
UNIT 10 MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: INDO-PERSIAN

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ghurian conquest of north India towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. is an important event in Indian history. This is because an independent sultanate, founded in its wake, opened India to foreign influences on the one hand and led to the unification of the country under a strong centre on the other. It also attracted emigrants from the neighbouring countries who represented different cultural traditions. One of the traditions introduced by them was that of history writing. The historical literature produced by them in Persian language is of vast magnitude. As a matter of fact, the study of history was considered by the Muslim elite as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and the jurisprudence. With the coming of the Mughals in the 16th century the tradition of history writing achieved new heights. During the Mughal period, the state patronised writing of history and we have a large body of historical literature in Persian spread over two centuries. In this Unit, we will analyse the tradition of history writing during the Sultanate and Mughal periods.

10.2 SULTANATE PERIOD

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events.

It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the style is also generally eulogising or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written.

In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works.

Apart from historical texts a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdu'r Razzaq's *Matla'us Sa'dain* (travelogue), Tutsi's *Siyasatnama* (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at* (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (*Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar*) have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will study the historiography for the whole Sultanate period in separate subsections.

10.2.1 The Pioneers

The pioneer in history-writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period. In Lahore he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab*, the book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri). The compiler wanted to present it to the sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as *Sipahsalar* of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India.

It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting. Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends.

No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogising the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance. For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. This ceremony, indeed, implied operational legitimacy for Sultan's claim to authority. Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land-grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others. The collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour were abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian Conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. It was in view of its importance that in 1927, the English scholar, E. Denison Ross separated it from the manuscript of *Shajra-i-Ansab* and published its critically edited text with his introduction (in English) under the title *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*.

Another important work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It is written in the episodic form of

historiography. It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period.

The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. Being a literary genius and a master of the conceits of Arabic and Persian poetry, Hasan Nizami makes abundant use of metaphors, similes and rhetoric for the sake of literary ornamentation. The work abounds in unnecessary verbiage. Sans verbiage and unnecessary details, the historical material could be reduced to almost half of the book's size without any loss of the content.

As for his approach, he begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin Sam. However, from the year 1192 upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 A.D. Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was taking part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak. No mentions has been made by the Compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority. His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. For example, when he refers to the Hindu Chiefs attending the Sultan's court, he simply states, "the carpet of the auspicious court became the Kissing place of *Rais* of India". It contains no biographical details of the nobles, though many of them were the architects of the Sultanate. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history-writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (hereafter mentioned as Minhaj) was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period upto his own time, the year 1259 A.D., seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkuh and Ghazna. He himself served under different Ghurid Princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed the head of the *Firuzi Madrassa* (government college) in Uch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sind and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236-40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of *Madrassa-i Nasiri* in Delhi. Later on, he rose

to the position of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud.

It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259.

The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol irruption under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterised by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had first hand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan.

The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of 'conveying intimation' on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticised directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish's criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltutmish's rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj's sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptions to writing on the period covered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*. He rather preferred to begin his account from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban.

10.2.2 The Fourteenth Century Historiography

Many scholars seem to have written the 14th century histories of the Khalji and the Tughlaq Sultans. Ziauddin Barani mentions the official history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's reign by Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi but it is now extant. Amir Khusrau also compiled the *Khazainul Futuh*, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji. Khusrau also composed five historical *masnavis* (poems) in each of which historical events are described (in verse). It may, however, be recalled that neither Ziauddin Barani nor modern scholar, Peter Hardy regards Khusrau as a historian. They consider Khusrau's works as literary pieces rather than a historical work. Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami's *Futuh us Salatin* (1350), Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (1357), anonymous *Sirat-i*

Firuzshahi (1370-71) and Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (c.1400) are important historical works. A few of these 14th century historical works need to be analysed separately.

