling through Education*. For the formative work on the role of English literature in the project of colonialism, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*.

transmission of Persian from teachers to students in the Mughal period.² As this article will demonstrate, the institutionalization of Persian created and sustained demand for Persian teachers at colonial colleges across British India and in the princely states. From the foundation of colonial universities until the 1947 partition, the Persian curriculum underwent a gradual process of expansion as Indian Persianists came to exercise greater control over it. What began as a small selection of texts, such as *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, and the *Sikandarnāmah* of Niẓāmī, grew to include a much wider corpus of Persian classics, Persian translations of texts ranging from English-language Orientalism to contemporary Turkish dramas, and works by contemporary Indian and Iranian writers.

The curricular reforms wrought by the architects of the curriculum also created and sustained markets for critical editions, classical and contemporary commentaries, and translations into English and Urdu. In some cases, there appears to be a cause-and-effect relationship between the adoption of texts into the colonial curriculum and their appearance in print. The excavation, editing, and publication of the Persian writings of Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (d. 1852; lexicographer and Persian teacher) by the Naval Kishor Press in the 1880s and 1890s will be examined as a case in point.

The colonial universities were examining bodies and degree-conferring institutions, not brick-and-mortar teaching institutions. Beginning at their foundation in 1857, the universities administered examinations leading to bachelors' degrees and more advanced degrees in the arts and sciences. They prescribed curricular study to affiliated colleges, administered standardized exams to students, and awarded degrees to successful candidates. The terminology used to describe the examinations varied among universities and changed over time, but the influential system used by the University of Calcutta in its early years illustrates the typical progression of examinations. Students studying at an affiliated college in pursuit of a Bachelor of Arts degree were expected to pass an entrance examination (similar to achieving a secondary school diploma), then progress to a First Arts (FA) examination or a Bachelor of Arts (BA) examination. More advanced degrees, such as an MA, were added later. All students had to pass examinations in English. However, students also were required to sit for an examination in an elective language. The options varied among institutions and changed over time, but most universities required FA and BA examinees to pass an examination in a classical language. At the Calcutta and Bombay universities, students could choose among Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian.³ Comparison of the teaching faculties at most affiliated colleges suggests, perhaps not surprisingly, that teachers of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin were relatively scarce in India. Students in affiliated colleges were much more likely to have access to faculties of Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit.

The reasons a student might choose to study Persian ranged from utilitarian through cultural to aesthetic. By the 1890s, the relative ease of Persian had established it as a much more popular elective than the other languages.⁴ Persian having been a language of education and administration in India, the first generations of examinees, many of whom were the children of administrators, were exposed to the language from an early age and likely found

² See Kinra, *Writing Self*.

³ At the University of Calcutta, students sitting for the BA exam were allowed to select a vernacular language such as Urdu or Hindi until 1864, when the vernacular languages and Persian were removed starting with the FA exam; they were not reinstated until 1874, when Persian reappeared alongside other classical languages. They retained this position thereafter. Calcutta, *Calendar 1864-65*, 38, 40; Calcutta, *Calendar 1874-75*, 37, 40. Persian was not an option on the FA and BA exams at the University of Bombay in the 1860s, but was made an option by 1871. Bombay, *Calendar, 1865-66*, 64, 67; Bombay, *Calendar, 1871-72*, 47, 49. At Madras, students sitting for the FA and BA examinations could choose from a range of classical and vernacular languages, including Persian. Madras, *Calendar 1876-77*, 34, 39; Madras, *Calendar, 1892-93*, 49, 55.

⁴ For example, Gandhi in his autobiography famously describes a time in high school when he considered dropping Sanskrit and taking Persian instead because it was easier. He also writes that students generally considered Persian an easy language (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 15). The general perception that Persian was an easier language also was the subject of debate at the university (Nu'māni, "Ispīch," 46-48).

the Persian curriculum to be a convenient means of advancement on the examinations. Persian also was more useful than Sanskrit or Arabic to students seeking to master Urdu—which was by the mid-nineteenth century the language of administration, education, and everyday life for Indians throughout British India and the princely states—since Persian idioms were and continue to be parts of everyday Urdu speech and culture, just as Persian maxims, quotations, and literary allusions were, and continue to be, part of everyday literary Urdu.⁵ The ubiquity of Persian quotations and passages in Urdu books at the time are evidence that Urdu writers expected their readers to know Persian. Many writers corresponded in the language. Urdu poets wrote original verse in Persian.⁶ Persian continued to be used in the princely states even after it was officially displaced by the British, and remained current even after the adoption of vernacular languages such as Urdu. One graduate of the University of Calcutta's BA examinations, Mas'ūd Ḥasan Maḥvī, who worked for the princely state of Hyderabad, published a collection of Persian odes in praise of the Niẓām of Hyderabad modeled on the poetry of Qa'ānī, whom he had studied in preparation for the examinations.⁷ Persian also was and remains an important language of popular lyrics in the postcolonial period. Of the most cherished *qavvālī* songs of praise, which are performed at Sufi shrines throughout South Asia, many are in Persian. Although the focus of the present article is on the curriculum of Persian studies in the colonial universities, it is important to keep in mind that this curriculum was part of a larger cultural world in which Persian persisted as a language that served a wide range of functions throughout the colonial period.

Students sitting for the university examinations chose to study Persian for a wide range of reasons, but the broader question is why students enrolled in affiliated colleges and prepared for the examinations at all. As David Lelyveld has shown, most Indians, even among the literate, did not take to English education in the early years of the colonial universities.⁸ Those who did study in the colonial system were mainly focused on careers in or related to the system of government offices and courts, which Lelyveld calls the "*kachahrī* [court; office] milieu." For example, by the end of the nineteenth century, a university education had become one means of qualifying for some legal jobs and a prerequisite for high-level practice.⁹ Although by no means a guarantee of official employment, as the colonial period wore on university education became increasingly important for securing coveted positions in government service. This partly explains the explosion in numbers of university graduates around the turn of the century. As we shall see, the institutionalization of Persian to meet the demands of examinees hoping to become government officials created and sustained an ecosystem for Persian studies in colonial India, especially in the overlapping areas of education and publication.

The calendars of the colonial universities are a rich yet largely untapped mine of information about the development of Persian studies in India under British rule. The university calendars contained the history, bylaws, and regulations of the universities as well as information about their administrations and examinations. They generally presented the curriculum for examinations as sketchy lists of classic texts, names, or modern anthologies for students. By identifying these texts and their authors, studying the exams themselves, and consulting the readers, we can trace changes in the Persian curriculum across regions. We learn the names of the examiners who designed the curricula, those of Persian teachers at affiliated colleges, the names of students who passed Persian examinations, and what kinds of fellowships were available to support the study of Persian. We also can access the Persian examinations themselves to gain insight into the kind of training and methods

⁵ For examples, see Rizvī, *Farhang-i Amsāl*.

⁶ The trend continued well into the twentieth century. For example, the popular poet Jigar Murādābādī (d. 1960), whose verse was criticized in his own lifetime for its lack of classicism, included a collection of Persian poems with his Urdu ones (Murādābādī and Sikandar, "Bādah-i Shīrāz"; Bruce, "Jigar Murādābādī").

⁷ Maḥvī, *Nazr-i 'Aqīdat*.

⁸ Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 88–105.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

in Persian studies that teachers of Persian in colonial colleges were required to impart to their students.

The calendars also remind us that throughout the colonial period Persian remained a language and literary tradition not exclusive to any religious community or geographical region in India. Indians with Hindu, Parsi, and Muslim names appear in positions as Persian teachers at colonial colleges and as university examiners, and the Persian faculty at a college likewise might comprise members from different religious communities.¹⁰ The makeup of graduate lists was similarly multicomunal, with Hindu and Parsi graduates in some cases outnumbering Muslim ones.¹¹

The demand for Persian among students meant that affiliated colleges throughout British India had to hire faculty members with expertise in Persian to train students to pass the examinations. In the early years of the university, Persian teachers came from a wide range of backgrounds. Some had been educated at colonial colleges, such as the Calcutta Madrasa or Delhi College, prior to the foundation of the universities. Others were products of the colonial university system.¹² Still others had studied Persian privately at the feet of tutors and masters.¹³ For example, Shiblī Nu‘mānī (1857–1914), was a professor of Arabic and Persian at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh (initially affiliated with the University of Calcutta and later with Allahabad).

All teachers of Persian at colonial colleges, regardless of their educational background, were charged with preparing students to answer the same kinds of questions on the colonial examinations. For a scholar like Shiblī, the philological focus of the examinations, which mainly asked students to translate and analyze the grammatical elements in texts, would have seemed much narrower than the aesthetic and ethical purposes that the same texts had played in his early education.¹⁴ Still, the demand for Persian instruction provided him and other Persianists with new forms of institutional patronage and the opportunity to teach Persian to students, many of whom eventually rose to positions of influence as politicians, communal leaders, writers, journalists, and educators.¹⁵ The positions in affiliated colleges also afforded some Indian Persianists to become involved in university administration and examination boards, and some eventually designed and implemented their own Persian curriculum in the form of selections and readers prescribed by the university senates, many of which are surveyed here.

