

# **“Panchantantra” - A Persian translation**

## **(AN ANALYTICAL STUDY)**

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### **The Tradition of translation of Sanskrit Text into Persian & other languages:**

The tradition of translation of Sanskrit-text into foreign languages is age-old. It is difficult to find out which is the oldest Sanskrit text to have been translated, and in which language had it first been translated. But some scholars say that before 570 AD, the Pahalavi translation of the Sanskrit text ‘Panchatantra’ by Borzya is most probably the first translation of a Sanskrit text into Pahalavi (Middle Persian) language. Afterwards, it was translated into many languages such as Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, English, etc.

And since then, many Sanskrit-texts have been translated into other languages like the Persian translation of Varahmihir’s ‘Brihatsamhita’ by Mohammad Al-Barunee. He translated some other Sanskrit texts into Persian language such as ‘Trivasak’, Patanjali’s ‘Yogadarshan’, Barahmihir’s ‘Laghujatak’, and ‘The Principles of Indian Mathematics’.

In the period of Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-1388AD), Izzuddeen Khalid Khani translated a Sanskrit Astronomy book into Persian language by the name of ‘Dola-il-e-Firojshahi’. Then Abdul Ajiz Shaqs Baheruni (Shams Alif Siraz) translated Barahmihir’s Brihatsamhita into Persian. At that time a music text book in Sanskrit ‘Sangeet Darpan’ was translated into Persian as ‘Khunyat-ul-Mumya’. In 1370-71 AD, Firojshah Tughlaq found around 1300 Sanskrit manuscripts and these manuscripts were translated into Persian by the order of Firojshah Tughlaq.

During the time of Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517AD), Mayan Yunat Khan translated a Sanskrit Medical textbook named ‘Mahavaidyak’ into Persian and renamed it as ‘Tibbe-Sikandari’. In the reign of Mohammad Shah Bahamani, Vagabhatta’s Sanskrit-text ‘Ashtanghridayam’ was translated into Persian and named ‘Tibbe-Mahmudashani’. During Humayun (1530-1556AD), Sanskrit-text ‘Amritkunda’ was translated into Persian by Sufi Mohammad Sarini. Then, in the reign of Nasaruddin (Ethe says that most probably Humayun was the Nasaruddin), Sanskrit text ‘Hitopadesh’ was translated into Persian as ‘Mufa-Rihul-Qutul’ (Tajam-ali-taj-mufti-al-Maliq) and Taj-al-Ghani.

A number of Persian translations of Sanskrit texts were done during the rule of Akbar. This era is called as the ‘Golden Era’ for the Persian translation of Sankrit-texts. By Akbar’s orders, many Sanskrit texts were translated into Persian language such as Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavadgita, Yogavashista, Rajatarangini, Kathasaritsagar, Sinhasandwainshatika, Vetapanchvinshatika, Lilawati, Bhaskaracharya’s Siddhantashiomani, Nal-Damayanti-Upakhyam, Bhadvapuraw, etc. Besides, some other books related to Music, Medical Sciences, Astronomy, Mathematics, Stories of Puranas, Indian Philosophy, etc. were translated during this period. Mustafa Khalid Daad Abbasi translated ‘Panchatantra’ into Persian

and titled it 'Panch Ammana'. This work was published by Aligarh Muslim University in 1973 and afterwards from Tehran in 1984. Narayana Pandit's 'Hitopadesh' was translated by Tajuddin Mufti under the title 'Mufarahull-Qutub'.

After Akbar, during the reign of Jahangir (1605-1627 AD) Sanskrit text 'Yogavashishtha' was translated into Persian by Nijam Panipati. He completed this work along with two Brahmin pundits (scholars). Then, towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, (1705-1706 AD), Roopnarayan Khatri translated 'Kathopnishada' (Nachiketa) into Persian as 'Haqate-Nachiketa'. 'Prabodhachandroday' was also translated into Persian by Bhikam Vairagi under the name 'Gulzare Hal' of 'Tulu-e-Qamare-Ma'arafat'. Besides, Dara Shukuh (elder son of Shahjahan) translated Bagwadgita into Persian. Moreover, he also translated 22 Upanishads into Persian as 'Sirre-Akabar'

Later on a great Sanskrit fable text 'Hitopadesha' was translated into German language by Max-Mueller (Student of Prof. Yunin Vanaf) with a short explanation.

