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## **Role of India in the Formation of Political Relations between Iran and Britain during the Period of Fath Ali Shah Qajar**

### **Abstract**

With the beginning of Qajar period, the competition between European powers for acquiring world resources increased, and inevitably, Iran was also dragged into the political circle of the world. British settlements in India and the expansionist policies of Russia and France (the most important colonial competitors of Britain) opened a new chapter in Indo-Iran relations and for a few decades transformed the Indian sub-continent into the main centre of Iran's relations with Europe. Iran, situated in the neighborhood of India, augmented the greed of Russia and France on the one hand by encouraging them to establish political relations with Iran, while on the other hand, it convinced the British to pursue a more active diplomacy towards Iran.

The revolt of Indian people against the British under the leadership of Tipu Sultan, the support of Afghan Emir, Zaman Shah, for this revolt and the French attempt to instigate Iran in the matter related to the developments in India made the political situation of southwest Asia more complex. In this article various aspects of Iran's relations with the British government in India have been assessed.

**Key Words:** foreign relations, India, Iran, colonial, Tipu Sultan, Zaman Shah.

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## **Introduction**

The expansionist policy of Peter the Great influenced the contemporary history of Iran. He, who was fascinated by the industrial and economic growth and development of Western Europe, especially Britain, made an effort to occupy regions of Caucasus and the western Province of Iran in his reign. By occupying Iran, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, he intended to open the trade route of Russia to the sea and bring India under the domination of Russia.

To achieve this target, Peter dispatched three thousand and five hundred forces to Central Asia to open the gateway to India. Although these forces fell in the trap of the tribesmen of the region and were destroyed, it did not deter the Russian Tsar from trying to reach India. Consequently, Peter invaded Iran and brought Baku, Gilan, Mazandaran and Astrabad into his possession. Not long before that, the Afghans had invaded Iran and there was no power left to defy the Russians. But the victory of Peter in Iran was short-lived as his successors faced the emergence of Nadir Shah Afshar and forsook the claim of the possessed regions.

After the murder of Nadir Shah, Russians invaded the regions of Caucasus and Azerbaijan once more. Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar tried to put an end to this expansionism, but his murder hindered this objective. Fath Ali Shah also tried to get past the Russian by having close relations with the European powers. After the Russian invasion of the northwest border of Iran and the steps taken by the French who, by every means, wanted to harm the British interests in the Indian sub-continent, the British doubled their attention towards Iran.

## **Influence of India on the Relations between Iran and Britain**

This article does not intend to dig into Iran-Britain relations, rather its target is to review the phenomenon which on account of Iran's neighborhood with India has prepared the background for Iran-Britain relations.

From the seventeenth century A.D. onwards, Britain succeeded in grabbing the administration of various states, barring some of the regions of North-West from the hands of the Rajas and Mughal

emperors. India possessed abundant wealth and the continuance of British Empire depended on it. If London was considered as the brain of British Empire, India was like its heart which ran its wealth and splendor to the arteries of that country. After the revolutions in Europe and North America, India's importance for the British colonial government doubled because after that Great Britain lost its significance in the western parts, and it was India alone which could provide it with wealth and splendor. For this very reason, the British authorities tried to bring into existence obstructing regions around India. Napoleon's expansionism and the Russian advances to India through Iran were the causes due to which the British turned their hands, more than before, to the formation of a puppet government in the borders of the western parts of India.

### **Competition of European Powers in Iran**

With the beginning of Safavid rule in Iran, European powers established relations with Iran. These relations were mainly on the basis of trade interests. But from the middle of this dynasty, Russia, Britain and France paid attention to Iran from the political point of view. The British established East India Company in 1600 A.D. in the competition against the Portuguese. Russians, too, on account of neighborhood, had made presence in Iran earlier than the British. With the beginning of the reign of Peter, the relations of Iran with that country changed from trade to political, and the competition between Russia and Britain which was also of trade nature, took the shape of political relation. (Qaim Maqami, 1326:16) After his death, the successors of Peter made extensive efforts to have access to the Persian Gulf and India. In fact, in his will he had asked his successors to do so: "To be the masters of the whole world and have access to the treasures of Asia and Europe, it is necessary to acquire Constantinople and its vicinity." He further added: "It is essential on your part that without any hesitation take Georgia and Caucasus under your possession and make the king of Iran your protégé. Thereafter you should move towards India as it is a very large country and the best market for trade." (Taj Bakhsh, 1362: 10-11)

