

ON  
HISTORY  
AND  
HISTORIANS  
OF  
MEDIEVAL  
INDIA



K. A. NIZAMI



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فہم ۱۳۲۰ھ



# On History and Historians of Medieval India

by  
Khaliq Ahmad Nizami



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*To*  
*Mr. Badr-u'd-Din Tyabji*  
*(former Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University)*  
*as a*  
*token of respect and gratitude*







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## Preface

Some years back I delivered a series of lectures on medieval Persian historiography to my post-graduate students. This book has grown out of these lectures. Due to my pre-occupation with other projects, it would not have seen the light of the day but the insistence of my colleagues and pupils made me undertake its publication. The world of history is agog today with new historiographical concepts and new tools are being invented to analyze and interpret the complex configurations of human behaviour in the past. While it cannot be denied that these recent theories have added new dimensions to the study of history, the fact remains that no historical literature can be properly interpreted if the cultural and social milieu of the age in which it was produced is not taken into consideration. Further, no historical work can be properly understood if the psychology of the author is not carefully analyzed. Psycho-history becomes extremely relevant in such studies for it presents a person not merely as a separate nucleus of sensations, but as part of a flux of consciousness embracing other people and things. In dealing with historians like Zia-u'd-din Barani and Abul Fazl 'Allami an attempt has been made to probe into their psychology and interpret the motivations of their approach and methodology.

The advice which Fustal de Coulanges gave to scholars of history has guided the writer of these lines in the preparation of this work: direct recourse to original source material and abstention from importing modern theories in the interpretation of medieval institutions and literary traditions.

Nizami Villa,  
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March 25, 1983

K. A. Nizami



## INTRODUCTORY

### A. Source Material

The vastness and variety of source material for the history of medieval India has been acknowledged on all hands. Apart from political chronicles which constitute the chief source of information for constructing the political history of the period, there is non-political literature of different types: poetical works, mystic records—*malfuzat*, *maktubat* and general treatises—geographical accounts, autobiographies, *tazkiras*, manuals of book-keeping and revenue records, general works on religion, treatises on science, translations from Sanskrit and other languages, etc. The richness of archival material is also beyond calculation. If on one side the Geniza<sup>1</sup> records throw valuable light on India's commercial relations with the Mediterranean countries, from the 4th to the 14th century AD, there are innumerable types of documents—*farmans*, *parwanas*, *arzdashts*, *nishan*, *bakhars*, etc.—which are found in millions in Indian archives spread all over the country. While the main language of this literature is, of course, Persian, there are records in regional languages, like Marathi, Rajasthani, Bengali, Punjabi and Sindhi and in foreign languages, like French,<sup>2</sup> Portuguese<sup>3</sup> and the Dutch.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See, Goitein's article on 'Geniza' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 987-89; S. Shaked, *A tentative bibliography of Geniza documents*, Paris-The Hague, 1964; S.D. Goitein, 'The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a source for Mediterranean Social History' in *JAOS*, XXX, 1960, pp. 91-100.

<sup>2</sup>The Societe de l' Histoire de l' Inde Francaise, Pondicherry, published 8 volumes of records which are of inestimable value for the history of the French in India. The largest collection of unpublished records relating to the history of the French in India is to be found in the Archives du Ministere des Colonias, Archives Nationales, Paris. It consists of more than three hundred registers.

<sup>3</sup>The collection of Portuguese records known as *Assentos do Conselho do Estado* forms one of the important series of records contained in the Goa Archives.

<sup>4</sup>e.g., *Dutch Records*, ed. by Rev. Fathers A.J. Van der Burg, P. Groot and J. Fruictier and A. Galletti, 15 vols., Madras,



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With the changes that have taken place in the historiographical concepts it has become imperative for a modern historian to tap and utilize as many and as varied sources of information for his study as possible. This is not a fad with modern research methodology but an essential prerequisite for understanding the spirit of an age. The concept of history does not now reel round the pomp and panoply of the court; it seeks to study man in relation to his environment, irrespective of any social distinction. The hut and the palace have the same significance in the eyes of a modern historian. For this extended approach of history it is necessary to examine, analyse and utilize all types of source-material which was earlier considered irrelevant or beyond the purview of historians. Unless human activity in a particular period is surveyed as a whole and from all angles and aspects it is not possible to evaluate and understand the life of the people or to have an insight into the spirit of an age. May be that in certain cases the result of wading through a vast mass of non-political literature (or literature unconnected with the theme proper) is not commensurate with the time and labour spent over it; tiny bits of information gained after great effort, sometimes modify or clarify views about many aspects of contemporary history. Who would look to mathematical works for reconstructing the chronology of any contemporary event or movement, yet some important details of the chronology of Mahmud of Ghazni's invasions have been found in the works of Avicenna and Alberuni. Similarly in the *mal'uz* literature (table talks of Sufi saints) one comes across interesting pieces of information about the life and conditions of the common man. The political chronicles of the period speak about prosperity and affluence during the time of Firoz Shah Tughluq,<sup>1</sup> but it appears from the *Khair-u'l-Majalis* that the common man found himself in great difficulties during that period.<sup>2</sup> The motives of Muhammad bin Tughluq in embarking upon his various projects would have remained a myth but for Amir Khurd's revealing remarks about the Sultan in his *Siyar-u'l-Auliya*.<sup>3</sup> The *tazkira* literature of the 18th-19th centuries is full of interesting bits of information for

<sup>1</sup>Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>2</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, pp. 185-240.

<sup>3</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, pp. 271, 273-74, 532.



reconstructing a picture of social life in northern India during a period of transition.

It may, however, be clearly stated that this multifarious type of historical data calls for the application of different techniques and methods to tackle it. The historical method applied to political chronicles is bound to prove absolutely ineffective in dealing with the religious or poetical literature of a period. The critical apparatus required for the study of different types of source-material should be evolved with reference to that material itself and the attitudes, objectives and motivations of the authors should be clearly understood. A political chronicler connected with the court will, with the essential qualities of a court historian, look at political glory as the be-all and end-all of all human activity and for him the court and the camp exhaust all that is of value for man; a mystic looks upon the world as an iridescent bubble and, ignoring the hurry and bustle of mundane life and political glory, tries to discover the deeper meaning of life. The political chronicler and the mystical writer look at the world from two different poles. It is for a historian to stand at both poles and understand both points of view; he should not identify himself with any point of view, but should be sympathetic with both, at least till such time as he has understood faithfully their approach. Similarly a poet also has a world of his own. Sometimes he speaks his heart through the language of metaphors and similes, at others his criticism of the world he breathes in, emanates from his own unsatisfied ego. He has an elated sense of his own ability but when he finds that the world has not recognized him as such, he starts lamenting about the times. Nevertheless, a poet's soul is more sensitive to the environmental situations than others engaged in literary pursuits. His soul sometimes registers like a seismograph coming events and he cannot help giving expression to them. He thus becomes the harbinger of some new development in society. Further, a poet's horizon is very often not hemmed in by parochial considerations—narrow sympathies or prejudices. He is anxious to transcend the trammels imposed by society and address his contemporaries from a different plain. Thus utilization of this diverse type of data calls for (a) an attitude of sympathy, not identity, with the author; (b) an understanding of the ideals, attitudes and motiva-



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tions of the author; and (c) a careful attempt at synthesis of data culled and collected from different sources.

A tendency has lately developed among the modern writers to scan and examine medieval historians in the light of canons of historical criticism as evolved in the 20th century. This is, to say the least, absolutely anachronistic. To apply present day yardstick of criticism to authors who produced their works centuries ago and in an entirely different social context, is to betray a horrible lack of historical sensibility. All men are more or less a product of their environment and their literary or intellectual efforts can be understood only with reference to that milieu. Once a literary product has been examined and understood in the context of that age, it becomes easier to utilize it—certainly, according to modern methods and principles. The approach of the medieval writers should be understood, not derided; their method should be properly investigated, not discarded as obsolete. The principles followed by Fustel de Coulanges may well be adopted by a student of medieval Indian history:

- (i) to make direct and minute study of the original texts,
- (ii) to believe only what is proved by the texts; and
- (iii) to keep out from the history of the past modern ideas which a false method carries into it.

When medieval historians speak of close connection between *hadith* and *tarikh*, this does not mean that history is a religious science for them. It suggests that the methods of investigation and enquiry, acceptance and rejection—in short, the principles of critique evolved by the scholars of *hadith*,—should be emulated in the compilation of history works. A careful historian will endorse the opinion of Hitti that the principles of critique (*usul-i-ashnad*) evolved by the medieval Muslim scholars meet the most essential requirements of modern historiography.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Categories of historical literature*

The Muslim historical literature produced during the early medieval period may be categorized as follows:

- (i) *Sira*, relating to the life of the Prophet.
- (ii) *Ansab*, genealogical studies.
- (iii) *Maghazi*, wars and conquests.

<sup>1</sup>*The Origins of the Islamic State*, introduction, p. 3.



(iv) *Tabaqat*, biographies.

The central theme of investigation for the early Arab scholars was the life and sayings of the Prophet (*hadith*). In the process of developing the principles of critique for testing the authenticity and reliability of a *hadith*, they formulated two cardinal principles:

(1) *asma-u'r-rijal*, chain of all persons involved in transmitting a tradition from the Prophet; and (2) *usul-i-asnad* verification of the character of all persons through whom a tradition has come down. No greater care or a more scientific method could be thought of for the scrutiny of data. These principles fascinated the early Arab historians also and one is surprised to find that in some works a chain of authorities is quoted for a single incident and, for what may be dismissed as an insignificant fact, numerous authorities are cited.

The method was no doubt scientific and based on a desire to investigate the 'truth' but it was hardly possible to apply it in such meticulous detail to all historical works as it had been applied to *hadith* literature. But the spirit of the *usul-i-asnad* became the guiding principle for historical works and investigating an event to the person who had actually participated in it and testing his veracity, came to be followed. Where an event is of crucial significance, the Persian historian would refer to 'reliable witnesses'<sup>1</sup> or name the person.<sup>2</sup> In case of any doubt they would end the account with the remark: '*Truth is known to God alone.*'

Later, when geographical horizons widened and conquests brought new regions and races under Muslim domination, general histories came to be compiled. The works of Abu Hanifa Dinawari, Tabari, Mas'udi and others fall within this category. Simultaneously interest in regional and local history developed and histories of Medina, Damascus, Baghdad, Aleppo etc., came to be compiled.

Compilation of geographical encyclopaedias exercised deep influence on historical writings and dictionaries of '*ulama, sufis*

<sup>1</sup>Isami, Yahya and others often refer to "trustworthy witnesses." See also, Minhaj, pp. 146-47 (As. Soc).

<sup>2</sup>e.g., Minhaj refers to Kurbat Khan Sanjar, Mu 'in-u'd-din Ushi, Samsam-u'd-din for different important statements. Similarly Barani refers to many reliable individuals for his statements.



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and literary celebrities added to historical literature.

The categorization of Islamic historical literature into *manaqib*, *faza'il* or *muwa'iz* (dealing with laudable qualities, attainments and those containing exhortations and advices) is hardly sustainable because even without declaring a work to be of any of these categories, expressions of praise, admonition and advice may be found in a work. Every biography is not a *manaqib* treatise and every work written with an eye on moral and ethical lessons to be drawn from a situation is not a didactic or *muwa'iz* work. In a single work sometimes all these trends and many more simultaneously operate.

### *Two Traditions of Historiography*

Two distinct traditions of historiography seem to have determined the nature and character of medieval historical writings—the Arab and the Persian. Both of them had diametrically opposed ideals and methods of handling and presenting historical data. The Arab tradition, rooted as it was in the Arab character, cherished democratic ideals and treated history as a *biography of nations*. The Persian tradition, drawing its inspiration from the monarchical background of its institutions, looked upon history as a *biography of kings*. The Arab historians, as a necessary corollary to their democratic approach, did not hesitate in incorporating in their narrative incidents and events which related to the life of the common man. Their histories were therefore arranged date-wise—a chronological catalogue of events pertaining to political, military, social, economic and cultural activities. All classical Arab histories—of Tabari, Ibn Asir and others—follow this pattern. The Persian historical approach was limited to kings and the historian concentrated on the life of the royalty and the governing classes to the exclusion of all other sections of population. The conspectus of a history planned on the Persian model was, therefore, naturally limited. The Arab historians looked down upon the idea of dedicating their works to rulers or the nobles. The Persian historians, on the contrary, considered such dedications necessary in order to enhance the value of their works.

Uptil the 10th century the Arab tradition of historiography held sway, but later on, when the spirit of Persian Renaissance permeated every aspect of the life and thought of the ruling



elite, the Persian tradition came to be revived, adopted and encouraged. All the Ghaznavid histories breathe the spirit of Persian Renaissance. When the Sultanate of Delhi was established, Persian tradition was a dominant factor in political life. The rulers of Delhi were racially Turks but culturally they were Persians. They emulated in all spheres of their life the Iranian traditions, customs, ceremonials, etiquette and festivals. Iranization was the prevailing trend. The Sultans, deeply soaked in these traditions as they were, expected their historians also to follow the Iranian traditions. A historian like Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami, author of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*, is an exception because he expressed his deep disappointment at being asked to compile his work in Persian. He still looked upon Arabic as the proper language for compilation of histories.

Hasan Nizami, Fakhr-i-Mudabbir and Minhaj, all the three historians of early medieval India, followed the Iranian traditions of historiography. Their works ignore all references to scholars, saints, poets, artists etc. If any general reference is made to them it is casual and in the context of rulers. These sections of the population—much less the workers, peasants and the common man—were not deemed fit enough to form the subject matter of narration in historical works. At a time when there was an endless influx of scholars, saints and literati and they were, in many cases, actively engaged in cultural activities, our historians scrupulously avoided all discussion of their role in the life of a country newly conquered, and in great need of such groups to help in creating a favourable atmosphere for the cultural institutions to strike roots in the soil. Minhaj was in India when saints like Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti, Shaikh Qutb-u'd-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Sufi Nagauri and many others flourished but he makes absolutely no mention of any of them. Notwithstanding the commitment of historians to Iranian traditions of historiography, the disinterestedness of Minhaj in scholars and saints was resented by the readers of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*.

With Barani a significant break-through takes place. He occasionally refers to sufis,<sup>1</sup> scholars<sup>2</sup> and other celebrities;<sup>3</sup> even dancing girls and cup-bearers find a place in his narrative. His

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 112.    <sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 111.    <sup>3</sup>*ibid*.



anxiety to recreate the atmosphere of bygone days and provide a glimpse into the court life of that age compels him to prepare a picture gallery in which he cannot avoid admitting men and women like Nusrat Bibi, Mihr Afroz,<sup>1</sup> Firoz the barber, Manka the cook, Ladha the gardener and Babu Naik the weaver.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by his example, Bihamid Khani slightly broadened his canvas and referred to poets and literary and religious figures but his figures float in the atmosphere without being adjusted in a frame. In fact he lacked the powerful imagination of Barani, though he appreciated the significance of literary and religious trends in the assessment of an age. Abul Fazl proceeded a step further and tried to combine the Arab and the Persian traditions of historiography. Despite the fact that the entry of common man in his narrative is not in his own right, but as a veritable background to the portrait of the Emperor and his activities, Abul Fazl definitely advanced the conspectus and perspective of history. He is, on that account, both a name and a legend in Mughal historiographical literature. Later on it became a tradition with historians to refer to literary and religious figures along with their narration of kings. But the tradition of Abul Fazl could not be developed on lines which could help a real synthesis of the Arab and the Iranian traditions of historiography. In fact Arab historiographical tradition needed a totally different social and political milieu to flourish. Medieval Indian historical tradition therefore remained wedded to the Iranian concept of history.

#### *Political Chronicles*

From the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* of Hasan Nizami to the *Tarikh-i-Shah 'Alam'* of Munna Lal, large number of political chronicles were produced in medieval India. Most of them were written for and dedicated to the reigning monarchs; some were presented to nobles, and few were undertaken to satisfy one's own historical curiosity. An analysis of this literature for purposes of utilization as a source of information for the period contemporaneous with the writer, demands some very basic enquiries: (a) What was the social, political and religious background of the author? (b) To what political groups, inside and outside the court, did the

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 505.



author belong? (c) What were the author's views about the basic religious and political problems of the day? Did he find himself largely supported by the people in his views? (d) What was the author's motive in compiling the work? Did he want simply to please the reigning monarch in order to obtain some favours from him? Was he anxious to defend himself against some criticism or misunderstanding? Now these investigations are helpful in understanding the psychology of a writer and the subjective elements in his narrative. "Study the historian before you begin to study the facts,"<sup>1</sup> is Carr's advice to all scholars of history.

Then comes the question of finding out an author's sources of information. Did he have personal contact with the main figures of his study or did he collect his information from second-hand sources? Is his attitude in assortment of facts one of critical enquiry or does he record everything that he finds floating down the stream of time? Lastly, the methodology of an author should be carefully examined and clearly understood. How does he arrange his data? Is there a tendency to start with a thesis and then marshal facts in support or opposition to this thesis? What is the nature of his literary style? Is he clear, straightforward and direct or involved, cautious and circuitous?

These interrogations should precede utilisation of political chronicles for purposes of historical study. Unless one is fully aware of the fact that in recording military achievements of a ruler, a historian is guided by the spirit of *Fath Namas* which were fondly circulated in neighbouring countries and the purpose was to invite applause of the gallery, it is difficult to analyse the data in a proper historical perspective. If as many people were killed in the early Turkish military operations in India as Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami would have us believe, there could not have been a single soul alive in India when these operations came to an end. If the number of temples reported to be destroyed during the war is accepted as true, not a single temple would have survived! Such exaggerated statements are motivated by the desire to extol the achievements of a monarch and thereby to enlist recruits to the army. But the sensitivity of a historian cannot fail to detect such exaggerated statements and the motives underlying them. Mir Khwand's advice to his contemporary historians still holds

<sup>1</sup>E.H. Carr, *What is History*, 1961.



good. "The second condition is", he writes "that the historian should describe all aspects of every affair. In other words, just as he recounts the merits, charities, justice and mercy of great men, similarly he should describe, and not seek to hide, their wicked and mean acts. If he considers it prudent, he may describe his (wicked acts) openly; if not, he should resort to hints, insinuations and indirect remarks. A hint to the wise is enough."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes silence becomes more eloquent than speech. Abul Fazl's total omission of *Mahzar*, his calm and curt account of the banishment of 'Abdun Nabi and Makhdum-u'l-Mulk, his casual and indifferent attitude towards Syed Muhammad Ghauth of Gwalior can hardly fail to raise queries in the mind of a reader. And as soon as a query is raised, the answer also becomes available through analysis of motivations.

Amir Khusrau extols the achievements of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji in the south but his mystic soul writhes in pain at the sight of the destruction wrought in war. Having described the achievements of the Khalji Sultan he quietly inserts a phrase: '*And you saw bones of men and animals.*'<sup>2</sup> This was the poet's own assessment of the Khalji campaigns in the south. While describing Sher Shah's conflict with Humayun, 'Abbas attributes the latter's defeat to the arrival of angels who turned away the horses of the Mughal soldiers, "else, it was not possible for a man like Sher Khan to face that brave lion (Humayun)." One who wrote for Akbar could not write otherwise.

Abul Fazl's language and style demand a critical and careful analysis of the historian's motivations and ambitions. His use of involved and intricate language<sup>3</sup> is intended to conceal his

<sup>1</sup>*Rauzat-u's-Safa*, I, p. 6, as cited in *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>*Khaza'in-u'l-Futuh*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>The circumstances under which Abul Fazl had to adopt that style were many : (1) The book had to be written in ornate and florid style in order to make its presentation correspond with the greatness of the Emperor whose account it contained; (2) only behind a plethora of high sounding words could the author conceal many of those aspects of a situation which otherwise could reflect on the Emperor's dignity or wisdom; (3) since the data was supplied to him by large number of people, the only effective was of putting the stamp of his own genius on this work was to follow a style which was unique and in which no one could claim a share.



real feelings. Akbar had initiated policies calculated to bring about a change in the religious outlook of the people through a synthesis of different religious ideals and ideologies, but he did not succeed. Abul Fazl could refer to irritants that obstructed or hindered these policies but he does not say a word about them. He keeps the mind of his reader so hypnotized and overawed by his rhetorics that such questions do not come to his mind. But in the whole range of Indian literature pertaining to political chronicles, Abul Fazl remains unsurpassed in his shameless flattery and unabashed minionism. Akbar's greatness as a monarch, his achievements in the political, social and administrative spheres, were no doubt remarkable. But the way Abul Fazl showers encomiums on him and invests him with prophetic attributes and ascribes miraculous powers to him is hardly a compliment to Abul Fazl's scholarship. If he believed in all that he says about his patron, one would be justified in questioning his intelligence and common sense. In fact it was the role of a court minion which Abul Fazl was called upon to play and he played it dexterously and to the liking of his master, though no intelligent reader of his monumental work will be left in any doubt about the real aim and intention of the author. But if this shortcoming of Abul Fazl blinds one to the great historical value of his work and the method adopted to collect and compare statistical data, it will be a great mistake. Abul Fazl's subjective moods and motivations may be carefully sifted and separated and the rest of the work used for constructing a picture of Akbar's reign in all its details, if not in all its fullness.

There were certain very obvious reasons for the critical attitude of people towards Abul Fazl. His complete identification with the religious and administrative policies of Akbar offended one section; his closeness to the Emperor excited the jealousy of others; while his unpleasant relations with Prince Salim made him unpopular with another powerful section in the government. Despite criticism from so many sources, Abul Fazl was too big to be ignored. His contemporaries introduced their own prejudices in his estimate and in course of time he and 'Abdul Qadir Badaoni came to be looked upon as two rival historians who had surveyed Akbar's reign from two different angles. Those who approved of Akbar's policies, uncritically accepted Abul Fazl; those who disagreed with him, placed blind reliance on 'Abdul



Qadir. This approach led to a polarization of views and a criticism of Abul Fazl came to be interpreted as an indication of preference for 'Abdul Qadir's views. It was forgotten that both hatred and love blur the historical vision; one fails to see virtues, the other ignores vices. Abul Fazl and 'Abdul Qadir may not be complimentary to each other, they nevertheless, supplement each other's information and no study of Akbar's reign can claim to be of value if it ignores any of them.

'Abdul Qadir Badaoni's *Mutakhab-u't-Tawarikh* is a political chronicle but with a different slant and a different motivation. He had no intention of presenting his book to any ruler or noble and, in fact, it would have brought great harm to him if he had published his work during the reign of Akbar. His work is partly *apologia pro vita sua* and partly a charge-sheet against Akbar's religious views. But apart from this, the book delineates very clearly the political, religious and literary trends of the age and their interaction. Badaoni's prejudices apart, he had a fairly extensive view of history and looked alike at the court, the *khanqah* and the *madrasa* for reconstructing a history of the religious and intellectual ideals and achievements of the age.