Persian translation of Kalidasa's 'Abhigyan-Shakuntalam' was done by Prof. Ali Asgar Heqamat. Thereafter, Prof. Hadi Hasan also translated it into Persian by referring to William John's English translation of 'Abhigyan Shakuntalam'. Prof. S.A.H. Abidi translated the 'Vikramorvashayam' into Persian.

### **History of cross-cultural migration/transmission:**

The work has gone through many different version and translations from the sixth century to the present day. The original Indian version was first translated into foreign language (Pahlavi-middle Persian) by Borzya in 570 AD (before), then into Syric into 570 AD (around) and into Arabic in 750 AD. This became the source of version in European languages, until the English translation by Charles Wilkins of the Sanskrit 'Hitopadesh' in 1787.

### **Early Cross-Cultural Migration:**

The Panchantantra approximated its current literary form during 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, though originally written around 200 BCE. No Sanskrit text before 1000 CE have survived. Buddhist Monks on pilgrimage took the influential Sanskrit text (probably both in oral and literary formats) north to Tibet and China and East to South East Asia. These led to the versions in all Southeast Asian countries including Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolians, Javanese and Lao Derivatives.

### **The Panchantantra:**

The panchantantra<sup>1</sup> (five tantra/principles) is known by many names according to its different translations such as Kalila-o-Damna (كليلة و دمنه) in Persian, Anvar-i-Suhayli<sup>2</sup> in Persian, Kalila-

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<sup>1</sup> It goes by many name in many culture. In India, it had at least 25 recension, including the Sanskrit "Tantrakhayika" and inspired the "Hitopadesha".

wa- Damna in Syric, Kalila-wa-Damna in Arabic, the fables of Bidpai/Pilpai in various European languages, the moral philosophies of Doni in English and many more were originally the canonical collections of Sanskrit animal fables in verse and prose. The work illustrates the central principles of political science (Rajaneeti) through stories of animals. The five principles illustrated are:

1. Mitra Bhedha (The loss of Friend).
2. Mitra Laabha (Gaining Friends).
3. Suhrubhedha (Causing Dissension between Friends).
4. Vighraha (Separation).
5. Sandhi (Union).

A king, worried that his three sons are without the wisdom to live in a world of wile and guile, asks a learned man called Vishnu Sharma to teach them the way of the world. Since his wards are dimwits, Vishnu Sharma decided to pass on wisdom to them in the form of stories. In these stories, he makes animals speak like human being. Panchantantra is a collection of attractive stories about the five ways that help the human being succeed in life. Panch means five and tantra means way or strategies or principles. Addressed to the king's children, the stories are primarily about statecraft and are popular throughout the world.

Some scholars believe that the original Sanskrit Panchantantra was composed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and it was attributed to Vishnu Sharma. It is based on older oral traditions. Including the Buddhist Jatak Tales. It is certainly the most frequently translated literary product of India and these stories are among the most widely known stories of the world. In the words of Edgerton (1924), "As early as the eleventh century, this Panchantantra's translation work reached Europe and before 1600 it existed in Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, German, English, Old Slavonic, Czech and perhaps other Salvonic languages. Its range has extended from Java to Iceland....."

### **Translations of Panchantantra into other languages:**

The Panchantantra, originally written in Sanskrit and its translation recorded in over 200 different versions to exist in more than 50 languages, and three-fourth of these languages are extra-Indian. Here we can see a list of some translations of Panchantantra into other languages:

Sr. No.	Language	Title	Translated By	Era
1.	Pahalvi <sup>3</sup>	Kalile va Demne	Borzya	570 AD (Before)
2.	Syriac <sup>4</sup>	Kalilah va Damnah	Buda Abdul Inu	770 AD (Around)
3.	Arabic <sup>5</sup>	Kalilah wa Dimnah	Abdullah Ibn-al-Muqaffa	750 AD (Around)

<sup>2</sup> The light of Canopus.