When Catherine assumed power, she tried to exercise her influence mostly in the southern parts of Russia. As a result, her

soldiers disembarked on the Gulf of Astrabad. The selection of Astrabad by Russia was for the reason that it was situated in the trade route between Bukhara and India. In order to stabilize the position of her soldiers, Catherine ordered them to get the consent of Aqa Mohammad Khan, the sovereign leader of Astrabad. But Aqa Mohammad Khan opposed this request (Avery, 1387:309). Hence, the Russian soldiers encamped on the coast of Gurgan and Ashuradeh. Aqa Mohammad Khan, due to the lack of naval forces, did not take any step to drive out the aggressors but warned the Russian soldiers to leave the Iranian soil as soon as possible. Aqa Mohammad Khan ordered the Russian Commander and his officers to meet him and during the meeting, he arrested them and kept them hostage until the Russian Commander ordered his soldiers to leave Ashuradeh (ibid: 154).

One of the British officers writes on the importance of Astrabad to India: "In the beginning of the nineteenth century the strategic importance and position of Astrabad have been discussed widely and Napoleon and Tsar of Russia were busy in chalking out plans to conquer India from this route which was only possible through planning and that seemed rational." (Sykes, 1363:15)

The French, too, extended their influence in the East, including Asia, at the end of the 18th century. They created obstacle in the passage to the Persian Gulf. These explorations did not make the British happy as they saw the presence of the French in these regions dangerous for their Indian colonies. The British opposed the French Revolution more than any European country and formed the axis of military alliance against the French. Napoleon had also rightly known that India was the Iron door for the British and if he sent his forces to India, British power would be destroyed (Maleh, 1345:504-505). The British were also aware that the occupation of India was practical through Iran, Afghanistan, Sind and Punjab because during the course of time the conquerors of India had achieved their targets through these routes. For this reason the British endeavored hard. In the year 1796, Lashington, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the East India Company wrote to Murray Dandas, another member of the Board of Directors of the East India Company, about the threat to India by France. He proposed for alliance with Iran in order to fight the French (Avery, 1387:367). In addition to the European powers, Zaman shah

who had also dominance over Kabul and a large part of Afghanistan decided to extend his dominion up to the Gangetic coast. Moreover, Indian Rajas who were unhappy with the British dominance in their land sought for his help to drive them out (Mahmood, 1353: 15-16).

### **Representatives of Colonial Governments at the Court of Qajar**

In the period coinciding with the formation of the Qajar government, the French sent two botanists named Olivie and Bruniere, along with a translator, to Iran (Dugardan, 1362:16). They were entrusted with the task of persuading the Iranian king to take sides in favour of Tipu Sultan with his twelve thousand soldiers in their revolt against the British in India. These two persons reached Iran after the murder of Aqa Mohammad Khan. They reached the Iranian capital at a time when Fath Ali Shah had still not reached Teheran from Shiraz and had not graced the throne. Therefore, Ibrahim Khan Senior sent them back. However, the French did not get disappointed in forming relations with Iran and once again sent a letter to the Iranian king through a trader named David. Since nobody knew French in the Iranian court, they did not pay attention to that letter (Sipahr, 1377 : 146 ; Hidayat, 1380 : 7562). After that Napoleon sent Djoubre and Romeo to Iran and also immediately sent Djavanan, Ben Tan and Da La Blash, the nephew of Taleran to that country. It is evident from the letters, declarations and memorandum of Napoleon that Iran held significant position for the French to take on the Russians and British and to threaten India (Tarah Zel, Bi Ta : 31-32). The British had serious concern of the French plans and therefore, dispatched Mirza Mahdi Khan, an employee of the East India Company to Bushahr, to thwart the French attempts. The objective of sending him there was to prevent the influence as well as the threat of the French and Zaman Shah on India and development of trade relations with Iran (Avery, 1387 : 368).

The revolt of Tipu Sultan, interference of Zaman Shah in it and French support for the revolution were the factors that encouraged the British to establish relations with Iran. French Foreign Minister advised Napoleon that by sending eighty thousand forces to India and strengthening Indian chieftains who had revolted against the British, that country could be cleared (from the British). Therefore, after his conquest of Egypt, Napoleon established relations with Tipu Sultan. As

Tipu Sultan had recaptured Mysore with the help of the French, Napoleon was hopeful of taking his help in the fight against the British (Tarah Zel, Bi Ta : 37).

