



The contact between Persia and Ancient India

The age of Great Darius of Achaemenid (521-485 B.C)

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Abstract

The great Darius I was a famous king from Achaemenid dynasty, that he divided the kingdom into twenty states called Shahrban (Satrap) and appointed governors over each state. He selected a commander in each state for the whole present forces of the state. Also, the commander was an agent from the king. Along with those two occupations, he also created a third job which was of receiving the taxes. All states according to their wealth should pay tribute. Its sum was over 14,560 Talents silver which is almost around one third of what should be paid to the treasury by Indian state. Furthermore, these payments were done in costly metals. The states submitted their natural gifts that Darius named India, in the inscriptions of Persepolis and Naghshe-Rostam India has been named in three languages: ancient Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian. According to classical writings of



India Darius added the Indus River region to his conquered lands.(11)

In the carvings of Darius grave in Naghsh-i-Rostam in Fars province of Iran, Professor Hetresfeld has identified three Indian soldiers who covered themselves with a piece of cotton cloth. They have short turban hats on their head. Their weapons are long and wide swords that they hang with a rope over their shoulders. The clothing style of these three men shows that they were Indians..(12)

Keywords: *Darius, tribute, India, Shahrban (Satrap), inscriptions*

Inscriptions of the Great Darius Behistun inscription:

Darius' Behistun inscription is located on the road of Hamadan-Kermanshah in western Iran. In this inscription, Darius named Harauvati as the most eastern state of his kingdom. This state is present Ghandhar.

As it is mentioned, Gandhar was added to the kingdom of Iran by Cyrus. The date of the genesis of Behistun is 517 B.C. Therefore, after that date the occupation of western regions of India belonged to Darius who commanded to dig the Suez Canal in Egypt before his attack on India. He wanted to develop business between the East and West. This



matter was written in the third line of the inscription about Suez Canal. Also, it is supposed that some ships had been sent to the shores of India at the same time to discover the water paths between West Sea, Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Five years later, Darius occupied the western region of the Indus River. Also, he passed Indus River and added part of Punjab to this new state in his kingdom. The significance of Iranians entering India has been very important to Indians (13)

The period of Darius is the glorious period in the relationship between Iran and India. We also realize that the spiritual influence of Iran on India reaches to its maximum during this time. In later centuries, it bloomed into the Mauryan Empire. Behistun inscription consists of a list of 23 states or Satrap. India was mentioned there. As it was mentioned, the most eastern part of the empire pointed out includes present day Ravalpindi and Peshawar and their neighbors, Soghdia (Sakdiana), Shaka (Sakeeye) or Saki shia and Bakterish (Bakhtar) and Bahika. Of the next two inscriptions, one is in Persepolis (518-515 B.C) and another is in Naghsh-e-Rostam (515 B.C). The name of Gandhara or Gandhar has been mentioned in all the four of Darius's inscriptions as an eastern state in his territory. Says Darius the King:



These are the countries which belong to me; by the grace of Ormazd I have become King of them; Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, those which are of the sea, Sparta, Ionia, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Zarangia, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, the Sacae, the Satagydes, Arachosia and Micia, in all twenty-three countries. Says Darius the King:

These are the countries which belong to me; by the grace of Ormazd they have become subject to me, they have brought tribute to me. (14)

Inscription of Susa:

In 521 B.C, the Persian king Darius I the Great ordered that a new alphabet, the Aryan script was to be developed. This was used for a small corpus of inscriptions, known as the Achaemenid royal Inscriptions.

An overview of all inscriptions can be found here. The following text, which contains a useful list of satrapies, was written in three languages and is known from eleven Old Persian, five Elamite and three Babylonian fragments. One of these, a Babylonian stone tablet of 25×37 cm is almost complete.