Isami's Narrative

The *Futuh-us Salatin* of Isami is a versified history of the Muslim rulers of India. It begins with the account of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna's reign (999-1030 A.D.) and comes to a close with that of the foundation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan by Alauddin Bahaman Shah, a rebel against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, in 1350. Though much is not known about the author, yet it may be added that his ancestors served the Delhi court since the time of Sultan Iltutmish. Ziauddin Barani includes one of the Isami family in the list of the leading nobles of Sultan Balban. Isami, himself was brought up by his grandfather, Izuddin Isami, a retired noble. he was still in his teens when his family was forcibly shifted to Daulatabad in 1327. His grandfather died on the way and the young Isami was filled with hatred against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The hostility towards Sultan Mohammad Tughluq is quite evident in his account and needs to be treated with caution.

The early part of Isami's narrative is based on popular legends and oral traditions which had reached to him through the time. His account of the early Sultans of India is also based on popular tales with historical facts available to him through earlier works. But the details of historical events from the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji are much more authentic and can be of corroborative and supplementary importance. In this part Isami supplements the information contained in Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* about the siege operations conducted by the military commanders of the Delhi Sultanate in different regions during the Khalji and the Tughluq period. Isami's description of the foundation of Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughluq as the second most important city and his account of socio-economic growth of Delhi under Alauddin Khalji and other cities is graphic and insightful. Barani has precedence on Isami only in his analysis of cause and effect, connected with historical events.

Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*

Barani is, no doubt, the doyen of the Indo-Persian historians of medieval India. Born in an aristocratic family and associated with the royal court of Delhi for generations, he was obviously concerned with the fate of the Delhi Sultanate. He seems to have believed that it was his duty to present through his *Tarikh-i Furuzshahi* an intellectual composition for the enlightenment of the ruling elite of his times.

Barani's *Tarikh* begins with the accession of Sultan Balban to the throne of Delhi in 1266 and comes to a close with the account of first six years of Sultan Firuzshah Tughluq's reign, i.e. the year 1356. Barani's *Tarikh* is unique to the Persian history writing tradition prevalent till his times. It is for the first time that he tries to analyse the cause and effect of the events and developments taking place in polity and economy. In his account of the economic policies and measures of Alauddin Khalji he provides an analysis with causes and formulation of the policies and their impacts. Barani also elaborates the purpose of writing history in explicit terms :

“The mean, the ignoble, the rude, the uncouth, the lowly, the base, the obscure, the vile, the destitute, the wretched, the low-born and the men of the market-place, can have no connection or business with History ; nor can its pursuit be their profession. The above-mentioned classes can derive no profit at all by learning the science of History, and it can be of no use to them at any time; for the science of History consists of (the account of) greatness and the description

of merits and virtues and glories of the great men of the Faith and State... The (Pursuit of the) science of History is (indeed) the special preserve of the nobles and the distinguished, the great men and the sons of great men.'

Barani also declares that the job of the historian is not only to eulogise the deeds and good works of the rulers but also to present to readers a critical account of the shortcomings and drawbacks of policies. Moreover, the scope of history is considerably widened by Barani with the inclusion of details about the cultural role performed by intellectuals, scholars, poets, and saints. Barani's style of history writing inspired the historians of the subsequent period, many of whom tried to follow his ideas.

10.2.3 Late Fourteenth Century Histories

Other major works of history from the second half of the 14th century are the anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, *Futuhāt-i Firuzshahi*, composed by the Sultan Firuz Tughluq himself and Shams Siraf Afif's *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi*. The rare manuscript copy of the *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, available in the Khuda Bakhsh library, Patna, does not contain the name of its author. It reads as an official history of Firuz Shah's reign up to the years 1370-71. It contains, besides the details of military and hunting expeditions led by Sultan Firuzshah, interesting information about religious sects, sufis, ulema, socio-ethical matters, science and technology such as astronomy, medicines, pharmacology, etc. It is really a compendium of many-sided activities, accomplishments and contribution made by the Sultan to the works of public utility. The construction of canals and water reservoirs, the foundation of the new cities with forts and repair of old monuments are described in detail.