One of the historians of Qajar period, referring to the military expedition of Ahmad Shah Durrani and his son Timur to India and regarding the concerns of the British after Zaman Shah, the son of Timur, came to power, writes: "The British believed that if the Afghan Emir settled down, they would attack India. For this reason they started operations, open as well as clandestine, for the disintegration of the Durrani rule in Afghanistan. Tipu Sultan's revolt against the British in India intensified in the regions around it. Tipu also knew that he might not be able to face the British threat single-handedly, so he requested Zaman Shah to start military campaign in India and take his side in the fight against the British. The British, despite their engagements in Europe, could not remain aloof from the dangerous alliance of Tipu Sultan and Zaman Shah. It was to achieve this objective that the British ruler wrote a letter to Fath Ali Shah and advised the British Commander in India to send the letter through a clever and experienced man along with precious gifts and ask him to move towards Khorasan on the pretext of maintaining law and order in the region so that the Afghan Emir sensing Iran's invasion on India, would ignore the thought of invading India." (Khawari, 1380 : 127-129)

Another Qajar historian writes in this regard: "During this period, William IV had taken control of India and the Company looked after the affairs in his place in Calcutta. When he heard of pomp and grandeur of the king, as per the customs of the kings, he sent congratulatory message through a messenger and expressed his friendship and meanwhile wished that the Iranian and the British be together so that the Afghans do not intend to conquer India and the king does not leave the Iranian soldiers relieved and desist from travelling to India." (Hidayat, 1380 : 7490)

At last, Mirza Mahdi Ali Khan, reached the court of Fath Ali Shah along with presents and gifts in the year 1799, with more authority to have talks with him (Khurmoji, 1344 : 12). The British envoy, in his correspondence with the Iranian king, emphasized that the king should pay no attention to the British concern of Zaman Shah. Abstaining from

dragging the East India Company in the talks, he referred to the Afghan aggression in Lahore, thereby inciting the feelings of the Iranian ruler by describing the fate of thousands of Afghan Shias who had taken refuge in India due to the high handedness of the rulers of that region. Mahdi Ali Khan was exhorting the Iranian king to put an end to all this and render services to God and people and protect his frontiers from their evils. He made a lot of efforts to send Mahmood and Feroze, two brothers of Zaman Shah who had taken shelter in the Iranian court, back to Afghanistan. Mahdi Ali Khan had a royal order that permitted him to have agreement with Iran at any cost, by spending money to incite the Iranian king against Zaman Shah, but he was trying to achieve the desired result with lesser political diplomacy and lesser use of resources. When the British envoy came to know of the intention of the Iranian king to invade Afghanistan, he concealed this charter from the view of the Iranian king. He writes in this regard: "If the eyes of the Iranian and king had fallen on the credibility of my letter and had they paid attention to my political and financial powers, they would have understood that the Indian government was inclined to buy the friendship and closeness of Iran in this regard. As I knew that the king was himself willing to attack Afghanistan and there was no need to instigate or extend British financial support for him, I decided not to mention that charter and instead described another letter that contained the condolence of the death of the king's uncle and greetings on his accession to the throne." (Watson, 1340 : 87; Nawaii, 1369 : 41)

In this visit he got a charter from the Iranian king that any Frenchman entering into the Iranian soil from any point be arrested and sent to jail (Watson, 1340 : 87).

Simultaneous to the visit of the British envoy to Iran, Tipu Sultan also sent a delegation to Iran. In his letter, Tipu asked the Iranian king to support the revolt of Indians. Relying on the support of Safavid kings for their Indian counterparts against internal and external threats, he asked Fath Ali Shah to play his historical role in defending India from the British colonial rule. One of the sources of Qajar period says: "When the envoy of the British king left London for India and set out for Iran, Tipu Sultan also sent an emissary from among the remaining Sultans of Deccan and asked him, in his letter, to ask the British not to have a greedy look on Deccan, and since Safavid kings had extended

their support for the Qutub Shahi dynasty of Deccan, the Islam-loving Iranian king has also the consideration of taking their side.” (Hidayat, 1380 : 7491)