If one looks at the vast mass of literature produced in medieval India under the rubric of political chronicles, three works stand out prominently as having distinct personality—the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* of Zia-u'd-din Barani, the *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl and the *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh* of Badaoni. Barani wrote on the basis of personal experience, unaided by any one, in the closing years of his life—overwhelmed by frustration, pessimism and gloom. Abul Fazl wrote when he was at the height of his fame and fortune, close to the Emperor of Hindustan and assisted by a whole secretariat of clerks and copyists. The two works provide an interesting comparative study of the subjective elements in historical writing. Comparisons are odious but one cannot help saying that in style and expression Barani is superb. He writes excellent Persian, unique alike for its felicity and charm. Abul Fazl's rhetoric acts as a screen to cover his real views; in fact it gives the impression of a mask rather than an embellishment. But attention may be drawn to one very important difference: Abul Fazl's work did not need any change of views and therefore it stands as it was written; poor Barani had to revise his opinions in order to be acceptable under the changed circum-



stances. What was good during the time of Mahammad bin Tughluq had become a taboo under Firoz Shah. If he wanted to win the favour of the reigning monarch, he had to make changes here and there. This perhaps accounts for the difference that one finds in the two or three available recensions of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. But surprisingly enough, Barani did not succeed in giving a twist to his views and he still stands unsurpassed for his frank and candid exposition. A deeper study of Barani's attitudes and ideas would be possible when details about the thought and activities of a number of contemporary philosophers — Najm Intishar, Sa'd, 'Ubaid etc. — whom he condemns, are brought to light. His account of Firoz Shah's reign is, however, a very sorry piece of historical literature, full of minionism, flattery and hyperbole. Perhaps this is the only concession that Barani was prepared to make to the changed situation.

Barani and Badaoni, though firm in their views, cannot be placed in the same category. Barani does not make as great a fuss about his religious views as Badaoni does. And if he ever makes a fuss, its basis is very often political or economic, not religious. He is sharp and satirical at places, but there is no venom in him. Badaoni is bitter and sarcastic and sometimes he allows his religious fanaticism to blur his perspective also. Barani is charming despite his exclusive thinking at places, but Badaoni turns away a reader roughly if he is not in complete agreement with his views. Barani's interest in religion and his knowledge of the laws of *shari'at* could not affect his political realism. Unhesitatingly he observes that it was not possible under the existing circumstances of political life to run the administration according to *shari'at*. State-laws (*zawabit*) were a necessity and no government could be run without them, no matter they were inconsistent with *shari'at* law or not. Badaoni does not give any evidence of that independent thinking or a realistic approach to problems of religion and politics.

How did the medieval historians collect their data? The answer would vary from individual to individual. While a whole secretariat supplied data to Abul Fazl, Barani had only his pen, paper and memory. Between these two extremes there are different types of historians who used different methods for collecting their data. Minhaj relied on historical works for the earlier portion of his book, based his account of the Sultans of Delhi on



his own knowledge, and patiently collected information from travellers and merchants about the Mongols. Yahya Sirhindi says that he collected material upto the coronation of Firoz Shah Tughluq from books and for accounts subsequent to that he recorded whatever he heard from reliable reporters.<sup>1</sup> He even thought of giving in full documents of historical significance. He quotes Hasan's elegy<sup>2</sup> on the death of Prince Muhammad to convey to his readers the grief and sorrow felt by the people on that tragedy. Sometimes the purpose of quoting documents was different. Badaoni gives *Mahzar* in full in order to substantiate his views about Akbar's religious innovations; Abul Fazl ignores it exactly for the same reason for which Badaoni highlights it. So collection and rejection of data was sometimes determined by different motives.

The writing of political chronicles was generally undertaken by persons who had close, direct or indirect, contact with the rulers and the ruling classes. Minhaj was actually brought up in the Shansabanid house of Ghur and his ancestors had close links with the ruling families of Ghur and Ghaznin. Barani's grandfather Sipahsalar Husam-u'd-din was the *wakil-i-dar* of the *Barbek* of Sultan Balban. His father and uncle—Mu'ayyid-u'l-Mulk and 'Ala-u'l-Mulk—were important dignitaries of the Khalji court. 'Isami who supplies interesting details about the Ilbarites belonged to a family which had close and intimate relations with Iltutmish and his descendants. His grandfather, 'Izz-u'd-din 'Isami was a *sipah-salar* in Balban's army. 'Izz-u'd-din's father, Zahir-u'l-Mulk, was the *wakil-i-dar* of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud. Zahir-u'l-Mulk's father Fakhr u'l-Mulk was the *wazir* of Iltutmish. Shams-i-Siraj 'Afif's great grandfather was a revenue officer at Abuhar and was on friendly terms with Ghiyas-u'd-din Tughluq before he became the Sultan. He himself was attached to the court of Firoz Shah and used to accompany him on his hunting expeditions. 'Abbas Khan Sarwani was connected by marriage with the family of Sher Shah. In fact there are few political chroniclers of medieval India who did not have close

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, p. 4. The translator has confused the lines (p. 4) when he says: ". . . after that event whatever was witnessed (by the author) has been related." The author clearly refers to the testimony of reliable sources.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, pp. 44-51.



relations or contact with the court. Obviously therefore their whole thinking pattern and approach to problems was determined by the circumstances of their life.

The practice of some medieval historians to quote conversations where there was little or no chance of being present, is sometimes criticised. Dr. Peter Hardy has particularly raised his finger at Barani's account giving extracts from orations of Iltutmish, Balban, 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji and others. Hardy's criticism is partly true. While it cannot be denied that quoting a speech *verbatim* is hardly possible for a later writer and what in such cases a writer can provide is the substance of a conversation, it would not be fair to reject all such conversations as fictitious or concocted. No doubt it is his favourite practice to put speeches into the mouth of his heroes in *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* but by its very nature the *Fatawa* is a work of a different kind. There is however a tendency in Barani to make his narrative powerful by adding speeches and conversations. Like Browning, he could say:

Love you saw me gather men and women  
And speak from every mouth  
The speech of power.

The conversations in *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* give the impression of being genuine, if not literally, at least substantially. Minhaj has also quoted some conversations but the nature of the narrative makes it abundantly clear that they are real and factual. 'Isami's conversations, as is evident from his verses, are not factual or real. It is to enhance the poetic effect of his account that he gives repeated and lengthy conversations. It is, in fact, a part of the poetic technique that he has followed in his *Futuh-u's-Salatin*. In the case of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani the nature of conversations is different. He was writing about Sher Shah at the instance of Akbar. His association with Sher Shah was too deep to allow him to condemn the Afghan ruler just to please Akbar and yet, it was not possible to state facts plainly without offending Akbar. His characters speak because this method relieves him to some extent of his responsibility for the views thus expressed. That this method of conversations, as followed by 'Abbas Khan, was the outcome of the situation in which he found himself—and was not a literary device—is evident from the fact that his literary equipment fails to do justice to the technique of dialogues.



Though kings were always the central theme of political chronicles, the Afghan histories laid great emphasis on biographical aspects and looked at things from a limited angle. It is difficult to explain the reasons for this development. May be that the Afghan revival was responsible for it. But even in provincial histories the same tendency is discernible. Shihab Hakim's *Ma'asir-i-Mahmud Shahi*,<sup>1</sup> which deals with Sultan Mahmud Khalji I (1436-1469), reflects the same tendency.

Though the *Jawami-u'l-Hikayat* of 'Awfi is the first book of historical stories written in India, the anecdotal element in historical writings of medieval India was introduced by Rizqullah Mushtaqi, the author of *Waqi'at-i-Mushtaqi*<sup>2</sup> and Shaikh Muhammad Kabir, the author of *Afsana-i-Shahan*.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps both of them wrote just to while away their time and not as a serious literary job. Kabir's only son, Mahmud, having died of snake bite, he thought of keeping himself busy in the compilation of this work. Dr. R.P. Tripathi considered it "a curious mixture of facts, fiction, history and tradition."<sup>4</sup> It, however, contains some valuable pieces of information, particularly with regard to the rise of the Karrani Afghans in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. But anecdotes, whatever their historical value, cannot be a substitute for regular history, particularly when they float in the atmosphere without being properly adjusted in a chronological framework.

The Afghan histories suffer from one other serious defect. Supernatural atmosphere pervades most of these works. Inaction, inertia, superstition and credulous faith in talisman point to degenerate trends in society. Perhaps popular interest in historical works could be created through such fantastic stories of genii, demons and fairies. But this trend betrays lack of interest in

<sup>1</sup>It contains some valuable information about Bahlul Lodi also.

<sup>2</sup>*Waqi'at-i-Mushtaqi* has been edited by my colleague Mr. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi and is being published by the Indian Council of Historical Research.

<sup>3</sup>For assessments of *Afsana-i-Shahan*, see, Hasan Askari's article 'Historical value of Afsanah-i-Badshahan' in *Journal of Indian History*, XLIII, part I, April, 1965, pp. 183-200; Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi's article 'Shaikh Muhammad Kabir and his history of the Afghan Kings (1451-1555)' in *Indo-Iranica*, XIX, no. 4, December 1966, pp. 57-78.

<sup>4</sup>*Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 362.



history as an academic discipline. Dr. Tripathi has warned the scholars: "It must however be remembered that almost all the histories of the Afghans have been written on hearsay and are based on traditions".<sup>1</sup> This literature should, therefore, be relied upon only to the extent that corroborative evidence is available from other contemporary sources.

The tradition of compiling histories of cities – Indian or foreign – developed very late in India. In Persia the histories of Isfahan, Kashan, Kirman, Gilan etc., had been written. In India it was Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith who completed in 1001/1592 his history of Medina under the title *Jazb-u'l-Qulub-ila dayar-i'l-Mahbub*.<sup>2</sup> Histories of regions or provinces came to be written early but cities did not attract attention for long. Manik Chand's *Ahwal-i-shahr-i-Akbarabad*, Waliullah's *Tarikh-i-Farrukhabad*, and other similar works were written during the nineteenth century under influences which were different from those of the political chroniclers of the earlier period.

### *Insha Literature*

*Insha* (epistolography) was one of the most powerful expressions of literary exuberance during the medieval times. A scholar's literary eminence was judged by the excellence of letters and documents drafted by him. Consequently considerable *insha* literature was produced in India during the medieval period. But this literature is broadly of two types : (a) *Insha* manuals intended for the guidance of others,<sup>3</sup> with literary examples and models not necessarily real; (b) *Insha* collections of letters and documents actually sent. It is the second type of literature which is of great historical value and supplies information which it is difficult to obtain from other sources.

The earliest *insha* collection is the *Zinat-u'l-Kuttab* of Abul Fazl Baihaqi (ob. 470/1077). The *al-Tavassul-ila't-tarassul* of Baha-u'd-din Baghdadi, which contains documents dating from the years 578/1182, was looked upon in medieval India as a

<sup>1</sup>*Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, pp. 362-63.

<sup>2</sup>Printed, Kanpur, 1893.

<sup>3</sup>Works like *Manazir-u'l-Insha* (Mahmud Gilani), *Makhzan-u'l-Insha* (Husain Kashifi) etc, fall within this category.



model of *insha*-writing.<sup>1</sup> Among the non-Indian collections of letters, Rashid-u'd-din Fazlullah's *Mukatabat-i-Rashidi* is a very valuable source of information for the study of Khalji—Ilkhanid relations.

In India the *Insha* tradition owes its origin to Amir Khusrau whose *I'jaz-i-Khusravi*<sup>2</sup> is a mine of information for the literary, cultural and social history of medieval India. It contains literary essays, intended for display of literary power as well as actual drafts prepared by the poet. The *Insha-i-Mahru* of 'Ain-u'l-Mulk Multani contains only documents and letters which were actually sent and supplies interesting information about the working of the Tughluq administration. Among the *Insha* collections of the South, *Riyaz-u'l-Insha*<sup>3</sup> of Mahmud Gawan is a very valuable source of information for the cultural and political history of the South. It appears from this collection that the Deccan had brisk contact with the outside Muslim world and that works written in 'Ajam reached the South earlier than in northern India. The *Insha-i-Tahir*<sup>4</sup> of Shah Tahir Husaini (ob. 952/1545), contains letters written by Tahir in the name of Burhan Nizam Shah and on his own behalf. There are letters addressed to Babur, Humayun and many important persons of India and Iran. *Riyaz-u'l-Insha* and *Insha-i-Tahir* are the best available collections of letters produced in the south.

The *Insha* collections of the Mughal period are so numerous that it is difficult to mention them all. Starting from *Bada 'i-u'l-Insha*<sup>5</sup> of Hakim Yusufi (compiled in 940/1533) to the *Nigar Nama-i-Munshi*<sup>6</sup> of Munshi Malikzada (compiled in 1095/1683) there are numerous *Insha* collections produced during a period of 150 years.

Abul Fazl's name stands out pre-eminently in the history of

<sup>1</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 169. The work has been edited by Ahmad Bahmanyar, Tehran; 1315/1936.

<sup>2</sup>Though *I'jaz-i-Khusravi* was lithographed at Lucknow, Nawal Kishore Press, 1875-76, a critically edited edition was a great desideratum. My colleague Dr. Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi has prepared a critical edition which will be published soon.

<sup>3</sup>Edited by Shaikh Chand, Hyderabad, 1948.

<sup>4</sup>MS., British Museum, 499.

<sup>5</sup>Published, Delhi, 1870.

<sup>6</sup>Printed, Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1882.



*insha*-literature in India. His *Mukatabat-i-'Allami*,<sup>1</sup> collected and published in 1015/1606 by his nephew Abdus Samad b. Afzal Muhammad is invaluable for understanding the thought of Abul Fazl and some of the religious and cultural trends of the period. Another collection of his letters made by another nephew, Nur-u'd-din Muhammad, under the title *Ruqqat-i-Abul Fazl*,<sup>2</sup> is equally interesting. At places the Abul Fazl of *Insha* appears in different colours than the author of *Akbarnama*. Nur-u'd-din Muhammad did a similar service to Faizi also and prepared a collection of his letters, known as *Latifa-i-Faizi*.<sup>3</sup> It is a valuable source of information for contemporary religious, cultural and literary trends. The *Insha-i-Har Karan*,<sup>4</sup> written by Harkaran son of Mathuradas Kanboh of Multan during the time of Jahangir, has a place of its own in the *insha*-literature of the Mughal period. Aurangzeb's *Ruqqat*,<sup>5</sup> brief but scholarly, have been looked upon as models of scholarly letter-writing. Some other collections of Aurangzeb's letters, like *Raq'aim-i-Karaim*,<sup>6</sup> *Kalamat-i-Tayyabat*,<sup>7</sup> *Ramz-wa-Ishara-ha-i 'Alamgiri*<sup>8</sup> and *Dastur-u'l-'Amal-i-Agahi*<sup>9</sup> have also come to light. A complete edition of all these writings of Aurangzeb would be of immense historical value.

Of the *insha*-collections of the Mughal period the following deserve particular mention:

1. *Chahar Bagh*,<sup>10</sup> by Hakim Abul Fath of Gilan. According to Badaoni Abul Fath had exercised a very unhealthy influence on the religious ideas of Akbar. This collection shows his interest in philosophy.

<sup>1</sup>Published, Lucknow, 1280 A.H.

<sup>2</sup>Printed, Calcutta, 1238/1822.

<sup>3</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library.

<sup>4</sup>Text and English translation, Francis Balfour, Calcutta, 1871.

<sup>5</sup>ed. Najib Ashraf Nadvi, Azamgarh, 1930.

<sup>6</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Sir Shah Sulaiman Collection, 412/145; British Museum, Add. 26, 239.

<sup>7</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Abdus Salam Collection, 322/92; British Museum, Add. 26, 238.

<sup>8</sup>MS., British Museum, Add. 26, 240.

<sup>9</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Abdus Salam Collection, 323/93.

<sup>10</sup>MS, India Office Library, 2063.



2. *Munsha'at-i-Namakin*,<sup>1</sup> by Mir Abul Qasim Khan Namakin. Completed in 1006/1598, and dedicated to Akbar. It contains specimens of all types of *insha*.

3. *Zubdat-ul-Insha*,<sup>2</sup> by anonymous author. Compiled during the reign of Jahangir.

4. *Insha-i-Munir*,<sup>3</sup> by Munir Lahori (ob. 1054/1644).

5. *Bahar-i-Sukhan*,<sup>4</sup> by Muhammad Salih Kanboh, with a preface by Munir.

6. *Munsha'at-i-Brahman*,<sup>5</sup> by Chandra Bhan (ob. 1068/1657). Shah Jahan and Dara Shukoh had great admiration for his language and style. Shah Jahan used to call him *Hindu-i-parsi dan*.

7. *Insha-i-Amani or Insha-i-Khanazad Khan*,<sup>6</sup> of Amanullah Khanazad Khan (ob. 1047/1637).

8. *Insha-i-Baqir Khan*,<sup>7</sup> of Baqir Khan Najm-i Sani (ob. 1047/1637).

The literary value of some of these collections has been assessed<sup>8</sup> but a historical evaluation of the material of historical significance that lies buried in them is still a desideratum.

It is interesting to note that Hindu scholars of the Mughal period were not only keenly interested in *insha*, they excelled many of their contemporaries in this art. Their collections reveal a high standard of literary achievement. *Tarz-u'l-Insha*<sup>9</sup> of Inderjit, *Guldasta-i-Faizi*<sup>10</sup> of Thori Mal Tamkin, *Ruqqat*<sup>11</sup> of Rai Chabaila Ram, *Daqa'iq-u'l-Insha*<sup>12</sup> of Ranjor Das, *Insha*<sup>13</sup> of

<sup>1</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library.

For a critical evaluation, see *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, VIII, part II, April 1960, pp. 90-96.

<sup>2</sup>MS., India Office, 20, 65.

<sup>3</sup>Printed, Kanpur, 1874.

<sup>4</sup>MS., British Museum, Or. 178.

<sup>5</sup>MS., Edinburgh University, 334.

<sup>6</sup>MS., British Museum, Or. 1410.

<sup>7</sup>MS., India Office, 1535.

<sup>8</sup>Dr. Momin Mohiuddin has attempted this in his scholarly study, *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals*, Iran Society, Calcutta, 1971.

<sup>9</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 1043.

<sup>10</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 987.

<sup>11</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 986.

<sup>12</sup>MS., Personal Collection, India Office, 2120.

<sup>13</sup>MS., Asiatic Society of Bengal, no. 714.



Din Dayal, *Insha-i-Nioz Nama*<sup>1</sup> of Sujan Rai, *Jami'-ul-Insha*<sup>2</sup> of Bhag Chand, *Ruqqa't*<sup>3</sup> of Sahib Ram, *Gharib-u'l-Insha*<sup>4</sup> of Kishan Singh Nishat, *Gulsan-i-Bahar*<sup>5</sup> of Jaswant Rai Munshi and dozens of other *insha*-compilations bear testimony to Hindu interest in Persian language and literature. Even Nizam-u'l-Mulk's letters were drafted by Munshi Ram Singh and his collection known as *Gulshan-i-'Aja'ib* is noteworthy.

Apart from everything else, these *insha* collections give us an idea of the mental climate of the period and the literary and cultural ideals and patterns of the age. Enormous details of historical significance lie hidden in these collections.

### Poetical Literature

Excluding versified histories, like the *Futuh-u's-Salatin* of 'Isami, which constitute a category by themselves, there are three distinct categories of Persian poetical literature—*ghazal*, *masnavi* and *qasida*. In *ghazal* every verse is a unit, self-contained and complete, both in thought and expression. The *ghazal* is a vehicle for the expression of erotic sentiments. But the medium of *ghazal* has been employed by mystics also for expressing their cosmic emotion and sometimes it has been used by poets to express their discontent against the political powers of the day. If direct criticism was not possible, and under strong medieval monarchies that was hardly possible, poets spoke about their distress through the medium of *gul* (flower) and *bulbul* (nightingale). The distress and discontent of their soul found a convenient theme in a lover's misfortune. A careful study of medieval *ghazal* literature—and under the impact of Persian the same tradition was continued in Urdu also—would reveal the anguish and anger of sensitive souls at the existing order of things. A poet's soul often rebels at the idea of his thought being put in fetters. He wants to rise above petty considerations of caste, creed and colour. He wants to address his message and convey his feelings to humanity as a whole. So poets have very often

<sup>1</sup>MS., British Museum Catalogue III, p. 988.

<sup>2</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 984; Or. 1702.

<sup>3</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 986.

<sup>4</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue II, p. 795.

<sup>5</sup>MS., British Museum, Catalogue III, p. 987.



given expression to sentiments which may not be acceptable to some sections of contemporary society but which embody the essence of their social thought and humanistic feelings.

A *masnavi* is a long versified narrative on any theme, historical or romantic. In a historical *masnavi* the poet's imagination is fettered by the data. He can indulge in digressions – sometimes absolutely unconnected with the theme proper – but he cannot alter, amend or twist the data to suit his poetic needs. Amir Khusrau wrote a number of *masnavis* under both the categories :

- (a) Historical : *Qir'an-u's-Sa'dain, Miftah-u'l-Futuh, Dawal Rani, Nuh Sipahr, Tughluqnama.*
- (b) Romantic : The Khamsa : *Matla'u'l-Anwar, Shirin Khusrau, A'ina-i-Sikandari, Majnun Laila, Hasht Bihisht.*

In romantic *masnavis* the interest of a modern historian lies in collecting data about social and cultural life and institutions of the period. The pattern followed in historical *masnavis* is that the poet concentrates mainly on historical themes, but wherever he finds that his imagination has been too much hemmed in by restrictions imposed by data, he takes up a general theme and expatiates on it for sometime. This helps him in maintaining the poetical charm of the composition. There are some very brief *masnavis*, like Khusrau's *Sahifat-u'l-Ausaf* on Deogir, and Faizi's *masnavi* on Akbar's conquest of Gujarat, which deal with specific matters and throw valuable light on them.

The *qasidas* written in Persian have a set pattern and, above all, a well-established tradition of hyperbolism and exaggeration. It would be naive to accept a poet's statements in a *qasida* literally. The historical value of *qasidas*, however, lies in supplying some data of historical significance. For instance, from the *qasidas* written by Badr-i-Chach we know about the visits of the emissaries of the Caliph, the construction of Jahan Panah etc. Since in the *qasidas* a poet's constant endeavour is to say things which may please his patron, this type of literature is helpful in understanding the likes and dislikes of the medieval rulers and their nobles. Constant references to 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji's religious interests in the *qasidas* of Khusrau and Amir Hasan are not without significance.

In the long and chequered history of medieval India three

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reigns stand out pre-eminently for the production of poetical literature of great quality—Iltutmish, 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji and Akbar. Though a number of poets flourished during the Tughluq period but, as Shaikh 'Abdul Haq Muhaddith has observed, an atmosphere of gloom and depression hangs over their compositions.

Iltutmish's Delhi had attracted the finest poetic talent of 'Ajam to its fold. Taj Raza, Ruhani, Siraji, Nasiri, Shams Dabir and Sadr Ajal Baha-u'd-din 'Ali were the outstanding poets of the period. Their works—in whatever form they have survived—throw lot of light on the social and cultural milieu of India during the 13th century.<sup>1</sup> The *diwan*<sup>2</sup> of Shaikh Jamal-u'd-din Hansvi, an elder disciple of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar, contains considerable information of cultural and religious significance.