The *Futuhāt-i Firuzshahi* was originally an inscription fixed on the wall of the Jama Mosque of Firuzshah's capital. Later on, it was copied and preserved in the form of a book. Through this, the Sultan wanted to disseminate to general public about reforms and projects he undertook for public welfare.

Shams Siraj Afif, another historian of the period seems to have served the Sultan during the last years of Firuzshah's reign. He tells us that his great grand father, Malik Shihab Afif worked as revenue officer in the province of Divalpur under Ghazi Malik during the reign of Ala-Uddin Khalji. His father and uncle supervised the management of Firuzshah's *karkhanas*. As Chaos and anarchy began to prevail after the death of Firuzshah (1388), he seems to have retired and devoted himself to writing the history of the Sultanate from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah (1320-1324). He refers to many volumes of his works, each devoted to the reigns of the individual Sultans. Of these only one, devoted to the reign of Firuzshah has survived the ravages of time. It seems to have been completed after the sack of Delhi by Timur in 1398. This work of his is full of nostalgia and portrays Firuzshah as a saintly ruler whose presence on the throne saved Delhi from every calamity. Because of this reason, he has written this volume in the form of *manaqib* (collection of virtues) like that of the spiritual biography of a saint. The name *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* has been given to it by the editors of the Text.

The book is divided into five *qism* (parts) each containing eighteen *muqaddimas* (chapters) of unequal length. The last (fifth) *qism* of the printed text comes to an end with the fifteenth chapter. The last three chapters seem to have been destroyed by the Mughal Emperors probably because they contained vivid details of the sack of Delhi by Timur, the ancestor of Babur. This volume of Afif is important for the information about socio-economic life and prosperity that resulted from the state-policies followed by Firuzshah. The details about the foundation of new urban centres, construction of canals, water reservoirs and the administrative reforms are invaluable. Similarly, mention made by him of the agrarian reforms introduced by Firuzshah casts light on his interest in revenue matters. It may also be pointed out that Afif does not fail to mention the abuses and

corruption that had crept in the administration; and says that officials in every ministry became corrupt. In the *diwan-i arz* (military department) the officials took one *tanka* per horse as bribe from the horseman at the time of annual muster. He also provides us with hints about the degeneration of the central army that was considered the best fighting force which could successfully defend the frontier against the Mongol invaders. On the whole it is, an important source of information about the life and culture in the Sultanate of Delhi during the later half of the fourteenth century.

After the dissolution of the Delhi Sultanate, a number of regional Sultanates and principalities arose. The capitals of these regional Sultanates replaced Delhi as the main centre of learning and culture. Delhi, which was reduced to the size of a town, was seized by Khizr Khan (Saiyid) the founder of a new dynasty. Khizr Khan (ruled from 1414 to 1421) and his son and successor, Sultan Mubarkshah (1421-1434) tried to rebuild the power of the Delhi Sultan but could not succeed. The latter was assassinated by his own nobles in the prime of his life. One of his officials Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, composed the history of the Sultanate and named it after the Sultan as *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi* in 1434. It begins with an account of Sultan Muizuddin Mohammed bin Sam, who led the Ghurian conquest of India and the account closes with the accession of Mohammad Shah in 1434. The compiler seems to have drawn information from a number of histories written in India at different times. Some of the sources utilised by Yahya are now extant but bits of information on them survived through information collected and incorporated in the *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*. It enhances its importance. The historian of Akbar's reign utilised the *Tarikh* in the preparation of their volumes devoted to the history of the Delhi Sultanate.