Another historian writes: “On the other hand, glib-tongued emissaries of Tipu Sultan reached Deccan and informed that the British had taken the possession of four of the seven provinces of India and were still eyeing on the remaining three provinces. It is expected that in case of war the king of Iran would not abstain from assisting us.” (Sipahr, 1377:106)

However, this visit did not bring the joy on the faces of the emissaries of Tipu Sultan because after few days of their return, Tipu was killed in a violent British attack in his capital (Hidayat, 1380: 7491; Khawari, 1380:129). In this situation, the arrogation of the Afghan Emir towards Khorasan made the political situation of the region more complex. At a time when Fath Ali Shah had the intention of moving towards Khorasan, the emissary of Zaman Shah was trying to persuade him to hand over Khorasan to Zaman Shah and keep away from that province. But the Qajar used to consider not only Khorasan but also the whole of Afghanistan including Kabul, Qandhar and Hirat as a part of the Iranian government. Fath Ali Shah became very angry at this request and was more determined to crush the Afghan Emir. The circumstances leading to the steps taken by the Iranian king in the year 1800 have been described in one of the sources of the Qajar: “Turreh Baaz Khan, the Afghan, asked Shah Zaman through a letter about the expedition of the Iranian king to Khorasan which was the cause of concern for people out there and if the expedition of the Iranian king was postponed, it would be a royal gesture from his part. Fath Ali Shah replied in writing that he would not hesitate in demanding his inherited country and the occupation of Khorasan, and if anybody wanted answer in that regard, he would get that answer in the language of the sword.” (Sipahr, 1377:107)

Another historian writes on the request made by Turreh Baaz Khan in this way: “The area of Khorasan, because of its neighborhood with the conquered part of Afghanistan, must be in the possession of Shah Zaman as Shah Zaman has no say in the whole of Iran. From that side, too, there should be no movement towards Khorasan. He should



consider him his younger brother and leave the kingdom of Khorasan to Zaman Shah.” This rude request of the Afghan Emir was replied in this way: “With the movement of the king, the objective is not to maintain discipline in Khorasan, but the whole objective is to wrest all the provinces related to the kingdom of Iran from the conquest of the outsiders. So, the expedition towards Jurud, Qandhar and Kabul is final and the thread of the conversation in this chapter depends on the precision of Azershim.” (Khawari, 1380 : 132-133).

“Mahmood Mirza, the brother of Zaman Shah, had taken refuge in Iran with his brothers and sons. He left towards the vicinity of Kandahar and Kabul on the order of Fath Ali Shah. The Iranian king ordered his men at Khorasan to assist Mahmood Mirza in removing Zaman Shah.” (ibid: 134)

#### **Impact of British Diplomacy on the Changes in India**

The impact of the establishment of relations between Iran and the Governor-General of India was to open the British hand for the extinction of Tipu Sultan. The British, probably, thought that perhaps Mahdi Ali Khan would not be able to incite Fath Ali Shah against Tipu Sultan. So, they took initiative and by attacking Tipu's forces annihilated him. The defeat of Zaman Shah's aggressive plan to India was among the other outcomes of Mahdi Ali Khan's visit. The actions of the Iranian king caused Zaman Shah, who had set out for India to fight against the British, to, inevitably, get back to fight against the Iranian forces and his brother. The fight that ensued resulted in the defeat of Zaman Shah. At last, he was arrested and blinded by his brother and his vizier even killed. The clandestine political activities of the British started in Kandahar from 1800 A.D. They incited various Sikh tribes for revolt against Zaman Shah outside Afghanistan. They also carried out successive campaigns within the country and incited feudal lords, spiritual leaders and military forces against him. To give a final blow to him, they dragged him from Kandahar to the border of India. This policy was against the earlier diplomacy of the British because before that by propagating the probable attack of Iran on Afghanistan from the side of Hirat and Kandahar, they would bring Zaman Shah to Afghanistan from the coasts of the Sind and by the sides of Punjab and India. But this time to distance him from Kandahar

and open the passage to Iranians' attack they carried out rebellions and revolts in Punjab and opened the passage for Mahmood to attack Kandahar from Tarshiz. Even at a time, when Zaman Shah reached Kandahar from Kabul, they deceived some of his commanders and consequently there was nothing except defeat left for this adventuresome emir (Mohd. Ghubar, Bi Ta: 389-390).