They must have belonged to several copies, which included clay tablets and a small cask. In the following text, Darius tells how he built the



royal palace of Susa and imported products from all over his empire: This palace which I built at Susa, from afar its ornamentation was brought. Downward the earth was dug, until I reached rock in the earth. When the excavation had been made, then rubble was packed down, some 40 cubits in depth, another part 20 cubits in depth. On that rubble the palace was constructed. The silver and the ebony were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned, that from Yaunâ was brought. The ivory which was brought here was brought from Nubia and from India and from Arachosia.

A great god is Ahuramazda, who created this world, who created yonder sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king. One king for many, one leader of many. I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of all kinds of peoples of all kinds of origins, king of this earth far and wide, the son of Hystaspes, the Achaemenid, Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan descent. King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda, these are the nations that I subdued outside Persia.

I ruled them. They brought me tribute. What I ordered them they did. They kept my law: the Mede, the Elamite, the Parthian, the Arian, the Bactrian, the



Sogdian, the Chorasmian, the Drangian, the Arachosian, the Sattagydiian, the Mactian, the Gandarian, the Indian, the Haoma-drinking Saca with pointed caps, the Babylonian, the Syrian, the Arab, the Egyptian, the Armenian, the Cappadocian, the Lydian, the Greeks near and across the sea, the Thracian, the Libyan, the Nubian, the Carian. King Darius says: Much that was done badly, I made good. The nations were in commotion; people were fighting each other. By the grace of Ahuramazda, I brought about that they no longer fight each other at all. Each one is in his place. They feel fear of my law, so that the stronger does not fight or destroy the weak. King Darius says: By the grace of Ahuramazda, many constructions that had previously been put out of place, I put in place. In a town called [Iacuna], the wall was fallen from age. Before this unrepaired wall I built another, [to serve] from that time into the future. King Darius says: May Ahuramazda and the gods protect me, my royal house, and what I wrote in this inscription. (15)

Darius also talks about the construction equipments of Shush palace in his own inscription in Shush. He mentioned India and his neighbours for collaborating to complete that palace. Darius's inscription gives a picture of performance and decoration. Darius



stated: I have built this palace in Shush. Its materials and jewels have been brought from far away. The land has been taken from far down so that I reach stone in the ground, as the digging has been done. After that, mortar has been accumulated. Also, a part with its depth is 20 Arsh. A palace has been built on it and the land which was dug and mortar which was accumulated and adobe which has rubbed by Babylon's people. The lumber of the palace has been brought from Lebanon. Assyrians brought it to Babylon. Kairha carried it to Greece, and Greek people brought them to Shush. Wood, Yaka, has been brought from Gandhar and Kernan. The gold which was used here has been brought from Soghd. The ivory which was used here has been brought from Abyssinia, India and Rakhaj.

Darius' Suez Inscriptions

The next three texts are part of a slab of pink granite that was discovered in 1866, by Charles de Lesseps, near Kabret, 130 kilometers from Suez. The upper part shows Darius (twice), flanking a cartouche with his name. To the left and right is inscription; at his feet is written in ancient Persian and Elamite; the reverse of the stone gives the same text - with some extra details - in Egyptian. The first



two texts resemble. The monument, also known as the Chabouq stele, was related to the construction of a canal that connected the river Nile and the Red Sea. The project, finished by King Darius, was not the first of its kind: in fact, Ramses II (pharaoh from 1279-1213 B.C) had already built a canal like this and the list of places mentioned in the biblical book of Exodus as the route of the Jews leaving Egypt, resembles the general direction of the canal. But although Darius merely restored an older water course, the project was very important because it facilitated trade between the Nile, Red Sea and Persian Gulf. King Darius says: I am a Persian; setting out from Persia I conquered Egypt. I ordered to dig this canal from the river that is called Nile and flows in Egypt, to the sea that begins in Persia. Therefore, when this canal had been dug as I had ordered, ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, as I had intended.