The age of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji also saw the production of enormous poetic literature which is replete with information of historical import. Amir Khusrau's poetical works constitute a veritable source of information for the social and cultural history of medieval India. They contain wealth of details about Indian birds and animals, languages and religions, fruits and flowers, clothes, curtains, ornaments, weapons, customs and ceremonials. These facts which lie scattered in his *masnavis* help us in reconstructing a picture of the social and cultural life of medieval India. Amir Hasan Sijzi was another poet of eminence whose *diwan*<sup>3</sup> contains panegyrics on 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji. Zia-u'd-din Nakhshabi's compositions<sup>4</sup>—particularly quatrains on moral and ethical themes—so captured the imagination of the contemporaries as well as the posterity, that many writers of *insha*,

<sup>1</sup>See Agha 'Abdus Sattar Khan's article 'Sultan Iltutmish kay daur main 'ilmi aur adabi tahrikan', *Oriental College Magazine*, May 1939, pp. 22-48; also August 1940, pp. 54-60.

<sup>2</sup>Published by Pirji Rafi'-u'd-din, Chashma-i-Faiz Press, Delhi, 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Edited by Mas'ud 'Ali Mahwi, Ibrahimiyah Machine Press, Hyderabad, 1352 A.H.

<sup>4</sup>He was the author of several works in prose, containing large number of verses. Particular reference may be made to *Tuti Nama*, *Sharh Du'a-i-Suryani*, *Chehl Namus*, *Silk-u's-Suluk*, *Nasa'ih-wa-Mawa'iz*, *Gulriz*, and *Lazzat-u'n-Nisa*. For a detailed discussion of his life and works, Nizami, *Tarikhi Maqalat*, pp. 79-114.



including Abul Fazl and Aurangzeb, refer to his verses. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk Mahru makes very respectful reference to him as *Maulana Afzal-u'l-'Asr*.<sup>1</sup> A careful study of Nakhshabi's poetry gives us a feel of the moral and spiritual ideals and expectations of the medieval people. When he says that he did not build his house because he had seen world destruction, he speaks volumes about the psychology of people who came to India uprooted from their homelands.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly the poetic literature produced during the reign of Akbar reflects the trends and tendencies of the period. Akbar had initiated a policy of religious syncretism, *sulh-i-kul* and tolerance. The poetic literature of this period fully reflects this trend. No study of Akbar's reign can claim to be complete unless the poetic literature of the period is used thoroughly and critically.

Most of the poets of Akbar's reign were free thinkers. Like Faizi they could say:

'Take Faizi's *Diwan* to bear witness to the wonderful speeches of a free thinker who belongs to a thousand sects.'

Some of them came to the Mughal court because they were persecuted in their homelands for their religious views. Ghazali Meshedi, the first poet-laureate of Akbar, was a man of unorthodox religious views. Disgusted with his "heresy and irreligiousness," the people of Iraq made an attempt on this life but he somehow escaped to India.<sup>3</sup> Qasim-i-Kahi, another distinguished poet of this period, was known for his catholicity of views. He mixed freely with all sorts of people--*qalandars*, mystics, free thinkers, etc., and visited different places of worship. He had visited Somnat also where he heard a Hindu quoting as follows: "I was raw, became mature, and was burnt."<sup>4</sup> Badaoni remarks about him that that he had spent his whole life in heresy and impiety.<sup>5</sup> Ja'far Beg, another distinguished poet of this period, was a member of Akbar's *Din-e-Elahi*.<sup>6</sup> It is said

<sup>1</sup>*Insha-i-Mahru*, p. 189. He further refers to him as *makhdumi*.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikhi Maqalat*, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 170.

<sup>4</sup>*Diwan-i-Qasim Kahi*, edited by Hadi Hasan, p. ii.

<sup>5</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 173.

<sup>6</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, Blochmann, pp. 636-37.



about Abtari Badakhshani that he was deeply influenced by the pantheistic philosophy of Shaikh Muhi-u'd-din Ibn-i-'Arabi and had committed to memory some portions of *Futuh-i-Makkiya* and *Fusus-u'l-Hikam*. His free and unfettered religious thinking led him to believe in the correctness of Pharaoh's faith. Some people contemptuously addressed him as 'Pharaoh's Advocate.'<sup>1</sup> Tashbihi Kashani,<sup>2</sup> Sani Khan Hervi<sup>3</sup> and Wuqu'i Naishapuri<sup>4</sup> were inclined towards the Nuqtawi sect.<sup>5</sup> Daghistani condemns Tashbihi as a heretic; Badaoni charges him of seducing others also to heresy. Wuqu'i is reported to have been a believer in the transmigration of souls. Thus most of the poets associated with Akbar's court held heterodox views on religious matters.

The following poetical collections<sup>6</sup> of Akbar's period are available but it is a pity that no appreciable use has been made of this literature in assessing the spirit of the age:

1. **Sana'i Meshedi**, *Diwan-i-Sana'i*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, no. 680; India Office, nos. 1449-50; British Museum, no. 309; Bodleian, 1045-49; Berlin, 722, 899-900 etc.; Bankipore, no. 250, Hyderabad.

2. **Hijri**, *Diwan-i-Hijri*, India Office, no. 1441.

3. **Naziri Naishapuri**, *Diwan-i-Naziri*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 705 07; India Office, 1489-92; Sup. British Museum, 316; Bodleian, 1074-75; Berlin, 701, 908; Bankipore, 276-78.

4. **Nau'i**, *Kulliyat-i-Nau'i*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 698-99; India Office, 1485; Sup. British Museum, 313, 376, 419; Bodleian, 1064-66; Berlin, 696; British Museum, 674; Bankipore, 272.

5. **Raha'i**, *Diwan-i-Raha'i*, India Office, 1493; Bodleian, 1037.

<sup>1</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, Blochmann, p. 666; Badaoni, III, pp. 204-06; Nizam-u'd-din, II, p. 504.

<sup>3</sup>Blochmann, pp. 531-32; Badaoni, III, pp. 206-07.

<sup>4</sup>Badaoni, III, pp. 378-81; Nizam-u'd-din, II, p. 505. *Ma'asir-i-Rahimi*, III, pp. 687-97.

<sup>5</sup>For details about the Nuqtawi sect, see *Nuqtawiyān ya Pasikhaniyan* by Dr. Muhammad Sadegh Kia, Tehran. See also Blochmann, pp. 502-04.

<sup>6</sup>Some of these collections have been published, but most of them still await proper editing and careful collation.



6. Bahram Saqqa, *Diwan-i-Saqqa*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 669-70; India Office, 1436; Hyderabad, 304, 23, 432.
7. Mushfiqi, *Diwan-i-Mushfiqi*, India Office, 1446; Bodleian, 1044; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 766.
8. Mazhari, *Diwan-i-Mazhari*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 702.
9. Sanjar Kashani, *Diwan-i-Sanjar*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 703; India Office, 1488; Berlin, 909; British Museum, 675.
10. Qaplan Beg, *Diwan-i-Qaplan Beg*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, no. 734.
11. Shifa'i, *Kulliyat-i-Shifa'i*, India Office, 1531-33; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 729; Bodleian, 1093; Berlin, 913-15; British Museum, 822; Bankipore, 298-300; Hyderabad, 397; *Diwan-i-Shifa'i*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 730; *Masnawiyat-i-Shifa'i*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 731.
12. 'Urfi, *Diwan-i-'Urfi*, India Office, 1451-63; Bodleian, 1051-54, 1991; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 683-84; Cambridge, 289-90; British Museum, (Sup.) 310-11; Berlin, 901-05; Bankipore, 253-58; *Majma'-u'l-Akbar*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 685.
13. Ghazali Meshedi, *Diwan-i-Ghazali*, Bodleian, 1033; British Museum, 661-63; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 674.
14. Faizi, *Diwan-i-Faizi*, British Museum, 450, 670; India Office, 1464-79; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 692-93; Leipzig, 128; Berlin, 906; Bankipore, 261-64; *Markaz-u'l-Adwar*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 695; Bodleian, 1057; *Nal-u-Daman*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 696.
15. Qasim-i-Kahi, *Diwan-i-Kahi*, British Museum, Lucknow, edited by Hadi Hasan, Iran Society, Calcutta, 1965.
16. Maili Hervi, *Diwan-i-Maili*, British Museum, 666 etc.; Bankipore, 243; Asiatic Society of Bengal, 686-87.
17. Khwaja Husain Mervi, *Diwan-i-Mervi*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 682.
18. Qasim Arsalan, *Diwan-i-Arsalan*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 678; Bankipore, 249.
19. Nasir Hamdani, *Diwan-i-Nasir Hamdani*, India Office, 1484.
20. Asaf Khan Ja'far, *Masnawi Farhad Shirin*, Bodleian, 1068-71.
21. Kashifi, *Diwan-i-Kashifi*, India Office, 1443.
22. Shafi'i, *Masnawi-Shafi'i*, Bodleian, 1055.
23. Qudrati, *Diwan-i-Qudrati*, Bodleian, 1056.

The historical value of these poetical works cannot be over-emphasized. First, they help us in understanding the spirit of



Akbar's age. "The buildings of Fatehpur Sikri", writes Dr. Tara Chand, "are the expression of the same spirit as inspired the *Din-e-Elahi*. The Panch Mahal was the translation into stone of the Allah Upanishad."<sup>1</sup> The same may be said about the poetry of Akbar's court. It breathes the spirit of *Din-e-Elahi* and mirrors the spiritual and moral urges of the time. To understand the mental climate in which the *Din-e-Elahi* was promulgated, it is necessary to scrutinize the poetical works of this period.

Secondly, many poets of this period delighted in writing chronograms which help us today in determining the dates of many historical events, campaigns, conquests, constructions, compilations, births and deaths. To quote only one instance Faizi's *diwan* contains chronograms on the following events:

- Date of the marriage of the heir-apparent
- Birth of Shah Murad
- Date of the conquest of Ranthambhor
- Date of the construction of the imperial mosque
- Death of father (Shaikh Mubarak)
- Death of brother
- Death of Sabihi
- Death of Shaikh Kapur Majzub
- Death of Mulla 'Alam Kabuli
- Death of Maulana Ghazali
- Date of the conquest of Gujarat
- Date of the construction of the royal Khanqah
- Date of the compilation of *Sawati'u'l-Ilham*
- Coronation of His Majesty
- Death of Mulla Qasim Kahi

Thirdly, these works contain information which helps us in understanding some incidents and individual more intimately. For instance,

Bayram Khan Khan-i-Khanan's attitude towards Akbar has been the subject of great controversy. Whatever information we get in the contemporary records about the circumstances of his conflict with the Emperor really represents the imperial point of view. Bayram's own *diwan* throws considerable light on his feelings towards Akbar. Begging for royal mercy he writes:

<sup>1</sup>*Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, p. 248.



‘O My King! For God’s sake don’t be unhappy with this beggar. I ask you in the name of God not to be unhappy with me.’

The whole poem is full of spiritual agony and reflects Bayram’s feelings when Akbar’s attitude towards him underwent a change.

During the eighteenth century the medieval pattern of life, its traditions and values, developed a decadent veneer though a casual observer could hardly notice it. Mir, however, writes :

‘In the garments of roses and tulips was reflected the coming of the autumn;  
In the full bloom of spring we wept for the spring.’

So the poetic literature of medieval India – both of the Sultana and the Mughal periods, as also the literature produced in provincial kingdoms – is in a way more useful in the study of the spirit of the age than the prose literature. However, the critical apparatus needed for the study of the Persian poetical literature cannot possibly be the same as for the political chronicles. Here a thorough understanding of the medium of poetry—its traditions and styles—is necessary to separate the chaff from the grain.

### *Mystic Literature*

Mystic literature is a category by itself—with a spirit, methodology and literary treatment distinct from all other types of literature. The main difference lies in approach towards material pursuits of life and mundane attractions of the world. To a mystic the be-all and end-all of his life was to “live for the Lord alone.” He looked upon attractions of the world as distractions from the spiritual objective. Therefore most of the discussions that constitute the main burthen of the literary output of others are horrible distractions for a mystic. Nevertheless, it was not possible for a mystic to cut himself off completely from society. ‘Service of humanity’ being one of his ideals, he could not avoid coming into contact with men and women belonging to different strata of society.

If understanding of a society’s *weltanschauung* is necessary for an assessment of its social and religious milieu, the mystic literature has a value which cannot be over-emphasized. The mystic concept of ‘service of mankind’ as the supreme ideal of human endeavour expressed itself in a variety of ways. While to the political chroni-



clers of the period the greatness of Iltutmish lay in his military achievements, a mystic viewed him from a different angle. To him the highest and the noblest contribution of Iltutmish was the construction of Hauz-i-Shamsi<sup>1</sup> which supplied water and comfort to thousands of the needy people of Delhi. Thus mystic assessment of men and movements should also be taken into consideration as it reflects the opinion of a very large sector of people during the medieval period.

In many cases the information found in mystic records acts as a corrective to the impressions created and perpetuated by the political chronicles. By and large most of the mystics of the medieval period believed in giving a wide berth to the government of the day. They considered contact with the court injurious to the development of mystic personality and persistently advised their disciples: "If you desire elevation in your spiritual ranks, do not mix with the princes of the blood."<sup>2</sup> Some of the saints, like Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, included a clear and specific advice in their *khilafat-namas* warning their disciples against contact with kings and princes.<sup>3</sup> This attitude of non-chalance towards the state is reflected in the mystic literature and is a welcome relief from the rhapsodies of political chronicles. After a careful study of the mystic literature one has the feeling that the court life did not constitute the totality of social or intellectual activity of the period. The *khanqahs* were also an important centre where people of all sorts—rich and poor, villagers and townsfolk, men and women, Hindus and Muslims— assembled. In fact, if any one place in medieval India represented all types and sections of people, it was the *khanqah* of the sufis.

The mystic literature falls under the following broad categories :

- (a) Works on mystic thought, practices and litanies ;
- (b) *Malfuzat*, conversations of saints ;
- (c) *Maktubat*, collections of letters ;
- (d) Biographical accounts of saints.

Works on mystic thought should be studied with a view to

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 204, 295.



assess and evaluate (a) the nature and extent to which the mystic thought of the earlier generations, particularly outside India, formed the basis of Indian mystic thought, and (b) how far Indian conditions modified or changed the thought of Indo-Muslim mystics, and (c) what original dimensions to mystical thought were given in India and how far it represents the originality of the Indian mind. Such a study, involving an analysis of the drift and direction of mystical thought, is of great value in understanding the main processes of ideological growth and adjustment.

The *malfuzat* of the medieval saints have a great value in understanding an important-segment of medieval society. The founder of this tradition in India was Amir Hasan Sijzi who, on Sha'ban 3, 707/January 1307, thought of preparing a record of the conversations of his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, and after years of preparation produced *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* which according to Barani became a manual of guidance for the mystics of the *silsilah* and *sufis* of other affiliations also followed suit. In no time large number of *malfuzat* collections appeared from Delhi to Deogir and from Lakhnauti to Uchch. The practice did not remain confined to the Chishti *silsilah*; saints of other orders—Suhrawardis, Firdausis, Naqshbandis, Qadiris and Shattaris—followed the tradition. The literature produced under this category during the last six centuries or so constitutes a veritable source of information for the life and thought of medieval mystics.

It was through correspondence that sufi teachers trained and guided their disciples living far away from their mystic headquarters. Hence these epistolary collections reveal the nature of problems faced by the mystic workers in different areas and the guidance provided to them by the mystic master. In this connection, *Maktubat-i-Nur Qutb-i-'Alam*, *Maktubat-i-Ashraf Jahangir Samnani*, *Maktubat-i-Shaikh 'Abdul Quddus Gangohi*, *Maktubat-i-Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi*, *Maktubat-i-Shah Waliullah*, *Maktubat-i-Shah Kalim-ullah Dihlawi* and *Maktubat-i-Khwaja Ma'sum* are of great historical significance.

Biographies of mystic teachers of the medieval period demand a very sharp and critical, but sympathetic, approach of the reader. It was most unfortunate that compilers of many of these hagiologies concentrated on supernatural stories and undermined the



historical value of their works. The tendency to attribute miracles to their mystic teachers played havoc with these compilations and the historical figures of many medieval sufis got obscured by meaningless stories. Later generations of writers went on adding one layer after another to these accounts till it became extremely difficult to see the figure of a sufi saint in his human form. For a sample study one may take up the works produced on Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i Shakar by the later generations. Amir Khurd gives the earliest and by far the most authentic account of the Shaikh. As years roll on, every writer fondly adds something to this, till at last in *Jawahir-i-Faridi* of 'Ali Asghar Chishti, produced during the reign of Jahangir, the personality of Shaikh Farid gets completely wrapped up in supernatural stories and anecdotes.

Besides, the tendency to fabricate literature in the name of eminent mystic teachers was fairly widespread in medieval India, perhaps for market reasons. Many of the *malfuzat* attributed to early Chishti saints are apocryphal.<sup>1</sup> The study of mystic literature is no doubt invaluable for a proper understanding of the moral and spiritual urges of the people and to have a glimpse of the life and problems of the common man, but a reader has to be cautious and careful in handling this literature.

### *Tazkira Literature*

*Tazkira* literature of medieval India comprises mainly accounts of poets but includes also lives of 'ulama, sufis, literati and artists. The earliest *tazkira* is 'Awfi's classical *Lubab-u'l-Albab*<sup>2</sup> which contains notices of nearly 300 poets. It was compiled in 618/1221-2 and was dedicated to Qubacha's Wazir, 'Ain-u'l-Mulk Fakhr-u'd-din Husain b. Abi Bakr al-Ash'ari. Though the poets connected with India are few, the work helps us in understanding the literary and intellectual atmosphere of the period and contains certain pieces of information which are of great value in the

<sup>1</sup>For a critical evaluation of this type of apocryphal literature, see Prof. M. Habib's article 'Chishti Mystic Records of the Sultanate Period' in *Medieval India Quarterly*, I, no. 2, October 1950, pp. 1-42. See also Nizami, *Supplement to Elliot & Dowson's History of India*, II, pp. 63-66.

<sup>2</sup>Part II edited by E.G. Browne, London and Leyden, 1903, part I edited by Browne and Qazwini, London and Leyden, 1906.



larger framework of medieval history. The *Nafa'is-u'l-Ma'asir* of 'Ala-u'd-Daula Qazwini, compiled in 973/1565-6, is another important *tazkira* which contains brief accounts of Babur, Humayun and Akbar, besides the biographical notices of the poets of the period.

It was from the later half of the 17th century that *tazkira* literature came to be produced in abundance and for the 18th and 19th centuries this literature forms a very valuable sources of information for the social, cultural and literary history of the period. It sometimes throws interesting light on political events also. With the break-up of the Mughal Empire and decentralization of the power of the Mughal Emperors, the house of every important noble became a miniature *darbar* where poets, scholars, artisans and musicians were patronized and kept in regular service. It was but natural under the circumstances that large number of *tazkiras* came to be written under the patronage of Mughal nobles. For reconstructing the history of the social life and activities of the nobles, literati and poets, this literature has a value which cannot be over-emphasized. Some of the *tazkiras*, like the *Kalimat-ush-Shu'ara* of Mirza Muhammad Afzal Sarkhush (ob. 1226/1714), the *Mir'at-u'l-Khayal*, of Sher Khan Lodi, the *Hamisha Bahar* of Kishan Chand Ikhlas, the *Safina-i-Khwushgu* of Bindaraban Das Khwushgu and the *Tazkira-i-Nudrat* of 'Ataullah Nudrat, are a mine of information for a study of the cultural and literary trends in Mughal India. The *Tarikh-i-Tazkira-i-Farsi*<sup>1</sup> by Ahmad Gulchin Ma'ani contains valuable information on *tazkira* literature, which may be read along with Storey's *Persian Literature*<sup>2</sup> to get an idea of the enormity of this type of literature. For the literary and cultural history of India during the 18th and the 19th centuries this literature is invaluable.

#### *Autobiographical Literature*

Compilation of an autobiographical account may proceed from very different attitudes of mind. Sometimes dissatisfied ego seeks satisfaction in self-projection; at others, the need to justify some actions not recorded correctly by others impels one to com-

<sup>1</sup>Published in two volumes from Tehran, 1348-1350.

<sup>2</sup>*Persian Literature*, pp. 781-923.



pile an autobiography; sometimes the desire to perpetuate one's name and fame is at the root of such compilation. Not infrequently nostalgic memory of the past inspires the compilation of an autobiography. No autobiography can be properly understood and correctly utilised unless the motivations of the author are carefully analysed and understood.

Medieval autobiographical literature includes biographies of rulers, politicians, mystics, poets, litterateurs. The autobiographical literature pertaining to rulers and nobles includes the *Futuh-at-i-Firoz Shahi*, the *Tuzuk-i-Baburi* and the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*. A few pages deemed to be a fragment of the missing autobiography of Muhammad bin Tughluq are apocryphal and cannot be used for evaluating the thought or personality of the great Tughluq Sultan. The *Futuh-at-i-Firoz Shahi* was originally inscribed on the walls of the Jami' Masjid and this fact is vital in analysing its contents.

#### *Dastur-u'l-'Amals*

*Dastur-u'l-'Amals* constitute a veritable source of information for the actual working of the administration. The earliest work of this nature produced in India is the *Dastur-u'l-Albab fi 'Ilm-il Hisab*,<sup>1</sup> written by 'Abdul Hamid Muharrir Ghaznavi during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughluq in order to instruct his son in the art of ledger keeping. In the process of describing the procedure to be followed in the maintenance of accounts he has explained a number of terms then in use. During the Mughal period large number of *dastur-u'l-'amals* were compiled, particularly during the time of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. Particular reference may be made to *Dastur-u'l-'amal-i-'Ilm-i Navisindangi*,<sup>2</sup> *Dastur-u'l-'amal* (Jawahar Nath Baikas Sahaswani)<sup>3</sup> *Dastur-u'l-'amal-i-'Alamgiri*,<sup>4</sup> *Dastur-u'l-'amal-i-Navisindangi*,<sup>5</sup> *Zawabit-i-*

<sup>1</sup>The only manuscript of this work is in Rampur Library. For Prof. S.A. Rashid's translation of some portion of this work, see *Medieval India Quarterly*, I, nos. 3-4, pp. 59-99.

<sup>2</sup>MS., British Museum, Add. 6599.

<sup>3</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Subhanullah Collection, 954/4.

<sup>4</sup>MS., British Museum, Add. 6598.

<sup>5</sup>MS., British Museum, Add. 6641.



'*Alamgiri*,<sup>1</sup> *Farhang-i-Kardani*<sup>2</sup> *Khulasat-u's-Siyaq*,<sup>3</sup> *Hidayat-u'l-Qawa'id*<sup>4</sup> and *Siyaq Nama* of Nand Ram Kayasth.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately none of these *dastur-u'l-'amals* has been properly edited and published, except the last one, while the fact remains that nothing gives better an idea of the Mughal administrative machinery than this literature. Since these manuals were intended for the guidance of the government officers, the idealistic aspect predominates the realistic one, an objection which Sir Jadunath Sarkar had once raised even about *A'in-i-Akbari*.<sup>6</sup> However, from this literature we get an idea of the revenues of the different provinces, expenditure of the State, number and position of the mansabdars, distribution of work among various functionaries, procedures followed at different levels, classification of officers etc. For an actual picture of the Mughal government and its functioning a study of the *dastur-u'l-'amals* should be co-ordinated with an analysis of the *akhbarat*.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Foreigner's Accounts*

India with its fauna and flora, rivers and mountains, customs and institutions and, above all, its achievements in the realm of learning—particularly mathematics, astronomy and medicine—has always attracted the attention of foreigners. During the early medieval period we find elaborate and interesting accounts

<sup>1</sup>MS., British Museum, Or. 1641.