The cooperation of Fath Ali Shah with the British for the extermination of the Afghans and not lending support to the Indian fighters who had revolted against the colonial rule of the British was a mistake from the historical point of view, and the Qajar government paid the price of it by losing Hirat and a large part of Sistan and Baluchistan. Relations between India and Iran have always been based on trade and culture. These two countries have had racial and cultural relations since the time of the migration of the Aryans in the third millennium B.C. and have carried on business in various fields for centuries to come. Falling of India in the hands of the colonialists not only dried up the source of lasting profit of Iran in India but also provided background for future interferences of Western countries with the powerful presence of a European country on the Eastern Border. The success of the British in benefitting from the position of Iran to dispel the threat of Afghans and Tipu Sultan caught the attention of the Europeans to the world equations and after that, those European countries pursued disciplined programs to suit their colonial interests.

With the role played by Iran in crushing Zaman Shah and the advantage taken by its colonial competitors on account of the presence of the Iranian forces on the western border of India, the French government became aware of the importance of Iran more than before. Had the French thought of taking Iranians to their side before any operation, their actions against the British in India would not have resulted in defeat.

### **Role of the French in Britain's Closer Relations with Iran**

After the defeat of French marines, the British became the masters of the sea. Napoleon had accepted this fact and wrote in his memoir: from 31st March 1807 to October no boats could cross from French harbors because the exit of boats meant the destruction of French navy by the

British (Tarah Zel, Bi Ta: 29). Consequently Napoleon decided to attack India from the land route. After his alliance with the Tsar of Russia, he decided to get in touch with Russian soldiers on the entrance passage of India by crossing Northern Iran and by the route of Herat, Kandahar and Afghanistan. Alliance between Russia and France and the rumor of Napoleon's invasion of India by the route of Iran increased the concerns of the British government. Thus, Lord Wellesley decided to send an important delegation comprising of elites to Teheran. He sent the political delegation under the leadership of Captain John Malcolm. The main objective of Malcolm's visit was to set aside the threat of Afghan settlements on the Western Border and also to prevent the French influence in Iran (Avery, 1378:370). Contrary to the earlier reports, Malcolm signified the political importance of Iran to all British authorities in Bombay who had mostly trade interests, and announced that in his opinion a probable attack on India in future would be carried out through the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and/ or through the Caspian Sea. He proposed that for the safety of India against these threats they must be united with Iran and provide a strong base in Iran and the Persian Gulf in order to support India. In the opinion of this young officer, Bushahr was the best place for stationing British forces (ibid: 371). At last, he succeeded in entering into a political and trade agreement with Iran in 1801, according to which the Iranian king was entrusted with the task of preventing the Afghan attack on India and curbing the crossing of European forces, especially the French ones, to Iran with the intention of attacking India (Taj Bakhsh, 1362:13-14).

On the other hand, Alexander, the new Tsar of Russia also established goodwill relations with Iran. In this way the policies of European Countries came to a change in Iran. Now, the Franco-Iranian alliance could alone account for the threat to India. The agreement of 1801, too, did not provide much satisfaction for the British. The British saw the engagement of Iran to safeguard their colonial interests. They utilized their friendship with Russia to incite it to attack Iran. The Russians, who were also waiting for the opportunity, had the Iranian border in their sight. Now, Iran had come into the shackles of a new colonial power and it could no longer think of alliance with France. Afterwards, all the Iranian efforts were spent defending its borders. War between Iran and Russia and the hostile relations between the

Russian Tsar Alexander and Napoleon dispelled British concerns in the Iranian region for long, and when the threats against Indian settlements reduced, London did not pay further attention towards Iran.

