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REPRESENTATION OF SHAH ABBAS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Shah Abbas, the Safavid king of Persia, has been portrayed in different literary and non-literary sources from the early modern English period to date. The period of Safavid Persia ruled by Shah Abbas has been famous due to the march of progress and prosperity as the ancient Achaemenid period of Cyrus and Darius has been. These two periods namely the Achaemenid period and Safavid period haunt the Western minds due to their glory and grandeur and even serve as model of how the rulers can strengthen and expand their states simultaneously. Shah Abbas played a pivotal role in making Persia as great and glorious state as it was in the past. The researchers have attempted to investigate how the west has represented Shah Abbas in varied literary and non-literary works. Through this investigatory study, the paper reveals that the Western writers and playwrights have somewhat misrepresented Shah Abbas due to their Eurocentric perspectives despite Shah Abbas' great contribution to Persia.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The reign of Shah Abbas in Persia is considered an exemplary period as he transformed Persia into a modern Persian state due to his radical measures. Abbas, (1571-1629), the fifth Safavid king of Iran, holds prominent place in the Persian history for his audacious sway with multitudinous vicissitudes in his political career. He is also referred to as Shah Abbas, the great. The time he ascended the throne was marked by intense political turmoil brought about partly owing to his weak-willed father and his policies and chiefly because of the rivalries within ranks. As Edwards (1915) comments on the conditions of that time "Not only was Persia riven by internal quarrels; she was attacked by foes from without" (p.247). Amidst the crises, the Ottoman Empire as well as

the Uzbeks attempted to capitalize on the situation by taking over and grabbing the territory. It was in 1588 that Shah Muhammad was overthrown by Qizilbash leader, Murshid Qoli khan who placed the 16 years old Abbas on the throne. The leadership qualities in Abbas soon surged up; he tightened his control, ousted the established power structures of Qizilbash from the mainstream and made major reforms in Iranian army. Similarly, Shah Abbas established friendly relations with the Mughal emperors of India like Jahangir and Akbar to counter the threats from the Ottoman Turks. It is also worth mentioning that Abbas sent his ambassador Robert Sherley, an Englishman, to the court of Jahangir for this purpose in 1614. Thus, in this way, Shah Abbas because of his political insight and prudent diplomatic measures “rescued Iran from headlong decline and turned it into a power that was respected, both in its region and in lands as distant as England and Portugal” (Stanley, 2009, p.409).

This restructuring of the Persian army helped Shah Abbas not only weaken the Qizilbash influence but also to have an army that was ethnically diversified, well-equipped and more loyal to Shah Abbas. Later on, this new Persian army served a good countering force against the rival Ottoman Turks. The English soldier Robert Sherley also played a significant role in restructuring and strengthening the Persian army. The three playwrights John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins have glorified Robert Sherley’s efforts in reorganizing the Persian army during the regime of Shah Abbas in their joint play *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* (1607). As Kouymjian (2004) comments that “The Ottomans had little success against Shah Abbas's newly reorganized army, trained in the European manner by the Shirley brothers, English adventurers who also conducted diplomatic missions with the West” (p.24). All these measures prompted considerable positive changes and transformed Persia into a great Muslim state during the early modern English period. As Mitchel (2000) argues that “When Abbas assumed power in 1588, he spent roughly a decade eliminating a number of semi-independent members of nobility and reorganizing the central and provincial governments” (p. 106). Exploiting his political acumen, he was empowered enough to fight the Ottomans as well as Uzbeks, ultimately to take back the lost provinces. By the end of the Ottoman War, Abbas the Great had regained possession over Transcaucasia and Dagestan as well as swaths of Eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia. The four year long period of 1603-1607 was an era of triumph for the Safavid Empire. Part of this victory was due to the internal chaos and turbulence characterizing Ottoman’s politics.

Shah Abbas, before waging war, deemed it economically and politically useful to develop relationship with the European countries particularly those not having good relationship with the Ottoman Empire. In 1602, the ambassadors of Germany and special envoy of the king of Spain visited Iran. In the meantime Shah Abbas sent Anthony Shirley and Hossein Ali to Europe with the instruction of paying visits to the authorities of Russia, Germany and Spain. The peace treaty was signed in the year 1613, as per which the occupied territories were incorporated in the Safavid Empire. Shah Abbas was, however, generous enough to send 59000 kilograms of raw silk on annual basis to the Ottoman king so that their confiscated silk could be compensated for in the years to come. In 1616, the battle between the two empires began again resulting in Ottoman’s

defeat and followed by another treaty which retained the injunctions of the previous treaty decreasing the annual share of silk to 2950 kilograms. In 1623, another battle took place which was again won by Shah Abbas and this time the city conquered was Baghdad. Mussel, Basra, and Shia holy cities like Najaf and Karbala were some of other cities that were taken possession of by The Safavid State.