Darius the Great: building inscription from Persepolis

In the following text, to be found on the terrace walls of Persepolis, Darius asks the gods to protect Persia, and tells about the size of his empire. The full text of the inscription is given below. I am Darius



the great king, the king of kings, the king of many countries, the son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid.

By the favor of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I got into my possession along with this Persian people, which felt fear of me and bore me tribute: Elam, Media, Babylonia, Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, the Greeks who are of the mainland and those who are by the sea and countries which are across the sea, Sagartia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Hinduš, Gandarva, Sacae, Maka. (16)

Darius: Four empire lists

Darius fought several foreign wars, which brought him to India and Thrace. When he died, the Persian Empire had reached its largest extent. He was succeeded by his son Xerxes. In the following texts, often called Empire lists, we see the expansion of the Persian Empire: Darius mentions the territories he had conquered. The oldest list is the Behistun inscription (519 B.C.); a second text was found on the Persepolis terrace (515 B.C.); a third one is from Susa (after 513 B.C.); and the last one can be read on Darius' tomb at Naqš-e Rostam (after 492

B.C).(The list of tax districts in Herodotus' Histories is an odd example of the same genre.)The texts are very interesting,not only because they show the expansion of the empire,but also the changing borders of the satrapies.

Behistun inscription

These are the countries which are subject unto me,and by the favor of Ahuramazda I became king of them Persia,Elam,Babylonia,Assyria,Arabia,Egypt,the countries by the Sea,Lydia,the Greeks,Media,Armenia,Cappadocia,Parthia,Drangiana,Aria,Chorasnia, Bactria ,Sogdia, Gandara, Scythia ,Sattagydia,Arachosia and Mka ; twenty - three lands in all.

Persepolis terrace

By the favour of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I got into my possession along with this Persian people,which felt fear of me and bore me tribute :Elam Media,Babylonia ,Arabia ,Assyria ,Egypt,Armenia,Cappadocia, Lydia,the Greeks who are of the mainland and those who are by the sea and countries which are across the sea, Sagartia, Parthia ,Drangiana ,Aria, Bactria,Sogdia ,Chorasnia,Sattagydia,Arachosia,Hi nduś,Gandra,Scythians,Mka.



Susa i nscri pti on

By the favor of Ahuranazda these are the countries which I seized outside of Persia; I ruled over them; they bore tribute to me; what was said to them by me, that they did; my law that held them firm. Media, Elam, Babylonia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdia, Chorasmia, Drangiana, Arachosia, Sattagydia, Māka, Gandara, Hinduš, Sakāhaunavargā, Sakāi grakhaudā, Parthia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, the Greeks who are by the sea and who are across the sea, Thracians, Libyans, Ethiopians, Carians.

Naqsh-i Rostam

By the favor of Ahuranazda these are the countries which I seized outside of Persia; I ruled over them; They bore tribute to me; they did what was said to them by me; they held my law firmly; Media, Elam, Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdia, Chorasmia, Drangiana, Arachosia, Sattagydia, Gandara, Hinduš, Sakāhaunavargā, Sakāi grakhaudā, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, the Greeks, Sakā paradrayā Thrace, the Macedonians, the Libyans, the Nubians, the men of Māka and the Carians

Steel of eastern stairs of Apadana, Persepolis and Naghsh-E-Rostam



Darius I accepted representation of all countries of his great kingdom. They provided that the best gifts from their lands for dedicated to the king. The meeting started with Medes and Elamite people in the upper row. At the end, the low row belonged to Indians. They were wearing just a wrapper. The first Indian person who carries the gift has a horizontal stick on his shoulder on which a basket is hanging on each side of it. There are two closed bags in each basket that contained the golden powder of Indus. Also, Indians brought an ass with themselves. With the figures of Indians, ends the long line of figures from imperial tribes. The order of location of these tribes is the same order which Darius accounts in his grave in Naghsh-e-Rostam near Persepolis, but with some small differences. The documents of the plaques several times, the satraps who were travelling, have been mentioned in the relic, which existed in the ruins of Persepolis and Shush. However, there are no details about the duration of their missions and portions. However, the name of Indian person is mentioned.