<sup>2</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Abdus Salam Collection, F. 85/315.

<sup>3</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Sir Shah Sulaiman Collection, 410/143.

<sup>4</sup>MS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Abdus Salam Collection, 149/339.

<sup>5</sup>Published by Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1879.

<sup>6</sup>*Mughal Administration*, p. 246.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar says: "The immense size of the *A'in-i-Akbari* and the unreality or rather the practical uselessness of much of its contents, made it undesirable to write similar works or to bring it upto date in the reigns of Akbar's successors" (p. 247). This is, of course, correct but the *dastur-u'l-'amals* of the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb follow a simple and straightforward language.

<sup>7</sup>For an account of *akhbarat*, see Sri Ram Sharma, *A Bibliography of Mughal India 1526-1707 AD*, pp. 6-14.



of India from the pen of Arab geographers.<sup>1</sup> Some of them came to India personally, others collected information from reliable visitors. No encyclopaedia or geographical work was considered complete unless it contained an account of India—a land of wisdom, pearls, rivers and mountains. These accounts naturally differ in accent, emphasis and presentation according to the status and understanding of the informant. A foreigner's account has, however, one great advantage. He highlights and brings into focus aspects of life which are very often ignored or omitted by local historians on account of their familiarity with those details. As he is born and brought up in that atmosphere, its novelty or rarity or uniqueness wears out in his eyes. Further, a foreign traveller, if he is intelligent and has studied similar customs and institutions in other lands, helps in a comparative study of many interesting social, economic and cultural institutions. The author of *Subh-u'l-A'sha*, for instance, describe weights and measures, coins and currencies of different countries and this helps us in making some sort of a comparative study of these aspects of economic life.

The fourteenth century, particularly the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq, finds detailed mention in the works of Arab scholars, like al-Qalqashandi,<sup>2</sup> al-'Umari,<sup>3</sup> Salah-u'd-din Safadi,<sup>4</sup> Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani<sup>5</sup> and others.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that while Muhammad bin Tughluq was criticised by the Indian 'ulama he was lavishly praised by the Arab scholars.

Muhammad bin Tughluq had established diplomatic relations on an extensive scale. No wonder, therefore, that some of his policies can be understood and explained only in an international

<sup>1</sup>Extracts from some of the Arab writers on India have been published along with Urdu translation by the *Dar-u'l-Musannifin*, Azamgarh, 1960-1962. How this material can be effectively used in constructing a picture of Indo-Arab relations may be seen in Syed Sulaiman Nadvi's classical work *Arab-wa-Hind Ke Ta'luqat*, Hindustani Academy, Allahabad.

<sup>2</sup>*Subh-ul-A'sha*, portion dealing with India translated by O. Spies, *An Arab Account of India During the 14th Century*, Aligarh.

<sup>3</sup>*Masalik-u'l-Absar*, portion dealing with India, translated by O. Spies, Aligarh.

<sup>4</sup>*Al-A'yan-u'l-'Asr*, MS.

<sup>5</sup>*al-Durar al-Kamina*, Dair' at-u'l-Ma'arif, Hyderabad.

<sup>6</sup>My colleague Dr. Mohd. Zaki has consolidated all these accounts in his *Arab Accounts of India*, Delhi, 1981.



context. He was fully conversant with political developments in the Il-Khanid territory, knew the details of the main political tussles and tangles in the neighbouring countries, had correspondence with the Abbasid Caliph in Cairo and knew about the paper currency in Iran and China. This contact with the outside world widened his political and intellectual horizons. He came to be looked upon as an erudite, generous and gifted ruler of Hindustan.

The information available in foreign records about medieval India needs to be carefully collected, examined and utilised. If Iltutmish could procure for his sons books on political theory from outside India,<sup>1</sup> and Muhammad bin Tughluq could know what books were being written in lands beyond the Indian frontier,<sup>2</sup> and an Indian jurist 'Alim b. A'la could obtain latest works on jurisprudence for his own compilation *Fatawa-i-Tatar Khania*,<sup>3</sup> the nature of India's contact with the outside world needs careful investigation and study. The *Riaz-u'l-Insha* of Mahmud Gawan throws valuable light on the cultural contact of the Deccan states with the Muslim countries. Recent discovery of a *bayaz* in Iran<sup>4</sup> has brought to light Muhammad bin Tughluq's correspondence with Sultan Abu Sa'id. This data obtained from sources outside India may well be coordinated and compared with information found in indigenous records. The Turkish archives have considerable literature bearing on Mughal-Ottoman relations. Faridun Bak's *Munsha'at-u's Salatin* gives some idea of the information that can be gleaned from these records.

#### *Literature in Sanskrit and Hindi*

The present study is based primarily on literature available in Persian which was the main language of administration and in which the historical literature of medieval India was mainly produced. It is, however, necessary to tap, identify and utilize material available in other languages, particularly Sanskrit and

<sup>1</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>*Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>For a brief account, see 'Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 392. The author has referred in this compilation to works which had just then been written in Muslim lands.

<sup>4</sup>*Bayaz-i-Taj-u'd-din Wazir*, ed. by Iraj Afshar and Murtaza Timuri, Isfahan 1353 solar,



Hindi. Though large number of Sanskrit and Hindi works are cited in some important works produced during the last few decades, a critical evaluation of this literature still awaits the attention of a historian well-versed in Sanskrit language and literature. The discovery of Jain records has thrown invaluable light on the relations of Muhammad bin Tughluq with the Hindus. The *Vividha Tirtha Kalpa* of Jinaprabha Suri, the *Kathakosa* of the Jain saints, the *Prabandhacintamani* of Merutanga and the *Prabandhakosa* of Rajasekhara deserve careful and critical study. Works from Muslim writers in the Hindi language, like *Chandayan*, *Padmavat*, *Akhravat*, also deserve to be studied as sources of information for the religious and cultural trends in medieval India. Prof. Sri Ram Sharma has given a long list of Sanskrit writers of the Mughal period.<sup>1</sup> It is a pity that all this literature has not been properly tapped by scholars of Mughal history. For a comprehensive study of Indian society, in all its aspects—regional, racial, religious and linguistic—it is necessary to study contemporary literature in Sanskrit and Hindi. Obviously this literature can be evaluated in terms of its own literary and cultural traditions. Tools used for Persian literature may not be at all helpful in the study of this literature. To use a word coined by Gottschalk, it is to be seen about every individual title as to how far it is “historicable.”<sup>2</sup>

### *Bhakti Literature*

The poets of the Bhakti school—Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Dadu, Dhanna, Pipa, Sena and others—made valuable contribution to the social and cultural life of medieval India. Their compositions in prose and verse, soaked as they are in the spirit of the Bhakti cult—unity of Godhead, rejection of discriminations in society, brotherhood of man, interiorization of religious rites—throw invaluable light on contemporary religious life. No study of Indian religious thought and tradition can afford to ignore the literature produced by various *panths* and religious sects. This literature gives us an idea of the religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people.

Linguistic analysis of this literature reveals impact of Persian

<sup>1</sup> *A Bibliography of Mughal India*, pp. 154-65.

<sup>2</sup> Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, New York, 1958, p. 39.



classics. The *Guru Granth* for instance has scores of Persian and Arabic words which show that Guru Nanak had come to acquire personal and intimate knowledge of the delicate concepts of Islamic mysticism. He absorbed and assimilated the teachings of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakar which were floating in the atmosphere and preserved them for posterity. Nearly two hundred Arabic and Persian words and terms have been found in the works of Kabir. The literature that Dadu and the Dadupanthis produced is equally valuable.<sup>1</sup> What is needed is to examine this literature as a source for the cultural history of India and as an index for the study of the aspirations and ideals of the common man.

### *Regional Literature*

As pointed out earlier, there is enormous literature of historical significance in the regional languages of India. The Marathi language has valuable records—*bakhars*, *sanads*, letters and state papers. Some hundred years back Kashinath Narayan Sane published a mass of original material in his journal *Kavyetihasa Samgraha*. Later on Rajwade, Vasudeoshastri Khare and Parasnis pushed the studies further. The publications of the *Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal* draw attention to important sources of information available in the Marathi language. Exhaustive lists and catalogues can make this literature available to scholars. It would be possible then to compare the information found in Marathi sources with that available in other languages. Paramananda was a court poet but his *Shiva-Bharat* (in Sanskrit) has an accurate chronological framework. Literature available in Marathi, whether in prose or in verse, needs careful assessment and scrutiny.

Similarly the literature available in Rajasthani has a value of its own. The archival records at Bikaner, Kotah, Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur and Ajmer abound in very important source material for the history of medieval Rajasthan. A collection of 18th century letters exchanged between the Ranis and the queen mother, as preserved at Bikaner (File No. 42/14-2) throws a

<sup>1</sup>My colleague Dr. Shihab-u'd-din Iraqi has attempted a critical appraisal of this literature in his article published in *Medieval India—A Miscellany*, V.



flood of light on the life of the ladies of the Rajput *harem*. For economic history of the period some very valuable information may be obtained from *bahis*, *chopanyas*, *haqiqats*, *dasturs* and *arshattahs*. The archival records of Kotah throw light on the celebration of different festivals, dances of various communities, distribution of charity on 'Id days, garments used by men and women, daily wages of labourers, patronage to scholars etc.

Literature available in regional languages has to be carefully tapped and systematically utilised because in a vast country, like India, regional historical studies are a necessary adjunct to our understanding of the broader patterns of Indian society. In fact historical data should be collected on a regional but interpreted on an all-India basis.

## B. Concepts and Conspectus

### *Time Consciousness*

The dimension of time in human life is the basis of all historical thinking. The date of an event is a value-laden fact and a historian's concern is to trace categories of diversity, change and continuity in time because it provides him with a clearer perception of the processes of human development.

Among the early medieval historians, Minhaj<sup>1</sup> alone seems to have realized the necessity of a chronological framework for presenting historical data. He had an awareness of change in the social milieu. As one who had personal knowledge of the havoc wrought by the irruption of the Mongols and the way old order was quickly passing out, he had his eyes on the processes of change. Historical sequence of dynasties and rulers apart, he gives some details year by year, e.g., his account of the Prophet's life after his migration to Medina is year by year because Minhaj realized the great historical significance of the Medinese era in the evolution of Islamic institutions. In the case of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud's reign, Minhaj's adoption of the year by year pattern<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Minhaj quotes Chingiz's message to Sultan Muhammad Khwarazm Shah: "I am the sovereign of the sunrise, and thou the sovereign of the sunset. Let there be between us a firm treaty of friendship" ...*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Raverty, II, p. 966.

<sup>2</sup>The reason that he gives for this record year by year is: "in order that the events may be more accessible to the understanding." Raverty, I, p. 675.



was determined by other pragmatic considerations. He wanted to avoid total presentation of a situation which did not suit his interests.

Barani, however, did not attach any significance to chronological sequence of events though he was far more perceptive to the processes of social and political change than any of his contemporary historians. In fact mere chronological framework cannot be equated with time-consciousness. It is chronology plus sensitivity to change that constitutes 'time consciousness.' Barani gives his impressions about important developments of a reign but it appears that he looks out of the window of political history to survey the neighbouring regions of culture, religion and literature.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless these impressions are graphic and take the reader to the spirit of the age, it must, however, be accepted that his data assumes real significance when it is put in some chronological framework provided by other contemporaries. In fact Barani succeeded remarkably in communicating to his readers the atmosphere of Balban's court, the spirit of the Khalji Revolution, the era of higher imperialism initiated by the Tughluqs and the hectic political activity of Muhammad bin Tughluq which led to a shake-up of the entire country. There is very sharp time-consciousness in every one of these discussions in the pages of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*.

One finds in some medieval Indian works a clear appreciation of the fact that change of times necessitates change in attitudes. A few instances may be cited to explain this:

(a) In a communication to Yilduz, Iltutmish thus refers to changes in polity and political outlook of the people after the fall of Ghaznin:

"You know that to-day the dominion of the world is enjoyed by one who possesses greater power. *Those times are gone when succession was by heredity. Times have abolished those institutions. If it were not so, Ghaznin would have still been governed by the house of Turks.*"<sup>2</sup>

(b) A sharper realization of change in attitudes as a result of the change of times and circumstances is found in the following

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Barani's account of the literary and religious developments of the Khalji period, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 341-64.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 110.



passage of Barani's *Hasrat Nama*:<sup>1</sup>

"Once I happened to be present in the assembly of Sultan-u'l-Mashaikh (Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya) from sunrise to about mid-day, listening to his life-giving discourses. Many people joined the discipleship of Sultan-u'l-Mashaikh on that day and reached their spiritual goals. When I was (sitting) in the assembly (the idea) crossed my mind that distinguished saints of the past had exercised great caution in admitting people to their discipline, (but) the Sultan-u'l-Mashaikh, in the extreme generosity and with a view to helping them all, admits all and sundry to his discipleship. I thought of enquiring from the Shaikh about the reasons for this departure from the practice of the earlier saints. Sultan-u'l-Mashaikh, who knew (had the intuitive intelligence of) the secrets of hearts realized what was (going on) in my mind and said: 'You (often) enquire from me about so many things but you did not enquire from me why I give my hand (admit in discipline) all visitors without any enquiry (about their aptitude)? I trembled when he spoke this to me. I fell at his feet and submitted: 'For a very long time I have been thinking about this and today also this question came to my mind and the Shaikh (in his intuitive intelligence) came to know of this' The Shaikh then remarked: 'God has in His great Wisdom given a *special characteristic to every age. So that in every age the habits and customs of the people are different and the temperament and attitude of one (generation) does not correspond with that of the preceding one. This has been proved by experience.* The real aim of allegiance (i.e., admitting as *murid*) is cutting off a *murid* from Non-Absolute and establishing his involvement in God, as has been explained clearly in mystic works. The elders did not admit anyone to their discipline unless they saw in him total break from the Non-Absolute. But from the time of Shaikh Abu Sa'id Abul Khair till the time of Shaikh Saif-u'd-din Bakharzi and from the time of Shaikh-ush Shuyukh-u'l-'Alam Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi till the blessed times of Shaikh-u'sh-Shuyukh-i-'Alam Farid-u'l-Haq wa'd Din, huge crowds flocked there (in their hospices). All sorts of people, kings, nobles, élites, scholars and other

<sup>1</sup>The *Hasrat Nama* is lost but this extract is found in *Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, pp.346-48.



notables came to them and out of fear for punishment on the Day of Judgement, threw themselves under the protection of these lovers of God. And these notable saints admitted all sorts of people, without any distinction, in their discipline.”

Surprisingly enough, time consciousness was sharper among the sufi saints to whom Time represented Reality.

(a) Khwaja Baqi Billah, spiritual mentor of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, is reported to have observed:

“God keeps mystic trainees of every age in a condition appropriate to the times.”<sup>1</sup>

(b) When he undertook to translate the Qur’an into Persian, Shah Waliullah of Delhi declared that welfare of the community demanded that Quranic exegesis is prepared in every age according to its need,<sup>2</sup> underlying thereby the importance of time in the interpretation of religion. In consonance with this basic approach he developed his views about *ijitihad* (fresh interpretation of religious law) and declared that space-time conditions should determine the interpretation of law.

In political chronicles time-consciousness is connected largely with the change of rulers and dynasties: it has a political dimension. In mystic thought it is God’s will unfolding itself differently in different times, but necessitating change in attitudes and behaviour. Time, Shaikh ‘Abdul Qadir Gilani used to say, is like pregnant woman; nobody knows what is in its womb.<sup>3</sup>

The time consciousness is deepened by upheavals and changes when one looks back and forth in terms of causes that created a particular situation. ‘Isami had undergone a terrible experience of having been uprooted from his homeland and thrown into a totally alien atmosphere. This set his mind on thinking about the causes underlying change and destruction. He propounds a theory on the basis of what he heard from men of experience and maturity :

“After every hundred years, the world undergoes a change; construction vanishes before the forces of destruction and things shape themselves over again. Lofty palaces are laid low and old

<sup>1</sup>*Kalamat-i-Tayyabat*, Afzal-u’l-Mataba’, Delhi, 1332 AH, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>*Fath-u’r-Rahman*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Fath al-Rabbani*, Urdu translation by ‘Ashiq Elahi, Delhi, 1339 AH, p. 57.



structures are ruined; assemblies are scattered and flower-beds are transformed into beds of thorns. The pillars of faith are shaken to their foundation and descendants are installed in the place of their ancestors. Old trees are rooted out and old gardens are consigned to fire; and the sun and moon shine on a new world and the dying world turns a new leaf and heights are changed into depths. The human temperament gets changed and neither land nor water remains in its old axis."<sup>1</sup>

This theory of hundred year's cycle seems to have exercised deep influence on medieval Muslim mind. The concept of the birth of a *mujaddid* (reformer) after every century is an expression of the same belief.<sup>2</sup>

### *Concept of History*

The medieval Indian historians were not totally devoid of concepts of history. Their emphasis differed and their objectives varied but they considered history to be basically an investigation of truth. Even where their conscience was not their own and where they had to chime in the moods of a monarch, they used different devices to convey to the reader what really lay in their heart. If Khwandmir recommended the use of exaggerated language of praise when the real intention was to condemn, Abul Fazl adopted the language of *go ma go* (deliberate hesitation to say or not to say the truth). Some of them thought silence to be golden but forgot to realize that omission of facts sometimes did greater harm to history than exaggeration or over-statement.

Barani, as in many other things, was the first historian of medieval India to propound clearly and definitely his theory of history and to prescribe the duties of a historian. His preface is a valuable exposition of the medieval historiographical concepts. He says :

1. History is an account of the good deeds of the nobles and great men of religion and state. It has nothing to do with the low born who, as a matter of fact, are not themselves

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh.-u's-Salatin*, p. 453; tr. III, p. 685.

<sup>2</sup>A *hadith* in Abu Da'ud runs as follows: "God will, on the eve of every century, raise a person in this *ummat* who would renew the religion." See Dr. Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujt' 'id's Conception of Tawhid*, p. 1 n.



interested in it.

2. Wisdom of men is derived from the history of prophets and the oppressions of the rulers.
3. Knowledge of history is necessary for putting *ahadith* into chronological framework, and to separate the genuine *hadith* from the fabricated one.
4. Aristotle and Buzurchemehr have said that history helps in correct judgement.
5. It keeps the hearts of *sultans*, *maliks* and *wazirs* firm in dealing with situations (which have already been dealt with by earlier generations).
6. History teaches patience and submission to the Will of God.
7. Fruits of good actions and results of wickedness are known through history.
8. History is based on truth. A historian should be just and truthful so that people believe in his testimony.
9. Men of false faiths, due to their prejudice and bigotry, weave false stories. A historian should have the correct faith.
10. A historian should not emulate the ways of the courtiers. He may write facts plainly, if that be not possible he should convey the truth to the wise and intelligent through suggestions and hints. If he is dealing with contemporaries his difficulties in not recording unpalatable things may be excused but about past events he should be correct and honest. It is a religious obligation to be truthful. He will be accountable on the Day of Judgement. Most severe punishments await the lying historian.<sup>1</sup>

Religious, moral, didactic, pragmatic—all threads seem to have woven the complex thought pattern of Barani. As a realist he makes some concession for recording contemporary events but he is not prepared to accept distortion of past events by any act of omission or commission. Though not written in India, Mir Khwand's *Rauzat-u's-Safa* very neatly expressed the attitude of the historians of the Mughal period to history and historiography. A comparison of his views with those of Barani may lead to interesting formulations about the identity of their approach. It appears that Mir Khwand was influenced by Barani's ideas on history and the historians.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 1-18.



Views expressed by other historians are not so explicit and exact, nevertheless their stray remarks throw some light on one or the other aspect of historical studies. At the end of his preface to *Zikr-u'l-Muluk*, Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith writes the following verse:

'The aim of men of discernment in writing about people gone-by is admonition of both the poor and the king.'

Thus a didactic purpose of history was before Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq. But why did he not complete his account of Akbar? Why did he not discuss the religious experiments of Akbar? It appears that the Shaikh could not persuade himself to write about rulers. He says :<sup>1</sup>

You are a *derwesh*, what have you got to do with the story of kings.

Badaoni, whatever his prejudices, had a very high concept of history. He remarks:

"The science of history is essentially a lofty science and an elegant branch of learning."<sup>2</sup>

He dispels the misunderstanding of those people who were sceptical of the value of history. He clearly states that his words were not addressed "to those who are not led by the sacred law."<sup>3</sup> This statement shows Badaoni's sincerity and honesty of purpose. He makes no secret of his views and his approach.

The author of *Tarikh-i-Da'udi*, 'Abdulla had also a very high ideal of history writing before him. He says: "History is not simply information regarding the affairs of kings who have passed away, but it is a science which expands the intellect, and furnishes the wise with examples. This humble individual had spent a considerable portion of his life in studying historical works pregnant with instructive examples, and has examined the conditions of things under many sovereigns."<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding all this, he is parsimonious in dates and mentions

<sup>1</sup>For details, Nizami, *Hayat-i 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi*, pp. 144, 194-96.

<sup>2</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, I, p. 3; tr. I, p.4.

<sup>3</sup>ibid, pp. 3-4; tr. I, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Elliot and Dowson, IV, p. 434.



incredible and fantastic stories which do not go with the clear vision of an honest historian.

Medieval historians, who were mostly connected with some court, could not be expected to give a complete or impartial account of rebellions or state the point of view of the critics of their patrons. This has deprived us completely of any opportunity to make an impartial assessment of movements against the established authority. All the political chronicles of medieval India are partial or prejudiced in that way. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir and Minhaj refer to rebellions as sin ('*isyan*) and the rebels as sinner ('*asi*).<sup>1</sup> The terminology is significant and suggestive. It is the first indication of that attitude which ultimately led to religious *ahd-namas* from nobles and government officers during the time of Firoz Shah Tughluq.<sup>2</sup> A situation entirely contrary to the one dealt with by the earlier historians, presented itself to 'Isami. He had to justify a rebellion and for that purpose he presented Muhammad bin Tughluq as a heretic. If a rebel could be condemned as a heretic, a heretic ruler could, with enough justification, be rebelled against.

Medieval history has suffered a lot on account of the suppression of the point of view of rivals and opponents of the ruling group. Minhaj ignores completely the point of view of the Hindustani group in the polity of those days; Abul Fazl contemptuously refers to the Raushaniya movement as one of *Tarikis* and belittles their leader as Jalala. Had the Raushaniyas themselves not produced some literature, their movement would have been utterly misrepresented by the Mughal historians. Similarly the point of view of powers opposed to Akbar's imperialistic designs has been completely ignored.

Similarly the role of people in political developments is rarely brought to light by the medieval historians. True the people as such had little to do with political changes but there were times and situations when their assertion altered the course of events. Razia's rise to the throne was due to the support of the Delhi population. 'Isami<sup>3</sup> and Ibn Battuta<sup>4</sup> refer to this but the contemporary historian Minhaj is absolutely silent on this point. It

<sup>1</sup>See Nizami, *Salatin-i Dehli Kay Mazhabi Rujhanat*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>*Insha-i-Mahru*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 132.