After a series of Shah Abbas' victories over Ottomans, he turned his attention to Jahangir, the Moghal ruler. By a dint of his diplomatic strategies, Abbas the Great promoted peaceful relations with Uzbeks at one hand, and launched invasion on the eastern regions of Ghandehar on the other. Besides Ottomans and Moghals, he fought Portuguese as well. In 1507, Portuguese seized the control of the seaway of India to China and Strait of Hormuz as well, avoiding paying royal taxes to the Safavid government. In 1515, they lost the islands and the strait for good to the Safavid state. In the following eight years, the Portuguese Admiral left no stone unturned in recapturing Hormuz, the war where he killed the supporters of Qizilbash and their leaders thereby strengthening the structure of this strait. He built ammunition depots, garrisons and inquisition establishments and subjugated the local governor, Turan as his loyal servant. During the 16th century, an important Portuguese commercial factory was established in Hormuz and developed very fast. The Strait of Hormuz was important to the Safavid Empire for their silk exportation to Europe, since they had to face cheaper custom expenses, when exported from the Strait of Hormuz in comparison with the costs of exporting silk from Anatolia in the Ottoman's Empire. That is why the price of silk in Halab, Syria was 50 per cent higher than its price in the Safavid Empire. Of course, the Silk Road was much safer than seaways in the Persian Gulf for exportation in general, facilitating merchants with much more security, alongside with the higher amount of expenses. It was a time when other colonizers had initiated their economic competition with their counterparts. In the same vein, the establishment of East India Company took place in 1600. One of the chief aims of its establishment was to curtail the Portuguese's influence in the whole region in general and in India in particular.

And it was in this historical moment that Shah Abbas's objectives meet with English colonizers resulting in the former's imposition of royal decree for the East India Company in 1614. The hostility between the East India Company and Portugal got intensified with the passage of time. In fact, they went for war in the year 1620 and in 1623, the East India Company waged another battle in collaboration with the Safavid army so that the Strait of Hormuz could be seized from Portuguese. And they precisely succeeded in achieving this mission. The victory of Hormuz granted twofold advantage to Shah Abbas: one, it enabled him in countering the Portuguese forces and two, it helped Shah expand the Persian trade. After confiscating the strait and its surrounding islands, Shah named this biggest island of the region as The Port of Abbas. In The Port of Abbas, the English merchants and entrepreneurs could enjoy the privilege of tax free commercialism and fixedly nominal portion from the Custom revenues. With every passing moment, the English strengthened themselves economically and tried to promote their businesses at vast scale throughout the Safavid states. They made the best use of opportunities especially with regard to the export of

silk and established monopoly over the region. This can be found in the instance when the Dutch companies settled in the port of Abbas. English companies found them as their commercial competitors.

One thing that deserves mention is that although Shah Abbas took possession of many precious territories in the Empire largely by subduing most of the landlords, he never could establish a feudalistic system in the Safavid Empire. His intention to develop central provinces, in spite of the exploitation of colonizing countries of the time, could be read as a sign of his desire not to rule the Empire according to feudalistic system like the Ottoman Empire. Given his support for industrialization, Shah Abbas created opportunities of providing safer trading routes for merchants. This gave region a kind of financial boost. With economic prosperity he could materialize his desire for political expansion. He also supported agriculture in some parts of the Empire. The ruling policies, migration of feudalists, studies on irrigative watering of crops and the destruction of Jolfa near Aras in its relocating near Isfahan indicated that Shah's prioritized economical pursuit was to create his Empire one of the biggest cross roads in silk exportation. He ordered building roads for transports in Isfahan and Bandar Abbas so that there could be a proper transporting system for goods to be delivered to the Persian Gulf. He also built the new city of Jolfa near Isfahan for Armenians. In this city, the denizens were exempted from paying taxes to the central government. Persia became famous because of her silk industry in the whole world. For this, credit goes to Shah Abbas who established royal workshops for manufacturing silk and cotton cloths (Savory, 1980). This step expanded the limits of the Persian trade. For further promoting Persian architecture and trade, Shah Abbas shifted the capital from Cazvin to Isfahan that was known as Nisf-I Jahan (Minowa & Witkowski, pp. 295-317).