Apadai va, came to the Shush in 499 B.C. and then, he returned to India. It seems he wanted to receive a Satrap command for Indians so



he had made a long journey. His monthly portion was 2100 liters beer and probably 900 liters wine.

The expansion of Persia

Behistun	Persepolis	Susa
Naqsh-e Rostam		
Persia	-----	--
---	-----	
Elam		Elam
Elam	Elam	
Babylonia	Babylonia	Babylonia
Babylonia		
Assyria		Assyria
Assyria	Assyria	
Arabia	Arabia	Arabia
Arabia		



Egypt

Egypt

Egypt

Egypt Countries by the sea
(to Assyria)

Countries by the sea

To Assyria

Lydia

Lydia

Lydia

Lydia

Greeks

Greeks by the sea

Greeks by the sea

Greeks by the sea

Greeks beyond the sea

Greeks beyond the sea

Macedonia

Mediterranean

Mediterranean

Mediterranean

Mediterranean

Armenia

Armenia

Armenia

Armenia

Cappadocia

Cappadocia

Cappadocia

Cappadocia

Parthia

Parthia

Parthia[1]

Parthia



Drangi ana

Drangi ana

Drangi ana

Drangi ana

Sagarti a

(to Drangi ana)[2]

(to Drangi ana)

Ari a

Ari a

Ari a

Ari a

Chorasmi a

Chorasmi a

Chorasmi a

Chorasmi a

Bactri a

Bactri a

Bactri a

Bactri a

Sogdi a

Sogdi a

Sogdi a

Sogdi a

Gandara

Gandara

Gandara

Gandara

Sakâ

Sakâ

Sakâ

haunavargâ

Sakâ haunavargâ

Sakâ

ti grakhaudâ

Sakâ ti grakhaudâ



-----	-----	Sakâ
paradrayâ	Sakâ paradrayâ	
Sat t agydi a		Sat t agydi a
Sat t agydi a	Sat t agydi a	
Arachosi a		Arachosi a
Arachosi a	Arachosi a	
Maka		Maka
Maka	Maka	
-----		Hi nduš
Hi nduš	Hi nduš	
-----		-----
Thrace	Thrace	
-----		-----
Cari a [3]	Cari a	
-----	-----	-
-----	Li bya	
-----		-----
-----	Nubi a	



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- The text mentions Babylonia twice; Parthia is a restoration.
 - The nomads of Sagartia, only mentioned as an independent satrapy on the Persepolis list, was, at this time, added to Drangiana.
 - The Carians had been subdued by Cyrus the Great but had retained something of their independence (17)

conclusion

Ancient Dorian Greek historian Herodotus, who is regarded as the Father of History, describes in his third book (94th Article) that India was one of satraps of Darius's kingdom. India was a rich satrap. It was able to supply one third of empire with its income which was 360 talents in golden dust. This gold had been mined from north of Indus. It was a region with plenty of gold at that time according to geologists. Herodotus has an interesting description about mining gold from soil. He wrote, "Probably these animals have been Tibetan mastiff which has been mentioned in Mahabharata. They have been used to have mining gold in Dardistan." (18)

In 512 B.C. Darius gave a mission to Admiral Scylax Decaryanda, a Greek commander who was in the service of Darius to find a way from Indus River to Egypt. It was a vast map for discovering sea paths in order



to connect the eastern parts of the kingdom to its western possessions. This attempt was both political and official. Moreover, business aims were another stimulant to Darius for performing his purpose .(19)

Through the writings of Herodotus it is realized that Darius' territory included entire south regions of Indus, east dry lands of this region, and Rajputana.

Also, Indus region included present day Punjab. In the west of the Indus river to its mouth, it has neighborhood in the west with Gandara which included Aria, Harat, and Rakhuzia (Gandhar). (20)

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