### **Iran's Proximity with France and Its Impact on India**

Following the intensity of Russian attacks, Fath Ali Shah sought help from Malcolm who was still in Iran, as per the agreement of the year 1801. But at that time the relations between Britain and France had become cordial, and assisting Iran was not in the interest of that country; Malcolm rejected this request. On the other side, France was also making efforts to attract the attention of Iranian officials to attack India. But the Iranian government which was satisfied with the British did not accept this proposal. Despite Fath Ali Shah's inclination to secure relations with the British, the authorities of that country neither offered help to him nor accepted the Iranian ambassador. Napoleon, who had been keeping an eye on the events in Iran, sent a letter to Fath Ali Shah and promised him assistance in reclaiming the captured land from Russia on the condition he broke agreement with the British. Under such circumstances, France was planning to carry out attacks against India on the one hand, while on the other hand, the British were determined to thwart this plan. Iran which was also caught in the whirlpool of ignorance and was not able to understand the game played by the colonial powers was making efforts to get the British support, as per the earlier agreements. The British this time offered assistance to Iran on the condition that they are permitted to fortify in the Bushahr port (QaimMaqami, 1326:18). The Iranian King rejected this proposal and being disappointed with the British, he turned towards the French. Napoleon welcomed this move because by mounting the thought of attack on India, he was determined to divert the Russian's attention from Europe by sending forces to Iran. In this situation one of the experienced secretaries of the Iranian court was sent to France to enter into agreement with them. Napoleon welcomed the Iranian ambassador, and consequently an agreement was signed between the two countries. (Maruzi, 1369:153) On the basis of this agreement, Iran promised to sever ties from Britain, and by driving out their citizens, declare war with that country. It also persuaded Afghans to attack India. Similarly, Iran acceded that in the case of Napoleon's decision to invade India, it

would allow the French forces to cross from Iran (Etezad- al Saltanah, 1356 : 54 , 66 ; Sipahr 1377:164).

One of the historians of Qajar writes on the contents of this agreement in this way: “ What Emperor the Great (Napoleon) wishes is that in the distant future whenever there was the necessity of sending troops to India to drive out the British through land route, his majesty the Iranian king would allow them to send troops through its soil and also accompany them in Indian expedition. In this regard the agreement between Iran and France states what should be the number of troops from both sides; their resources and essential commodities should come from which way and how many Iranian forces should accompany them. All these things said and done, be sent for the permission of his majesty the Iranian king and set out for Iran.” (Sipahr, 1377: 748)

Following this agreement, General Gordon was entrusted with the training of Iranian soldiers. Napoleon emphasized that since Iran was the natural enemy of Russia and an appropriate route for the attack on India, it held significant importance. General Gordon had the responsibility of instigating war between Iran and Russia as far as possible (Etezad- al Saltanah, 1365: 55 ; Sipahr, 1377: 585). After his presence in Iran, he introduced the routes of Halab, Baghdad, Basra, Bushahr, Shiraz and Yazd, in a letter, to carry out attacks in India. However, due to the presence of the British in the Persian Gulf, he did not see it appropriate for the crossing of French artillery from there. Another route from Orfa, Hamadan, Khorasan and Hirat was also not suitable because it was too far. He proposed: French forces should pass through the Black Sea and Trabouzan; some of the soldiers must set towards India through arzrome, van, Hamadan, Yazd and others through Tehran, Khorasan and Hamadan. In the eyes of Gordon, Hirat was a good place for the encampment of soldiers because in case goods and equipments were assembled in Astrabad, there was the possibility of Passing from Hirat to Kabul and Peshawar.

General Gordon writes in this report: The Iranian king is ready to arrange his troops (lashkar Kasheedan) up to Delhi as he believes in driving out the British from India in the next two years. He considers the attack on India among the great ideals of the Iranians (Dugardan, 1362: 64-66).

It seems Napoleon was more interested in India than having the thoughts of driving out the Russians from Georgia and Caucasus (Tarah Zel, Bi Ta: 39). For this reason the alliance between Iran and France resulted in defeat. Soon after, the French closed the Teleset agreement with the Russians. In this agreement there was no hint of Iranian interest. However, there was the possibility of Iran, France and Russia forming an alliance. Such an alliance was being considered as a big threat to British settlements in India. But Napoleon's engagements in Europe, close relations between Iran and France and the happenings in Spain and Portugal, at least for a brief period, protected India from any European attack (Maaleh and Isaac, 1364:17-622 ; Avery, 1387: 376).

The Iranian king, having been disappointed with France, once again turned to the British. But with the threat from France gone, relations with Iran had lost significance for the British and they were thinking more of catching the attention of Russians. For this very reason when Fath Ali Shah, on the basis of the agreement with Malcolm, sought for help to fight against Russians, the British authorities in India rejected the Iranian request, and Barlow, in charge of affairs in India, on the pretext that the agreement was to fight against the French not the Russians, refused to help Iran (Campbell, 1384: 6).