As far his religious creed, he respected the old religious traditions and rites, often giving them political colour. He advocated Shia school of thought and showed highhanded attitude towards the Sunni sect. He liberated the Shi'ite holy places of Iraq from the Ottoman Turks and brought them under the care of Safavid dynasty. Similarly, he took special care of the holy shrines of Mashhad and Qum and made these shrines the important pilgrimage places. Abbas's religious policies and patronage of Shi'a religion prompted to emerge the picture of nowadays Islamic Republic of Iran (Stanley, 2003, pp. 409-411). He gave maximum privileges to the Armenians. In order to control the indigenous population in the confiscated lands, he made craftsmen and farmers of Azarbaijan, Armenia and Georgia migrate so that the Safavid influence could be sustained in such states and rebellious germs could be crushed. In his era, architecture developed too, and the capital city of Safavids was reconstructed and redesigned. In a nutshell, the era of Abbas the Great was the most flourishing era in the Safavid Empire. Nearly in all spheres of human activity, from local architecture to national and international political domains, he attained series of successes and triumphs. Historical writings depict him as a ruler of hardihood and derring-do, an adept manipulator with political acumen and a distinguishably valiant man.

Representation of Shah Abbas in Literary and Non-Literary Works:

Shah Abbas has been equally popular and pervasive in the literary and non-literary works of early modern English period as the ancient Achaemenid emperors Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius have been. Early English Books Online (EEBO) registers an evidence of the familiarity of the early modern English writers with Safavid Persian emperor Shah Abbas. Out of 963 records of the varied works, it shows 4806 matches of the word Abbas. Compared with the record and matches of the Achaemenid ruler, Darius, the record and matches of Abbas reflect the decline of Persian glory and grandeur that came in the wake of the decline of ancient Persia. Despite the clear difference between the Achaemenid Persia as “an idealized empire” and the Safavid Persia as “less idealized empire” (Grogan, 2014, p.8), some scholars and researchers also have compared the Achaemenid period with the Safavid period due to many commonalities between the two. Both Achaemenid Persia and Safavid Persia has been documented in early modern period due to their power and glory. In this regard, Pietro Martire d’Anghira’s *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies* (1577) is a significant work that talks about the similarity between the two (Masood, 2012, p. 9).

Among the non-English sources, Thomas Minadoi’s *A History of the Warres between the Turkes and the Persians* (1595) is a monumental historical work that was originally written in Italian language. Its English version has been translated by Abraham Hartwell. Minadoi calls both the Turks and Persians as “Barbarians” (Hartwell, 1595, p.6), the “two enemies of the name of Christ” (ibid, p. 7). To him, all Muslims are “disciples of crafty and wicked Mahomet” (ibid, p.12) who was “a filthy and lecherous wretch” and had “eight wives or Concubines” (ibid, p. 28). Consequently, all the Muslims are dishonest and evil doers. It is in this light, Minadoi has portrayed the people and emperors of the Ottoman and Persian empires. The Persians are “great deceivers, full of crafty stratagems, unconstant and breakers of their words” (ibid, p.46). The book narrates different Persian rulers and the court intrigues that cause jealousy and subsequent deaths in the palaces, the emergence of Shia’ism in Persia and the ensuing conflicts between Persia, the Shi’a majority state and the Ottoman Empire, the Sunni majority state, the overpowering ambitions and the unnatural acts that caused the fathers killed their children and vice versa. This is true in the case of Shah Abbas and other Persian emperors of the Safavid dynasty.