<sup>3</sup> Middle Persian Language, Unfortunately this translation and the Sanskrit original used for it are lost.

<sup>4</sup> This translation was made from Borzya's pahalvi version. One manuscript of this survives this survives but is preserved imperfectly. The title of this work was unmistakably derived from the name of two jackals in Panchantantra. They are Kartaka and Damana (कर्कटदमनः) in original Sanskrit and thus the Syriac translation adopted the name "Kalilah va Damna".

<sup>5</sup> Abdullah Ibn-al-Muqaffa, he was a Zoroastrian and convert to Islam. He had translated this Arabic translation of Panchantantra. This Arabic translation is the parent of nearly all the European version of Panchantantra. In Middle Europe, Panchantantra's translation were generally known as "The Fables of Bidpai".

4.	Persian	Kalile va Damane <sup>6</sup>	Rudaki	970AD
5.	Greek	-	Simon (Son of Seth)	1080 AD
6.	Hibrew	-	Rabbi Joel	1100 AD (Around)
7.	Persian <sup>7</sup>	Kalile va Damne	Abul Ma'al Nasr-Allah Munshi	1121 AD
8.	Spanish <sup>8</sup>	Calyle-e-Dymna	-	1252 AD
9.	Latin <sup>9</sup>	Liber Kelilae et Dimrae <sup>10</sup>	John Capua	1260-1270 AD <sup>11</sup>
10.	German <sup>12</sup>	Das buch der byspel der alten wysen	Anthonius Von Proff	1483 AD (Around)
11.	Spanish	-	-	1493 AD
12.	Italian	-	Agnolo Firenzuola	1546 AD
13.	Italian <sup>13</sup>	La Moral Philosophie	Antonio Francesco Doni	1552 AD
14.	Franch	-	-	1556 AD
15.	English <sup>14</sup>	The Fables of Bidpai (La Moral Philosophie of Doni)	Sir Thomas North	1570 AD

Panchantantra has been translated from Borzuya's Pahlavi Translation titled "Kalile va Damne" into Syriac and later by into Arabic by Ibn-al-Muqaffa around 750 CE under the title "Kalila wa Damna". Almost all pre-modern European translations of Panchantantra arise from this Arabic version.

### **The Pahlavi<sup>15</sup> translation of Panchantantra by Borzuya:**

In 6<sup>th</sup> century, in Persia (Iran) there was a king Anushirvan. He had 25 physicians, Greek, Indian and Persian, and Borzuya was one of his favorite physicians. Borzuya had heard about a miraculous Indian herb named Sanjivani Buti (The herb of life) which could bring the dead back to life. Borzuya traveled to India for the herb. He went to Himalays to find it, but he was unable to get it. When he was returning, he met a wise saga. The saga told him that this is very true that in India there is Sanjivani Buti (The herb of life) which could bring the dead back to life but that Sanjivani is not herb but "Knowledge". The saga told him about the Panchantantra, the book of knowledge. After that Borzuya translated the Sanskrit book Panchantantra into Pahlavi language in 570 CE with the title "Kalile va Damana". The book "Kalile va Damna" was always carefully

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After the first Arabic Translation, it was re-translated into Syriac Language from the Arabic translation in 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>6</sup> In Persian verse

<sup>7</sup> Modern Persian

<sup>8</sup> Old Castilian

<sup>9</sup> This was translated from Hebrew's version into Latin by Johan of Capua as – "Directorium Humanae Vitae" or "Directory of Human life", and printed in 1480 and became the source of most European version.