The following sections survey major shifts and variations in the Persian curriculum across the Indian colonial universities from their founding in 1857 until independence and partition in 1947. It assumes that the question of who read what in Persian in colonial India is foundational to a broader reassessment of theories about the displacement and eventual disappearance of Persian in the period. Although the focus of the article is on Indian education, it seeks to contribute to comparative studies of reading practices across the Middle East and Central Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶

¹⁰ Bombay, *Calendar, 1906–1907*, 364–442; 367.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 311–12.

¹² One example was the compiler of the first Persian curriculum for the University of Allahabad (‘Alī, *Intarmīdiyat-i Kōrs Fārsī*, front matter).

¹³ Nadvī, *Ḥayāt-i Shiblī*, 58–170.

¹⁴ Shiblī rarely wrote directly about the role that Persian played in his education, but his letters (some in Persian), Persian and Urdu poetry, books, and essays evince the centrality of his formal and informal education in Persian to his intellectual formation. Examples are too numerous to cite, but see his own Persian poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Kulliyāt-i Shiblī–Fārsī*; his quotations, allusions, and discussions of Persian poetry in letters to colleagues and students in Nu‘mānī, *Makātīb-i Shiblī*; his articles about Persian literature in Nu‘mānī, *Maqālāt-i Shiblī*; his formative study of Rumi’s life and poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Savānih-i Maulānā Rūm*; and his magisterial analyses of the history and aesthetics of Persian poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Shi‘r al-‘Ajām*.

¹⁵ For an overview of the intellectual lives and social and political influence of students educated at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, an affiliate of Calcutta and later Allahabad, where Persian was one of six options on the compulsory classical language examination, see Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s First Generation*.

¹⁶ For example, Strauss, “Who Read What.”

Calcutta University and the Making of a Curricular Canon for Persian

When the University of Calcutta was founded in January 1857, it administered examinations in Persian to students sitting for the entrance and Bachelor of Arts exams; an intermediary exam, First Arts, was added a few years later.¹⁷

The first three decades of the Persian curriculum at the University of Calcutta drew heavily on the canon of texts compiled and published by Orientalists and Indian Persianists decades earlier. Most of the texts in the curriculum had been compiled by the faculty at the British East India Company's Fort William College, which was founded in Calcutta in 1800 as a language school for company officers. For example, prominent texts of the curriculum, including *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, *Sikandarnāmah*, the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl, and *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, had all been included in the college's six-volume anthology *Miscellaneous Works of Prose and Verse* (1809–11).¹⁸ The adoption of this corpus by the early university examiners was in part a response to the debates among British administrators and Indian scholars divided along ideological lines into Anglicists and Orientalists in the decades before the universities were founded.¹⁹

The Persian curriculum at the University of Calcutta was influential not only because it determined the curriculum at affiliated colleges, but also because some of these colleges later drew from it as they transformed into independent universities. The Oriental College in Lahore was an early affiliate until its administration founded the University of Panjab in 1882, to which colleges throughout the region and elsewhere (for example, the princely state of Hyderabad) later became affiliated. Likewise, Muir Central College in Allahabad had been an affiliate of Calcutta until its faculty, along with the faculty of several other affiliated colleges, incorporated the University of Allahabad in 1887. Later, the Persian curriculum at schools inherited the legacies of the University of Calcutta Persian studies canon. These included Aligarh Muslim University (founded 1920), which had, in its initial form as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, been affiliated to the University of Calcutta and later to the University of Allahabad.

The university's initial Persian curriculum assigned a mere handful of texts, such as selections from the *Gulistān* and *Būstān* of Sa'dī; *Anvār-i Suhailī* by the Timurid writer Vā'iz Kāshifī; selections from the *Sikandarnāmah* of Niẓāmī; and the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl (courtier to the Mughal emperor Akbar).²⁰ By 1863, the works by Niẓāmī and Abū-l-Faẓl had become the textbooks for the FA, and readings from *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* by Davvānī and the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ were adopted as textbooks for the BA.²¹ By 1869, the university consolidated its entrance examination into two publications: *Iqd-i Gul* (Roman-script title; comprising selections from the *Gulistān* and *Anvār-i Suhailī*) and *Iqd-i Manzum* (Roman-script title; comprising selections from the *Būstān*).²² First published in 1863, both texts were the products of a collaboration between the Orientalist William Nassau Lees, who was the university's first examiner in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu (1858–59; 1863–64), and Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad, who was then a professor of Arabic and Persian at the Calcutta Madrasa (an affiliate of the University of Calcutta after 1868).²³ The *Iqd* readers remained perennial textbooks for Persian until 1884, when they were replaced by a new selection by Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad.²⁴ Both continued, however, to be used as texts for students in the form of commentaries.²⁵

¹⁷ Calcutta, *Calendar 1858–59*, 17.

¹⁸ Das, *Sahibs and Munshis*, 161–63.

¹⁹ See the edited volume of primary sources that not only illuminate the subtleties of these arguments, but also remind us of the central role that colonized Indian scholars played in shaping them (Moir and Zastoupil, *Great Indian Education Debate*).

²⁰ Calcutta, *Calendar 1858–59*, 69, 71; Calcutta, *Calendar 1863–64*, 89.

²¹ Calcutta, *Calendar 1863–64*, 93–95, 97–99.

²² Calcutta, *Calendar 1867–68*, 88.

²³ Lees and Ahmad, *Iqd-i Gul*, front matter.

²⁴ Calcutta, *Calendar 1881–82*, 72–82, 90; Aḥmad, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*; al-Dīn, *Guldastah-yi Dānish*.

²⁵ For example, a full translation and commentary on *Iqd-i Gul* by Adālut Khān (his spelling) was in its third edition in 1894, and its companion volume, Adālut Khān's commentary on *Iqd-i Manzum*, was in its fourth edition in 1895. Khān, *The Iqd-i Gul*, front matter; Khān, *The Iqd-i Manzūm*, front matter.

In 1867, Persian was removed from the list of elective classical languages for the FA and BA examinations, although it remained an optional language for the entrance examination.²⁶ The reasons for the removal are not given in the calendar, but this would not be the first time that Persian's place in the curriculum would prove precarious.²⁷ When Persian was eventually reinstated in the Calcutta FA and BA exams in 1874, the FA course had changed to include new texts such as *Sih Naṣr* by Nūr al-Dīn Ṣuhurī; *Ruq'āt* (letters) by 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdil; the qasida of 'Urfī Shīrāzī; and the *Sikandarnāmah*. The BA examination had been rewritten to comprise the *Vaqā'i'* of Ni'mat Khān 'Āli; *Durrah-yi Nādirah* (a history of Nādir Shāh) by Mirzā Mahdī Khān Astarābādī; the qasida of Khāqānī; and the qasida of Badr Chāchī.²⁸ This remained the course of studies for a decade.²⁹

By 1881, the Persian curriculum had grown to add an honors course for the 1882 and 1883 exams. Still mainly focused on classical texts, it added selections from the *Shāhnāmah*; *Tuḥfat al-'Irāqain* by Khāqānī; *Ḥadīqah* by Sinā'ī; the *Dīvān* of Anvarī; and the qasida of Qā'ānī—and, in prose, excerpts from the *Dasātīr*; selections from *Tārikh-i Vaṣṣāf* (a history of the Ilkhānids) by Faḥrullāh Shīrāzī; treatises by Mullā Tuḡhrā; and selections from the Mughal chronicle *Akbarnāmah* by Abū-l-Faḥl.³⁰ The curriculum continued to reflect the interests of the Orientalist examiners who designed it. For example, in addition to the aforementioned work, students also read Saifi's study of meter and Jāmi's treatise on rhyme. Both treatises had recently been studied and translated by Heinrich Blochmann, who had been the head examiner in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu at the University of Calcutta in 1865 and then again from 1868 to 1875.

The 1880s witnessed a rapid expansion of the Persian curriculum as Indian Persianists gained autonomy over the courses and examinations. Many of the Persianists who came to control the curriculum had been trained in the colonial universities. For example, by 1887, the Persian entrance and FA exams at Calcutta were overseen by an Indian, Abū-l-Khair, who was an MA graduate of the colonial education system.³¹ The university had by then (in 1886) also added an MA examination in Persian. By the 1890s, boards of studies had been established for the languages. The Persian board comprised a mixture of British Orientalists and Indian scholars. In 1894, the Arabic, Persian, and Urdu board comprised eleven Indian scholars and four British.³² Two decades later, in 1917, the board consisted exclusively of Indian scholars, most of whom held degrees from colonial universities.³³ Two English names appear on the 1920 list, but the president and all but one of the examiners were Indian Persianists.³⁴ Subsequent increases in Indian control over the curricula

²⁶ Calcutta, *Calendar 1867–68*, 38–40. Persian is only offered as an elective for entrance exams in the 1868–69, 1869–70, and 1870–71 calendars (the last-mentioned includes curriculum for exams through 1873).

²⁷ In the 1890s, it was proposed in the University of Allahabad senate that Persian be removed from the curriculum. Charges were that the language was too easy and thus drew students away from studying Arabic and Sanskrit, and that it did not have the capacity to train students' capacity for thought and imagination. In response, Shibli Nu'mānī designed curriculum that he thought made Persian as challenging as the other languages. Then, in 1899, he defended the inclusion of Persian on aesthetic, historical, literary, and philological grounds in a speech to the Muhammadan Educational Conference (Nu'mānī, "Ispīch," 46–52). Ultimately, the proposal to remove Persian from the curriculum at Allahabad was not adopted.