Don Juan of Persia: A Shiah Catholic (1604) is another significant source that supplies direct information related to Shah Abbas’ regime. It was basically written in Castilian, Spanish language by a Persian Uruch Beg or Ulug Beg, a Shi’a Muslim who converted to Christianity. It has been translated by G. Le Strange. Uruch Beg went to Christian European countries at the behest of Shah Abbas as a member of the Persian Embassy whose main objective was to form Persian-Christian league against the Ottoman Turks. Anthony Sherley was also the part of this Embassy. Uruch Beg narrates how Shah Abbas had bestowed great honours on Anthony Sherley and how he proved himself unworthy of these honours due to his dishonest and cheap tricks. The book records the history of Achaemenid Persia as well as Safavid Persia. With reference to the Persian kings’ seraglio or harem, Uruch Beg says that common people cannot

think of entering the royal seraglio as it is a well-guarded area either by eunuchs or the old men. The Persian king is called Sophy because of either his great wisdom or the cotton and woollen cloths he wears. Uruch Beg describes how Shah Abbas became king after the death of Hamzah and did great reforms in the Persian army. He also clarifies that Hamzah was killed by twenty two conspirators who were associated with Esmi Khan. When Shah Abbas ascended the throne, he issued orders for the death of all these people and their heads were stuck on the lances as a terrible sight for the common people to look at. Uruch Beg tells that Shah Abbas took Murshid Quli Kahan as his mentor and sought advice from him in important matters.

Eskandar Beg Monshi's *Tarikh-i 'Alamara-yi 'Abbasi* (1617), translated by Professor Roger Savory with the title of *The History of Shah Abbas, the Great* (1986) is a unique work that provides first-hand information related to Shah Abbas. Eskander Beg served Abbas as a chief secretary. This close contact with Shah Abbas gave him an opportunity to see and describe different events from close quarters. (Farmyan, 1988). The work contains significant information not only related to Shah Abbas' period but also about earlier Safavid kings. It gives "a year-by-year account of the first thirty years of the reign of Shah Abbas" (Mazzaoui, 1982). Eskander Beg traces the genealogy of Abbas back to Ali and Muhammad. The book narrates Abbas's piety, his God-gifted wisdom, his policies, his public works, his battles and victories in detail.

Abul Qasim Firdawsi's *Shahnama*, or *Book of Kings* (1605) is known as a great epic in Persian literature. It is a superb blend of visual and textual representations of the Safavid period in general and Shah Abbas in particular. It projects the image of Shah Abbas as a great early modern Persian leader, a pious believer, and a noble emperor" (Rizvi, 2012, p.226). The paintings present in *Shahnama* represent Shah Abbas as a complex character. Some of these paintings show Shah Abbas as a great ruler surrounded by the flatterers and a man indulged in sensual pleasures. Some other paintings reflect Shah Abbas as a pious and repentant person. It is in this vein that some contemporary works record the title *Kalb-i 'a'ast' a' an-i 'Ali* (Dog of the Threshold of Imam Ali), the title which Abbas liked for himself. The work highlights Shah Abbas' humanity and his imperial vision (ibid, pp.227-246).

Abul-Hassan Naderolzman's painting of Jahangir (1618) in which he seems to welcome Shah Abbas is a famous painting that shows the imagined embrace of the two contemporary Oriental emperors. The painting is based on the dream of Jahangir. It represents Shah Abbas standing on a lamb whereas Jahangir standing on a lion. It reflects the power relations between the two emperors: Abbas as a weaker king as compared to Jahangir who is associated with lion. Cole (2003) rightly comments that the painting shows Jahangir as "cosmic chieftain with the lion [whose] realm is bigger than that of Shah Abbas and reduces Shah Abbas from a ferocious king to "a willowy and seductive youth on lamb-skin" (p.59). However, the reality was otherwise. Shah Abbas was more powerful ruler than Jahangir due to the conquests he achieved during his regime. As Cole argues that "The effeminate, drug-addicted Jahangir was in reality no match for the little-world conquering Shah Abbas" (ibid). While interpreting the painting, Dayyeri & Egbali (2017) argue that the political

relation of Iran and India was getting dark because of the dispute over control of Kandahar. In that context, even a little incident could cause a war between the two states. To portray the situation of that time, the worthy scholars note that the “Presence of lion and lamb represent a relative peace and it seems that by a small tingle this peace will be disrupted” (p.642).

Among the English sources, most of the writers have represented Shah Abbas in an ambivalent manner. Some have admired Shah Abbas as a king who is favourable and friendly towards Christians and foreigners. This is a pro-Christian aspect of Shah Abbas’ character. Some other writers have depicted Shah Abbas as an emperor who is sensual, tyrant, power hungry and a murderer who can kill his near and dear ones for the sake of authority. These writers have represented Shah Abbas as a stereotypical Oriental character who is emotional, irrational fellow. This negative aspect has been aggravated by portraying Shah Abbas as an enemy of Christianity.