<sup>10</sup> "Directorium Humanae Vitae" or "Directory of Human life"

<sup>11</sup> Printed in 1480 AD

<sup>12</sup> This was repeatedly re-printed from 1483. This was printed immediately after invention of printing, making Panchantantra one of the first work to be printed.

In addition to deeply influencing German literature, it also gave rise to translations into Danish, Icelandic and Dutch languages.

<sup>13</sup> Translated again into Italian. This Doni's translation is important since from it came the first English translation.

<sup>14</sup> This was the first translation in English language and come out a full 1000 years after the original Panchantantra was translated into Pehlvi (Middle Persian Language).

However, this translation was partial and mode form the Doni's Italian version (La Moral Philosophie). (In the year 1983, it was re-printed. This re-printed translation gave an almost complete table of versions of Panchantanta in medieval Europe.)

<sup>15</sup> Middle Persian Language

guarded by the king of Persia until Ibn-ul-muqaffa translated it into Arabic in 750 AD with the title “Kalila wa Damnah”. Ibn-ul-Muqaffa said:

“Having heard the Persian had translated this book from Indian language into Pahlavi, we desired that people of Iraq, Syria and Hejaz should also benefit by it. So we have translated it into Arabic, which is our language.”

“Kartaka (Horribly Howling) and Damana (Victor)” are the Sanskrit names of the two Jackals in the Panchantantra. In the translation of Pahlavi language by Borzuya, it is named “Kalile va Demne<sup>16</sup>” (this is Kartiak and Damana – name of the two Jackals, the central characters in the Panchantantra). By the time Sanskrit version had migrated several hundred years through Pahlavi into Arabic, the two Jackal names changed into “Kalila wa Dimna”.

### **The Arabic translation of Panchantantra by Ibn-al-Muqaffa:**

Borzuya’s 570 CE Pahlavi translation (Kalila va Demne) was translated into Syriac language. Nearby two centuries later, it was translated into Arabic by Ibn-al-Muqaffa around 750 CE under the Arabic title “Kalila wa Dimna”. Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s work is considered as a model of the finest Arabic prose style, and is considered as the first masterpiece of Arabic literary prose.

Furthermore, in 1121 AD, a complete modern Persian translation from Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s Arabic version flowed from the pen of Ab’al Ma’ali Nasr Allah Munshi in the title of “Kalila wa Damna”. Scholars say that the second section of Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s translation, illustrating the Sanskrit principle of “Mitra Labdha” (Gaining Friend), become the unifying basic for the Brethren of purity.

### **The Persian translation of Panchantantra by Dr. Indu Shekhar:**

Dr. Indu Shekhar undertook the Persian translation of the Sanskrit fable “Panchantantra” in 1961 from University of Tehran, Iran. In the introduction of his work, he mentions F. Edgerton’s English translation of Panchantantra as the basis of his work. The F. Edgerton’s English translation was published at Bombay. He talks about Hertel’s English translation of Panchantantra but he finds F. Edgerton’s translation more authentic than Hertel’s. Hence, he prefers F. Edgerton’s translation as a reference for his work.

In the introduction he mentions that he couldn’t find the original book of Pahlavi Panchantantra, which was the first translation of Sanskrit Panchantantra into any other language (Pehlavi language) by Borzuya.

He writes about “Tantra-Khayayika<sup>17</sup>” that probably Borzuya’s Pehlvi translation of Panchantantra is based on Tantra-khayayika. Now researchers have proved that Borzuya’s translation is based on Panchantantra and it is also said that perhaps the pehlavi translation work was translated from original Sanskrit text.

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<sup>16</sup> Now lost

<sup>17</sup> Tantra-khayayika: Dr. Indu Shekhar writes that this is the oldest text of Panchantantra which is famous in Kashamir and the area which was near from Kashamir, Probably Borzuya translated from this book into Pahalavi language.

Dr. Indu Shekhar has written that the original name of the Pahlavi translation of Panchantantra is “Kalile va Damne<sup>18</sup>” and in Sanskrit it is “Kritika Damna<sup>19</sup>”. He says that the Pahlavi translation of Panchantantra is in very bad condition.