10.2.4 The Fifteenth Century Histories

In the fifteenth century a number of historical accounts were compiled about individual kingdoms and were dedicated to the regional rulers. Shihab Hakim compiled the history of Malwa and named it after Sultan Mohammed Khalji as *Maasir-i Mahmudshah*. Abdul Husain Tuni, emigrant scholar from Iran who had settled in Ahmadabad (Gujarat) wrote *Maasir-i Mahmudshahi* during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah Begara. Both the works are extant. Another worth-mentioning history is the *Tarikh-i Muhammadi*, compiled by Muhammad Bihamad Khani, resident of Kalpi. It is written in the *Tabaqat* form beginning with the rise of Islam in Arabia. It is a summary of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* and similar other works to cover history of Firuzshah and his successors. But his account of the rise of Kalpi as a centre of culture and learning under the fostering care of its Sultans is original. He narrates the circumstances in which Mahmud Khan Turk founded the principality of Kalpi and assumed the title of Sultan after the return of Timur in 1398. The information about the nature of relationship between the Sultans of Kalpi, Jaunpur and Malwa is also of historical interest.

10.3 HISTORIOGRAPY UNDER THE MUGHALS

The most dominant feature of the historiography of the Mughal period is the tradition of history writing by official chroniclers appointed by almost all Mughal emperors till the reign of Aurengzeb. These chroniclers were appointed by the emperors and all official records were provided to them for the purpose. Another salient feature of the period is the autobiographical accounts written by emperors themselves. *Tuzuk-i Baburi* (in Turkish and not Persian) by Babur and *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (in Persian) by Jahangir are important works in this genre. Apart from the official works, which had obvious constraints, a number of independent works were written by independent scholars which provide a critical appraisal of the policies and events of the period. In this section we have discussed the historiography of the period during the reigns of individual emperors.

10.3.1 The Early Writings

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur who invaded India and supplanted the Lodi rule by his own in 1526, was a prolific writer. He wrote both in his mother tongue Turkish and in Persian. His autobiography *Tuzuk-i Baburi*, written in Turkish is a literary masterpiece, containing the history of the decline and fall of the Timurid power in central Asia, his own biography, the description of life and culture in India and the diary of events that took place in the course of campaigns he led against his rivals in eastern India. Babur's account of central Asia and Khurasan is marked by objectivity. However, his account on his dealings with the ruling elite in India lacks objectivity. This is obvious because of the hostility towards those against whom he was waging war. Babur wrote in anger against the Indian ruling elite. He calls the Indian nobles untrustworthy, although he himself had deceived them. The Afghans had invited him to help them in their struggle against their own Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi thinking that he would go back after taking treasure. Babur is full of praise of India's resources and the availability of skilled craftsmen and artisans in the towns and cities. 'For any work or any employment', says he, 'there is always a set ready, to whom the same employment and trade have descended from father to son for ages'. Babur also mentions the list of *sarkars* (territorial units) with the annual revenue yields. Further, the description of towns and cities with their respective topography is interesting. The geographical details in his biography further enrich its importance. Moreover, the *Tuzuk-i Baburi* is not merely a political narration but is also considered as a naturalist's journal. His description of fauna and flora of the region he visited is graphic and insightful.

Babur's son and successor, Humayun (1530-1555) was also interested in history. He commissioned a renowned scholar, Khwandmir, to compose the history of his reign. In compliance with the royal order, Khwandmir prepared a brief account of Humayun's reign from his accession upto the year 1535 and named it *Qanun-i Humayuni*. It sheds interesting light on Humayun's state policy, particularly towards the Indian nobles and landed aristocracy. He refers to Humayun's efforts to win over Indian chiefs to his side.

10.3.2 Akbar's Reign: Official Histories

With the accession of Akbar (1556-1605) to the throne, important change took place in the concept of history writing and the class of history writers. Since the history of a dynasty served as a memorial to the dynasty, Akbar proposed to have a written history of the Muslim rulers from the death of the prophet upto his own time on the completion of the first millennium of Islam, i.e., a history of one thousand years, called *Tarikh-i Alfi*. For providing information about the lives and times of Babar and Humayun, all the officials, the nobles and relatives were asked to write their reminiscences in book form. At Akbar's instance, Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Babur, Bayazid Biyat (an official of Humayun) and Jauhar Aftabchi (a personal attendant of Humayun) put down their reminiscences in book form. Gulbadan Begum's memoirs entitled *Humayunnama* is an important source as it sheds light on the lives and culture of the royal *harem*. It is considered unique as it reflects a woman's perception of the events of the period. After Humayun's death, Bayazid Biyat served under Munim Khan Khan-i Khanan in Jaunpur and Bengal and was asked by Emperor Akbar to keep a watch on the governor and secretly inform the king about all developments. He has narrated the event of Humayun's life in Iran, Kabul and Later in India. Most of these he himself had witnessed. His work is entitled *Tazkirat-i Humayun wa Akbar*. Jauhar Aftabchi who had served Humayun also furnishes useful information about Humayun's life and times in his *Tazkirat-ul Waqiat*. Like collections of reminiscences of Gulbadan Begum and Bayazid Biyat, his work also does not distinguish between trivia and the historical facts. Nevertheless, all these works served as sources of information for the compilers of *Tarikh-i Alfi* and other histories of Akbar's reign including Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*.