In the list of the English sources, John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins’ drama *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* (1607) expresses a mingled response in the portrayal of Shah Abbas’ character. The three playwrights have represented the character of Shah Abbas in detail in their joint play. The play revolves round the story of three Sherley brothers namely Anthony Sherley, Thomas Sherley and Robert Sherley who came to Persia to make a request to the Persian Sophy, Shah Abbas to form a Christian-Persian alliance against their common enemy i.e. the Ottoman Turks. Thus, the play is rooted in the socio-historical conditions of the period since the Sherleys’ visit to Persia is in the context of the diplomatic and strategic Christian-Persian alliance against the Turks. The play introduces Shah Abbas as a powerful king, a “great Sophy” (Ridha, 1974, p. 45) and a “renowned Sophy” (ibid, p.46) who comes back to his court after defeating the rival Ottoman Turks in a battle.

The play highlights Persian Sophy as a hospitable, pro-Christian emperor who warmly welcomes the Englishmen in the court and shows his eagerness for this alliance. He is so much impressed by the Sherleys that he sends Anthony Sherley as a Persian ambassador along with other Persians to the Christian European countries to have a grand alliance against the Turks. It was also during this period that Shah Abbas appointed Robert Sherley as a general of the Persian army and assigned him the task of reorganizing his army. Because of his patronizing attitude, Shah Abbas marries his Niece to Robert Sherley and permits him to build a church in Persia. It is due to such favourable acts some critics perceive the Persia of Shah Abbas as “a Christianized Persian Sovereign” (Andrea, 2005, p. 289) and “a feminized Persia” (Niayesh, 2008, p. 132).

Basically, the drama was written to glorify the heroic acts of the Sherleys and restore their honour back in England. Therefore, the playwrights have idealized and admired the Sherleys more than Shah Abbas. Apparently, they have portrayed Shah Abbas as a magnanimous personality and a positive character in the play but actually, he has been depicted as an emotional and ignorant person as compared to the Sherleys. For an instance, when Anthony Sherley explains to Shah Abbas that the English army can cause havoc with the cannon:

We can lay cities leuell with the pauement,
 Bandee vp Towers and turrets in the ayre;
 And on the seas orewhelme an Argosie (Ridha, 1974, 1. 112-116, p. 51).

The Sophy is surprized and becomes tongue-tied to hear about the technologically advanced weapons of war with which the English army is equipped. In this state of awe and wonder, like a child, he thinks that probably the cannon “is a God” (ibid, 1. 119, p. 51) and Anthony Sherley is a divine figure with “God-head” (ibid, 1.126, p. 52). It is due to such dialogues, Ladan Niayesh (2008) notes that “Western superiority here takes the form of a cannon, which the Sophy apparently sees for the first time” and which causes him “worship both the object and the man who wields and masters it” (p.131). Like a captivated person, Shah Abbas beseeches Anthony Sherley:

First teach me how to call thee ere I speake,
 I more and more doubt thy mortality
 Those tongues do imitate the voice of heauen (Ridha, 1974, 1. 121-122, p. 52).

He further adds that:

Tell vs thy precepts; and we’ll adore thee. (ibid, 1. 128, p. 52).

Shah Abbas’ dialogues over here clearly show the superiority of England in terms of knowledge and technology and the inferiority of Persia that lacks all this. As Abdul Ghaffar & et al. (2021) comment that these and the following dialogues in the play indicate how Day, Rowley and Wilkins have represented the Sherleys as well-disciplined, civilized and educated characters who are worthy of doing heroic acts and Shah Abbas as a child and uncivilized person who even lacks communicative skills (p.9).

Sir Thomas Herbert’s *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (1634) is a famous work of the early modern English period that consists of author’s experiences of varied parts of Asia and Africa in general and Persia and Mughal India in particular. Along with Cotton Dodmore and Robert Sherley, Herbert was a part of the English Embassy that visited India and Persia in 1627. The main purpose of this Embassy was to establish positive commerce and diplomatic relations between England and Persia against their common enemy, the Ottoman Turks. The work dwells a lot on Persia and the Persian emperors of the Safavid dynasty. Herbert expresses mingled attitude in the representation of Shah Abbas. Nevertheless, he has mainly represented Shah Abbas in a negative way. On one occasion, while praising the Persian Sophy, Herbert comments that “the Potshaw or Emperor of Persia, Abbas [was] more beloved at home, more famous abroad, more formidable to his enemies, than any of his predecessors” (p. 169). On another occasion, Herbert has depicted Shah Abbas a beast, a lusty fellow who is “a master of four thousand concubines” (ibid, p. 172). Yet on another occasion, he says that “Mahomtan princes are terrible crafty and mysteriously politicous” (ibid). This generalization on the part of Herbert reflects Christians’ general attitude towards the Muslims. Abbas has been represented as an inhuman fellow, a beast, a despot, a killer and an ill-fated ruler. Abbas’ fears and jealousy prompt not only his own catastrophe but also the miserable plight of his unfortunate son, Mirza.