²⁸ Calcutta, *Calendar 1874–75*, 86–93.

²⁹ It was repeated in the calendars until 1884, when Kabīr al-Dīn's anthologies were adopted (described later).

³⁰ Calcutta, *Calendar 1881–82*, 82.

³¹ Calcutta, *Calendar, 1887*, xxxiv, lxxiii–lxxviii, 125.

³² Calcutta, *Calendar 1894*, 120–26.

³³ Calcutta, *Calendar 1917*, 18. This may be related to the educational reforms of the 1880s, which sought to integrate schools founded and run by Indian educators and to increase the involvement of classically trained Indian scholars (Paranjpe, *Source Book*, 169). This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however, since the reforms were primarily aimed at high schools and middle schools and increasing access to trade schools, and the transfer of power over university curriculum to Indian Persianists does not obviously fall under the broader objectives of this program.

³⁴ Calcutta, *Calendar 1920 & 1921*, 37, 44.

were aided by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and its proposed form of government, called a “dyarchy,” in which control over education was delegated to the provinces and gave greater control over curricular matters to Indian educators. By 1947, the board comprised all Indian scholars, most of whom held degrees from British universities such as Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, and Leeds.³⁵

The shift in control from British to Indian examiners was accompanied by the introduction of new texts and continued curricular expansion. In 1884, Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad, who coauthored *Iqd-i Gul* with Lees and was now a fellow of the academic senate of the University of Calcutta, produced a new course for the BA exam, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī* (Selections of Persian; Calcutta: Urdu Guide, 1884), comprising selections from the *Tārīkh-i Firūzshāhī*, *Vaqāʿiʿ* of Niʿmat Khān ʿAlī, the *Shāhnāmah*, and the qasida of Zāhir Fāryābī.³⁶ In 1885, the university also introduced a new entrance course designed by Muḥammad Moḥy al-Dīn, then professor of Arabic and Persian at the Government School in Allahabad. Titled *Guldastah-yi Dānish*, the course consisted of unattributed selections from *Rauzat al-Khuld* (also known as *Khāristān*, 1332–33, revised 1336–37; an early imitation of the *Gulistān*) by Majd Khvāfi; excerpts from the collected poems of Saʿdī and Ḥazīn; and selections from *Makhzan al-Asrār* by Niẓāmī.³⁷ The selections by Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad and Muḥammad Moḥy al-Dīn marked a new trend in curricular design at the university, whereby selections in the form of university-approved readers came to replace lists of texts in the university calendars, especially for the entrance and intermediate examinations. Nearly all of them were compiled by Indian Persianists.³⁸

For the next several decades, the core canon of texts outlined above remained the same at the University of Calcutta. New texts were added as new editions became available and as the university expanded its curriculum and added more advanced exams. Some texts, for example, the *Ruqʿāt* (letters) of Jāmī, earlier printed by Fort William and added in 1892–93, were not regular staples. Some, for example, the *Masnavī* of Rūmī (added in 1896), were surprisingly late additions. Others, for example, *tazkīrah*s by Daulatshāh Samarqandī and ʿAufī, both added in 1919, seem to reflect contemporary Orientalist scholarship (both had recently been compiled by E. G. Browne). By 1947, the curriculum had come to include classical and contemporary Persian works. On the entry-level matriculation examination alone, students were now expected to study selections from curricular classics as well recent additions and contemporary literature, such as the poems of Ibn Yamīn, the *rubāʿī* poems of ʿAṭṭār, and selections from the Iranian poet Īraj Mīrzā (1874–1926).

By 1947, the scope and form of the advanced examinations (BA and MA) in Persian at Calcutta also had changed and expanded considerably. The prescribed texts comprised a much longer list of classical and contemporary Persian literature covering a much wider range of topics. The nature of the exams themselves also had changed. Early exams had focused on translation and philological analysis. By the end of the colonial period, students were expected to demonstrate familiarity with historical context, secondary literary criticism and scholarship, and specialist disciplines.

In 1947, the MA exam set for 1948 required students to produce papers on the history of Persia, the history of Persian literature, Persian philology, modern Persian literature, and a fifth paper on an elective topic.³⁹ For the elective exam, students could choose to focus on Persian literature, the historical literature of Iran, the historical literature of India, philosophy and mysticism, or philology. Textbooks included not only Persian literature, but relevant secondary literature in Urdu and Persian by Indian Persianists. In Urdu, students read the five-volume study of Persian poetry *Shīʿr al-ʿAjām* by Shiblī Nuʿmānī and the two-volume

³⁵ Calcutta, *Calendar Supplement for 1947*, 33.

³⁶ Aḥmad, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*.

³⁷ Al-Dīn, *Guldastah-yi Dānish*.

³⁸ Calcutta, *Calendar 1917*, 382, 390, 399, 406, 412–13.

³⁹ Calcutta, *Calendar Supplement for 1947*, 362–66.

study of Persian philology *Sukhandān-i Fārs* by Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād. In Persian, they read secondary scholarship such as *Sukhanvarān-i Irān dar ‘Asr-i Ḥāzīr* (1933) by Muḥammad Ishāq (a Calcutta-based scholar). The exams also incorporated contemporary Persian literature from India and Iran, including *Payām-i Mashriq* by Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877–1938) and poems by the Iranian writers Muḥammad-Taqī Bahār (1886–1951) and Parvīn I’tīshāmī (1907–41).

University of Bombay: Wisdom Literature, History, and More

The University of Calcutta was not the only university whose examinations exerted influence over Persian studies in India in the colonial period. Incorporated in July of 1857, the University of Bombay was in its early years a much smaller institution than its sibling in the northeast. By its fifteenth year, it listed only seven affiliated colleges, mostly in Bombay (but also in Poona), only four of which were affiliated in the arts, compared to the forty-four institutions affiliated to Calcutta just a year earlier.⁴⁰ By 1887, the university’s domain had grown in number to fifteen and expanded in geographical reach to include affiliated institutions in cities across western India stretching from Karachi in the north to Kolhapur south of Bombay, and Ahmadabad, Baroda (Vadodara), Bhavnagar, Bombay (Mumbai), and Poona in between.⁴¹

The early Persian programs at the University of Bombay were overseen by pairs comprising a European Orientalist and an Indian scholar. In the 1860s, these were Reverend John Wilson, who had founded Wilson College (later the Free General Assembly’s Institution) in Bombay in the 1830s, and one Mūsā Khān who is otherwise not mentioned in the calendar.⁴² In the 1870s, the examiners were the Hungarian-born Orientalist Edward Rehatsek (translator of several Persian historical and ethical texts into English, including the *Gulistān* and *Bahāristān*) and ‘Abd al-Faṭḥ Maulavī, who was professor of Arabic at Elphinstone College in Bombay.⁴³ By the 1880s, the examinations were overseen by pairs of Parsi and Muslim Indians.⁴⁴ In one case, both members of the pair graduated from the same college in Bombay.⁴⁵

The Persian curriculum at the University of Bombay included many of the same works of poetry and moral philosophy as the curriculum at Calcutta, but added to them a number of works on history and legend. The *Gulistān*, *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, *Bahār-i Dānish*, *Sikandarnāmah*, and *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* were all prescribed textbooks in the first decades of the university. To these were added in the 1860s and 1870s sections on the first Mughal Emperor Bābar from the history of India by Firishtah (d. 1620); the *Shāhnāmah*; and selections from the legends of Ḥātim Ṭā’ī.⁴⁶ Later, in the 1880s, the BA examinations added selections of *Rauzat al-Ṣafā* by Mīrkhvānd on Sassanid history or the early Mongols (Chingiz Khān), depending on the year; selections from *Ḥabīb al-Siyar* by Mīrkhvānd’s grandson, Khvāndmīr, on the Abbasids or Ilkhāns; and passages in the *Ātash-kadah* by Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Bīgdīlī in addition to selections from the *Shāhnāmah*, Sa’dī’s *Ṭayyibāt* (odes), and Rumi’s *Masnāvī*.⁴⁷

The emphasis on the history of Persia and Persian wisdom literature continued into the twentieth century as contemporary works were added to the Persian classics. For example, excerpts from the Qajar-era history of Persia *Nāmah-yi Khusravān* by Jalāl al-Dīn Mirzā (1827–72) appeared alongside curricular classics. The intermediate examinations prescribed an eclectic mixture of Indo-Persian history, texts from the Calcutta canon, Sufi classics, and recent autobiographical literature such as Ḥazīn Lāhijī’s travelogue. The BA exams similarly drew from canonical historiographical texts and Sufi classics, as well as contemporary works, such as

⁴⁰ Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 194–220; Calcutta, *Calendar, 1870–71*, 127–28.

⁴¹ Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, 353–424.

⁴² Bombay, *Calendar 1865–66*, 172.

⁴³ Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 186.

⁴⁴ Bombay, *Calendar 1883–84*, iii, xlvi, lxxvii, ccxiii.

⁴⁵ Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, iii, xlvi, lxxv, ccviii.