Akbar constituted a board of seven scholars to compile *Taikh-i Alfi*. Each member of the board was assigned a period to write its history in chronological order. As per this scheme the events are described year by year. However, the accounts of certain Indian rulers have been compiled separately in different sections. This pattern has been followed in providing the history of Muhammad Tughluq, the Lodis, fifteenth century regional kingdoms emerging after the decline of Sultanate, Sher Shah Sur, Islam Shah and Adil Shah Sur. Its concluding part is devoted to the reign of Akbar upto 1585. Not satisfied with the account of his reign in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, in 1589-1590, Akbar ordered Abul Fazl to compile the history of his reign, beginning with an account of Babur and Humayun. A bureau was established in which competent people were employed to assist Abul Fazl. The entire archival material was placed at the compiler's disposal. It may be stressed that Abul Fazl was selected for this task because he had identified himself with Akbar's views and religious inclination. He portrays Akbar's own view about his status and role in history as conceived by emperor himself. Akbar was led by his courtiers to think of himself as the perfect representation of the spiritual profile of his age. He wanted to be remembered in history as the *Insan-i Kamil* (perfect man), gifted by God with full knowledge of Divine Unity. Therefore, in compiling the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl was able to come up to his royal patron's expectations. He presents Akbar as cosmic man, entrusted by God with sway over outward form and inner meaning, the exoteric and esoteric. His mission is said to liberate people from *taqlid* (tradition), lead them to truth and create an atmosphere of concord, so that people following different sects could live in peace and harmony. He was shown as "a light emanating from God."

Despite flattery, Abul Fazl was able to produce a history of Akbar's reign that is considered an important contribution to Indo-Persian historiography. It was brought to completion after five revisions that involved strenuous labour of seven years, the completion of the work was indeed epoch making. Abul Fazl did not believe that Indian history should concern itself only with the achievements of the Muslim rulers in India, nor did he try to establish any relation with the past of Islam. In his treatment of Akbar's military expeditions against the Rajputs, he emphasises on the point that there was no justification for any chief, Hindu or Muslim not to join the imperial confederation in view of the reconciliatory policy of Akbar. He feels that Akbar's state policy was calculated to bring unity, stability and economic prosperity to the country. In fact, Abul Fazl's secular interpretation of history gained ground during the subsequent century.

The *Akbarnama* and the *Ain-i Akbari* provide exhaustive details of the events and policies introduced by Akbar till the year 1602. However, Abul Fazl fails to mention or raise any issue which cast any aspersion on Akbar. It is true that the *Ain-i Akbari* abounds in economic details, but these details do not tell us anything about the life and conditions of the mass of peasantry or working class. The *Ain-i Akbari* contains statistical details which are valuable source for the study of economic history with no parallel with any historical accounts prior to it or till the 18th century. But artisans or peasants are completely absent. The *Ain-i Akbari*, the third part of the *Akbarnama* is a unique compilation of the system of administration and control through the departments of government. It also contains an account of the religious and philosophical systems of the Hindus. However, Abul Fazl's identification with Akbar's views and religious beliefs prevented him from presenting a picture in different hues, reflecting the currents and cross currents in society. Abul Fazl does not mention Shah Mansur or his successor Todarmal's contribution while dealing with revenue reforms and portrays Akbar as the genius who evolved key reforms including *Ain-i Dahsala* (ten years settlement) and revenue *dasturs*. The reader does not find the spirit of Akbar's age in *Akbarnama* that was successfully depicted by Abdul Qadir Badauni or even Nizamuddin Ahmad.