John Denham's *The Sophy* (1642) is created in the context of Persian-Turks wars. It heavily draws upon Herbert's *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (1634). Denham has dramatized the story of Shah Abbas, his son Mirza and his grandson Sophy, the titular hero of the play. It depicts how Shah Abbas' catastrophe and Mirza's death results from his own jealousy and fears. Denham represents Shah Abbas as a stereotypical Oriental king – sexual beast, cruel, lazy and superstitious. For the sake of power, he commits the unnatural acts like fratricide and parricide. He ignores the public due to the gratification of his sensual pleasures:

For though his eye is open as the Morning's,
Towards lust and pleasures, yet so fast a lethargy
Has seized his powers towards public cares and dangers,
He sleeps like death (Denham, 1642, 1.i).

His court has become a centre of vice. The king is surrounded by flatterers and follows their counsels. The playwright highlights his superstitious nature when he is determined to blind and kill his own son due to "The Prophet's Revelation" (ibid, 5.1). As he says in the presence of the Persian lords:

Great Mahomet we thank thee,
Protector of this Empire, and this life,
Thy cares have met my fears... (ibid).

Finally, Abbas causes the blindness and death of Mirza just because of his jealousy and groundless fears. When he realizes how he caused the death of his own son because of his jealousy, it is too late. The playwright has represented Shah Abbas totally in a negative way by occluding the positive aspects of his personality (p.9, Ghaffar& Munawar, 2019).

Robert Baron's *Mirza* (1642) is a closet drama that also draws on Herbert's *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (1634). It has thematic link with Denham's *The Sophy*. Nevertheless, there is difference in the treatment of the material. Denham has depicted Shah Abbas under the influence of flatterers and hypocrites like Haly and Caliph whereas Baron has depicted Abbas under the influence of the ladies of his seraglio. Both playwrights have represented Shah Abbas as an Oriental tyrant who transgresses all limits to achieve his ends. Following Denham, Baron also portrays Shah Abbas as a despot, a murderer and a sexual monster. The ghost of Emir-Hamze appears in the opening scene of the play and warns his brother to

leave thy Adulteries,
Thy Rapes, thy Incests, heaps of Perjuries,
And Ghomorean sports, no sting behind (Baron, 1642, 1. P.9)?

Like some contemporary writers, Baron has also depicted Shah Abbas as an enemy of Christianity who caused the death of many Christians (p. 21, Ghaffar & Asif, 2020). As Emangoly says, "What signified his wrong to the poor Christians" (Baron, 1642, 4. p. 114). In the annotations, the playwright further elaborates that Abbas is responsible for the deaths of "no less then the lives of

1000(some say 1200)” (ibid, p. 254) innocent Georgian and Armenian Christians due to the fact that they expressed their association with the Roman Church. Similarly, Thomas Heywood’s *The Four Prentices of London* (1594) portrays Abbas as an enemy of Christianity who challenges the Christians but is defeated by them. Taking this role of Abbas as an enemy of Christianity in account, an Iranian scholar, Farahmandfar (2016) argues that the dramatist has represented the Sophy “as a sworn enemy of Christendom that must be eliminated” (p. 142). Shah Abbas is described as a young and hot-headed emperor. The four brothers Godfrey, Guy, Charles and Eustace finally meet in Jerusalem and get them enlisted in a crusade that is being commanded by Robert, Duke of Normandy. In this crusade, they defeat the Sophy of Persia and the Souldan of Babylon. The Muslims and Christians form binaries that have been represented as stereotypical characters of early modern period. As Matar (1999) observes that the Muslims have been depicted as “bombastic and cruel” whereas the four Prentices have been delineated as great heroes since “they come from England” (pp. 142-3). Like Baron and Heywood, Spenser in his poem *The Faerie Queen* (1590-6) has also represented Shah Abbas as an enemy of Christians. In Canto III, he tells how the brave captains and mighty warriors will defend Britain “Against their forrein foe, that comes from farre” (Spenser, 1978). Here the word ‘forrein foe’ refers to Shah Abbas.