⁴⁶ Bombay, *Calendar, 1865–66*, 38; Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 24–25.

⁴⁷ Bombay, *Calendar 1883–84*, 24–26; Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, 25–28.

the letters (*Munsha'āt*) of the Qajar prince and governor Farhād Mirzā (1818–88). The MA exam likewise drew from a wide range of genres and included, in addition to textbooks that had been standard elsewhere, the *Maqāmāt-i Ḥamidī* by Qāzi Hamid al-Dīn and the Sufi allegorical poem *Gulshan-i Rāz* by Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. ca. 1339–40).⁴⁸

This corpus of texts remained largely unchanged in subsequent decades, although a handful of new texts were added. In 1924–25, for example, students read the same texts as they had in 1906, although the texts were rearranged and reassigned to different exams.⁴⁹ New texts included a Persian translation of *Kalilah va Dimnah* by Naṣrullāh Munshī; *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādat* (a work in ethics translated from Arabic) by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (d. 1829); and the Persian translation of John Malcolm's *History of Persia* by Mirzā Ḥairat. Ḥairat was himself a part of the colonial university system, having taught Persian at Elphinstone College in Bombay in the 1870s and 1880s, been elected to the University of Bombay senate in 1876, and served as examiner in Persian at Bombay in 1879.

University of Madras: Classical and Contemporary Persian in South India

Of less influence than Calcutta and Bombay, perhaps, but nonetheless remarkable for the innovativeness of its Persian curriculum, was the University of Madras. Incorporated in September 1857, Madras administered examinations to colleges in the Deccan (South India) in cities such as Aurangabad, Bangalore, Madras, Mysore, and Hyderabad. Persian appears to have been a late addition to the curriculum. No examiner for the language was named until 1872, and one did not begin to appear regularly until 1875.⁵⁰ Unlike Calcutta and Bombay, Madras required students to pass an examination in an optional language, not a classical one, until the MA level. Persian was one of eleven options, including Tamil, Telugu, “Kanarese” (Kannada), Malayalam, Hindustani (Urdu), and Uriya, at the first examination and BA levels. It was only at the MA level that candidates had to pass an examination in Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.⁵¹

The Persian texts studied by examinees at Madras-affiliated schools combined some of the standard texts used at Calcutta and Bombay with texts not studied elsewhere. For example, students studying for the matriculation exam in 1876 studied the *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, just like those studying for exams at Calcutta and Bombay.⁵² However, in the following year, they were required to read *Ḥikāyāt-i Dilpasand* by Muḥammad Mahdī Vāṣif, a collection of animal fables in Persian adapted from “European stories translated from Greek” by a local poet.⁵³ Also included were selections from the poetry of both the eighteenth-century Indian Sufi proselytizer Mirzā Maḥzar Jān-i Jānān and the seventeenth-century Sufi poet Ṭāhir Ghānī Kashmīrī (recently translated into English by Mufti Mudāsir Farooqī and Nusrat Bazaz), neither of whom appears to have been studied elsewhere. In 1879, they also studied poetry by Asīr Iṣfahānī.⁵⁴ Asīr's *Dīvān* had been published by Nawal Kishore that same year.

In the 1890s, the Madras curriculum continued to incorporate moral fables and contemporary Persian translations. The examinations for 1892 and 1893 involved standard textbooks such as the *Būstān* and *Anvār-i Suhailī*.⁵⁵ They also incorporated *ʿAyār-i Dānīsh* (a version of the Indian Panchatantra animal fables compiled by the Mughal vizier and chronicler Abū-l-Faẓl) and Persian translations of two Turkish plays by Mirzā Faṭḥ ʿAlī Ākhūnzādah (Mirza Fatali Akhundov; 1812–78): *Vazīr-i Lankarān* and *Ḥikāyat-i Ḥakīm-i Nabātāt va Mostaʿlī*

⁴⁸ Bombay, *Calendar 1906–1907*, 719–21.

⁴⁹ Bombay, *Calendar 1923–24 and 1924–25*, 795–99.

⁵⁰ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 181, 187, 190.

⁵¹ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 34, 39, 47.

⁵² This section is based on Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 96–108.

⁵³ Vāṣif, *Ḥikāyāt-i Dilpasand*, 2, 103.

⁵⁴ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 108.

⁵⁵ The calendar also lists *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*, which is almost surely the anthology by Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad discussed earlier. Madras, 1892–93, 451–52, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465.

Shāh.⁵⁶ The same corpus continued to be prescribed by Madras for decades and appears not to have been substantially revised until the 1930s. The same set of texts appears in the 1902–3 curriculum with only minor changes.⁵⁷ By the 1920s, a mixture of canonical classics, Safavid- and Mughal-era poetry, and contemporary Persian by the Indian poet-philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl had been incorporated.⁵⁸ By 1939, the textbooks prescribed for the intermediate exam had shifted focus to contemporary Persian literature. The intermediate exams for 1939–41, for example, all assigned *Ā'īnah-yi 'Ajam* by Muḥammad Iqbāl; 1939 and 1941 required selections from the *Gulistān*, whereas the 1940 exam assigned a reader of selections in modern Persian and [*Dāgustarān yā*] *Intiqāmkhvāhān-i Mazdak* (1921; a historical novel about the Arab conquests and the fall of the Sassanid Empire) by 'Abd al-Huṣain San'atizādah Kirmānī (1895–1973).⁵⁹

The Madras curriculum's combination of curricular classics and contemporary Persian literature written in Central and South Asia continued to the end of the colonial period. In 1939, students preparing for the BA exam read canonical ethics works along with the aforementioned novel by San'atizādah; Persian translations of Ākhūnzādah's plays *Vukalā'-i Murāfa'ah* (one of the three plays in the translated anthologies of his plays mentioned above) and *Mard-i Khasis*; a Persian translation of James Justinian Morier's *The Adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan*, which had been translated into Persian and published by Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow in 1886; selections from the Indian poet Mirzā Ghālib (1797–1869); and the *Jāvidnāmah* by Muḥammad Iqbāl.⁶⁰ They read *Nal Daman* by the Mughal poet Faiẓī alongside selections from *Nasīm-i Shimāl* (probably excerpts from the journal by Ashraf Gīlānī, 1870–1934, which published satirical verse on contemporary events). Those preparing for the 1940 exam also read selections from the social reformist novel *Siyāhatnāmah-yi Ibrāhīm Beg* (1895) by the Turkish-born Iranian writer Zain al-'Ābidīn Marāghah-yī (1840–1910) and selections from the anthology *Poets of the Pahlavi Regime* (Bombay 1933) by the Parsi Persianist Dinshaw J. (Jijibhoy) Irani (1881–1938). Students sitting for the honors exam added to these texts *Ta'rikh-i Adabiyāt-i Irān* (first published in Tabriz in 1929–30) by Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī.⁶¹

The gradual expansion of Persian studies at the three founding colonial universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras did not take place in isolation from institutional changes and curricular developments elsewhere. Some of the texts adopted by Bombay and Madras in the 1890s and afterward were initially adopted by the new universities founded in the 1880s, Panjab and Allahabad. The program at the University of Panjab followed Calcutta in offering examinations in Persian to fulfill the classical language requirement. It also introduced new Persian-medium examinations of its own and established degree programs focused exclusively on Persian. This led to the adoption of new textbooks, the expansion of the curriculum, and increasing specialization. Allahabad followed the basic structure of the Calcutta curricula. It also followed Calcutta's practice of having Indian scholars design curriculum and produce anthologies as textbooks. It is to the curricular changes at those universities that we now turn.

Specialization at Panjab University

Incorporated in October 1882, the University of Panjab was unique among the colonial universities for its specialized degrees in Persian studies. Like Calcutta, it had a Faculty of Arts that conferred entrance, intermediate, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of

⁵⁶ Three of Ākhūnzādah's plays, including *Ḥakīm-i Nabātāt*, had been translated into Persian by Mirza Dja'far and published without attribution as *Trois Comédies* (Persian title: *Kitāb-i Tamāshākhānah*; 1885). They were soon thereafter translated into English and published (likewise without attribution) in a bilingual Persian-English volume by A. Rogers as *Three Persian Plays* (1890).

⁵⁷ Madras, *Calendar 1902–1903*, 179–206.

⁵⁸ Madras, *Calendar 1924*, 501–12.

⁵⁹ Madras, *Calendar 1938–39*, 349, 358.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 466–67, 483.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 568.