10.3.3 Akbar's Reign : Non-official Histories

Nizamuddin Ahmad and Abdul Qadir Badauni are two important historians of the period. Motivated by the popularity of the discipline of history, both the scholars have written history of the Muslim rule in India and have also recorded achievements of men of learning in different fields. Their works run into several volumes. Let us deal with each one separately.

Nizamuddin was the son of Khwaja Muqim Harawi, a noble of Babur and Humayun. A well-educated man, he was interested in the study of history and literature. When he took up the project of writing history of India in three volumes, he employed men like Masum Bhakkari to assist him and provide information about different regions of the empire.

A man who had gained experience in the government after having served on important positions in the provinces and at court as well, he was able to make substantial contribution through his scholarly work. His first-volume deals with the history of the Muslim rulers of India upto the fall of the Lodi dynasty in 1526. The second volume contains the account of the Mughal rulers of India upto 1593. The third volume deals with the rise and fall of the regional kingdoms in India. It is to the credit of Nizamuddin Ahmad that he mentions all the important events that took place during Akbar's reign including the controversial *Mahzar* which is omitted by Abul Fazl. However, being the *mirbakshi* (the incharge of the department of army) of the empire, he does not provide any critical evaluation. Still, it helps us in filling the gap left by Abul Fazl not only on this issue but in several other areas. His work *Tabaqat-i Akbari* was regarded by all the later writers as an authentic work and they borrowed from it.

Abdul Qadir Badauni was also a keen student of history and literature. He tells us that from his student life, he spent hours in reading or writing history. He also learnt Sanskrit and classical Indian music along with Islamic theology. Akbar employed him to translate *Muhabharat* from Sanskrit into Persian. The first volume of his history entitled *Muntakhabut Tawarikh* is related to the history of the Sultanate of Delhi. The second covers Akbar's reign while in the third volume we find the biographical notes on the scholars, poets and Sufi saints of Akbar's reign. His account is very readable bringing out the important facts of the period. Brevity is the beauty of Badauni's style. The first volume contains information culled from miscellaneous sources, many of which are not extant today. Moreover, Badauni possessed an analytical independent mind with different views than the official line. In fact Badauni's objective was to present a frank account of his times. It is Badauni's second volume that needs to be studied along with Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* to have a proper understanding of Akbar's reign. Badauni does not gloss over any uncomfortable question on Akbar's ability as an administrator. For example, Badauni records the failure of the *karori* experience and the disaster it caused. Badauni is corroborated in essentials by Nizamuddin Ahmad also. Unlike Abul Fazl and even Nizamuddin Ahmad, Badauni's account of the religious discussions held in Akbar's *Ibadat Khana*, the origin of Akbar's differences with the Muslim orthodoxy that led to religious controversies is vivid depicting the currents and cross currents of thought. It certainly has precedence on *Akbarnama*, in a number of areas especially the controversial issues. It gives an impression to the readers that it is free from the official constraints, catches the realities of the time and reflect the magnitude and intensity of conflicts of the period.

10.3.4 Histories During Jahangir's Reign

Akbar's son and successor Jahangir decided to write autobiographical history of his own reign in the traditions set by Babur. Besides, he persuaded other scholars also to write the history of his reign. He requested Shaikh Abdul Haque to add in his *Tarikh* the account of his reign also. But the Shaikh was too old to take up the work, yet his son

Qazi Nurul Haque compiled the history, *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* and closed it with the account of Jahangir's reign. Like the *Tarikh* compiled by his father, Shaikh Abdul Haque, the *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* also narrates the history of the Muslim rulers of India. Another writer, who compiled the voluminous History of the Afghan tribes and the Afghan rulers, the Lodis and the Surs also incorporated a chapter on early ten years of Jahangir's reign. This *Tarikh-i Khan-i Jahani* was compiled by Nemat Allah Harawi under the patronage of Khan-i Jahan Lodi, the noble of Jahangir. As regards Jahangir's own memoirs *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, it is a major source for his reign.

