



## HINDU

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**HINDU** (Hendu), denotes in Persian an inhabitant of the Indian Subcontinent as well as a follower of Hinduism. During almost three millennia, the eastern Iranians have lived in close contact with the Indians. Their mutual experiences left traces in historical memory, but also created images and stereotypes of an ethnic type which are reflected in Persian poetry. An important event was the establishment of a satellite state of the Ghaznavid empire in the Punjab (first half of the 11th century) which was called Hindustan. Its capital Lahore was the first center of Persian culture on Indian soil. Moreover, Indians entered into the service of the Sultan of Ghazna and his entourage as slaves and soldiers, together with Turks, Khorasanians, and members of other ethnic groups (cf. Bosworth, p. 110). The military confrontation with the Hindu states farther east, such as the kingdom of Qannowj, was sharpened by the religious motivation proclaimed by the conquerors. This was echoed in the odes on the Sultan Maḥmud's campaigns written by Ghaznavid court poets. For centuries the Hindu as he appeared in the eyes of the Muslims was a major theme in the dialogue between the religious communities on the Subcontinent (see further Schimmel 1975).

In the Persian epic, Hindustan or Hend is mentioned as a remote region on the eastern fringe of the inhabited world. According to Ferdowsi, this was the place where the mother of Faridun hid her child from Žaḥḥāk's persecution; here also was the mountain where the miraculous bird Simorġ raised the abandoned Zāl (cf. Boyce, *EIr.* I, p. 812, s.v. ALBORZ). In later epics, starting with Asadi's *Garšāsp-nāma*, expeditions to Hend and Sarandib (Sri Lanka)



feature prominently among the hero's fantastic adventures, no doubt under the influence of popular stories about the Indian campaigns of Alexander the Great.

The stereotype of the Hindu developed into an element of lyrical imagery which had little to do with reality. It appears also in the works of poets who had no actual experience with Indians at all. Some of its features, however, are indeed related to material culture, such as the Indian sword (*tiḡ* or *šamšir-e hendi*), which Farroki even could use metonymically, when he speaks of *zakm-e hendi*, “a blow by the Indian sword” (*Divān*, p. 6, line 118a). In an ingenious conceit the poet Kāqāni (d. 1199) used the association sword/Indian when he praised one of his patrons as a defender of Islam: *tiḡ-e to dānad ke čist ramz-o ešārāt-e din / ʔorfe bovad henduyi w-az ‘Arabi tarjomān* “your sword knows about the secrets and allusions of the [Islamic] faith / it is a remarkable phenomenon, being [and yet] a Hindu, a translator from Arabic [of the Qur’an]” (*Divān*, p. 331, 1.5). Among perfumes, products associated with India, are aloë (*ud-e hendi*) and amber (*anbar-e hendi*), both mentioned already by Farroki (*Divān*, p. 240, 1. 4767 and p. 387, 1. 7854).

More prominent in poetry is the part played by the image of the Hindu in a confrontation of ethnic types, in particular when it is put in opposition to the Turk. The latter is associated with a fair complexion, beauty, and military virtues, which are qualities befitting the lyrical persona of the Beloved [q.v.] with its combination of attractiveness and cruelty. In contrast to this, the Hindu is “ugly, mean and blackish” (Schimmel, 1974, p. 244), and even cunning (cf., e.g., Hāfez, *Divān*, no. 395, 1. 5: *ḡilat-e Hendu*). In one of Neẓāmi's conceits an origin from Hend is ascribed to the crow in the description of a garden in winter, because he has stolen the song of the nightingale (Ritter, p. 12). But the Indian is above all the slave; saying that one is someone's “Hindu” is a strong expression of devotion, especially in love. Notwithstanding the association with ugliness, items in the conventional description of a beautiful face which are remarkable for their black color, are said to be Indian, such as the mole (*kal*: *kāl-e hendu* ‘black beauty spot’), the locks (*ʔorra*, *zolf*) and the pupils of the eyes. In such imagery the link to ethnic characteristics is hardly relevant, so that it may be used together with features of another ethnic type in the characterization of a single person, e.g., when Neẓāmi describes the princess of Hend as *āhu-ye Tork-čašm-e Hendu-zād* (“a gazelle with Turkish eyes, of Indian blood”; *Haft Peykar*, p. 121).

The religious connotation of Hindu can be applied in a purely pictorial



manner without any deeper meaning, e.g., when the smoke surrounding a fire is compared to Indians prostrating themselves (Ritter, p. 13). In a mystical context, however, Hindustan becomes an apt symbol for the material world of clay and water, as against the Turkestan of spiritual being (see in particular Schimmel, 1978, pp. 193-97). The Hindu is also the night, which is engaged in combat with the Turk of daylight. In astrology the dark and inauspicious planet Saturn is frequently called the Hindu of the Firmament.

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