Literature degrees. However, unlike the founding universities, Panjab also housed a Faculty of Oriental Learning that served its broader mission to encourage the study of “Eastern classical languages.”⁶² The existence of the Oriental faculty meant that Panjab not only followed Calcutta and others in requiring students to pass an examination in a classical language such as Persian as part of the otherwise English-medium curriculum, but also that it conferred Bachelor of Oriental Learning degrees requiring a classical language (Arabic or Sanskrit) and any two of a handful of elective subjects, including Persian.⁶³ The Oriental faculty also offered diplomas in “Oriental languages” (Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian) and conferred literary titles to successful candidates. Examinees who passed the proficiency exam in Persian were awarded the title “Munshī.” Those who passed the high proficiency exam were “Munshī ‘Ālim.” Those who passed the honors exam were given the title “Munshī Fāzil.”⁶⁴

By the 1890s, the University of Panjab Persian courses were already highly specialized, covering a wide range of genres in prose and poetry. The entrance exam used as its textbook an anthology reader, *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad*. Produced for students in secondary schools in the Panjab, the reader by its eleventh edition (1912) was fully vocalized and comprised selections from textbooks used elsewhere.⁶⁵ To prepare students to read *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad* and pass the entrance examination, students in middle class courses in secondary schools read the primer *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad*. Although not a university textbook per se, *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad* was unique among the university textbooks for its focus on conversation.⁶⁶ Of the book’s 232 pages, the first 43 comprised dialogues under the heading of “daily conversation” (*guftugū-yi yaumiyah*), covering various topics related to everyday life (e.g., illness, bathing, clothing); emotions (e.g., anger, surprise); and social interaction with Persian-speaking people (e.g., “the manners of social interaction of the people of Iran”). Students also read selections from the Persian letters of the nineteenth-century Indian Persian writers Mirzā Ghālib and Mirzā Qatīl in addition to canonical works of prose and poetry.⁶⁷

The anthology textbooks for the 1897 intermediate and Bachelor of Arts examinations at the University of Panjab illustrate the expansion of Persian studies as part of arts faculty exams in the decade following incorporation. Unlike the calendar lists divided simply into prose and poetry, the intermediate reader organized texts into a wide range of genres in prose and poetry and included a large number of classical and contemporary works.⁶⁸ The BA course for 1899 was even more expansive, adding works of poetry, history, and rhetorical theory, including the writings of the Qajar courtier and reformer Mirzā Abū-l-Qāsim Farāhānī Qā’im Maqām (1779–1835); the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*; *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*; a Persian translation of *Alf Lailā va Lailā*; and *Miftāḥ al-Adab* (an elementary work on Arabic grammar and morphology).⁶⁹

The University of Panjab’s honors programs in Persian administered by the Oriental faculty were highly specialized and accelerated counterparts to the arts faculty curriculum. In 1901–2, the Oriental entrance exam comprised selections from the arts faculty’s intermediate exam and added to it readings from *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī* and the study of Arabic grammar.⁷⁰ The intermediate exam comprised the Persian BA course plus supplementary readings in Persian literature and the study of Arabic grammar and literature.⁷¹ The Bachelor of

⁶² Panjab, *Calendar 1900–1901*, 22–34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 52–85.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 71–74, 95–97.

⁶⁵ Punjab, *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad*, front matter, 1.

⁶⁶ Conversational Persian had been part of the training of British officers in the Fort William College, most famously with the use of Gladwin’s *The Persian Moonshee*. However, Gladwin’s book was never adopted for use in the curriculum of the universities, and, with the possible exception of Persian translations of contemporary dramas, the books that were incorporated into the university curriculum did not include conversations that could serve as models for speaking practice in everyday contexts.

⁶⁷ Punjab, *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad*.

⁶⁸ Punjab, *Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

⁶⁹ Punjab, *Bī E Kors Fārsī*.

⁷⁰ Punjab, *Calendar 1900–1901*, 61.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Oriental Learning exam for that year assumed these courses as background and required students to study a handful of other texts and the entire Arabic BA course.⁷² The Munshi (proficiency) exam in Persian comprised the regular Persian intermediate course and added to it works in poetry, ethics, history, and letters. It also required students to have analytical command of Persian and Arabic grammar and to translate from Persian into Urdu and Urdu into Persian. The Munshī ‘Ālim (high proficiency) course consisted of the Persian BA course; a Persian grammar *Makhzan al-Favā'id* by Fā'iq Lakhnavī (fl. 1810) in addition to other texts; and the entire intermediate course in Arabic. It also required Persian-Urdu and Urdu-Persian translation. The Munshī Fāzil (honors in Persian) exam included readings in rhetoric and prosody, history, an essay in Persian, Persian-Urdu and Urdu-Persian translation, and the entire BA course in Arabic.⁷³

Over the course of the following decades, the Persian curriculum at the University of Panjab proved to be more mercurial, specialized, and expansive than that of other universities. In 1927, the syllabus for the intermediate, First Arts, and Munshī examination comprised a mixture of standard and less-common texts.⁷⁴ By 1936, the Persian studies program had grown to comprise a massive corpus of no fewer than two hundred texts and ten different degree and diploma programs.⁷⁵ Students were assigned secondary readings by Orientalists and literary critics in English, Urdu, and Persian. Textbooks included classics of the colonial curriculum as well as Persian works in poetry and prose by contemporary Indian writers, such as *Ā'inah-yi 'Ajam* by Muḥammad Iqbāl and *Dabīr-i 'Ajam* (1928; a magisterial Persian-language study of poetics, rhetoric, and literary theory) by Aṣghar 'Alī Rūhī (professor of Oriental Languages at Islamiyah College, Lahore).⁷⁶ Other contemporary works included Persian translations of plays by Akhūndzādah and *Haji Baba of Isfahan* by Morier, and the aforementioned *Siyāhatnāmah-yi Ibrāhīm Beg*. Secondary readings included English-language histories of Persia and Persian literature by Browne, Levy, and Rogers, as well as the Urdu study *Shi'r al-'Ajam* by Shibli Nu'mānī.

By the end of the colonial period, the specialist examinations at the University of Panjab reflected the abiding influence of the early colonial curriculum, the legacy of the expansions of the 1880s and 1890s, the integration of contemporary Persian literature by Indian and Iranian writers, and the specialization of Persian studies as both a philological and historical-literary discipline.⁷⁷ In the early years, the curriculum was divided into prose and poetry and included a narrow range of genres. Later, the textbooks divided the readings, especially in poetry, into specified genres. By 1934, the curriculum was organized by discipline. For example, the course of studies in mysticism and moral philosophy for the Munshī Fāzil exam of that year combined treatises in ethics with Sufi literature, including *Akhlaq-i Jalālī*; *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (eleventh century, the earliest surviving treatise on Sufism in Persian, edited and published in Lahore in 1903) by al-Hujvī; and the mystical allegories in verse *Gulshan-i Rāz* and *Mantiq al-Ṭair*. Students also were expected to translate between Persian and Urdu and produce an original composition in Persian.

Standardization at Allahabad University

The expansion and specialization at the University of Panjab was paralleled by similar processes of expansion and regularization of the syllabus at the University of Allahabad, which further cemented the place of Persian studies in the Indian colleges. Founded in 1887 and incorporated in November 1889, Allahabad followed the examination structure of its parent

⁷² Ibid., 82.

⁷³ Ibid., 95–96.

⁷⁴ Bilgrāmī, *Sharḥ-i Intārmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

⁷⁵ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 150–76, 879–80, 905, 940, 960–61, 986–87, 1090, 1093, 1095–96, 1109–13.

⁷⁶ Rūhī, *Dabīr-i 'Ajam*, 2–4.

⁷⁷ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 1111–13.

institution, the University of Calcutta.⁷⁸ Students sitting for all examinations, from entrance to BA, had to pass exams in English, history and geography, mathematics, and a classical language (Sanskrit, Arabic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or Persian). As elsewhere, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were unlikely choices for students. Of the twenty-four colleges affiliated to the university in arts in 1894, only one, Women's College in Lucknow, listed a faculty member who taught Latin, and only one other, St. George's College in Mussoorie (managed by Catholics), taught "classics" (certainly Latin, perhaps Greek).⁷⁹ None listed Hebrew. By contrast, nearly all affiliated colleges listed faculty in Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit.

The relative ease and accessibility of Persian made it a popular choice with Allahabad university examinees.⁸⁰ By 1899, the general preference for Persian meant that few students opted for the more difficult courses and exams in Arabic and Sanskrit. Consequently, the status of Persian as a classical language was questioned by the British director of education in the region, and a proposal was made to remove Persian from the list of elective classical languages. In response, Shibli Nu'mānī, retired professor of Persian and Arabic and current examiner in Persian at Allahabad, produced a new curriculum designed to demonstrate that Persian was worthy as a classical language. In a speech before an educational conference, he argued that the treasury of historical literature, especially the history of Muslims, available in Persian was unique, and therefore Persian deserved continued institutional support. The resistance to the proposed exclusion of Persian worked. It remained an elective classical language.

The Persian faculties at affiliated colleges evince the role that the University of Allahabad, like the other universities, played in sustaining an ecosystem for Persian studies. Persian studies faculty bore titles such as Professor of Persian and Head Persian Teacher. Others bore broader titles, such as Professor of Oriental Literature (e.g., at Muir Central College in Allahabad). Such professors were accompanied by many other Persian instructors—bearing titles such as masters, maulvis, munshis, and teachers—employed by the schools. The calendars do not record the names and subjects of the latter, but many are identified as part of the Oriental (studies) faculties, and some of them, especially those bearing titles associated with Perso-Arabic studies such as maulvi and munshi, surely taught Persian. Of the twenty-four colleges affiliated to the university in arts in 1894–95, seventeen listed Persian teachers among their faculty, spread across a wide range of departments.⁸¹ Maharaja's College in Jaipur, for example, retained two Persian professors (one in the English department, the other in the Oriental department), a superintendent of Persian and Arabic in the Oriental department, three teachers of Persian in the English department, and a head instructor and nine teachers of Persian in the Persian department (separate from the Oriental department), for a total of sixteen Persian studies faculty members.⁸² Persian studies also were encouraged by prizes for academic excellence in the subject; for example, the Maulvi Hyder Husain prize at Muir Central College, Allahabad.