The emperor wrote the Tuzuk himself upto the 17th regnal year till his health permitted him. Later, he dictated it to his trusted officer, Mutamad Khan. It presents to a great extent the picture of Jahangir's reign. The principal events connected with rebellions, the role of the imperial officers, their promotions and punishments as well as diplomatic relations between India and the foreign powers are described in a lucid style. It contains a year-by-year narrative. Further, we find insights into the culture of the Mughal empire as well as Jahangir's aesthetic taste, learning and his interest in nature.

10.3.5 Histories During Shahjahan's Reign

Mutamad Khan set to write the history *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* after Shahjahan's accession to the throne. His aim was to justify Shahjahan's rebellion against his father because Nur Jahan Begum wanted to harm him and clear the way for Shaharyar's accession to the throne. It is divided into three parts: the first part covers the history of Babur and Humayun, the second part contains the account of Akbar's reign while the third is devoted to Jahangir's reign. In the last part the first nineteen years are merely an abridgement of the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. The account of the last years of Jahangir's reign is almost an eye witness account.

Like Mutamad Khan, Khwaja Kamgar Husaini also came from a family associated with the Mughal court. He served under Jahangir and Shahjahan both. In the preparation of his *Maasir-i Jahangiri*, he also drew on *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. His account from the 19th year of Jahangir's reign is his original work and is an important source for the events that took place during the last years of the reign. He started compiling his work in 1630. It may be pointed out that the compiler also supplemented information about certain events that took place before Jahangir's accession to the throne. For example, he furnishes details about the role played by prince Khusrau's supporters to secure the throne for him leaving Jahangir aside. No other historian supplies this information. He also portrays Jahangir as a naturalist, describing Jahangir's interest in fauna and flora, animal breeding, etc. In short, *Maasir-i Jahangiri* is one of the major histories on Jahangir's reign.

Impressed with Abul Fazl's style of prose writing and the richness of details in the *Akbarnama*, Shahjahan desired to have the history of his reign compiled by a master of Persian prose. First he tried Mohammed Amin Qazvini and suggested him to write *Badshahnama*, i.e. the history of his reign on the lines of Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. Like Abul Fazl, Amin Qazvini was provided with assistants and given permission to have access to the royal library and the state archives for the collection of material. In nine years Qazvini was able to complete the first volume covering the first ten years of Shah Jahan's reign. It seems that he had planned to compile a separate volume on every decade but he was stopped from working on the project. Although the volume was rich in details, his style was not liked by the emperor. According to Mohammed Saleh Kamboh, the author of the *Amal-i Saleh* (or *Shahjahannama*), Qazvini was transferred to the intelligence bureau. Abdul Hamid Lahori, another Scholar was appointed as the official historian in his place. Abdul Hamid was found competent enough to emulate Abdul Fazl's Persian prose-style. Saleh Kamboh says that Abdul Hamid was celebrated for the beauty

of his style. Like *Akbarnama*, the *Badshahnama* is also full of outbursts of laboured rhetoric.

Abdul Hamid's *Badshahnama* contains an account of twenty years of history of Shahjahan's reign. It is divided into two parts, each covering ten years of the reign. The events have been arranged chronologically year-wise. It also contains separate sections on the Princes, Princesses and the nobles of the empire. The latter have been listed in accordance with the descending order of their *mansabs* from 9000 to 500 horses. Lastly the author devotes a section on the leading *Sufi* saints, scholars, physicians and poets of the reign of Shahjahan.

Owing to old age, Abdul Hamid Lahori was retired and his pupil Mohammad Waris was ordered by the emperor to continue the work. Waris's volume contains ten years account from the beginning of the twentieth year to the thirtieth year when Shahjahan had to abdicate the throne. Waris's *Badshahnama* bears resemblance to his teacher's *Badshahnama* both in style and details.