There is no doubt that early modern English period was the period in which there was surge of interest in the Oriental states like the Ottoman empire, Persia and the Mughal India and the writers of the period documented them in their works to capitalize on their readers’ interest. Nevertheless, this interest waned with the passage of time due to different factors. The power structures shifted from the Oriental states to the Western states. Particularly, Britain became a powerful empire. Therefore, it was natural that the Western writers also shifted their creative focus to new subjects in the coming times. Despite this dwindling interest, the Oriental states like Persia haunted the Western writers’ minds due their exotic and romantic past. It is in this context, William Collins and Justin Morier have created their works in 18th & 19th centuries where they have portrayed the picture of exotic and romantic Persia. However, both writers have shown continuity in the negative representation of Shah Abbas along with the Persian world of pastoral romance and beauty.

William Collins’ *Persian Eclogues* (1742) or renamed and Published as *Oriental Eclogues* (1755) is a romantic pastoral. The poem consists of a preface and four eclogues that tell different stories. According to Eversole (1979), “The four eclogues reflect a cycle of contrasting experiences, a cycle of the miseries and inconveniencies, as well as the felicities, that attend one of the finest countries in the East” (p. 26). The poem is a beautiful expression of shepherds’ culture. Collins represents Shah Abbas as a typical Oriental despot and a wanton fellow. The poem falls in the category of those literary works that have highlighted the negative aspect of Abbas’ personality. For an instance, the third eclogue of the poem tells the story of a Georgian girl, Abra who is wooed by Shah Abbas:

Great Abbas chanc’d that fated Morn to stray,
By Love conducted from the Chace away;
Among the vocal Vales he heard her Song,

And sought the Vales and echoing Groves among:
 At length he found, and woo'd the rural Maid,
 She knew the Monarch, and with Fear obey'd (lines, 19-24).

James Justinian Morier's novel *Misselmah, A Persian Tale* (1847) portrays Shah Abbas as an Eastern emperor who is inhuman and ruthless. In the words of Bennet (2011), "The story is one of intrigue, jealousy and betrayal" (p. 15). The novel throws light on Shah's cruel acts, his injustice and the seraglios of Shah and other nobles of Persia. It tells the story of Shah Abbas' General of the Persian army, Aga Top Ali Beg Topchi, Misselmah, the beautiful Georgian girl (as beautiful as moon) and her lover, Ferhad. Top Beg returns triumphant from the battlefield along with the prisoners. He goes to Shah Abbas to present the beautiful girls except Misselmah among the prisoners as a gift for his harem or seraglio. Jealousy causes rebellion and intrigue among the women of Top Beg's seraglio. Subsequently, Top Beg is killed and lovers are reunited. Like his predecessors, Morier has represented Shah Abbas as a despot and lusty fellow.

CONCLUSION:

The survey of different literary and non-literary works reveals that Shah Abbas played significant role in restructuring and strengthening the Safavid Persia. It is because of his contribution to the uplifting of his state that Shah Abbas is considered the founder of modern Safavid Persia and the Iranian historians have graced him with the title of Great Shah in the history of Persia. There is no doubt that Shah Abbas had some personal blemishes but these flaws don't seem to affect his reputation as an efficient and successful ruler of Persia. If they have portrayed the positive character of Shah Abbas somewhere in their works, they have done so because of Shah Abbas' much projected kind and hospitable feelings towards the Christians as compared to the then Ottoman Turks who were hated by the West as an avowed enemies of Christianity. However, the Western playwrights and writers have mainly delineated Shah Abbas in a negative light partially due to these personal blemishes and mainly due to his anti-Christian attitude towards the West. They have misrepresented him by occluding the positive aspects of his personality as an exemplary ruler of Persia. Nevertheless, there are only a few Western writers who have portrayed Shah Abbas in a positive manner in their works. They have done so because of Shah Abbas' rivalry against the Ottoman Turks (as their enemy's enemy) and because of his much projected kind and hospitable feelings towards the Christians as compared to the then Ottoman Turks who were hated by the West as an avowed enemies of Christianity.

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