Dr. Indu Shekhar has written that many books have been based on “Kalile va Damne” in Persian and other languages, such as Marzaban Nama, Akhalake-Muhasani, Anware-Suhali, Dashatanahaye-Bidapa’ayiye, Abdullahe-Bukhari, Ayare-Danish and many more. He observes that many other poets follow the style of “Kalile va Damne” while writing their books.

He has written about Vishnu Sharma<sup>20</sup>, who is considered to be the writer of original Sanskrit Panchantantra by many. Dr. Indu Shekhar also writes about Chanakya and Shukra<sup>21</sup>, the great Indian “Aacharya or Guru<sup>22</sup>” who had worked on ethics and morals. Dr. Indu Shekhar mentioned that original Sanskrit Panchantantra belongs to the Gupta Dynasty<sup>23</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC).

Dr. Shekhar talks about the Greek Panchantantra and says that some scholars like Beber (German) and Benfey (German) believed that the Panchantantra came to India from Greece. But most scholars don’t accept this as they couldn’t give any satisfactory evidence to prove this<sup>24</sup>.

Masa’uddi has written in his book “Tarikaye-Masa’uddi” that Panchantantra originated in India and it is a book related to the tales of Indian Kings. He didn’t agree with the statement of Ibne-Nadim, who said that Panchantantra was an Iranian book and it moved to India from Iran<sup>25</sup>.

Dr. Indu Shekhar talks about six Arabic translations of Panchantantra in his introduction chapter, such as:

1. Kalilah wa Damnah (Original Arabic translation).
2. Tarjumaye-Abdullah Benhalal Ahwajee.
3. Tarjiunaye-Ali Ben dabut.
4. Tarjumaye-Aabane lohakee.

The Great Persian poets Rudakee, Firdosy, Maulana and many more have also written poetry in Persian language on Panchantantra’s story. Such as:

1. RUDAKI (858-CA -941):

Rudaki’s full name was Abu Abdullah Jafar Ibn Mohammad Rudaki. He was a Persian Poet and is regarded as the first great literary genius of the modern Persian, who composed poems in the Perso-Arabic alphabet or “new Persian” Script. Rudaki is considered a founder of Persian classic literature. He translated the Arabic version of Panchantantra into Persian verse.

Firdosy mentions in his Shahnameh that they recited Kelileh va Demneh to him and he rendered it into poem. Also using some of his poems we can see that he sight:

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<sup>18</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-9

<sup>19</sup> Kritika Damna: Name of two jackals in Panchantantra.

<sup>20</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-21-22

<sup>21</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-21-22

<sup>22</sup> Teacher (meaning of Acharya of Guru), Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-23-24

<sup>23</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-17 (IV)

<sup>24</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-21

<sup>25</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-20

پوپک دیدم به حوالی سرخس، بانگک بر بردہ بہ ابر اندرا  
چادر کی رنگین دیدم بر او، رنگ بسی گونه بر آن چادرا

## 2. FIRDOUSY (935-1020):

According to ‘Shahname<sup>26</sup>’, The Panchantantra migrated westwards during the Sassanian reign of Khosru Anushiravan before 570 CE. When his famous physician Borzuya translated it from Sanskrit into the Pahlavi (middle Persian language). A few lines of Shahnameh<sup>27</sup> have been quoted below:

پزشکی سراینده برزوی بود، به پیری رسیده سخن جوی بود  
ز هر دانشی بهره ای، به هر بهره ای در جان شهره ای

## 3. MAULANA RUMI’ MATHNAWI (1207-1273):

In Mathnavi-e-Manavi, Rumi has adapted the fifteen story from the first book of Kalileh va Damneh, the name by which the book goes in Farsi.