Two other writers who produced histories of Shahjahan during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign were Sadiq Khan and Muhammad Saleh Kamboh. The former's work is known as *Badshahnama*, while the latter history is popularly called *Amal-i Saleh* (or *Shahjahanama*). Both these works furnish important details about the war of succession between Shahjahan's sons and the last years of Shahjahan's life.

10.3.6 Histories During Aurangzeb's Reign

The emperor Aurangzeb also followed the tradition of Akbar and Shahjahan. He appointed Muhammad Kazim the son of Muhammad Amin Qazvini to write the history of his reign. An order was also issued to the officers incharge of the royal records to make over to the official historian all such state papers as were received from the news writers and other high functionaries pertaining to important events. On the completion of the account of first ten years of the reign, its writing was stopped. The volume produced was called *Alamgir Nama* (1568). This volume reads as a panegyric in prose, portraying the emperor as a special recipient of divine grace and endowed with super-natural powers. Disgusted with flattery and exaggeration, Aurangzeb banned history writing, saying that 'the cultivation of inward piety was preferable to the ostentatious display of his achievements'. The curtailment of state expenditure seems another reason for stopping the writing of chronicle.

Later on, Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, a trusted noble of Aurangzeb's son and successor, Bahadur Shah persuaded Saqi Mustaid Khan to compile the history of Aurangzeb's reign. Hence the compilation of the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* was brought to completion in 1711. This fills a wide gap in the official history of Aurangzeb's reign.

Like *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl and *Badshahnama* of Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Maasir-i Alamgiri* has been composed in the form of annals, each year has been marked off. Its style is free from literary conceits, but the work reads like a dry list of official postings, promotions, armies deputed for the conquest of forts, etc. However, the interesting bits of information are found at places where the compiler makes observation and reflection on events and particularly biographical sketches. It may be pointed out that the account of first ten years of Aurangzeb's reign in the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* is a concise summary of Kazim's *Alamgirnama* but the account from the eleventh year onwards is based on his personal knowledge and the state archives. It is, however, almost devoid of details about the social life and the deteriorating economic conditions in the Empire. This was the last official history of the Mughal empire. Thereafter, Khafi Khan and other historians of the 18th century composed histories but their approach was partisan, each historian wrote according to his allegiance to certain group of nobles at court.

Apart from these historical works a number of other works like *Maasir-ul Umara*, by Shahnawaz Khana collection of biographies of nobles, treatise on Administration like *Diwan-i Pasand* of Rai Chhatar Mal; Amamullah Hussain's work *Ganj-I Badawurd* (on Agriculture) *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* of Mirzanathan (1623) are a few other important works of history for the Mughal period.

10.4 SUMMARY

Among the Muslim elite, history was considered as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and jurisprudence. Therefore, the study and writing of history were accorded great importance after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the closing years of 12th century. The pioneers of history-writing in the Indo-Persian tradition was Muhammad bin Mansur, popularly known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. His writings included a book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam and the Muslim rulers, including Qutbuddin Aibak. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani was another important historian of the 13th century. However, the most important figure in the Indo-Persian historiography was Ziauddin Barani in the 14th century. His *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* is a milestone in the tradition of history-writing in medieval India. It was written for the enlightenment of the rulers of his times. Under the Mughals this tradition of history-writing continued and reached new heights. Abul Fazl, Nizamuddin Ahmad, Abdul Qadir Badauni, Khwaja Kamgar Husaini and Abdul Hamid Lahori were some important historians of the Mughal period.

10.5 EXERCISES

- 1) Give a brief account of Minhaj's style of history-writing.
- 2) Discuss the important works of history written during the 14th century.
- 3) Why is Ziauddin Barani considered as the most important historian of the Sultanate period?
- 4) Compare the writings of Abul Fazl and Badauni on Akbar's reign.
- 5) Write a brief note on the historical works during Jahangir's reign.

10.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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