

**A BRIEF REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR  
ON THE TOPIC  
"INDIA – IRAN BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE HISTORICAL & NATIONAL  
PERSPECTIVE"**

*Dated: 19.07.2021*

The international webinar on '**India-Iran Bilateral Relations in the Historical & National Perspective**' was organized on **Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021**. It was a joint collaborative effort of the **Centre for History and Archaeology (CHA), a wings Asiatic Society of Social Science Research (ASSSR), New Delhi** and **Iran Cultural House, New Delhi**. The event was conducted both through Zoom Meet and Microsoft Teams online webinar platforms, which accommodated a large number of audiences, along with a live broadcasting on YouTube. The webinar was a detail discussion on India and Iran relations right from the Indus Valley period till the present day. There were 12 speakers in total covering either side, who were specialists in their respective fields and gave different vantage points on the theme of the webinar covering the entire gamut of Indo-Iranian relations.

The webinar was started with a welcome address by Ms. Ishani Sinha, Director and Moderator, CHA, ASSSR. Followed by her, Dr Mohammad Ali Rabbani, Cultural Counselor and Head, Iran Culture House, Embassy of I.R. Iran, New Delhi and Dr Pramod Kumar Ray, Vice President, ASSSR, gave their opening remarks on the theme and importance of the webinar and spoke in general about the India – Iran relations. There were four panel discussions covering wide range of subjects on the broad spectrum of the webinar theme in which each presenter was given 20 minutes to speak.

**Panel – One:** This panel was moderated by Mr. Mohan Rawar (Director and Moderator, CHA, ASSSR). Two speakers Mr. Prathapachandran Saratchandra Panikke (Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology & Ancient History, MSU, Baroda) and Miss Pratishta Mukherjee (Director, Executive and Exploration Branch, CHA, ASSSR, and a Research Scholar (PhD), Department of Archaeology and History and Ancient History, MSU, Baroda) had their presentation. Mr. Prathapachandran in his presentation recollected and explored India's contact

with Iran from the early days of the Indus Valley Civilization. He highlighted the historic genesis of relation between the two countries and explained the beginning of their contacts by examining material remains such as seals and other weight trades. Ms. Pratishtha Mukherjee in her presentation discussed India's relations with Iran during the Achaemenid Era (c. 560-330 BCE). She briefly focused on the socio-political, economic, cultural context of the Indo-Iranian relationship during this period. She highlighted those artifacts found during excavations in India and the pillars in both India and Iran show cultural exchange during the said period.

**Panel – Two:** Mr. Mohan Rawat, Director of Documentation, Photography and Archive Branch, CHA, ASSSR moderated this session. Two speakers who spoke in this session were Prof. Akhlaque Ahmad 'Ahan' from Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Dr Prasanta Kumar Pradhan, Associate Fellow, Institute for Manohar Parrikar Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Prof. Akhlaque Ansari spoke about the Persian language as a shared heritage between India and Iran. He discussed the role of the Persian language and Indian & Persian poets in documenting and preserving the shared history and cultural heritage. In doing so, he also brought out the critical conjuncture in which languages like Persian are placed. He remarked that due to the politicizing of languages, such important shared intangible heritage is in verge of being forgotten. Dr Prasanta Kumar Pradhan threw some light on the contemporary relations between India and Iran. Emphasizing the economic aspects of international relations, he specifically described the connectivity network and importing oil from Iran underlines the significance of relation between the two countries. He highlighted the shared mutual benefits and strategic interests constituting the crux of their relation in contemporary times.

**Panel – Three:** This session was jointly moderated by Prof. Mehdi Hasani, University of Tehran and Mr. Mohan Rawat, CHA, ASSSR. Prof. Mehdi, while moderating the session also enlightened the attendees through his presentation. The crux of his presentation was on the importance of Quran and its translations and interpretations in India, which he described as a stepping stone in strengthening ties and relation between the two countries. Mr. Jason Wahlang, a Research Assistant at Centre for Land Warfare Studies and Ph.D. Scholar in Russian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University discussed about the evolution of Indo-Iran