The faculty listings also remind us that Persian was neither exclusively the purview of the colonial system nor exclusively the purview of any particular religious community. The assistant professor of Persian at Canning College in Lucknow (later Lucknow University) was a Hindu named Munshi Ramkishan, without degree titles to suggest that he was the product of the colonial university system.⁸³ The multicomunal quality of Persian stands

⁷⁸ Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 37–52, 84–104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 183, 202.

⁸⁰ Nu'mānī, "Ispīch," 46–52.

⁸¹ These were Muir Central College, Canning College, MAO College, Aligarh, Agra College, St. John's College in Agra, London Mission College in Benares, Maharaja's College in Jaipur, Christian College in Lucknow, Jabalpur College, Madhava College in Ujjain, Lashkar College in Gwalior, High School in Fyzabad, Ramsay College in Almorah, the Women's College in Lucknow, Christ Church in Kanpur, and Meerut College. Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 177–203.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 194.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 183.

in contrast to Sanskrit and Arabic, which were almost exclusively the purview of Indian scholars with names suggesting Hindu and Muslim backgrounds, respectively, or European Orientalists.⁸⁴

The first curriculum for examinations at the University of Allahabad consisted of a mixture of the classic colonial texts and new innovations. The first designer of Allahabad's curriculum, Amjad 'Alī, had been educated in the colonial system up to an MA degree and was professor of Persian at Muir Central College in Allahabad. His entrance examination for 1891 (the first year exams were held) included standard Calcutta texts such as the *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, and the *Divān* of Hāfiẓ. To these he added texts not widely assigned on Calcutta's exams, including the mystical-moral poetry by 'Umar Khayyām and Ibn Yamīn, Jāmī's *Bahāristān*. He also assigned selections from *Āsar al-Ṣanādīd* (a work on the architecture of Delhi by the contemporary Indian reformer and educationist Sayyid Aḥmad Khān [d. 1898]).⁸⁵ His intermediate course likewise drew from a mixture of classics and contemporary works, standard textbooks, and new additions. To Calcutta standards were added the *Bahāristān* of Jāmī; the *Safarnāmah* (1873) of the Qajar Shah Nāsir al-Dīn; the travelogue and autobiography of Ḥazīn Lāhījī (d. 1766); a work by the Indian scholar Imām Baksh Ṣahbā'i (d. 1857), who had taught Persian at Delhi College in the first half of the nineteenth century; and excerpts from Ghazālī's mystical *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat*.

Amjad 'Alī's BA course likewise drew from curricular standards, but also included recent works, such as selections from poetry by the Qajar poet Mirzā Raḥīm Yaghmā (d. 1859) and the Indian poet Mirzā Asadullāh Khān Ghālib (d. 1869). It also incorporated Indo-Persian literature, for example, the *Siḥ Naṣr* of Zuhūrī and *Naldaman* by the Mughal emperor Akbar's court poet Fayyāzi.⁸⁶ In 1895–96, the MA examination in Persian added texts that had not been staples of the Calcutta curriculum, such as *Tauqī'āt-i Kisrā* (a work translated from Arabic for one of the sons of the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān purporting to record the sayings of the Sassanid emperor Naushīrvān) and *Ijāz-i Khusravī* (a prose miscellany by the thirteenth-century poet from Delhi, Amīr Khusrau).⁸⁷

Amjad 'Alī's courses were replaced in 1897 by new entrance and intermediate courses designed by Shiblī Nu'mānī. Shiblī drew from the same textbooks as Amjad 'Alī in the entrance course, but added selections that had been introduced elsewhere, including *Nāmah-yi Khusravān* (a nationalist history and biographical dictionary of Persian kings) by the Qajar historian Jalāl al-Dīn Mirzā (1827–72).⁸⁸ To the intermediate course Shiblī added selections from the Persian translation of John Malcolm's *History of Persia* (1815) by Mirzā Ḥairat Irānī and the eighteenth-century *Ma'āṣir al-Umarā* (biographies of Mughal notables) by Samsam al-Daulah Shāh Navāz Khān.⁸⁹ The BA and MA examinations for 1899 repeated earlier curricula, adding only selections from Manuchihrī to the BA exam.⁹⁰ Shiblī's syllabi were eventually replaced by Amjad 'Alī's in 1906, which remained in use until 1914.⁹¹

The curriculum at Allahabad from 1914 to the 1930s witnessed relatively few new additions to the canon of texts established by the early examiners. The 1914 curriculum for the intermediate examination by Mirzā Muḥammad Ismā'il Khān (professor of Persian at Christian College, Allahabad) adds only the letters of Bīdil and *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, neither of which was new to the colonial curriculum.⁹² His 1918 BA curriculum retained most of the previous curricula, but added selections from Bīdil's prose; the odes of Sanā'i; selections

⁸⁴ One important exception to this rule was Sayyid 'Alī Bilgrāmī, who was examiner in Sanskrit at the University of Madras in the 1890s. Madras, *Calendar 1892–93*, ii. For his life and works, see Bruce, "Bilgrami Brothers."

⁸⁵ 'Alī, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*.

⁸⁶ 'Alī, *Bī E Kors Fārsī*.

⁸⁷ Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 140–41.

⁸⁸ Nu'mānī, *Intrans Kors Fārsī*.

⁸⁹ Nu'mānī, *Intarmīdiyāt Kors Fārsī*.

⁹⁰ Allahabad, *Calendar 1898–99*, 171.

⁹¹ Allahabad, *Calendar 1904–1905*, 185, 192; Allahabad, *Calendar 1908*, 167, 171.

⁹² Khān, *Intarmīdiyāt Fārsī Kors*.

from Kamāl al-Dīn Ismāʿīl; and selections of odes by Fughānī (Fighānī), ʿAbd al-Vāsīʿ, and Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt.⁹³ The revised BA course for 1919 pared the new course down, but added nothing new.⁹⁴ A decade later, however, in 1928, the course had expanded in size to include multiple disciplines similar to those at the University of Panjab, but comprised largely the same texts that had been used previously. The intermediate exam added only *Tuḥfat al-Ālam* (a history of England in Persian) and *Āʿīnah-yi Iskandarī* by Amīr Khusrau. The BA excerpted a laundry list of by then standard textbooks, but added selections from the eighteenth-century Indian poets Sarkhush and ʿAndalīb (both excerpted in an anthology). Students also were advised to read *Ṣanādīd-i ʿAjam* by the Indian scholar M. H. Nāṣirī for their history of literature exams.⁹⁵ The MA exam used the same textbooks as before, but added several less common works, such as *Rasāʾil* by Yamīn al-Dīn Tuḡhrā Mashhadī, *Shabnam-i Shādāb* by the Safavid-era poet Ṣahīr al-Dīn Tafrīshī, Ākhūnzādah’s play *Sarguzasht-i Shāh-i Langarān*, and selections from the poems of the eighteenth-century Indian mystic and poet ʿAndalīb. It also assigned works of scholarship on Persian literature and language in English and Urdu as well as works on Persian grammar and poetics.⁹⁶

Legacy: The New Universities

Successor institutions to the colonial curriculum generally followed the structure and curricula set by the earlier institutions. Allahabad was the last colonial university to incorporate before the explosion of independent universities began in the second decade of the twentieth century. For six decades, three (and eventually five) universities had set the trajectory of Persian studies in colleges across British India and the princely states. Starting in 1916, British India witnessed the rapid rise of autonomous universities and the decentralization and diversification of control over Persian studies. Between 1916 and 1923, ten new universities were incorporated. Most emerged from an affiliated college, just as the University of Panjab had emerged from the Oriental College in Lahore and the University of Allahabad from Muir Central College in Allahabad—both of these previously affiliated to the University of Calcutta. Some universities would later emerge as leading centers of Persian studies. Osmania University in Hyderabad (incorporated August 1919) was an Urdu-medium university with an active community of Persian scholars that produced important translations from Persian literature. The universities of Lucknow (incorporated December 1920) and Delhi (incorporated May 1922) would be important centers of Persian studies in colonial and postcolonial India. Aligarh Muslim University (incorporated December 1920), formerly the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College affiliated to the Calcutta and Allahabad universities, likewise emerged as a major center of Persian studies and Mughal history, producing influential scholars such as Nazir Ahmed (1915–2008) and K. A. Nizami (1925–97).

An early curriculum for the intermediate examination at Osmania University comprised texts that had been standard for decades.⁹⁷ Likewise, the verse portion of the BA course in Persian at Aligarh Muslim University published in 1924 collected texts that had long been standard at Allahabad. The prose portion, however, added two texts not previously prevalent: the eleventh-century work of political wisdom *Qābūs-nāmah* by ʿUnṣur al-Maʿālī, which had been available in print since the mid-nineteenth century, and *Lubāb al-Albāb* (1221) by ʿAufī (the oldest-surviving Persian *tazkirah* of poets, edited and published by E. G. Browne in 1903–6).⁹⁸ This suggests that the practice of augmenting the colonial curriculum that began in the 1880s with Kabīr al-Dīn, Muḥy al-Dīn, and Amjad ʿAlī continued as

⁹³ Khān, *Bī E Fārsī Kors*.