The circumstances under which the colonial powers were in pursuit of alliance with Iran to secure their interest in the region, made the indigenous forces around Iran become determined to protect their lands from the enemies. Before that the representatives of Tipu Sultan had referred to the Iranian king seeking for his help. It was obvious that Fath Ali Shah would not pay heed to such requests, and it resulted in the strengthening of alien forces in India. Under such circumstances, once again the representatives of Sindh, Kabul and Peshawar met with Fath Ali Shah and sought for his help to fight the British power in India. The governing council of the Sindh province sent a representative to Iran to establish relations with Iran to be safe from British and Afghan vexations. Qajar sources have made references to these parleys. One of the court historians of the Qajar court writes in this regard: "At this time with the fear that Mahmood Mirza, son of Timur Shah Afghani, who was given shelter by the Iranian government...takes a decision or (out of fear that) the British authorities -- as they have overcome India - may rise again to acquire

Sindh and more importantly the Iranian king declares war for the acquisition of Sindh (because in the agreement of Kaikhusro, Punjab and Sindh were among the parts of Iran and Nadir Shah Afshar did so after his Indian conquest), thus they called the governing council and suggested that humbleness and sincerity at the Iranian court has nothing wrong with it...therefore, Mirza Mohammad Ali and Mirza Mohammad Ismail, who were from Sindh, were sent to Iran with a letter and presents. Having travelled by boat, they reached the Iranian capital Tehran through the Abbas Port late in Zi Qada and offered the letter and presents to the king.” (Sipahr, 1377:167)

The representatives of the Sindh government remained in the Iranian court for one month until Fath Ali Shah sent Khwajah Wand with them with presents. In this way, friendly relations between Fath Ali Shah and the government of Sindh were established (Sipahr, 1377: 168).

Following this request, Fath Ali Shah recommended the British envoy to desist from any disruptive activities against Sindh. Likewise, the ruler of Sindh, Mohammad Wali Mirza and the ruler of Fars were also given order that in case of attack on Afghans and all the inhabitants of Sindh, they should hasten to their help and defend them with ample forces (Hidayat, 1380: 7607).

The situations in the regions of Kashmir and Punjab were disturbed during this period, and since Iran was enjoying historical and cultural relations between the two countries, it could simply dispel the pressure the British colonialism was imposing on Iran and India. The readiness of Indian people for cooperation with Iran has been described in one of the Qajar sources in this way: “A man from the Sikh community of India, famous as the followers of Baba Nanak, whose name was Ranjit had brought Kashmir under his possession. The people of Kabul and Peshawar who were the refugees of the Iranian government, wrote a letter to the Iranian king through Husain Ali Khan Jawanshir with such details that, “whenever the king appoints a prince in this region, we, the followers of Qizilbash who have since long been the obedient of the Iranian king, would ourselves keep away from the power and humbly hand over to the brothers of Fath Ali Khan until the conquest of Peshawar and Punjab without any difficulty”. After the arrival of Husain Ali Khan Jawanshir, the king of Iran became aware of

their needs. Because from the beginning he had cordial relations with the British and stationing soldiers there would have been the cause of concern for the British government in India, after a few days he ordered Husain Ali Khan to stay in the capital and then, as per his wishes, he sent letters to the rulers of Sindh through him (Sipahr, 1377:416).

Except for this reference, there are no more words of practical assistance of the Iranian government to these regions as many of the Iranian governments did not consider it prudent to go against the British government leaving the fate of the region at the hands of the British. Soon afterwards, the British first conquered Sindh and thereafter separated Afghanistan from Iran on the way to achieve their colonial objectives; this can be considered a consequence of the lazy politics of Iran.