<sup>4</sup>*Rihla*, Urdu tr. II, p. 54.



is again to the credit of Barani that without identifying himself with the opponents of Muhammad bin Tughluq he supplies enough data to assess the reasons for the Sultan's unpopularity.

Taken as a whole, the greatest shortcoming of the medieval chroniclers is not the overpraise of the rulers and the governing classes, it is the suppression of the opponent's point of view. They could condemn and reject the other's view-point, but total omission renders it absolutely impossible to probe into a situation and make an impartial assessment. It is worse than distortion. The only way to deal with this situation created by the political chroniclers is to study the non-political literature extensively and critically so that the point of view of the disinterested sections of society is brought to light. Our historical studies may begin with political chronicles but should not end with them.

### *Social Perspective*

As most of the historians of medieval India were brought up in Iranian traditions of historiography, their perspective was hemmed in by the court and the camp. Barani introduced some comprehensiveness in his approach by referring to the literary and religious trends of the period. Though he did not introduce separate chapters on the lives of saints, 'ulama, poets and others, his frequent excursions into the cultural field broke the barriers imposed by the traditions of Iranian historiography. Later on the author of *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi*, *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, *Ma'asir-i-Rahimi* and Ferishta introduced accounts of poets and scholars in their works. Thereafter it became a well-established tradition to refer to literary and religious figures in historical works. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan pushed the tradition a little further and in a work which dealt with the archaeology of Delhi, he introduced accounts of scholars, religious men, gifted craftsmen and others.<sup>1</sup>

The most significant contribution to the conspectus of medieval Indian history was, however, made by Abul Fazl. In certain respects he seems anxious to combine the Arab and the Iranian traditions of historiography and evolve a new tradition of historiography centring round the King but including also the common man.

Abul Fazl's original contribution was, however, the supply of

<sup>1</sup>*Asar-u's-Sanadid*, Delhi, 1965.



statistical data. It made the history of the period a really comprehensive study. It is however note-worthy that Abul Fazl's tradition did not attract posterity and except a desultory and perfunctory effort by Abdul Hamid Lahori no one ever thought of collecting this sort of information. Sir Jadunath Sarkar even goes to the extent of saying: "The immense size of the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the unreality or rather the practical uselessness of much of its contents, made it undesirable to write similar works or to bring it up to date in the reigns of Akbar's successors."<sup>1</sup>

The concept of history in medieval India was either dynastic or personal. The historians either dealt with a dynasty or with a particular ruler. To Abul Fazl goes the credit of extending the conspectus of Indian history by incorporating in it an account of ancient India and the Hindu rulers. This approach represented the idea of unity in Indian history. The first attempt in this direction was, however, made by Amir Khusrau whose *Nuh Sipihr* presents the achievements of Hindus in ancient India as part of a common historical heritage. But under Abul Fazl it was the result of a conscious, deliberate and well-thought out scheme to develop an Indian-ness in the attitude of historians. Ferishta followed Abul Fazl in adopting the rule of Hindu rajas as part of his study. Behind this historical approach one can clearly read a sense of belonging to the country and a national sentiment however nebulous.

#### *Causal Relationship*

The medieval Indian historians are most deficient in their analysis of situations. They do not bother to trace the causes, the connections and consequences of particular events. This is their weakness and this is their strength. When one seeks to analyse a situation his data collection is naturally determined by it and this inevitably leads to serious consequences of omission and commission. If a historian's mind is not concerned with any analysis, he supplies data in a way that helps analysis in a more impartial context.

Neither Hasan Nizami, nor Fakhr-i-Mudabbir nor Minhaj give anywhere a cogent explanation for the success of the Turks. "God gives victory" and "Destiny leads to failure" is the formula which they follow. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir was interesting

<sup>1</sup>*Mughal Administration*, p. 247.



in the art of warfare and though he has given many interesting details about weapons, horses etc., he has not attempted anywhere a military explanation for the success of the Turks or the failure of the Rajputs.

Some remarks of Minhaj however reveal a whole frame-work of causal relationship. He praises Rukn-u'd-din Firoz Shah for his munificence and liberality but finds also the cause of his ruin in his weakness and failure to dispense justice. "It was not in his nature," remarks Minhaj, "and disposition to injure a human being. and this fact was the cause of wane of his dominion. It is essential above all things, that sovereigns should have justice in order that their subjects should dwell in tranquility and repose, and that they possess beneficence so that their followers may be satisfied and contented; and revelry and merriment, and companionship with the base and ignoble, becomes the means of an empire's ruin. The Almighty pardon him."<sup>1</sup> While describing the internecine struggle among the Mongols which eventually led to the rise of Chingiz Khan, Minhaj thus refers to a discussion of the Mongols:

"They all assembled and took counsel together, saying: "What was the cause of our downfall and of our being plundered and ravaged, and from whence arose our being made captive and being slain?" All made admission (saying): "These calamities and misfortunes have arisen through our great misconduct; and it is necessary that we abstain from thus acting, in order that Almighty God may grant us assistance, and that we may take our revenge upon the forces of Altun Khan. Certainly to carry out this intention a firm ruler is necessary."<sup>2</sup>

It is apparent from this quotation that investigation of causal relationship was deemed a pragmatic need but the historians were too involved in giving details of incidents to find time to bind their narration in a thread of cause-effect relationship. Sometimes this analysis went against the interests of their patrons. Hence it was usually avoided.

Barani sometimes attempts an analysis of some situations: he gives the factors which were responsible for the success of

<sup>1</sup>*Tabaqat*, Habibi, p. 457; Raverty, I, p. 637,

<sup>2</sup>Raverty, II, pp. 937-38.



the market regulations of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji<sup>1</sup>; he refers to the causes of resentment against Muhammad bin Tughluq.<sup>2</sup> His remarks may be brief but there can be no doubt about their being thought-provoking. What enhances the value of his statements is the fact that he often mentions both sides of a picture and does not suppress unpalatable facts. He praises the personal qualities of Kaiqubad and Mubarak Khalji but does not hesitate in describing their Bacchanalian activities which led to their fall. He praises Balban's religious devotions<sup>3</sup> and respect for the religious classes, but makes no secret of those Machiavellian methods to suppress and crush the nobles which paved the way for the decline of the Turkish oligarchy.<sup>4</sup>

Both 'Isami and Barani refer to a dust storm in Delhi and famine in the Doab as divine chastisement for the execution of Sayyidi Maula. Badaoni, however, rises above both these chroniclers and says that to connect the storm with the execution is irrational.<sup>5</sup>

Yahya Sirhindi displays great clarity of vision when he holds Muhammad bin Tughluq responsible for lawlessness and confusion in the country. He puts forward the following reasons for this:

1. Tarmashirin destroyed many *qasbat* and villages and dislodged peasants who could never again be rehabilitated.
2. He increased cesses 'one to ten and one to twenty times' and the grazing cattle were marked with seals. People abandoned in desparation their house and their cattle. Rebellious elements became powerful and indulged in pillage.
3. Scarcity of rains and severe famine broke out in the entire country. For seven long years not a drop of water fell from the sky.
4. The people of Delhi were sent to Daulatabad and people residing in the neighbouring *qasbat* had come and settled in Delhi. All their property and belongings which they had kept from their ancestors' days was destroyed. Both the cities and *qasbat* were ruined.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 304 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 468 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, I, p. 172.



5. Nearly 80,000 soldiers were recruited for the Qarajil expedition, excluding the auxiliaries, slaves, servants and dependents, who accompanied them. The entire army was annihilated and even two of them did not survive. Such an army could never again be recruited.
6. Whoever rebelled in an area, the people of that area were killed for supporting the rebel, others were so terrified that they abandoned the region. These rebels started shedding blood and no body prevented them. The Sultan had so spoiled his army that it became ineffective.
7. The city and neighbouring areas were depleted of nobles, elite, notables, 'ulama, sadat, saints, mendicants, artisans, money-lenders (*mahajan*) peasants, workers etc. who were ruthlessly put to death. If one area was pacified, the other one rose into rebellion. The foundation of the *Sultanate* was completely sapped. The Sultan was surprised and staggered at these developments but since these were the results of his own policies, he did not stop or retrace his steps.<sup>1</sup>

But such sharp and clear analysis is rarely attempted by medieval historians.

When Akbar asked his historians to preface the account of every dynasty by an analysis of the circumstances that led to its rise, he perhaps had in view this shortcoming of the historians. Had his advice been taken up seriously, the nature of Mughal histories would have entirely changed. But Akbar had instructed his historians to combine this effort with the experiment of substituting *Rihlat* era for the *Hijri*<sup>2</sup> era. The whole scheme foundered on this novel experiment. It must, however, be said that this analysis was feasible with reference to incidents of remote history but not for contemporary or near-contemporary events where a court chronicler always stood in danger of either offending some

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, pp. 113-15.

<sup>2</sup>Referring to the importance of Hijri era in Islamic calendar, Thompson observes: "This made for chronological uniformity and simplicity, in sharp contrast with the bewildering varieties of medieval Christian chronology in which the new year might begin with January 1, or March 1, or the Nativity (December 25), or Easter, which made confusion worse confounded, because Easter is not a fixed, but a movable date." *History of Historical Writing*, I, p. 336, Neither Akbar nor Abul Fazl had this aspect in view.



one or being held guilty of deliberate distortion. During the eighteenth century when the Mughal Empire was fast disintegrating some contemporary historians took courage in both hands to criticize the administration, but it was left to other intellectuals of the period—Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Shah Fakhr-u'd-din Dihlavi, Vaneshwar Vidyalkar, Harcharan Das and others—to raise voice against the prevailing lawlessness and the responsibility of the rulers in this context. Shah Waliullah even went to the extent of declaring the Mughal government in its last phase as an agency of exploitation, resembling the Roman and the Sassanid Empires.<sup>1</sup>

During the Sultanate-period five dynasties rose and fell but no historian thought of analysing the circumstances which led to such rapid dynastic changes. Some of the stray remarks of Barani however give the impression that he had the vision to see clearly the forces of decline and the forces of success. In the callous and cruel executions of the Turkish nobles by Balban, and in the pleasure pursuits of Kaiqubad, Barani saw the seeds of the disintegration of Ilbarite power. When he quotes Shaikh Bashir's remark about 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji that his Empire had no foundations, he has the whole panorama of Khalji militarism before him. When 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji died, and Qutb-u'd-din Mubarak came to the throne, Barani wrote that the people were relieved of being constantly asked "do this, don't do that; say this, don't say that; wear this, don't wear that; eat this, don't eat that; sell this and don't sell that; live like this, don't be like that."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, even without indicating it, the historians give facts in a manner that reveals the working of their mind and their eagerness to find the logic of events. But as stated earlier this procedure could not be adopted with reference to contemporary events for fear of offending some and disappointing others.

<sup>1</sup>*Hujjat-ullah-il Baligha*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 383.



**PART I**  
**HISTORIANS**







## CHAPTER 1

### Sadr-u'd-Din Hasan Nizami

The *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* is the first official history of the Delhi Sultanate. It begins with the Battle of Tara'in (1191 AD) which opened the gates of northern India for the Turks, and covers the period up to the caliphal recognition of Iltutmish's authority (1229 AD). This was an epoch of great political significance in the history of the Delhi Sultanate. The Turkish military activity in northern India was followed by the liquidation of the feudal system of the Rajputs and the emergence of a strong monarchy with centralized and bureaucratic system of administration. To write the history of a period of such hectic political and military activity was a fascinating task, though not without its limitations. For one who had seen the pathetic spectacle of Muslim states of 'Ajam going down the abyss, it must have been a psychological problem to transform his pessimistic and despondent moods into one of hope, buoyancy and confidence without which the story of the birth and bloom of a new Empire could not be written. Hasan could not rise to the occasion *psychologically*, but he faced it *linguistically*. His discussions about "unfavourable times" and "unreliability of friends" do not go with the spirit of a book of victory and show that unpleasant memories of homeland still lingered on in his mind. He lacks that perspective in which the rise of the Delhi Sultanate could be properly delineated; he misses completely the interaction of social, political and cultural forces and concentrates on military achievements. He had seen well established systems crumble; he did not know how new systems were born. Before Hasan put down his pen, the Sultanate of Delhi had passed from its nascent, and to some extent nebulous, position to a powerful centralized monarchy with an all-India administrative service. The country had been consolidated *iqta'* by *iqta'* and the multi-state system of the Rajput period had been done away with. Hasan saw all this but he could not grasp its significance or perhaps he thought that it was not his domain to enter into.



Hasan had initially undertaken to write about the conquests of Mui'zz-u'd-din and Aibek. This phase of the early Turkish rule in India had a clear unity of purpose and direction and could be handled in a uniform manner. But Aibek's accidental death forced upon him the necessity of continuing his narrative upto the time of Iltutmish whose rise to power ushered in the dawn of a new era in the history of Turkish rule in India. The end of Aibek was the end of a type of polity—half-Ghurid, half-Indian—looking to Ghaznin in certain essential matters, particularly regarding the position and powers of the nobles, slave and free-born. The dynamics of the new situation was different. Aibek's main contribution lay in conquest; Iltutmish's chief role was in administration. Hasan had, it appears, prepared his mind and geared his style to deal with military situations only. He, therefore, failed to do justice to the administrative achievements of Iltutmish.

What historiographical traditions could guide Hasan? Barring Gardizi's *Zain-u'l-Akhbar* and Baihaqi's *Tarikh-i-A'l-i-Subuktigin* there was no work of any historical significance in Persian. Even scholars who were of Iranian descent, like Tusi (ob. 459/1076), Imam Ghazzali (ob. 505/1111) Maidani (ob. 518/1124), Zama-khshari (ob. 538/1143) and Fakhr-u'd-din Razi (ob. 606/1209) had produced their works in Arabic. No wonder therefore that when Hasan was asked to write in Persian, he felt rather disappointed. So while he wrote in Persian, his mind planned in Arabic.

Among the historians of the period there was none who could work as a model for Hasan. Wassaf and Rashid-u'd-din Fazl Allah were not yet born. If any tradition worked on Hasan's mind it was that of Rashid Vatvat (508-573/1114-1177). The fact that Barani refers to his name in the context of the drafting of *Fath Namas*,<sup>1</sup> shows that his works were fairly well-known in India and were considered veritable models for compilations of this nature. Rashid Vatvat was a distinguished scholar of the court of Khwarazm Shah Atsiz, whose wars he has described in a style 'overburdened with rhetorical artificiality'. Vatvat's *Hada'iq-u's-Sihr* was a model of literary style in those days. Hasan seems to have been inspired and influenced by the tradition of Rashid Vatvat. Otherwise also, rhetorical embellishments and lengthy sentences under the influence of Arabic prose had become established principles of literary writings, and literary

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 169.



works like Hamidi's *Maqam*, Nasavi's *Nafihat-u'l-Masdur* and Baha-u'd-din Baghdadi's *At-Tavassul Ilat-Tarassul* had set the tone of literary works. Hasan imbibed the prevalent traditions and pushed them further.

In India, Amir Khusrau and Abul Fazl tried to emulate Hasan's florid and rhetorical style. Others who could not sustain that style borrowed passages from his *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* without acknowledgment. For instance, Hasan's description of Aibek's conquest of Meerut has been borrowed almost verbatim by 'Arif Qandhari<sup>1</sup> while describing Akbar's conquest of Ranthambhor. However it was not given to history writers of ordinary literary calibre to enter the realm of Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami who overawed a reader by his knowledge of Arabic and Persian classics, inexhaustible fund of synonyms, metaphors and similes. Not only Hasan's style was not sought to be imitated, many of the historians who followed him could not make extensive use of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*, though he has been referred to by the authors of *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, *Tarikh-i Ilchi-i Nizam Shah*, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh* and *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*. Among the non-Indian writers, Haji Khalifa, Mir Khwand, Hamdullah Mustaufi and others refer to him. It appears that in the academic and literary circles of the medieval period the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* was considered a masterpiece of literary achievement. Barani considers him one of the four most reliable historians of medieval India, the other three being 'Awfi, Minhaj and Kabir-u'd-din.<sup>2</sup>

But linguistic difficulties have always stood in the way of extensive and critical use of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*. Elliot's extracts are not only terse and brief but are so indifferently selected that they give the impression of the entire work being a worthless literary venture.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the non-availability of a critically

<sup>1</sup>He however pays tribute to the florid style of Hasan, *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, Rampur edition, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Storey, *Persian Literature*, p. 494, cautiously declares the work to be "uninformative." Jan Rypka makes several wrong statements in a single sentence when he remarks: "The reign of the Mamluk Sultan Qutbu'd-din Aybak and the first years of the reign of *his son* Iltutmish, (587/1191-614/1217) are described by Hasan Nizami in his *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*... which ranks among the most bombastic histories written in prose and verse and contains very little of value." *History of Iranian Literature*, p. 449.



edited text is due to difficulties of decipherment and interpretation. The earliest use of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* by a modern writer was made by Hammer-Purgstall in constructing a life-sketch of Qutb-u'd-din Aibek in *Gemaldesaal der Lebensbeschreibungen grosser Moslemischer Herrscher*.<sup>1</sup> Later W. Nassau Lees gave an account of this work in his article *Materials for the History of India*.<sup>2</sup> Elliot's translation of some extracts from *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* in his *History of India*<sup>3</sup> however introduced the work to a larger circle of scholars and students of medieval Indian history. Among the Indian writers, Dr. W.H. Andalib Shadani<sup>4</sup> and Professor Hasan Askari<sup>5</sup> have tried to study it in some detail with a view to cull from it material of historical import. Notwithstanding their commendable efforts, a critical and comprehensive study of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* remains a great desideratum, and this gap in our studies will be filled only when a critically edited text of the work is available.

## II

Details about Sadr-u'd-din's life are not available in any contemporary or even later work. Personal references in *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* are few and far between. It is difficult, therefore, to say anything about his religious or political views or even about his circle of friends. According to Hamdullah Mustaufi<sup>6</sup> he was the son of the author of *Chahar Maqala*, Nizami 'Aruzi Samarqandi. If so, the *Maqala* may enlighten some of his family background. The family belonged to Ghur and was very favourably disposed towards the Ghurids. 'Aruzi wrote his *Maqala* during the time of 'Ala-u'd-din Husain Jahansoz (ob. 1161). Among his friends the name of 'Umar Khayyam is the most outstanding.

It appears from the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* that the author was conscious of his scholarly background, and that he thought that the world had not duly recognized his talent.<sup>7</sup> An undercurrent of

<sup>1</sup>IV, pp. 172-82.

<sup>2</sup>JRAS, 1868, pp. 433-38.

<sup>3</sup>II, pp. 204-43.

<sup>4</sup>*Proceedings of the Idara-i-Ma'arif-i-Islamia*, Lahore Session, 1936, pp. 69-87.

<sup>5</sup>*Patna University Journal (Arts)*, 18, no. 3, 1963, pp. 49-127.

<sup>6</sup>*Tarikh-i-Guzidah*, p. 826.

<sup>7</sup>There is something more than mere poetic lament in his lines dealing with the 'complaint of times.'



dissatisfaction and subdued frustration runs throughout his work.

Sadr-u'd-din was a native of Nishapur. His conviction that a genius is not recognized in the land of its birth made him look to distant countries. Conflicts between the Khwarazmians and the Ghurids, which had disturbed the general atmosphere, added to his disgust; while family feuds, factions and jealousies made his life uneasy in his homeland. His spiritual mentor Muhammad Kufi<sup>1</sup> advised him to proceed to Ghaznin. Notwithstanding all this, his heart was full of deep pathos and frustration when he said 'good bye' to Nishapur :

I got separated from relatives and left Nishapur and friends with an uneasy and heavy heart. While parting with friends tears fell from any eyes like (water from) tents on a rainy day. It appears that Hasan's literary reputation had already reached Ghaznin because we find him being warmly received in the literary and religious circles of that renowned city. Men like Shaikh Muhammad Shirazi and the Sadr, Majd-u'l-Mulk, welcomed him.<sup>2</sup> Hasan fell ill in Ghaznin and remained confined to bed for sometime. Later, in the company of some friends with whom he had developed friendship during his stay at Ghaznin, he left for Delhi.<sup>3</sup> The journey was full of hazards and discomforts. Inclement weather, fear of robbers and indifferent health added to his hardships. On reaching Delhi he again fell ill. Sharaf-u'l-Mulk, the Sadr-i-A'la, received him with affection. It was at this time that an order was issued by Qutb-u'd-din Aibek inviting scholars to record the glories and conquests of Sultan Mu'izz-u'd-din Muhammad bin Sam. His friends persuaded him to undertake this assignment.

### III

It was perhaps after Shihab-u'd-din's assassination at Damiyah that Hasan undertook to compile this work, but he starts his narrative from 587/1191 the year in which Shihab-u'd-din won the Battle of Tara'in. The period covered varies in some manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup>Transcript, Aligarh, History Deptt., I, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Transcript, I, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Transcript, I, p. 50. It is interesting that he leaves for Delhi which was not the capital at that time.



In most of the manuscripts the account comes upto 614/1217, the year in which Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud (son of Iltutmish) was appointed as governor of Lahore. According to Sir Henry Elliot, Nawab Zia-u'd-din had a manuscript which came upto 626/1229. The manuscript in the Library of Faizullah Effendi, which is the oldest available manuscript, having been transcribed in 694/1295, comes upto 614/1217.

It appears that Aibek's sudden and accidental death came as a set-back to the author and upset his plan of work. The absence of any explicit dedication confirms the confusion that must have come in the wake of the tragedy. In fact, the work itself has no title, though it is generally known as *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*. It appears that adjustment of the account to suit the interests of another ruler necessitated some overt and covert changes. His omission of Aram Shah is not without significance. All the more so when some historians, like 'Isami, categorically state that he was the son of Aibek. With the rise of Iltutmish and particularly with the transfer of the seat of government from Lahore to Delhi, the political milieu had changed and Hasan, it appears, could not adjust himself to it. Lahore looked more towards Ghaznin: Delhi was rooted in Indian traditions. The 'complaint of times' in Hasan's narrative should be read in this context also. His account of Iltutmish lacks that depth and understanding which the multi-dimensional activities of the Sultan demanded. Upto 1229 Iltutmish had achieved remarkable political success—the problem of rivals had been solved, the cis-Indus region had been relieved of Chingiz's pressure, Lakhnauti had been brought under control, Ranthambhor, Mandor etc., had been conquered and formal legal recognition of the Sultanate had been obtained from the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad, leave aside the large number of cultural, religious and literary activities of the period. But Hasan's narrative does not rise to the occasion and fails to project a picture of Iltutmish's achievements. Surprisingly enough, the arrival of Chingiz Khan and its impact on Indian politics has been ignored. The few themes about Iltutmish's reign that Hasan touches give the impression of the author being in a hurry to conclude his narrative. The caliphal investiture was an appropriate point to stop—a stage when the Sultanate of Delhi attained legal status and personality.