All these poets (Rudakee, Firdosy and Molavi) wrote their Persian poems on the story of Panchantantra from its Arabic Translation, which was translated by Abdullah Ibna-al-Muqaffa (circa 750 AD). Rudakee and many other have written books on the basis of Kalilah-wa-Damna (Arabic translation of Panchantantra). Such as:

1. Tarjumaye-Rudakee (In the poetry form in persian).
2. Tarjumaye-Abulam Ali (Prose form).
3. Jabidan Kherak (Thought).
4. Akhalake-Asasi.

Dr. Shekhar says that Kalilah-wa-Damne was originated around 300 BC. Some of its Stories or parts have come from Buddhist literature. Ibne Muqaffa adopted 16 chapters from Panchantantra and only 10 chapters originated from Sanskrit<sup>28</sup>. MacDonald mentions that this book has 12 chapters. Dr. Shekhar mentions that Ibnal Muqaffa has written in his introduction of his Arabic translation of Panchantantra that Borzuya went to India and from there he brought Panchantantra and after that he translated it into Pahlavi language. Ibnal Muqaffa clearly mentioned about the Borzuya’s travel of India. DR. Shekhar, in his introduction, writes that Ibnal Muqaffa<sup>29</sup> visited to India many times and wrote about his travel and maintained about Borzuya’s travel to India in his book.

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<sup>26</sup> The Book of the king, Persia’s late tenth century national epic by Ferdowsi.

<sup>27</sup> According to the story told in Shahnameh, Borzuya sought his King’s permission to make a trip to Hindustan in search of a mountain herb, about which he had read that when it is mingled into a compound and sprinkled over a corpse, it is immediately restored to life. He didn’t find the herb but was told by a wise sage that “The herb is the scientist; science is the mountain; everlastingly out of reach of the multitude. The corpse is the man without knowledge, for the uninstructed man is everywhere lifeless. Through knowledge man becomes revived.” The Sage pointed to the book “Panchantantra” and Borzuya obtained the King’s permission to read and translate the book with the help of some Pandits.

<sup>28</sup> Introduction chapter of Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, p.-19

<sup>29</sup> Ibnal-Muqaffa: Some scholars say that he was an Iranian Writer, but some state that he was an Arabic writer.

Ibnal Muqaffa writes that Khusro Anushervan-a Iranian King sent Borzuya to India to bring a plant that could never die (Gayahe-Abadiyat – A plant that does not die) but instead of this Borzuya brought ‘Panchantantra’ from India to Iran and translated it into Pahalavi Language. This was the first translation of Panchantantra into any other language.

Ibnal Muqaffa writes about Borzuya that he was a physician and was contemporary of the Iranian King Khusaro Anusarvan. He took Mahabharata from India to Iran and translated it into Pahalavi language. He did some changes and added some extra parts in its Pahalavi translation.

Dr. Shekhar writes that after Borzuya’s Pahalavi translation of Panchantantra it was translated into Syriac language by Budha. Dr. Shekhar mentioned that after this translation, Panchantantra was translated into many other languages such as Arabic, Greek, Turkey, Latin, French, German, English, etc.

## **Conclusion:**

The Panchantantra is a compilation of interwoven series of tales in prose and poetry, mostly animal fables in Sanskrit language originally. In the article we have discussed about the tradition of translation of Sanskrit texts into Persian and other languages. We see that Pahlavi translation of Sanskrit text “Panchantantra” by Borzuya (570 AD) is most probably the first translation of a Sanskrit book into any other language. Afterwards, it was translated into many languages such as Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, English, etc. Since then, many Sanskrit text have been translated into many languages.

In the article, we have discussed about the history of cross-culture migration / translation and early cross-culture migration. After that, we have talked about the Panchantantra, originally written in Sanskrit language, which has five principles as well as the five chapters. We have talked about the writer and the history of the Panchantantra. We have discussed about the Borzuya’s Pahlavi translation and Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s Arabic translation of Panchantantra, after that in the end we have briefly talked about Dr. Indu Shekhar’s Persian translation of Panchantantra, published in 1961 from University of Tehran, Iran.



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