#### **Revising Iran's Relations by the Governor General of India**

After striking the Teleset deal, Lord Minto, the British Governor General in India, who was sensing serious danger in India, was determined to establish friendly relations with Iran. Therefore, Malcolm was once again sent to Teheran by the Governor General. Considering the importance of friendly relations with Iran, Sir Harfore Jones was also sent to Iran. (Maruzi, 1369:169-172 ; Hidayat, 1380: 7594 , 7604)

Malcolm did not get the desired result in this task. He came to Iran for the third time in the year 1809. Before his journey to Iran, Malcolm met Sir Van Charles Christie and Steven Henry Potinjer in Bombay and to get them acquainted with the routes of Sistan and Herat, he sent them on an exploration visit to south and central Iran. After visiting these regions, the British officers brought first hand information and submitted it to Malcolm. Even before this, there was no information regarding the practicality of the obstruction of whole European military to India through Sistan, Baluchistan or Makran. These actions were very useful for British plans in Western India (Avery, 1387: 379). One of the British authors hints at the dual policies of Britain and its divisive role in this way: "In the beginning of the nineteenth century we, the British, tried to form alliance between us and Iran against the dual threat of Napoleon on the one hand and



Afghanistan on the other hand and we succeeded in it. Now it should be our policy to reestablish relations with Iran. At the same time we should try to prepare ourselves for the fight against Iran and equip Afghanistan and Sindh with arms, and the Sikhs, who are our sincere friends, should be prepared to fight against Iran.” (Excerpts from Afshar Yazdi, Bi Ta: 69)

It was not only in the nineteenth century that the British rulers followed divide and rule policy, but also in the past they had such stance. When Khorshah Ismaili sent his representatives to the Pope for help against the Mughals, the Bishop of Manchester opined: “Let these dogs tear away one another and annihilate their generation. Then we would lay the foundation of general Catholic rule on their ruins. At that time the world will not be more than a shepherd and a herd” (Excerpts from Nawani, 1369: 28).

When Jones arrived in Teheran, he was welcomed in the Iranian court. After his meeting with the king and the courtiers, he succeeded in signing an agreement with Iran in the year 1809. According to this treaty, Iran agreed to attack with whatever forces it wanted and fight with them (Qaim Maqami, 1326: 32-33).

The agreement was very well serving British interests; yet, Lord Minto did not accept that heartily. He thought that the British power in India was very huge at that time and did not need help from Iran. On the other hand, with the events taking shape in Spain and Portugal and French involvement there, he was not seeing France as a threat anymore in India (Dallin and others, 1367: 124-138). But the Foreign Ministry of Britain had another plan. They sent Sir Gore Ousley to Iran with more powers and emphasized: Previous ambassadors have only given attention to the interests of the East India Company, while your appointment is done by the state Exchequer and you should get the orders and guidance from the Foreign Ministry of Britain and be responsible to this Ministry alone (Avery, 1387: 380).

After that Ousley came to Iran. In this capacity he transformed the previous agreement that was known as Majmal into a final agreement (1812). Thereafter, the Governor Generalship of India in place of concern from Russian and Afghan threats was only worried about the

expansionism of Russia and little by little, both the Russians and the British expanded the circle of their rivalry to the eastern part of Iran.

### **Conclusion**

In the nineteenth century A.D. India was Britain's most fertile colony and all European countries started rivalries to get hold of it. Since India had neighborhood with Iran, three countries, namely France, Britain and Russia pursued many diplomatic steps for the establishment of relations with Iran. France was considered as the biggest rival of the British. For this reason, Britain was on the one hand trying to prevent relations between Iran and France and on the other hand, it was protecting its colonies by establishing puppet governments around India. Napoleon succeeded in entering into an agreement with Fath Ali Shah that allowed him to attack India from Iran. But the French, after peace with Russia, could not fulfill their responsibilities towards Iran and hence, provided a background for close relations between Iran and Britain. The revolt of Tipu Sultan and the threat of Zaman Shah Afghan also persuaded the British authorities to establish relations with Iran. Consequently, due to the impact of the political steps taken by the Governor General of India, a troop was sent by Fath Ali Shah to Khorasan which dispelled the threat of Zaman Shah to a certain extent. The efforts of Tipu Sultan, to take the Iranian king to his side, in the revolt of Indian people against the British, was also fruitless, and the British succeeded in becoming the masters of the region. The politics of positive approach and the method of opening a third power taken to fight against the Russian threats by the Iranian government did not bear fruit for Iran. With the threat of Napoleon subsided in Europe, the rivalry of Russia and Britain was extended to the eastern part of Iran and the whole of Iran became the ground for colonial rivalry. So, it seems that not lending support to the revolt of Indian people against the British by the Iranian government and not utilizing Afghan forces to put pressure on Britain was a mistake the cost of which was paid by losing Afghanistan and the influence of Russia and Britain in Iran.

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