Relations from the political perspective right from the second world war till the present day. India and Iran have had a complex relationship over the years. He mentioned a number of events that have happened to improve the relations between India and Iran, for example, the Treaty of Friendship during the Second World War, Period of Dente in 1960s, Iranian Revolution in 1979 and India's support to it, post-Cold War period, challenges of terrorism to both the countries and visits of Indian Prime Ministers to Iran. In his concluding remark, he put emphasis on the role of both the countries to improve and stabilize their relations which could enable them in establishing a strong influence in the Asian region. The last speaker of this panel was Dr. Farzaneh Azam Lotfi from University of Tehran. In her presentation, she highlighted about the similarity between Sanskrit and Persian Languages. She pointed out that it was during the Mughal emperor Humayun's period when Iranian calligraphy, art, and architecture were introduced in India. She also spoke about the common roots of the Persian, Pallava, and Avestan languages. To explain the commonalities between Persian and Sanskrit, she gave some examples of common/similar words used in Persian and Sanskrit languages like *bhoomi*, *tapasya*, *panch*, *beva*, to name a few. She concluded with emphasizing the common origin ground for both languages and cultures, which has developed a symmetrical bond between the two nations.

**Panel – Four:** The last panel discussion was moderated by Mr. Mohan Rawat from CHA, ASSSR. This panel had two speakers. Speaking on the occasion, the first speaker of this panel Mr. Ashu J, President, ASSSR and Academic Counsellor at Sri Aurobindo College IGNOU Study Centre and Research Scholar (PhD) at Department of History, University of Delhi focused on “Architectural Influence of India and Iran: Indigeneity and Solidarity”. He ventured into the history and the relation between India and Iran and explored the trade and cultural exchange between the two countries. He highlighted the influence of the Mughal rulers in the development of culture, art and architecture. He said the Mughal rulers' patronage of skilled artisans from Iran, led to the Indo-Iranian architectural style which contributed immensely in strengthening their cultural ties. To name a few floral designs, the use of bright colors, marble, and other expensive colorful stones, changes in miniature paintings, large halls, gateways, domes are some examples of the development of this new architectural style that has occurred due to Iranian and Turkish influence. With visual pictures of Shalimar Gardens, Taj Mahal, Akbar's tomb,

Humayun's tomb, Fatehpur Sikri from India he tried to establish the similarities and exchanged cultures between the two countries.

The last speaker Dr. Mandana Tishehyar, Asst. Professor from Allameh Tabataba'i University, Iran had her presentation on strengthening of Indo-Iranian relations with special reference to Iran's oil and natural gas resources potential. She pointed out that during the time when oil ridges were discovered in Iran during 1908, the relations between India and Iran received a new height. Due to the discovery of oil ridges in Iran, many people migrated from India in search of employment opportunities which led to cultural exchange between the communities of both countries. Such cultural exchange is very much visible in the food culture. She talks about the introduction of Indian spices in Iran and also the influence of Indian cuisine and delicacies on the locals' communities of Iran. Apart from Persian and English as common languages, Hindi too became one. The Indian rupee was used in the region for local transactions and also to pay wages of Indians. She concluded by saying that India and Iran, in spite of the difficult times over the years, have shown great interest for peaceful co-existence and harmony which has strengthened relations between these two neighboring nations.

The webinar was winded up with Ms. Ishani Sinha wrapping up the webinar proceeding. Ms. Bishnu Kumari Gurung, Joint Secretary, ASSSR and Research Scholar (PhD), NEHU Meghalaya highlighted some of the landmark achievements of ASSSR in general and CHA in particular and briefed its future course of action. At the end Dr Pramod Kumar Ray and Dr Mohammad Ali Rabbani gave their concluding remark. Dr Ray while expressing his special gratitude to all the speakers for their excellent deliberation described the webinar as a milestone in the direction of a comprehensive and complete understanding of Indo-Iranian relations. He thanked Dr Mohammad Ali Rabbani and Iran Culture House for providing such a wonderful opportunity to CHA, ASSSR enabling it to organize such a topical and crucial webinar of contemporary relevance. Lastly, Dr Mohammad Ali Rabbani in his closing remark thanked each and all and the organizations involved in the webinar and the audience for giving their valuable time and patient hearing of the webinar. He also appreciated the humble and earnest endeavor of CHA, ASSSR in collaborating such an academic program which has helped in a big way in strengthening and promoting closer academic understanding and ties between people of the two

countries. The program was ended with the hope to have many such academic exchanges and joint ventures between the academic communities of the two nations in its future perspective.