IV

The style and diction of *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* is ornate and grandiloquent but has a majestic flow of words and cadences, the effect of which is heightened by the appropriate use of Persian and Arabic verses. He quotes from 'Unsuri, Sa'd Salman, Sana'i, Minuchahri, Khaqani, Zahir Faryabi and other poets which shows his extensive knowledge of the classical literature. Excessive use of literary devices and figures of speech has at places completely destroyed the effect of the narrative. For instance, his account of Shihab-u'd-din's assassination lacks that solemnity and pathos which the gravity of the occasion demanded. He writes:

"They then surrounded the King's own tent, and *one* or *two* men out of these *three* or *four* conspirators ran up towards the King, and inflicted *five* or *six*<sup>1</sup> desperate wounds upon the lord of *seven* climes, and his spirit flew above the *eight* paradises and the battlements of the *nine* heavens, and joined those of the *ten* evangelists."<sup>2</sup>

Here Hasan had used *siyaq-u'l-a'dad* (a figure of speech in which numerals are used) for which this was the most inappropriate occasion. Similarly his verses on the death of Aibek lack emotion,<sup>3</sup> though they abound in artistic embellishments.

Hasan was a poet also, though of a mediocre type compared with other eminent contemporaries of Ilutmish's reign. He thus solicits Aibek's favours:

There is not a single drop in the river nor a single particle in the desert which was not lucky enough to receive rewards from you. I have an affinity with you : You are *gharib*<sup>4</sup> in this age and I am a *gharib* in this land.

There are a few other quatrains and verses of Hasan which

<sup>1</sup>To place any credence on the *number* of injuries indicated here would be to misunderstand the whole tenor of the narrative. Hasan is guided here by *siyaq-i-a'dad* rather than historical accuracy.

<sup>2</sup>Elliot & Dowson, II, p. 236.

<sup>3</sup>cf. Barani's verses on the death of Muhammad bin Tughluq, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 526. Every verse is loaded with feelings of sorrow and grief.

<sup>4</sup>The word *gharib*. means both 'peerless' and 'stranger' (foreigner). Ibn Battuta says that Muhammad bin. Tughluq did not like the foreigners to be called *gharib*. He ordered that they be called '*aziz*. *Rihla*, Arabic text, II, p. 41.



appear in *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*. The poetic excellence of these compositions is not much. Hasan was a master of Persian prose; he lacked emotion to be a successful poet.

## V

Though Hasan does not give as detailed an account of the early Turkish campaigns as is supplied by Minhaj, he has provided us with valuable pieces of information which, when pieced together, illumine some of the essential aspects of the political and military history of the period. Though one wishes Hasan to have described in detail the campaigns of the Turks, the defence system of the Rajput forts, the nature of sieges and surrenders, the resistance of the local powers etc., the titbits of information that he has supplied are not without significance. He supplements, corrects and adds to the information given by Minhaj-u's-Siraj.

1. Hammer has observed in his life of Qutb-u'd-din Aibek that but for Hasan Nizami, the great conqueror would have passed into oblivion.<sup>1</sup> This remark though exaggerated is not without truth. Minhaj's account of Aibek's military career from 587/1191, when he was appointed to the government of Kuhram and Samana, to 602/1206 when he ascended the throne, is tantalizing in its brevity. Hasan throws valuable light on Aibek's military career and fills serious gaps in the narration of Minhaj. Aibek's battle against Jatwan, near the fort of Hansi, has been ignored by Minhaj. It was one of the brilliant exploits of Aibek who covered a distance of about 45 miles in one night. Then Harraj, the brother of the Rai of Ajmer, attacked his nephew the son of Rai Pithora, who had accepted the overlordship of Mu'izz-u'd-din. Aibek rushed for his help. Hasan refers to this episode but Minhaj ignores it. Subsequently, in a second confrontation in 591/1194, Harraj threw himself in the flames and performed *Jauhar*. This is the first reference to *Jauhar* that one comes across in Persian histories. Minhaj is silent about this. Aibek's initial defeat near Ajmer in 593/1196 and subsequent arrival of reinforcements from Ghaznin which facilitated the annexation of Gujarat and Nahrwala and the conquest of Gwalior and Kalinjar, has been described with interesting details by Hasan. Minhaj has nothing to say about it.

<sup>1</sup>Elliot & Dowson, II, p. 205.



The conquest of Delhi which is considered by some writers as an easy walk-over for the Turks has been thus described by Hasan :

“After settling the affairs of Ajmer, the conqueror marched towards Delhi...which is among the chief...cities of Hind. When he arrived at Delhi he saw a fortress which in height and strength had not its equal nor second throughout the length and breadth of the seven climes. The army encamped around the fort. A torrent of blood flowed on the field of battle...so from the dread of kingly punishment, the Rai and mukaddams of that country placed their heads upon the line of slavery...and firm in the conditions of tribute (*malguzari*) and the usages of service.”<sup>1</sup>

Hasan's account of some of the forts is really significant. The Meerut fort was “one of the celebrated forts of the country of Hind, for the strength of its foundations and superstructure, and its ditch was as broad as the ocean and fathomless.” The capture of such impregnable forts deserved greater details from the pen of those who had actually seen them. The fort of Kol is also described as “one of the most celebrated fortresses of Hind.” About the fort of Gwalior Hasan writes :

“(it) is the pearl of the necklace of the castles of Hind, the summit of which the nimble-footed wind from below cannot reach, and on the bastion of which the rapid clouds have never cast their shade, and which the swift imagination has never surmounted, and at the height of which the celestial sphere is dazzled.”<sup>2</sup>

The fort of Kalinjar “was celebrated throughout the world for being as strong as the wall of Alexander.”

Aibek's achievements and the nature of his struggle can be properly evaluated only when the defence mechanism of the Hindu States is clearly evaluated. Hasan supplies these details which are of great value. Another aspect of the problem which needs investigation is the circumstances under which these forts were captured. What was the defect in their defence potential? On the face of it, it seems almost a herculean task to capture such impregnable forts and fortresses. Aibek's military

<sup>1</sup>Elliot & Dowson, II, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, p. 227.



achievements can be assessed only in the background of these operations which Minhaj has ignored.

2. Before embarking upon their military operations, the Turks sometimes sent messages exhorting Rajput princes to desist from their activities. It is difficult to assess and estimate the spirit and sincerity of such communications but the fact has a significance of its own. Shihab-u'd-din sent Qiwam-u'l-Mulk Rukn-u'd-din Hamza to the Rai of Ajmer to tell him to give up hostile posture. When the Rai spurned the message, Turkish forces marched into his territory and captured him alive. He agreed to offer riches and wealth and his life was spared.

3. The impression that Rajput cities fell like autumnal leaves is contradicted by the narrative of Hasan. Rajput resistance to Turkish invasions was bold and determined and there were occasions when the Turkish armies found themselves under hot waters and only reinforcements from Ghaznin could salvage the situation. For example, see his account of the Anhilwara campaign when Bhim Deo II had nearly defeated the Turks. At several places he refers to the difficulties which the Turks had to encounter in their military operations. In his campaign on the borders of Bagar (near modern Bikaner) hot weather had put the forces to great hardships, but Aibek's determination got over the situation.

4. The Rajput governments were not overthrown soon after the military operations. Some of the principal Rajput princes were allowed to continue and were dislodged only when doubts about their cooperation and loyalty were confirmed. The life of the Chauhan Raja of Ajmer was spared but later, on being found involved in conspiracy, he was executed.<sup>1</sup> The son of Rai Pithora was entrusted with the government of Ajmer.

5. When a new area was brought under control by the Turks and administrators were appointed to it, clear instructions were given to them about the way they had to function. When Malik-u'l-Umara Husam-u'd-din Ughalbak was entrusted with the administration of Kol he was expected to run the government according to the following guide-lines:

a. to behave as deputy of the King and act in accordance with Divine Will;

<sup>1</sup>Minhaj skips over these details. According to him he was killed after the capture of Sarsauti.



- b. to be respectful towards scholars and divines;
- c. to prevent officers from becoming oppressive;
- d. to win the hearts of soldiers, servants and tenants;
- e. to be careful, just and fair in dealing with the soldiers;
- f. to treat high and low (*sharif-o-wazii*) alike and be fair and just to both;
- g. not to inflict capital punishment except after great scrutiny and sufficient proof of guilt;
- h. to adhere to the limits imposed by the Qur'an concerning wars;
- i. to root out vice and immorality;
- j. to guard highways, roads, bridges etc.;
- k. to grant favours to and encourage the traders;
- l. not to neglect the needy and the deserving;
- m. to save money to be spent in advancing loans and charities (to the deserving).

When Iltutmish appointed his son Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud to the governorship of Lahore, a royal order was issued which contained the following instructions:

1. He should honour the descendants of the Prophet and treat with respect and consideration saints and scholars.
2. All servants and officers, irrespective of position and status, should be treated liberally and with generosity.
3. Happiness and prosperity should be promoted among the people.
4. Ryot should be supported in times of need.
5. Peace, security and defence of the country needs help of the army—both cavalry and infantry.
6. Happiness of the officials and the men of learning should be ensured.
7. Be patient, firm and cautious.
8. The places of idol-worship should be denuded of idols.
9. Act with fairness and impartiality.

## VI

Apart from details of political nature, the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* supplies some information about social life and culture also. Hasan's references to weapons, precious stones, ornaments, flowers, herbs, birds and animals and musical instruments are



interesting and help us in understanding the social and cultural milieu of India during the early thirteenth century.

1. *Weapons*: Hasan refers to numerous weapons. The following deserve particular mention. A study with the help of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir's *Adab-u'l-Harb* may lead to some definite idea about the nature of these weapons and their actual use in the battle-field:

*bargustuwan*, horse armour worn in battle.

*char ayina*, a kind of armour.

*charkh*, a cross bow.

*dabus*, iron-headed mace.

*darga*, a shield, a coat of mail.

*gurz*, mace, battle-axe.

*jalajil*, bells hung about the heads and necks of cattle.

*jaushan*, a coat of mail; an armlet.

*kamand*, noose, a halter.

*karna*, a trumpet.

*khadang*, bow and arrow.

*khaftan*, a vest worn under armour.

*khanjar*, dagger.

*khisht*, a javelin or a dart.

*kopal*, a ponderous club, a mace.

*kos*, a kettle-drum.

*mighfar*, mail or network of steel worn under the cap; a protection for the face worn in battle.

*nawak*, a small arrow flying directly to the mark.

*niza*, a short spear, javelin, dart.

*partab*, arrow that flies fast.

*qarura*, missile.

*shira*, long spear.

*sinan*, spear or lance.

*sufar*, notch in the arrow which receives the string.

*tabarzan*, axe fixed to the saddle.

*tark*, a helmet.

*zirah*, a coat of mail.

*zopin*, a small spear.

Among the Indian weapons reference is found to *katar-i-Hindi* (a kind of dagger), *shill-i-Hindi* (sharp lance) and *bhala-i-Hindi* (spear).

2. *Musical Instruments*: A number of musical instruments



have been referred to in the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*. Some of them may be mentioned here. These may be discussed in the light of *Ghuniyat-u'l-Muniya* and the *Lahjat-i-Sikandar Shahi*: *arghanun, autar, bam, chang, charm-i-kaman, chughan, daff, damama, darhat, duhul, kamancha, karannaye, kus-i-harbi, mazamir, mizrab, naye, qanun, rabab, rud, tabl, tanbur, tar, tas, zakhma, zamzama, zarbam* and *zir*.

3. *Ornaments*: Hasan refers to the following ornaments in his narrative. These may well be compared with ornaments referred to in Amir Khusrau's *masnavis*.

*goshwara*, ear-ring.

*khal-khal-i-zarrin*, ankle-ring of gold.

*quilada*, necklace.

*siwar said*, bracelets for arms.

*siwar saq*, bracelets for legs.

*yara*, ornamented bracelet.

4. *Cloth, clothes and furniture*: The *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* contains the following references to cloth and furniture:

*bisat-i-harir, bisat-i-zamarrudi, burqa, chadar-i-khatib, diba-i-haft rang, farsh-i-qaqam, jama-i-zarbaft, jama-i-sanjab, jama-i-'unnabi, khaftan-i-qaba, kulah, libas-i-bahaman, libas-i-parniyan, masnad, niqab, qaba-i-fistuqi, rida, tailsan* and *takya*.

5. *Foreign goods*: Some very interesting references are found to articles either manufactured in foreign lands or imported from there (particularly Rum, Badakhshan, Yemen, China, Baghdad, Tibet, Syria):

*yaqut-i-Rumani, lal-i-Badakhshan, aqiq-i-yamani, a'ina-i-Chini, shagraf-i-Rumi, jam-i-Baghdadi, zarbaft-i-Rum, deba-i-Chin, jama-i-Shushtari, mushk-i-Tibbati, 'ud-i-Qamari, mighfar-i-Chini, nachakh-i-Dailam, jaushan-i-Khatai, abgina-i-Shami, Kaman-i-Kayani*.

It is possible that reference to some of the articles is made on the basis of the author's knowledge of these articles when he was in his homeland.<sup>1</sup>

Since *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* is the earliest book of the period, the information contained in it regarding weapons, clothes, ornaments etc., may be helpful in comparing it with the information given by later writers.

<sup>1</sup>Prof. Hasan Askari has listed all these goods and instruments in his article in *Patna University Journal*, 1963, 18, no. 3, pp. 120-24.



VII

A brief reference may be made to themes and topics discussed by Hasan:

- Invasion of Hindustan
- Conquest of Ajmer (587/1191)
- Government of Ajmer entrusted to Rai Pithora's son
- Conquest of Delhi (date not given)
- Qutb-u'd-din appointed governor of Kuhram and Samana
- Rebellion of Jatwan
- Conquest of Meerut
- Capture of Delhi
- Rebellion of Harraj (brother of Rai of Ajmer)
- Qutb-u'd-din visits Ghaznin
- Qutb-u'd-din proceeds towards Kol and Banaras (590/1193)
- Capture of Kol
- Government of Kol entrusted to Malik Husam-u'd-din Ughlibak
- Rebellion of Harraj (591-1195)
- Mu'izz-u'd-din arrives in India
- March towards Thankir (592/1196)
- Thankir entrusted to Baha-u'd-din Tughril
- Capture of Gwalior (592/1196)
- Battle of Nahrwala and flight of the Rai
- Capture of the fort of Kalinjar (599/1202-3)
- Kalinjar entrusted to Hizbr-u'd-din Hasan Arnab
- Visit of Ikhtiyar-u'd-din Muhammad Bakhtiyar (Khalji)
- Qutb-u'd-din's return to Delhi
- Mu'izz-u'd-din's battle with the Khokhars
- Assassination of Mu'izz-u'd-din
- Allegiance of the nobles to Qutb-u'd-din
- Death of Qutb-u'd-din
- Accession of Shams-u'd-din
- Capture of Jaliwar
- Ghaznin army defeated; Yilduz captured
- Flight of Qubacha
- Capture of Lahore (613/1216)
- Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud appointed governor of Lahore
- Conquest of Uchch and Multan
- Investiture from the Abbasid Caliph



Taken as a whole, *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* contains an account of the military operations of 27 years (from 587 AH/1191 to 614/1217), or if we take Elliot's MS. into consideration, upto 626/1229.

It appears from a careful study of the accounts of Aibek and Iltutmish that the author had perhaps made Aibek the central theme of his narration and had not Aibek's career been cut short by his accidental fall from the horse, he would have dealt with his achievements only. Aibek's death created a void and Hasan had to pick up the events of Iltutmish's reign. This accounts for virtual omission of events from the death of Aibek to the accession of Iltutmish. Aram Shah is totally ignored. The account of Iltutmish is cursory and seems to have been introduced just with a view to associate and involve the name of the ruling monarch.

Hasan does not give an account of the conquest of Bengal by Ikhtiyar-u'd-din Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji. This can perhaps be explained in the light of the fact that the administrative arrangement visualized by Mu'izz-u'd-din for his Indian acquisitions was to have three (or more) independent officers subject to himself; he did not put all his Turkish slave officers under Aibek's over-all control.<sup>1</sup> Thus to highlight the achievements of Bakhtiyar and 'Ali Nagauri would have been irrelevant and out of place.

All these facts for which Hasan's book is invaluable are hidden in a plethora of high sounding words and hyperbolic expressions.

If any history of medieval India is completely soaked in the spirit of Persian *Fath Namas*,<sup>2</sup> it is the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* of Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami. Rhetorical exuberance and hyperbole, without which no *Fath Nama* could be drafted, form the essence of this work.

The purpose of a *Fath Nama* was not to record facts of history but to impress a reader with the achievements of a monarch and to elicit the applause of the gallery. The greater the literary

<sup>1</sup>See Nizami in *Comprehensive History of India*, V, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>*Fath Namas* were communiques issued on behalf of the medieval Sultans after successful termination of a campaign.

Hasan Nizami refers to many *Fath Namās* in his work. Aibek sent *Fath Namas* to Ghaznin and on several occasions when military campaign came to successful end *Fath Namas* were issued. This literature was, in all probability, available to him and it spurred him to show greater flights of imagination and rhetorical excellence,



embellishment of a *Fath Nama*—flaming colour and echoing sound—the higher its value and greater its impact. Referring to Malik Qiwam-u'd-din 'Ilaqa's excellence in drafting *Fath Namas*, Barani remarks :

“His work as a secretary was so good that if Baha-u'd-din Baghdadi, Rashid Vatvat and Mu'in Asam, the secretaries and authors of the past, could have seen his letters, they would have been struck with wonder and surprise. He has worked such magic in his *Fath Nama* of Lakhnauti.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Barani this *Fath Nama* had become a model for the *dabirs*.<sup>2</sup> Qiwam-u'd-din's *Fath Nama* is, however, not available and it is difficult to assess the literary and other qualities of this document, but Amir Khusrau also had drafted a *Fath Nama* on Balban's Lakhnauti campaign and this document is included in his *I'jaz-i-Khusravi*.<sup>3</sup> It was not an official document but a literary essay intended to establish literary reputation. This is perhaps the only available *Fath Nama* of the medieval period. Compared with this document, the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* appears a bulky *Fath Nama*. There is considerable foliage of metaphors, similes and rhetorical devices, but when all this literary paraphernalia is removed, the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir* can be reduced to less than one-fourth of its present size without any loss of meaning or substance.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>*I'jaz-i-Khusravi*, IV, pp. 4-13.

See also, Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India during the thirteenth century*, pp. 341-50.



## CHAPTER 2

### Minhaj-u's-Siraj Jurjani

#### I

“In the composition of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*,” remarks Barani who, out of regard for his eminent predecessor, did not want to tread the same ground, “Sadr-i-Jahan Minhaj-u'd-din Siraj Jurjani has shown miraculous powers.” Where does Minhaj’s miraculous power lie? Perhaps what impressed Barani was Minhaj’s capacity to handle historical data relating to extensive political activity in space and time. Starting from patriarchs and prophets he could bring the story down to his own day. It was a remarkable feat of literary achievement and Barani was obviously deeply impressed by the extensive sweep and vast range of study of his eminent predecessor. To add to this was the personality of Minhaj—well-versed in religious sciences, connected with the ruling house of Ghur, possessing statesman-like qualities, impressive as a theologian, inspiring as an orator, calculating and shrewd as a politician—which Barani admired and appreciated. There were certain identical elements in the career of both—of course, with one great difference: Minhaj continued to bask in the sunshine of royal favours till he closed his aged eyes in death, but Barani met his end as a pauper, reduced to abject penury by the cruel hands of destiny.

Minhaj’s account of the early Turkish Sultans, despite the tantalizingly meagre data that it contains about some important aspects of contemporary history, is the only connected and coherent narration of the political and military activity of the period. He supplies an eye-witness account of the stages through which one of the greatest empires of the middle ages had to pass in order to take shape. Almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Sultanate of Delhi, the Mongol storm began to brew in Central

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shuhi*, p. 21.



Asia. Minhaj deals with both – the Delhi Sultanate and the Mongols. A careful student of Minhaj's history cannot fail to find in his account of Mongol invasions of India a sense of elation and pride: Delhi could keep its banner floating when almost all Central Asian states had been totally washed off the face of the earth. The value of Minhaj's account of the Mongols cannot be over-estimated. Apart from what he saw in India, he had earlier taken part in conflicts against the Mongols and had assiduously collected information about their activities and behaviour from merchants and travellers. Considered in the broader perspective of Asiatic history, Minhaj's account of the Ghaznavids, the Shansabanids, the Khwarazmians, the Sanjari maliks of Iraq, Azerbaijan, Fars, and Nishapur is full of interesting details so necessary for a historical appraisal of the institutions and ideas as they developed in medieval India. It is on this account that Minhaj's contribution to the history of 'Ajam has been acknowledged by non-Indian historians, medieval and modern.

## II

Why did the idea of beginning his history from the earliest times occur to Minhaj? What was the source of this global approach to history? His only predecessor in this field, if we ignore Persian translations of Tabari's *Tarikh*, was Gardizi whose *Zain-u'l-Akhar* contained an account of the ancient Persian Kings, the Prophet, the early Caliphs, the history of Khurasan upto 1041, the Turks, besides chronological eras, Zoroastrian and Hindu festivals etc. But Gardizi's perspective was limited and he did not include the dynasties covered in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*.

Broadly speaking Minhaj deals with the following six themes:

- (i) Patriarchs and Prophets
- (ii) Prophet of Islam, Pious Caliphs, the Omayyads and the Abbasids
- (iii) The 'Ajami dynasties:
  - (a) The Pesh-Dadan (b) The Kaianian (c) The Ashkanian
  - (d) The Sasanian (e) The Akasirah
- (iv) The Minor Dynasties and other Muslim dynasties,
- (v) The Sultans of Delhi and their nobles,
- (vi) The Mongols.



Significantly enough he does not deal with the 'Ajami dynasties (Sassanids etc.) at their proper chronological place, but introduces them after his account of the Abbasids. Minhaj perhaps felt that the 'Ajami traditions represented by these dynasties, particularly the Sassanids, constituted a veritable background to the understanding of the political concepts and institutions of the Turkish dynasties which, inspired by the spirit of Persian Renaissance, wanted to revive Persian Culture. Minhaj took no notice of Muslim power in Africa and Spain. His historical vision was confined to Central Asia, West Asia and India.