⁹⁴ Allāhābādī, *Bī E Kors Fārsī barā-yi 1919*.

⁹⁵ Allahabad, *Calendar 1928*, 323–27.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 355–58.

⁹⁷ ʿUṣmānīyah, *Niṣāb-i Fārsī*.

⁹⁸ ʿAlīgarh, *Niṣāb-i Fārsī barā-yi Imtīḥān-i Bī E*.

Persian studies faculties at the new universities developed curriculum in response to subsequent scholarship.

The Colonial Curriculum and Persian Publishing

Throughout the colonial period, the expansion of the Persian curriculum in the universities created and sustained a marketplace for critical editions, commentaries, and translations produced for students preparing for examinations. Recent scholarship on the proliferation of print in colonial India has focused mainly on the rise of vernacular literature and the emergence of the vernacular public sphere.⁹⁹ Far less attention has been paid to the publication of literature in classical languages such as Persian in the same period.¹⁰⁰ Yet government publications lists and library catalogs testify to the prolific and sustained publication of Persian texts throughout the colonial period.¹⁰¹ The prescription of particular texts by the colonial universities created instant, widespread demand for new editions of Persian classics. The correlations between the inclusion of Persian texts in the curriculum and their compilation, editing, and publication by the British-backed Nawal Kishore Press is evidence of the role that the curriculum played in sustaining market demand. For example, the first edition of the *Qaṣāʾid* of Badr Chāchi, published by Nawal Kishore in 1873, corresponds with its inclusion in the syllabus of the Bachelor of Arts examination at the University of Calcutta in 1875 when Persian regained its place as a subject on BA exams. The first edition of the *Vaqāʾiʿ* of Niʿmat Khān ʿAlī, which also was included in the BA syllabus, appeared just a few years before, in 1870. Its continued publication by Nawal Kishore likewise corresponds with its continued inclusion on the exams at Calcutta and other universities in subsequent decades (I have found references to printings in 1873, 1884, 1886, 1894, 1896, and 1906).

The works of Ghiyās al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (b. ca. 1785; d. 1852) provide an illustrative example of the ways in which the colonial curriculum influenced the excavation, compilation, editing, and publication of Persian literature by Indian presses in the colonial period.¹⁰² Ghiyās al-Dīn taught Persian at the court of the Navvāb of Rampur in the first half of the nineteenth century, authored a handful of commentaries in Persian on classical Persian texts, penned a handful of medical texts in Persian, compiled an influential monolingual Persian dictionary, wrote Persian and Urdu poetry, and penned a long cycle of fantastic tales in Persian dedicated to the Navvāb's wife. The dictionary, *Ghiyās al-Lughāt* (1827), was probably first printed in 1848–49. All his other works remained in manuscript until the final decades of the nineteenth century, when some of them were edited by his son and published by Nawal Kishore.

Among the works by Ghiyās al-Dīn that were eventually published, most were relevant to the colonial university curricula. His commentary on the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl, *Sharḥ-i Abū-l-Faẓl: Do Daftar*, was published in 1890 and again in 1897. His commentary on Saʿdī's *Gulistān*, titled *Bahār-i Bārān*, and his commentary on Niẓāmī's *Sikandarnāmah*, titled *Sharḥ-i Sikandarnāmah*, were both published in 1891. By 1898, his commentary on the qasida of Badr-i Chāch, which he had written as a guide for his sons, was in its second printing.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ For discussions of the rise and dissemination of print in the colonial period, mainly focused on vernacular languages, see Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams*; Minault, *Secluded Scholars*; Orsini, *Print and Pleasure*; Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters*; Robb, *Print and the Urdu Public*; and Stark, *Empire of Books*.

¹⁰⁰ Two important preliminary discussions of Persian book production in India and nineteenth-century printing are Tavakoli-Targhi, "Early Persianate Modernity," and Shah, "Sustaining Authority."

¹⁰¹ The British government's quarterly lists of published works have recently been digitized and made freely available online. See "Digitised 'Quarterly Lists,'" British Library. For evidence of the proliferation of Persian publications despite the so-called decline in Persian readership at the time, one need only consult library and publications catalogs. A search in WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>) for Persian-language books published by Nawal Kishore between 1857 and 1947 yields around 1,200 titles, compared to approximately 2,400 for Urdu.

¹⁰² For his life and works, see Bruce, "Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Rāmpūrī."

¹⁰³ Rāmpūrī, *Sharḥ-i Qasāʾid-i Badr-i Chāch*, 410.

By contrast, his works not related to the colonial exams were mostly left in manuscript.¹⁰⁴ His unpublished works include commentaries on other Persian works, including on the celebrated *Maṣnavī Nairang-i ‘Ishq* by Ghanīmat Kunjāhī (d. 1675); treatises on Persian poetics, grammar, and style; original works on medicine; and long and short collections of fantastic tales. Genre alone cannot be thought to determine general interest, since demand for fantasy literature, at least in vernacular languages such as Urdu, was high at the time.¹⁰⁵ The only exception to the rule appears to be Ghiyās al-Dīn’s letters, *Rayāhūn-i ‘Azīm* (1890), which were never prescribed as a colonial textbook. However, as we have seen, Persian letters by Abū-l-Faẓl, Bīdil, Ghālib, Mirzā Qatīl, and other Indian Persian writers were part of the colonial curriculum, and it is not difficult to imagine that the letters in *Rayāhūn-i ‘Azīm*, which closely resemble those of Abū-l-Faẓl in style, were published in hopes that they might be adopted.

Ghiyās al-Dīn was not the only Indian Persianist whose works were excavated and published in tandem with changes to the colonial curriculum. For example, in 1881, Nawal Kishore published a commentary by Imām Bakhsh Ṣahbā’ī (d. 1857) on the *Sih Naṣr* of Ṣuhūrī. *Sih Naṣr* had been introduced into the Calcutta curriculum in the mid-1870s, was later adapted by the universities of Panjab and Allahabad, and remained a textbook in Allahabad’s curriculum throughout the colonial period. Ṣahbā’ī’s commentary would have been useful as a guide to Ṣuhūrī’s prose. Students on the MA exam at Allahabad in 1902 not only had to translate it into English, but also explain allusions in it, gloss vocabulary, and vocalize and analyze etymology, all these being primary concerns of commentaries on Persian texts.

The new commercial function of classical commentaries as guides for college students affected the way that the editions were marketed. The cover pages of Nawal Kishore editions often replaced the original, literary titles of commentaries with names that clearly identified the books as pedagogical tools and study aids. For example, the commentary by Mullā Quṭb al-Dīn Fārigh on the odes of ‘Urfī bears the poetic and chronogrammatic title *Faiṣ-bār* (Bearing or Raining Bounty; 1682–83).¹⁰⁶ The Nawal Kishore edition replaces the original title with the more commercial *Sharḥ-i Qaṣā’id-i ‘Urfī* (Explication of the Odes of ‘Urfī).

The Persian curriculum also created markets for new commentaries on Persian classics, including some in Urdu. Many of these texts were published not by the government-backed Nawal Kishore, but by independent presses that also published Persian and Urdu literature. The authors of these commentaries and translations were often, themselves, employed by the colonial colleges. For example, the author of *Sharḥ-i Ruq‘āt-i Bīdil* (Lucknow: Anvār-i Muḥammadi, n.d.), Ḥakīm Shaikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Daryābādī, was a professor of Arabic and Persian at Canning College in Lucknow.¹⁰⁷ Bīdil’s *Ruq‘āt* or letters had been incorporated into the First Arts examination at the University of Calcutta in 1874, where they remained in use as a textbook for over a decade. The publishers of the commentary describe Bīdil’s letters as an “illusory world of deception” (*ṭilism-i firīb*) and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s text as “intelligible by common people” (*‘ām-fahm*).¹⁰⁸ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s text was thus self-consciously written and marketed as a college teacher’s guide for perplexed students.

As the Persian courses grew to include a larger and wider-ranging corpus of texts, the demand for study aids grew from commentaries on particular texts to include explications of the curriculum itself. *Sharḥ-i Bī E Fārsi Kors* (Meerut: Qāsimi Press, 1907) is a running glossary in Urdu on the BA course designed by Amjad ‘Alī for the Persian examination at the University of Allahabad in 1908. Coauthored by teachers of Arabic and Persian, the 335-page commentary contains Urdu definitions of key terms and Urdu translations and summaries of the Persian. It also includes the page numbers of Amjad ‘Alī’s anthology

¹⁰⁴ Shikīb, *Rāmpūr kā Dabistān-i Shā‘irī*, 267–72.

¹⁰⁵ For discussions of the marketability of folk and fantasy literature, see Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters* and *Romance Tradition*; and Pasha M. Khan, *Broken Spell*.

¹⁰⁶ Fārigh, *Sharḥ-i Qaṣā’id-i ‘Urfī*, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Al-‘Azīz, *Sharḥ-i Ruq‘āt-i Bīdil*, 64.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, front matter, 64.

textbook to facilitate cross-reference and study. Similarly, *Sharḥ-i Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī* (Lahore: Karimi Press, 1927) is a commentary on the FA Persian and Munshi examinations at the University of Panjab.¹⁰⁹ It likewise provided students with Urdu glosses of key terms, explanations and translations of difficult passages, and page numbers of the published course to facilitate reference and study.

The colonial curricula also created a marketplace for English translations, many of which were marketed specifically as study aids for students. In the 1890s, Thomas George, then head translator at the chief court in Panjab, translated the entire Persian intermediate curriculum at the University of Panjab into English as a textbook in four volumes for students.¹¹⁰ By 1906, the translation was in its third edition.¹¹¹

The translations of *Bahāristān* (1487) by ‘Abd or-Rahmān Jāmī (1414–92) into English by Indian scholars are a case in point.¹¹² Amjad ‘Alī was the first to adopt the text in his 1889 readers for the 1891 entrance and intermediate exams for the University of Allahabad.¹¹³ His courses were current for several years before being made current again in 1906. By then, Jāmī’s text also had been adopted for the exams at the University of Bombay, where it remained a regular part of the curriculum for decades.¹¹⁴ A complete translation of *Bahāristān* had been done by Edward Rehatsek and published in Britain anonymously and for subscribers only by Richard Francis Burton’s Kama Shastra Society in 1887.¹¹⁵ The *Bahāristān*’s sexually explicit and potentially offensive material meant that only certain chapters could be prescribed for examinations, and that some material from the remaining chapters was expurgated. The inclusion of the expurgated text on the colonial exams created a market for partial and expurgated English translations for students.

The first translation of *Bahāristān* for students was *The Behāristān-i-Jāmī or Abode of Spring* in two volumes (1899, 1900) by Sorabji Fardunji Mulla, a Parsi who had been educated in the colonial university system and taught at Elphinstone College in Bombay.¹¹⁶ His translation omits the sixth chapter (called *rauṣah* [garden]) of the text, which includes sexually explicit humor, and also omits some of the Arabic passages in the Persian. Mulla corrected Rehatsek without referring to him. He also included material for students: an introduction about Jāmī’s life and text as well as interlinear glosses and notes to facilitate study.

Mulla’s translation was followed by *Baharistan-i-Jami* (1914) by Chhotubhai B. Abuwala and Md. Hasibullah Qureishy.¹¹⁷ Abuwala had studied at the Gujarat College in Ahmedabad and Wilson College in Bombay, both affiliates of the University of Bombay, from which he had earned a BA in language and literature in 1914 with Persian as his classical language. Qureishy had passed the Persian-medium high proficiency in Persian examination from the University of Panjab. The Abuwala and Qureishy translation includes only Jāmī’s introduction and chapters 1–4 and 7–8, and, like Mulla’s, expurgates sexual and risqué material. In addition to providing students with a lengthy biographical and critical introduction, they also include copious notes on each chapter. They apparently intended their work to be read alongside the original Persian, since the notes comprise glosses of transliterated Persian words and phrases not found in the translation itself. Their translation also includes a concise five-page summary of each translated chapter, complete with an overview of the major themes addressed in the book’s many moral anecdotes.

The final edition for students was *Bahāristān-i Jāmī* (title in Persian; 1941) by Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, who held three colonial degrees, including a BA and a degree in translation

¹⁰⁹ Bilgrāmī, *Sharḥ-i Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

¹¹⁰ George, *Translation and Explanation* (1897).

¹¹¹ George, *Translation and Explanation* (1906), front matter.

¹¹² For a detailed discussion of these translations, see Bruce, “Making Sense.”

¹¹³ ‘Alī, *Muntakhbat*, 31–47; ‘Alī, *Intarmīdiyat*, 54–7.

¹¹⁴ Bombay, *Calendar 1906–1907*, 719; Bombay, *Calendar 1923–24 and 1924–25*, 795.

¹¹⁵ [Rehatsek], *Behāristān*. On Rehatsek, see Bruce, “Edward Rehatsek.”

¹¹⁶ Mulla, *The Behāristān-i-Jāmī or Abode of Spring*.

¹¹⁷ Abuwala and Qureishy, *Baharistan-i-Jami*.

studies.¹¹⁸ Unlike the previous translations for students, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ra’uf’s book is explicitly advertised on the cover page as prescribed for the examinations at the University of Bombay. It is the least complete translation, comprising only the first, seventh, and eighth chapters, but it also contains an English glossary and his own edition of the Persian text.

Conclusion

The Persian curriculum in the colonial universities had a profound influence on intellectual and cultural life in India. The sheer number of graduates who passed through the system by the partition of 1947 is enough to illustrate the point. In the first few decades of the universities’ existence, the number of graduates was small enough for the editors of the university calendars to publish their names in cumulative lists. For example, we find in the University of Calcutta calendars of the 1880s and 1890s a cumulative list of graduates, from the earliest days to the present. The Calcutta calendar for 1881–82 records some 1,650 BA graduates and around 3,350 students who had passed FA and entrance exams.¹¹⁹ Of these, as outlined above, a substantial number would have completed the classical examination in Persian. By the 1900s, however, the number of graduates was too large to maintain the cumulative rosters, and calendars printed only those students who had successfully completed exams in the previous cycle (usually two years). The University of Panjab calendar for 1936–37, for example, records that around 2,500 students earned DLitt, MA, and BA degrees in 1935–36. Among the listed are those who earned MA degrees in Persian and BA degrees with honors in Persian. Of the approximately 300 students who earned specialist MA degrees in the Faculty of Oriental Learning that year, 228 earned the Munshi Fazil or honors Persian degree.¹²⁰

The colonial universities created unprecedented forms of standardization for Persian studies in British India. The prescription of textbooks for university examinations meant that students at affiliated colleges across British India read the same selections from the same corpus of texts in preparation for the same examinations.

The curriculum of the colonial universities also created and sustained a massive ecosystem for Persian studies in colonial India. With classical studies as a necessary part of the exams, the colonial universities guaranteed continued demand and support for Persian faculty at affiliated colleges. They likewise ensured a sustained market demand for editions of Persian literature, commentaries in English, Persian, and Urdu on Persian textbooks, and English and Urdu translations for students. Future studies, following the pioneering work of Gauri Vishwanathan on the politics of English-language instruction, might examine the politics of the changes wrought in the Persian canon, such as the inclusion of Persian translations of Orientalist histories (e.g., Malcolm) and contemporary literature (e.g., the plays of Ākhūnzādah), and their relationship to broader colonial and imperial projects.

The university calendars also show us that Persian remained a multicommunal language throughout the colonial period. Persian studies in colonial India counted Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Sikhs, as well as British Orientalists, among its students, teachers, examiners, translators, and scholars.

Far from a fixed corpus of classical texts focused on any one particular region, the Persian curricula in the colonial universities gradually expanded to include classical and contemporary works drawn from a wide range of fields and genres and written by authors from across the Persian and Persianate ecumene, from Azerbaijan through Iran to India. Classics such as *Gulistān*, *Akh̄lāq-i Jalālī*, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, and the *Sikandarnāmah* were studied alongside Mughal-era Indo-Persian poetry and prose, histories and poetry by Iranian writers from the Qajar and Pahlavi periods, and contemporary works by Indian writers of Persian such as Muḥammad Iqbāl and Aṣghar ‘Alī Rūḥī. The present article has noted the significance

¹¹⁸ Al-Ra’uf, *Bahāristān-i Jāmī*.

¹¹⁹ Calcutta, *Calendar, 1881–82*, 210–311.

¹²⁰ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 778–814, 833–36.

of the changes made by Indian Persianists in the 1880s and 1890s without speculating about the relationship of these changes to educational reform. To what extent the Hunter Commission reforms of 1882–83 played a role in shifting control over the curriculum to Indian scholars is unclear, since the main focus of the reforms was on the promotion of elementary education and industrial or commercial training (as opposed to the literary curriculum of the universities).¹²¹ The Hunter Commission does not explain, at least not entirely, the autonomy afforded to Indian examiners and curricular designers, let alone the more important question of why the Indian scholars selected the texts that they did.

The next step for the study of Persian in the colonial period is to paint a fuller picture by studying the figures who received, produced, and transformed the curriculum by making connections between broader debates and decisions made about the selection of texts, and by comparing the selections themselves, to gain insights into shifting attitudes about inclusion and exclusion in curricular design. Research also must relate changes and developments in the curriculum to extracurricular literary trends. The persistent production of Persian literature, particularly poetry, by Indians in the colonial period attests to its ongoing cultural significance. The popularity of Persian *qavvālī* songs of praise; major Persian works by Muḥammad Iqbāl; the abiding presence of Persian verse in the collected works of Urdu poets in the colonial and postcolonial periods; and the scholarly attention paid to Persian letters by a wide range of thinkers—from the Islamic scholar Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī to the Marxist progressive Sajjād Zāhīr—all attest to the continuing significance of Persian letters throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods, despite the displacement of Persian as a language of governance in the early nineteenth century. What influence the curriculum of Persian studies in the colonial universities had on the development of Indo-Persian literature and Indo-Persianate thought in the colonial and postcolonial periods remains a central question for future research.

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¹²¹ Paranjpe, *Source Book*, 169–235.

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