Minhaj, who had spent his early years at Ghur, had seen the glorious past of Ghurid history and was also a witness to its disintegration and decline. The Mongol hordes carried sword and fire to prosperous and flourishing centres of culture before his own eyes. What appeared a reality today, might turn into a dream tomorrow. To preserve the vanishing shadows of glory it was necessary to preserve the history of these regions.<sup>1</sup> Minhaj's

<sup>1</sup>Note particularly the following remarks of Minhaj which give some idea of the mental background in which his *Tabaqat* was compiled:

"Notwithstanding that, by the will of the Almighty, and the decrees of Destiny, the turn of sovereignty passed unto the Chingiz Khan, the Accursed, and his descendants, after the Kings of Iran and Turan, that the whole of the land of Turan and the East fell under the sway of the Mughals, and that the authority of the Muhammedan religion departed from those regions, which became the seat of paganism, the kingdom of Hindustan, by the grace of Almighty God, and the favour of fortune, under the shadow of the guardianship of the Shamsi race, and the shade of the protection of the Iyaltimishi dynasty, became focus of the people of Islam...and, as from the extremity of the territories of Chin, Turkistan, Mawar-un-Nahr, Tukharistan, Zawul, Ghur, Kabul, Ghaznin, Iraq, Tabaristan, Aran Azarbaijan, the Jazirah, Anbar, Sijistan, Mukran, Kirman, Fars, Khuzistan, the Diyar-i Bakr, and Mausil, as far as the boundaries of Rum and Sham, fell into the hands of the infidel Mughals, and not a trace of the Muhammadan Maliks and Sultans of Islam remained in these countries—the Almighty's mercy be upon them, and may He long preserve the Nasiriah dynasty!—I desired to record in writing an account of these occurrences, from the beginning of the irruption of that race, and domination of that nation, up to the year 658 H. When this work was brought to a conclusion, and in order that that which I myself witnessed, and what I became cognizant of from the accounts of trustworthy informants, the events of the Muhammedan territory, and the transmission of the Mughal sovereignty from one to another, might become known, and also that (such account) might remain a



interest in giving a detailed account of Ghur was nostalgic. He wanted to tell the story of glory that was Ghur. While the parent ruling house had disappeared, its off-shoot, the Sultanate of Delhi, was still flourishing.<sup>1</sup> In tracing his historical narrative from Adam, Minhaj was perhaps guided by the consideration that the irruption of the Mongols foreboded the end of the Universe.<sup>2</sup> Hence the story should be told in full and from the beginning of the Universe.

Minhaj's interest in genealogy<sup>3</sup> also was rooted in his concern at the fall of respectable dynasties. The whole political and social fabric of 'Ajam was cracking under the pressure of Mongol invasions and everything seemed to be in a state of flux. In such moments of gloom and frustration the instinct to preserve the memory of the past gains momentum. Balban named large number of *muhallas* after the names of distinguished families that had been hunted out by the Mongols and had to seek shelter in India.<sup>4</sup> He invited expert genealogists to prepare genealogical tables and the history of old respectable families.<sup>5</sup> The fact that Fakhr-i-Mudabbir could find one thousand books pertaining to genealogy at a place like Lahore,<sup>6</sup> shows that time and circumstances had deepened interest in the history of dynasties and families. Minhaj thus represents an urge of the times in compiling his *Tabaqat*. It was the contemporary generation that mattered for him, and that too as denouement in a tragedy.

It would be futile to expect from Minhaj a global 'perspective'; if globalism touches anywhere his mind it is due to his faith in global destruction (*qayamat*). But he does not seem to be totally unaware of the stages through which humanity has marched. At times he traces the evolution of some institutions in their

memorial of the writer of this *Tabakat*—Minhaj-i Saraj." Raverty, II, pp. 869-98. In this very section Minhaj talks about the approach of the Doomsday.

Is his perspective and choice of regions and dynasties not determined by the fate of the countries listed above?

<sup>1</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, ed. Habibi, I, pp. 440-41; II, pp. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, II, pp. 92-93.

<sup>3</sup>Raverty, I, p. XXXII etc.

<sup>4</sup>Ferishta, I, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup>See *Maktubat-i-Ashrafi*, MS., f. 76a.

<sup>6</sup>*Tarikh-i-Fakhr-u'd-din Mubarak Shah*, p. 66.



political, religious and cultural context. Though his chapters dealing with Prophets and patriarchs are mostly based on earlier works, there is a very significant tendency in them to analyse and interpret the role of religion in the development of human society. For instance, he writes about Adam:

“On him descended (from above) a pair each of rams, cows, camels, goats and sheep; and (also) blacksmith's tools, hammer and anvil. He was taught (to use them) till he prepared iron. Gabriel taught cultivation and cooking of bread to him. He was instructed to make oven and to do farming. Eve was taught knitting from animal's hair and Adam was instructed in weaving.”<sup>1</sup>

Then about Prophet Shis he remarks:

“In fact thirty revealed books were vouchsafed to him. All of them dealt with different sciences and laws.....(The origin of) natural sciences, mathematics, laws, alchemy was traced from him.”<sup>2</sup>

His remarks about Prophet Idris deserve to be noted:

“He gave to people (knowledge of) astronomy...He was the first to teach (the people how) to stitch clothes and he was the first to write with pen.”<sup>3</sup>

He traced from Prophet Abraham the principles of personal hygiene<sup>4</sup> which later became the basis of *shari'at* law.<sup>5</sup> About Prophet Da'ud, he observes:

“Almighty God vouchsafed *Zabur* to him and gave him a sonorous voice and he melted the iron and earned his livelihood from it.”<sup>6</sup>

The way Minhaj refers to the development of human skill and craftsmanship, as also the *shari'at* laws promulgated by different prophets, leaves upon one's mind the impression that he had some realization of the need of tracing the stages through which human society has passed.

Minhaj's account of states and kingdoms gives some idea of his knowledge of geography. But it is all fragmented and not global. His historical perspective is basically dynastic and, in fact, it could not have been otherwise. Having focussed his attention on the Omayyad and the Abbasid dynasties as centres

<sup>1</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, I, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, I, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, I, pp. 27-29.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, I, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, I, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, I, p. 38.



of political activity, he could only deal with succession states and minor dynasties. Any other arrangement would have destroyed the unity of treatment. It is true that his *tabaqat* arrangement has necessitated some repetition, but on the whole his treatment is systematic and basically coherent within the framework designed by him for his study.

### III

Minhaj's approach as a historian was determined by his family background and the circumstances of his life. Many political, social and religious factors had gone into the making of his personality and had conditioned his attitude towards religious and political problems of the period. His family had a long background of loyal relations with the Khilafat at Baghdad;<sup>1</sup> his ancestors had matrimonial relations with the ruling houses of Ghur and Ghaznin;<sup>2</sup> the members of his family were known for their diplomatic finesse and were often employed as envoys and last, but not the least, the family enjoyed a reputation for its religious scholarship and piety.<sup>3</sup>

Minhaj was born in Ghur<sup>3</sup> in circa 589/1193, i.e., two years after the battle of Tara'in. His father was appointed Qazi of the Ghurid army stationed at Lahore after its occupation by Shihab-u'd-din in 582/1186-7. But in 591/1194, at the invitation of Sultan Baha-u'd-din Sam, he went to Banian and Tukharistan and accepted Qaziship of the region. Minhaj grew up in the *harem* of Princess Mah Malik,<sup>4</sup> daughter of Ghiyas-u'd-din Muhammad

<sup>1</sup>According to Minhaj his maternal ancestors had received *misals* from the Abbasid Caliph Mustazi Billah, while his paternal grandfather had been honoured by a *khil'at* from the caliph.

<sup>2</sup>One of his ancestors 'Abdul Khaliq Jurjani came to Ghaznin and, impressed by his religious erudition and position, Sultan Ibrahim of Ghaznin gave his daughter in marriage to him. 'Abdul Khaliq's son Ibrahim (named after his maternal grandfather) was the great grandfather of our historian.

<sup>3</sup>Minhaj's family originally belonged to Jurjan, which is a small district on the north-west frontier of Ghur.

Daghistani's statement that he was born at Lahore is not correct. According to Minhaj himself he reached Uchch for the first time in 624/1226-27.

<sup>4</sup>Mah Malik was the foster-sister and school mate of Minhaj's mother.



b. Sam. When Khwarazm Shah defeated the troops of Caliph Nasir and the latter sent some envoys to Ghur and Ghaznin to enlist support in his favour, Minhaj's father was one of the emissaries sent to the Caliph's court. Siraj-u'd-din, however, was killed on the way by robbers.

Another important figure of this family was the son of Minhaj's maternal uncle, Zia-u'd-din who was left by Mui'zz-u'd-din in command of the fortress of Tabarhinda in 587/1191. When Malik Rukn-u'd-din Mahmud was killed at Firoz Koh in 607/1210-11, Minhaj happened to be present there. Later on Minhaj moved to Zaranj, capital of Sijistan, and remained there for sometime. In 617/1220 we find the author in Tulak. For about four years he participated in defensive campaigns against the Mongols. In 618/1221, the year in which Chingiz crossed the Jihun into Khurasan, Minhaj married and thereafter he started planning to leave for India. In 621/1224 he fought against the Mongols at Tulak. He resided for sometime at Isfizar, Kuhistan, Khaesar and Farah. While at Farah, Malik Taj-u'd-din Binaltigin, the ruler of Sijistan, sent him to Kuhistan to bring about conciliation between him and the Mulahida chief. He succeeded in his mission but Taj-u'd-din did not agree to the terms and asked him to go again to the Mulahida governor, Muhtashim. Minhaj, who was anxious to proceed to India, declined to go again. Taj-u'd-din got irritated and imprisoned him in the fortress of Safhed. He was set free after 45 days at the intercession of Malik Rukn-u'd-din Muhammad.

Minhaj left for India in 624/1227 and, by way of Ghaznin and Banian, reached Uchch by boat. He was nearly 34 years of age at that time—fully educated according to the standards of the age and having some experience of diplomatic missions. Qubacha was impressed by his academic and intellectual attainments. He appointed him as Principal of the Firozi Madrasa at Uchch and made him Qazi of the forces of his son. After a year, when Iltutmish annexed Multan, Minhaj passed into the service of Iltutmish and reached Delhi in Ramazan 625/1227.

It was at Delhi that Minhaj found a favourable atmosphere for his genius to flourish and he attained a stature in the cultural and political circles of the capital. For ten years during the reign of Iltutmish he quietly and efficiently performed his duties as *imam*, *qazi*, *khatib* etc. Proximity with the Sultan and



close relations with the ruling elite provided him with an opportunity to study the political developments in all their details and dimensions. He accompanied Iltutmish to Gwalior in 629/1231 and the next year, after the conquest of the fort, he was made *Qazi*, *Khatib* and *Imam* of Gwalior, under its governor Rashid-u'd-din 'Ali. After the death of Iltutmish, like many other religious men of the period, he also plunged headlong into politics. During the next three decades, till the rise of Balban, he was one of the most active politicians of Delhi. His career waxed and waned with the fluctuating fortunes of his patron nobles. At times he was in the limelight of political activity, at others circumstances pushed him into the background. In the early years of Razia's reign he was removed from his assignments in Gwalior. However in 635/1237 the Principalship of Nasiriyah Madrasah at Delhi was also entrusted to him. In 639/1241 during the reign of Mui'zz-u'd-din Bahram, he was made Chief Qazi of Delhi. But he was so active in politics that the Wazir, Khwaja Muhazzab-u'd-din, hired some villains for his assassination. He was actually attacked in the Jama' Masjid but somehow escaped unhurt. When 'Ala-u'd-din Mas'ud Shah reappointed Khwaja Muhazzab-u'd-din as Wazir in 640/1242, Minhaj resigned his post and left for Lakhnauti. He remained there for two years. Then he accompanied Malik Tughril Tughan Khan in his expedition against the Raa of Jajnagar. On his return from Lakhnauti he got the post of the Principal of the Nasiriyah Madrasah through the good offices of Balban. He was entrusted again with the Imamat and Qaziship of Gwalior. Then he proceeded with the army to Uchch to defend the town against Mongol inroads. In 644/1246 Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud gave him a cloak, a turban and a richly caparisoned horse for leading the 'Eid prayers at Jullundhar. In 649/1251 the Qaziship of Delhi was conferred upon him, but when 'Imad-u'd-din Raihan came to power he removed him from the job.<sup>1</sup> In 652/1254 the title of Sadr-i-Jahan was conferred upon him while he was at Kol. When Balban came to power again, in 653/1255,

<sup>1</sup>He thus refers to his misfortunes during this period; "The case of this frail individual was on this wise, that for a period of six months, or even longer it was out of his power to leave his dwelling and go to the Friday prayers, for fear of the violence of a gang of villains who were patronized by Imad-u'd-Din-i-Rayhan." Raverty, II, pp. 829-30.



Minhaj got back the Qaziship of Delhi. After that we hear little about him, though in the year 658/1259 when he was in his seventieth year, he promises to continue the narrative further if health permitted him.

Raverty says that from 658/1259 to 664/1265, "there is complete blank in Indian History".<sup>1</sup> But, as will be shown later, 'Isami has supplied interesting details to fill this gap.

From this brief survey of Minhaj's life it would be clear that apart from his knowledge of Ghur, Ghaznin, Zaranj, Isfizar, Kuhistan etc., he had been practically to all important places in northern India—Lahore, Multan, Uchch, Gwalior, Amroha, Kol and Lakhnauti. His knowledge of men and conditions of life from Isfizar to Lakhnauti must have considerably widened his vision. He had held the offices of Principal of *madrassahs*, *imam*, *khatib*, *qazi*, *sadr-i-jahan* etc., and these offices brought him in close touch with the religious class on the one side and the nobility on the other. At a time when the 'ulama were weltering in the mud and mire of politics, Minhaj could not escape the prevailing madness for political prestige.

Three portions of the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* deserve particular attention : (i) earlier portion dealing with prophets and the early history of Islam, (ii) accounts of the rulers and nobles of Delhi, and (iii) the Mongols. Perhaps the most interesting part of the work from the point of view of Central Asian history is one which deals with the Mongols. His account of the Delhi Sultans is informative but not illuminating. Perhaps political considerations, changing attitudes and loyalties of nobles, made him extremely cautious in dealing with the accounts of the Sultans and the nobles of the period. For the first portion of the book, he cites as his source the following books:

1. *Salami* ;
2. *Takmilat-u'l-Lata'if* ;
3. *Tarikh-i-Baihaqi* ;
4. *Adas-u'z-Zaman* ;
5. *Sunan-i-Abu Da'ud Sijistani* ;
6. *Muqaddisi's Al-Badv-wa'l Tarikh* ;
7. *Tarikh-i-Yamini* ;
8. *Qanun-al-Mas'udi* ;
9. *Tarikh-i-Majdul* ;
10. *Muntakhab Tarikh-i-Nasiri* ;
11. *Nasab Namah-i-Ghuriyan* ;
12. *Tarikh-i-Ibn Haisam Nabi* ;
13. *Kitab-i-Aghani* ;
14. *Sabi*

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, I, p. xxix.



Among the individual reporters he cites, particularly for the Mongols and other incidents, Imam 'Ali Ghaznavi, Khwaja Rashid-u'd-din Hakim Balkhi, Syed Ashraf-u'd-din son of Syed Jalal-u'd-din Sufi Samarqandi (who came to Delhi in 657/1258 in connection with trade), Syed Ajal Baha-u'd-din Razi, Khwaja Ahmad Wakhshi and others. That he could collect from travellers and merchants data of historical significance shows his mental alertness and sense of awareness.

Minhaj's *tabaqat* arrangement also calls for some explanation. Literally the word means a 'layer' but it is used for a class or order, race or generation. Its connotation concerns both space and time. Earlier the term was used for the royal houses of Iran only, but later on it was used for others also (*shu'ara*, *sufiya*, *fuqaha*, *attiba* etc.) In *hadis* terminology it indicates those transmitters of *hadis* who belong to one and the same generation: they inherit from the earlier generation and transmit to the generation that follows. Some writers have tried to establish the exact length of a *tabaqa* as twenty years. Minhaj uses the term in the sense of dynasties or persons having racial or other identity and flourishing within a specific span of time.

#### IV

Minhaj's account of the Shamsi nobles is by far the most informative and revealing part of the book so far as medieval Indian history is concerned. This *tabaqa* contains an account of twentyfive nobles of Iltutmish and opens before our mind a picture gallery of *maliks*, bubbling with life, energy and talent. Regarding Iltutmish's attitude towards them, Minhaj remarks: "(they) were objects of his regard and affection; and they all looked upon him as a kind and loving father."<sup>1</sup> Barani refers to forty families (*Turkan-i-Chehlgani*) of Turks who enjoyed positions of power and authority during this period. No other historian refers to forty families. 'Isami, however, speaks of 40 Turkish slaves being brought for sale by the Chinese merchants before Iltutmish along with Balban.<sup>2</sup> However, Minhaj's account of

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, II, p. 729.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 122.



these nobles is replete with significant historical details which he has ignored in the main narrative of the Sultans. Here we find details about the racial and tribal background of the nobles, their training in the household, appointment to different offices, role in internecine struggles, responsibilities as *iqta'* holders, transfers, promotions and demotions, personal qualities and administrative achievements. Sometimes interesting side-light is thrown on the nature and duties of high administrative offices, e.g., on his appointment as *sar-i-jandar*, Malik Saif-u'd-din Aibek, submits: "My lord, the Sultan, in the first place, commands his slave to take an office of affliction, while his humble servant is unable to practise blood-shedding, torture, extortion, and oppression upon Muslims and subjects. Let the Sultan be pleased to assign other employment to his slave."<sup>1</sup>

Referring to the military skill of Malik Taj-u'd-din Sanjar-i-Kurat Khan, Minhaj says : "...he would have two horses under saddle, one of which he would ride, and the other he would lead after him, and thus used to dash on, and, whilst the horses were galloping, he would leap from this horse to that with agility, would return to this first one again, so that, during a gallop, he used several times to mount two horses."<sup>2</sup>

Minhaj's silence about some of the outstanding nobles shows that political considerations—particularly relations with Balban—determined his choice and rejection of data. He does not include Qutb-u'd-din Hasan Ghuri in this *Tabaqa*, though, according to Barani, others had written volumes about him.<sup>3</sup>

(a) Minhaj identified himself completely with the interests of the Turkish oligarchy in India. He was not merely an official chronicler, but one whose personal and family ties with Ghur and Ghaznin and the Mui'zzi and Qutbi Maliks were so strong that to think of anything prejudicial to their interests was just not possible for him. He therefore remains a representative of interests which were basically non-Indian and wanted the racial character of the Sultanate to be strengthened and perpetuated.

(b) His predisposition to extol the role of his Turkish bene-

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, II, p. 756.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 113.



factors and to suppress, under-estimate or misrepresent the activities of those opposed to them has rendered it difficult to estimate the role of non-Turkish elements in the politics of the Delhi Sultanate. The rise of the Khaljis was not a fortuitous event, but a successful assertion of forces that were struggling for decades. Minhaj's history provides no background to a study of the circumstances which facilitated the rise of the Khaljis to power.

(c) As a natural corollary to this political affiliation, he either ignored or painted in lurid colours all critics of his Turkish patrons. 'Imad-u'd-din Raihan's rise to power appeared to him as a mere accident. If any Sultan, disgusted with the recalcitrant activities and machinations of the Turkish nobles, sought to create a counter-nobility of non-Turkish elements, Minhaj reacted to it sharply and deliberately distorted facts. Opposition against Razia was due mainly to her bold policy of breaking the concentration of power in the hands of the old Turkish nobility, but Minhaj's narrative leaves upon one's mind an entirely different impression. It was the inordinate ambition of Ulugh Khan (future Balban) and his Machiavellian methods to usurp power that forced Sultan Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud to dismiss him and appoint 'Imad-u'd-din Raihan in his place. Better organization and *esprit de-corpe* of the Turks ultimately succeeded in creating a situation in which Nasir-u'd-din had to dismiss Raihan and to entrust the entire administrative machinery to Balban and seek an escapist's refuge in his prayers and penitences.<sup>1</sup> Minhaj was placed in a quandary: if he justified Balban's action, it amounted to a condemnation of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud; if, on the contrary, he supported Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud, it antagonized Balban. His clever mind found a solution which could be neatly placed in a framework to explain the development: Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud was painted as a man of the other-world – more interested in vigils, fasts, penitences etc. – than in the mundane task of administering a realm. Thus Balban's assumption of

<sup>1</sup>How deeply Minhaj's portraiture of the Sultan has influenced the mind of the posterity may be gauged from the fact that even Amir Khusrau echoes the same feelings in his *Daval Rani Khizr Khan*, p. 50. The same is the attitude of Barani (*Tarikh*, p. 26), but he definitely blames Balban for keeping him as a 'show piece' and usurping all power for himself.

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power could automatically be explained as a 'necessity of the situation' and no reader would ever hold Balban responsible for manipulating a 'situation.'

(d) Balban's manoeuvres to consolidate his position during the last few years of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud's reign were, by all standards, mean and disgraceful.<sup>1</sup> People in Delhi could not be unaware of this situation. Minhaj decided to close his narrative six years before the death of Nasir-u'd-din, though he was mentally and physically in a position to continue the account.

'Isami who helps us in tracing the later phase of Nasir-u'd-din's life, belonged to a family closely connected with the Ilbarites. He tells us that Balban had become extremely impatient to ascend the throne and in that connection he had demanded the royal canopy which led to Qutb-u'd-din Hasan Ghuri's protest. 'Isami then relates, on the authority of some 'old and reliable persons', that once two sons of Nasir-u'd-din, in reply to the taunts of Balban's sons about the wisdom of their father, said: "We can, by a trick, bring Ulugh Khan from his horse to the ground." Balban's sons offered a bet of eighty gold *dinars*. The next day one of the princes dropped his whip in the riding field and when Balban happened to pass by, they asked him for it. Balban got down from his horse to pick it up. When Balban's sons informed their father of the bet, he was perturbed and began to reflect that if these boys were so deceitful at that tender age, they could very well end his life. This fear festered his soul and he decided to cut short Nasir-u'd-din's life before it was too late.<sup>2</sup>

(e) Much more shocking than the misrepresentation of the non-Turkish nobles is Minhaj's deliberate suppression of facts regarding Turkish nobles who were not on good terms with his patrons. Qutb-u'd-din Hasan Ghuri was an eminent Turkish noble who perhaps belonged to the *Turkan-i-Chehlgani*. Ulugh Khan (future Balban) got him ruthlessly massacred. Anxious to suppress the details, Minhaj thus reports the incident:

"In the month of Rabi'-ul-Akhir, they conveyed to the hearing of the Sultan a remark from Malik Kutb-u'd-Din, Husain, son of Ali, the Ghuri, who was Nayab (Lieutenant) of the

<sup>1</sup>Isami's *Futuh-u's-Salatin* helps us in filling this gap in Minhaj's account. See pp. 156 *et. seq.*

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 161-63.



Kingdom, which was contrary to the sublime opinion, and, on Tuesday, the 23rd of Rabi'-ul-Akhir, he cited Malik Kutb-u'd-Din, Husain, and ordered him to be arrested and imprisoned; and that Malik obtained martyrdom."<sup>1</sup>

These lines, cryptic and brief, are deliberate suppression of unpalatable facts. The only concession that Minhaj makes to Qutb-u'd-din's eminence, patronage and services is that he calls his assassination martyrdom (*shahadat*), which may be interpreted as a quiet refusal to accept his assassination as justified. 'Isami has given full details about this incident in which Balban was involved. Offended at Balban's manoeuvres to deprive the Sultan of his canopy, Qutb-u'd-din made a remark which was disliked by Balban. Next day when Qutb-u'd-din Hasan entered the palace, assassins hired by Balban tore his body to pieces. When his dying shrieks reached the ears of Sultan Nasir-u'd-din he made anxious enquiries but was quietly told by Balban: "There was a thorn in the body; it has been removed."<sup>2</sup> As Balban was involved in this heinous murder, Minhaj passed over the details and suppressed essential information.<sup>3</sup>

Despite all the cleverness with which Minhaj has confused some matters, there are some passages which reveal his mind on crucial issues. For instance, in his account of Razia, he quotes Iltutmish as having said: "My sons are engrossed in the pleasures of youth, and none of them possesses the capacity of managing the affairs of the country, and by them the government of the kingdom will not be carried out. After my death it will be seen that *not one of them* will be found more worthy of the heir-apparentship than she, my daughter."<sup>4</sup> This is a subtle but indirect way of condemning all the heirs of Iltutmish. Does it mean justification for the nefarious designs of Balban?

Raverty, I, p. 702.

His names appear both as Hasan and Husain in different works.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>That Qutb-u'd-din Hasan's murder was not liked by religious men, may be inferred from *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, Lahore edition, p. 112.

There is no relation between its two sentences unless it means that the famine was due to divine punishment for that incident.

<sup>4</sup>Raverty, I, p. 639,



V

Muslim religious tradition of the medieval times, as developed particularly by the Chishti saints, looked down upon contact with the ruling powers. Maulana Nur Turk, an extremely pious and saintly person, himself lived upto that tradition and strongly criticised those who, regardless of their religious sanctity, dabbled in politics and indulged in materialistic pursuits. Maulana Nur Turk's only source of income was a *jital* a day which his liberated slave gave to him. Razia once sent to him a bag full of gold coins. He did not touch it but beat the bag with his stick and asked the people to remove it from his sight.<sup>1</sup> A saint with this attitude towards worldly attractions could hardly reconcile himself to the role of the contemporary '*ulama* who had thrown themselves headlong into the vortex of politics. At a time when the nobles had employed hundreds of such men in their service to whip up public opinion in their favour, Nur Turk looked with dismay at the degeneration of the morals of the '*ulama* and criticized them for their sordid materialistic pursuits.<sup>2</sup> Minhaj who himself belonged to this group of the '*ulama* could hardly tolerate such criticism. He hit back on Nur Turk by painting him as a Carmathian and charging him of inciting "the common people to animosity against the orders of the '*ulama* of the sects of Abu Hanifah and Shaf'i." He is reported to have planned an attack on the Muslims while offering Friday prayers. They divided themselves into two groups, one of them "entered the gateway of the Muizzi College under the supposition that it was the Jami' Masjid."<sup>3</sup> This supposition is intriguing. Such a confusion was hardly possible in Delhi.

The authenticity of Minhaj's statement was questioned by no less a person than Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya who once told his audience in his characteristically guarded language that Minhaj had not painted him correctly and that the Maulana was 'purer than rain water.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 199; *Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Raverty, tr. I, p. 646.

<sup>4</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 199.



## VI

Minhaj's approach and perspective has other short-comings also. He has given detailed account of the campaigns of the early Turkish rulers, but all this is not merely dry and insipid but ignores completely any reference to Indian resistance to the Ghurid occupation of northern India. The Turkish conquest was not an easy walk over. Even Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami makes it abundantly clear that Rajput resistance was stiff and determined. Minhaj completely ignored this aspect which would have made it possible for us to view the developments in their correct perspective. Equally painful is Minhaj's complete silence over the impact of Turkish conquest: What was the aftermath of these conquests? How cities started changing their character? What administrative and other changes were introduced by the Turks? What was the reaction of the indigenous population to all these measures?—Such questions do not touch the mind of Minhaj. He simply failed to understand the significance of the change that was taking place around him. He lacked in that historical perception which alone could help him in putting his data in some sort of perspective. For instance, he gives many details about Iltutmish's campaigns and activities but does not provide any insight into the methods adopted by him to lay the foundations of the Sultanate of Delhi and build up its administrative edifice. Even his buildings Quwwat-u'l-Islam Mosque, Qutb Minar, Hauz-i-Shamsi etc.,—which heralded the dawn of a new era in the cultural history of Delhi, have been skipped over. Minhaj's portraiture of Iltutmish falls short of the greatness of that architect of the Sultanate. Some very essential details seem missing. Prince Nasir-u'd-din's appointment to the governorship of Lahore, which has been referred to even by Hasan Nizami, has been ignored by him. Jalal-u'd-din Mangbarni's heroic confrontation with Chingiz's forces at *Chaul-i-Jalali* (as the place later came to be known) has been mentioned in the most dull and misleading manner. Even Chingiz had admired Mangbarni's courage and intrepidity and had remarked: "Such a son should a father have",<sup>1</sup> but Minhaj has only to say: "Sultan Jalal-ud-Din was defeated and overthrown, and he threw himself into the river, and retired, discomfited, into

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Jahan Gusha*, tr. Boyle, II, p. 411.



Hindustan."<sup>1</sup> This assessment of a warrior whose fearlessness and valour the Mongols "watched with astonishment with their hands on their mouths",<sup>2</sup> is a sad commentary on Minhaj's performance as a historian. Despite all his links with the Mongols, Ata Malik Juwaini had the honesty and courage to present Mangbarni in his true colours.

As a historian, Minhaj seems to have been least interested in the working of the administrative institutions. The institution of *iqta'* which was the linch-pin of the administrative system of those days, has nowhere been explained by him and it is only through indirect references that some idea can be formed of the principles governing its control and management. Minhaj's main interest lay in the military operations and the political manoeuvres of the period. Beyond that he cared to see little or search little. Notwithstanding his clarity of expression, chronological sequence and systematic cataloguing of events, Minhaj lacked in that vision which could help him in putting all these details in some coherent framework. As a historian, he does not come anywhere near Barani who could illumine a whole age by his stray but highly significant remarks. Minhaj gives so many details about Ilutmish, but fails to portray the personality of the Sultan. Barani's casual references to the Sultan—his remarks about his nobles standing with folded hands,<sup>3</sup> lectures of Syed Nur-u'd-din Mubarak Ghaznavi,<sup>4</sup> procurement of books on political theory from Baghdad,<sup>5</sup> discussions with a deputation of the *'ulama*,<sup>6</sup> gifts from the Khalifa of Baghdad<sup>7</sup> help to illumine a whole age. Minhaj lacked that comprehensive view of things which is needed for assortment of facts. In fact his account of the contemporary rulers is as lifeless as a slick court painter's portraits.

The age of Minhaj saw the influx of a very large number of *'ulama* and *mashaikh* into the country. Some of them gained eminence as founders of academic institutions, others as founders of *silsilahs* and centres of spiritual activity. It was the age of

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, I, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, tr. II, p. 411.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 41-44.

<sup>5</sup>*Tarikh*, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup>*Sahifa-i-Na't-i Muhammadi*, MS.

<sup>7</sup>*Tarikh*, p. 103.



Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti, Shaikh Qutb-u'd-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakar, Shaikh Baha-u'd-din Zakariyya, Qazi Hamid-u'd-din Nagauri and others. Minhaj speaks about refugees from Muslim lands in general terms, but does not say a word about their role and contribution to contemporary society. Was this omission deliberate and due to the fact that his own life was so different from the lives of these eminent saints? Whatever the reason, as late as the reign of Jahangir, a religious biographer, Muhammad Ghausi Shattari, disapproved of this attitude of Minhaj and said that his contemporaries also had raised their eyebrows over this omission.<sup>1</sup>

Indian influences are not easily discernible in his work but it appears that sometimes Hindu months were also referred to. In connection with Razia's march to Tabarhinda, he says that it took place in the month of *Ahar*<sup>2</sup> (the third solar month of India).

## VII

(a) In spite of all these shortcomings as a historian—and perhaps some of them are due to our expectations from a historian which may not be justified in certain cases—Minhaj had an individuality of his own. Well-versed in religious sciences, an erudite scholar, an eloquent speaker who could change the views of his audience, endowed with a sharp and shrewd sense of political necessities, Minhaj was held in high respect in political and religious circles of Delhi. He had close contact with the nobles and the Sultans on one side and with the mystics and the *'ulama* on the other. At a time when the relations between the *'ulama* and the sufis were far from cordial, Minhaj was respected by both. As Sadr-i-Jahan he was directly in touch with the *'ulama*, while as Principal of the Nasiriya Madrasah, he was looked upon as the most outstanding *'alim* of the period. He was esteemed highly in the mystic circles and Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya used to go every week to listen to his religious discourses.<sup>3</sup> It was perhaps due to his own interest in *sama* (mystic music) that orthodox opposition to it died out<sup>4</sup> or at least till the Tughluq

<sup>1</sup>*Gulzar-i-Abrar*, MS.

<sup>2</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Habibi, II, p. 21; Raverty, II, p. 748.

<sup>3</sup>*Fawar'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 191.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 239.



period no 'alim in Delhi had the courage to protest against it.

(b) Minhaj was a poet also, though in the age of Taj Reza, Amir Ruhani and Shihab Muhmara it was difficult for him to make his mark. However he had a poetic sensibility and could stir people by citing appropriate verses.<sup>1</sup> His poem on Ulugh Khan's victory of Talsandah, entitled *Nasiri Nama*, was appreciated both by the Sultan and the Ulugh Khan. The Sultan gave him a permanent yearly grant, while Ulugh Khan conferred upon him a village in Hansi.<sup>2</sup>

(c) The most valuable part of the book from the point of view of medieval Indian history is the one that deals with the Shansabani dynasty of Ghur and the early Turkish Sultans and nobles of Delhi. But for Minhaj the antecedents of the Delhi Sultans and the atmosphere of their homeland would have been completely unknown to us. Some of his descriptions of the life and activity of the Ghurid rulers, like Amir 'Abbas and 'Ala-u'd-din Jahan Soz, are lively and of absorbing interest. His chapters which deal with the Mu'izzi, Shamsi and Qutbi Maliks are full of interesting details. Minhaj recorded their account because he was himself closely connected with this class of nobility. He was hardly aware of the fact that through these accounts future generations would be able to construct a picture, however incomplete, of the life and activities of the Turkish governing class in India during the thirteenth century. Some of his descriptions are graphic and recreate a whole world of visions. (i) He thus records his first meeting with Taj-u'd-din Sanjar-i Gajzlak Khan:

“that Malik of good disposition treated him (the author) with reverence, and rose from his *masnad*, and went through the ceremonial of receiving him, and came to meet him, and seated the author in his own place, and put a rosy apple into his hand.<sup>3</sup>

(ii) Two incidents of Malik Nusrat-u'd-din Ta-yasai's intelligence have been recorded. Once on a campaign he lost a milch sheep

<sup>1</sup>Once he recited a quatrain meaning:

*The lip, in the ruby lips of heart-ravishers delighting,  
And to ruffle the dishevelled tresses essaying,  
To-day is delightful, but tomorrow it is not—,  
To make one's self like as straw, fuel for the fire.*

It moved Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Raverty, I, pp, 680-8.

<sup>3</sup>ibid, II, p. 722.



from his flocks. Nearly a month and a half passed. One day when he was taking a round of the camp among the tents, he heard the bleating of a sheep and immediately told his attendant that it was the bleating of his lost sheep. It turned out as he had said.<sup>1</sup> Another more significant event relates to the Kalinjar campaign undertaken in 631/1233-34. A guide led him for a night and a day but on the following midnight he confessed that he had lost his way. Ta-yasai put him to death and himself undertook to act as the guide. He took them to an elevation where there was moisture on the ground, obviously due to the urine of men and animals. Persons in the army began to express their fears: 'It is night and we may find ourselves in the midst of the enemy.' Ta-yasai got down from his horse and examined the spot carefully. 'Friends', he said, "be of good cheer. This is the urine of tailed animals at the very rear of the army. Had it been otherwise, the footprints of men would have been visible on the moist ground, but there are no human footprints here."<sup>2</sup>

(d) It would be unfair to Minhaj to minimize the value of his account of the Mongols. He had first-hand knowledge of the Mongols before he stepped into India and subsequently also he went on collecting information about them from reliable sources. Minhaj did not believe in giving portraits, but Chingiz Khan deserved an exception. He gives a lively and intimate picture of the great conqueror—his faith in *Tingri* and his prayers for three continuous days and nights without food,<sup>3</sup> his dreams, his enquiries about traditions of the Prophets,<sup>4</sup> his eagerness to know if Prophet Muhammad had said anything about his rise.<sup>5</sup> The circumstances under which Qazi Wahid-u'd-din Bushanji of Hirat fell into the hands of the Mongols and was taken to Chingiz who kept him in his company for sometime has been very graphically described by Minhaj. It shows that despite his ferocity, Chingiz had his moments of relaxation and kind heartedness and that he respected the plighted word.<sup>6</sup> The following description is too lively to be ignored:

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, II, p. 739.

<sup>2</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Habibi, II, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Raverty, II, p. 954.

<sup>4</sup>ibid, p. 1040.

<sup>5</sup>ibid, p. 1041.

<sup>6</sup>ibid, p. 1041 *et seq.*



“... Chingiz Khan, at the time when he came into Khurasan, was sixty-five years old, a man of tall stature, of vigorous build, robust in body, the hair on his face scanty and turned white, with cats' eyes, possessed of great energy, discernments, genius and understanding, awe-striking, a butcher, just, resolute, an overthrower of enemies, intrepid, sanguinary, and cruel . . . . Every now and then he used to fall into a trance, and, in that state of insensibility, all sorts of things used to proceed from his tongue . . . A person used to take the whole down in writing and enclose it in a bag . . . . the whole used to come true.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite his profound hatred for Chingiz, Minhaj was not blind to some of the positive qualities of the great conqueror. He observes:

“... the Chingiz Khan moreover in (the administration of) justice was such, that, throughout his whole camp, it was impossible for any person to take up a fallen whip from the ground except he were the owner of it; and, throughout his whole army, no one could give indication of (the existence of) lying and theft. If any woman that they (the Mughals) took in all Khurasan and the land of Ajam had a husband, no living being would form a connexion with her; and, if an infidel (the Mughal) set his eyes upon a woman who had a husband, he would (first) slay the husband of the woman, and then would form a connexion with her. It used to be impossible for falsehood to be spoken and this fact is clear.”<sup>2</sup>

The destruction wrought by Chingiz Khan and his Mongol hordes was such that there could be nothing in Muslim hearts but fear and hatred against them. Under such circumstances it was difficult for a historian to highlight any positive traits of their character and to condemn or criticize Muslim behaviour. But Minhaj does this and with a simplicity and candidness which raises his stature as a historian. Two Mongol soldiers were brought before a Mongol leader and it was reported that they were found asleep while on guard. Juzbi Uklan heard the report, turned to the soldiers and asked: “Were ye asleep?” Both of them accepted. “Put one of them to death”, the officer said, and fasten his head to the locks of the other, and parade the latter

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, II, pp. 1077-78.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, pp. 1078-79.



round the whole camp, and then put him to death also." Minhaj's informant asked Uklan in great astonishment: "There was no evidence or proof on the part of that Mughal accuser, and when they (the accused) were well aware that the punishment would be death, why did they confess? For if they had denied the charge, they would have escaped being killed." To this Uklan replied:

"Why are *you* astonished? *You, Tajziks, do* such things and tell lies. A Mughal, were a thousand lives at stake, would choose being killed, but would not speak false; but false speaking is your occupation; and, on account of such things, it is that Almighty God hath sent a calamity like us upon you (Tajziks)."<sup>1</sup>

It must be accepted that Minhaj's account of the Mongols is far superior to his account of the Delhi Sultans—in depth, understanding and objectivity. In the thirteenth regnal year of Nasir-u'd din (656/1258) he refers to Hulagu's attack on Baghdad and says: "(Hulagu) fled discomfited before the troops of the Lord of the Faithful, Musta'sim Billah, from the gate of Baghdad."<sup>2</sup> Some scholars thought that it was a wrong statement but, as Raverty has correctly pointed out, in this early encounter the Mongols were repulsed and Minhaj is absolutely correct in his statement.

(e) Balban was a patron and supporter of Minhaj whose devotion to him is well-known. He showers encomiums on him whenever an opportunity presents itself to him. When he completed *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* he presented a copy to him with an inscription which ran as follows:

To the Shahryar of the Universe, Ulugh Khan, he  
Who is Khan of the Ilbari, and Shah of the Yamek.  
Whosoever found acceptance in his presence  
Never more turned face towards the heavens.  
Before him (indeed) who is Hatim-i-Ta-i?  
Near unto him what is Yahya-i Barmak?  
The dust from the tablet of the heart of Minhaj  
The cares of the world—he with kindness wiped away.  
Listen to this assertion from me, all people,  
By the way of certainty, not by the road of doubt—  
Ninety and nine share of (his) generosity belong to me:  
Of it, all others have but one out of a hundred.

<sup>1</sup>Raverty, II, pp. 1080-81.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, I, p. 711.



Every prayer I may offer up from the heart for him,  
The angels, with sincerity, say, Amen, thereto.”<sup>1</sup>

But it may be of interest to know what Balban thought of him. According to *Sarur-u's-Sudur*, Balban once said:

“I have three *qazis*. One of them does not fear me but fears God. He is Qazi-i-Lashkar. The other one does not fear God but fears me. He is Fakhr Naqila. The third one neither fears me nor God. And he is Minhaj.”<sup>2</sup>

It is a very damaging certificate for one who had done great service to Balban in saving him from the criticism of posterity. But here our main concern is not Minhaj the *qazi* of the Sultanate. It is Minhaj, the historian whom we wanted to know more intimately in order to understand the significance of his history. Despite all his prejudices and predilections, he stands out pre-eminently as a very systematic and discerning chronicler of the times.

Though Minhaj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* is looked upon as an invaluable source of information for the history of Ghur, Ghaznin and Delhi, it is unfortunate that no complete text of the work has so far been published. The Calcutta edition contains *tabaqas* XI and XVII-XXII only. Raverty leaves out a number of portions from his translation which is otherwise thorough and reliable. Habibi's edition also is not complete.<sup>3</sup>

It is said that Shaikh 'Ain-u'd-din Bijapuri had compiled a *Mulhiqat* as an appendix to Minhaj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* and had covered in it the period from Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud's death to his own time (i.e. end of the fourteenth century). Ferishta refers to this work but it is not available now.

<sup>1</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Habibi, II, pp. 22D-21; Raverty, II, p. 1295.

<sup>2</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, MS., p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Habibi edition has been used here for portions not covered by Raverty in his translation; otherwise Raverty's translation is accurate and dependable and has been referred to here.



## CHAPTER 3

### Rashid-u'd-Din Fazl-ullah

Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah (*circa* 645-718/1247-1318) is one of the literary and scientific celebrities of Iran whose contribution to medieval historiographical tradition has been universally recognized. His encyclopaedic knowledge which covered almost every branch of medieval learning and embraced even such diverse subjects as rural economy, metallurgy, astronomy and architecture, was almost unrivalled in the contemporary academic world and scholars from far and near turned to him for guidance in abstruse and controversial matters.<sup>1</sup> His excellent acquaintance with the Persian, Arabic, Mongolian, Turkish, Hebrew and Chinese languages gave him that linguistic equipment through which the literary treasures of people belonging to different racial and cultural groups could be brought together and compared. An expert physician, with extensive knowledge of herbs and drugs, both Unani and Ayurvedic, he was known for his achievements in the medical profession and his *Rab Rashidi* attracted physicians from India, China, Egypt and Damascus, while his monumental historical work, the *Jami-u't-Tawarikh*<sup>2</sup> notwithstanding the collaboration that he received from others in its compilation<sup>3</sup>—gave a newer and wider vision to

<sup>1</sup>Even a cursory glance at the *Aswilah wa Ajwibah* will show that queries were received by him from far and near. The collection contains some queries from a *Hakim-i-Farang* also. His questions related to God, soul, blood, senses etc. See Zeki Velidi Togan's article, 'A Document concerning Cultural Relations between the Ilkhanide and Byzantiens' in *Islam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi*, III, part 2-4, pp. 9-15.

<sup>2</sup>For some recent assessments of this work, see Minuchihr Murtazavi's article in *Nashreeh Danishkadeh Adabiyat Tabriz*, XIII, part I, pp. 31-92; K. Jahn, *Historie des Franks*, Introduction, Leiden, 1951.

<sup>3</sup>About Franks he received his information from Iolus, a merchant of Pisa; about China from two Chinese scholars, Li-ta-chi and Maksun; about the Mongols from Ghazan Khan and Pulad Ching Chang and from Kamalashri about Kashmir.



history and laid the traditions of medieval historiography. To this versatile scholarship was added an unusual administrative ability and a remarkable suavity of manners which made him a fine representative of the cultural traditions of his country.

His relations with India were intimate and covered many spheres—literary, diplomatic, cultural and economic. Strangely enough no contemporary Indian historian throws any light on his contacts with India. In a casual reference, Abul Fazl mentions Rashid-u'd-din's visit as an envoy to the court of Sultan Mubarak Shah Khalji<sup>1</sup> (716-720/1316-1320). Amongst the non-Indian contemporary sources, Wassaf<sup>2</sup> refers to the relations of the Ilkhans with the Sultans of Delhi, but the information he supplies is tantalizing in its meagreness. However, a careful study of Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah's own works – histories, *mukatabat* and *Aswilah wa Ajwibah*—helps us in forming some idea of his relationship with India and his knowledge of Indian history and culture.

Broadly speaking, a review of Rashid-u'd-din's relations with India falls into two periods—one before and the other after his visit to India. His *History of India* belongs to the period before his Indian visit. It is not necessary to attempt here a detailed evaluation of his contribution to medieval historiographical tradition, but, in order to put his account of India in its proper historical perspective, it has to be stated that his consciousness of the international history of mankind was unique for that age. He wanted to see things in a more extensive and critical perspective, with his inquisitive eyes fixed on those political, religious and cultural trends which had any international import. To some extent this cosmopolitan approach was made possible by the Mongol conquests. "Now that the world from one end to the other is under one or the other branch of the Chingiz Khanids," he writes, "philosophers, astronomers, scholars and historians of all sects and religions connected with Khita, ancient India, Kashmir, Tibet, Uighur, as well as other people like the Turks, Arabs and Franks are before our eyes in large numbers and every one of them has books containing the history, chronology and religious thought of those countries and they are also conversant with these subjects."

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, ed. Sir Syed, II, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>*Tajziyat-al-Amsar-wa-Tazjiyat-al-A'sar*, Bombay, p. 528.



A word about the structure and content of his *Tarikh-i-Hind wa Sind* may not be inappropriate here. The work consists of two parts (*qisms*) and an appendix. The first part is divided into ten *fasls* (chapters). The first four chapters give general information about India, its geography, the habits of its people, religious beliefs, etc. This portion is mainly based on the *Kitab al-Hind* of Alberuni whom Rashid-u'd-din calls the 'pride of scholars' (*mafakhar-u'l-'ulama*). The fifth chapter deals with the history of the Sultans of Delhi. The sixth chapter contains an account of the rulers of Kashmir and brings to light entirely new historical material. The next four chapters (VII-X) deal with the four ages (*yugas*) and the kings who reigned in them. Some of the discussions of these chapters are absolutely original. Karl Jahn has very rightly remarked that this is "the first attempt of its kind to present systematically the mythological and legendary conceptions of the Indians as they appear principally in the traditions of the *Puranas* and the great epics."<sup>1</sup>

The second part of the book deals with the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha and is divided into twenty *fasls* (chapters). The appendix is a supplement on *tanasukh* (transmigration). This second part is a contribution of abiding value and is perhaps the first account of Buddhism in the Persian language.

On the face of it the content of the *Tarikh* might appear rather discursive and desultory, but the work is really more fundamental and vital to an understanding of Indian history and culture than appears at the first look. The chapters on the *Yugas* clarify the concept of time among the ancient Indians; no correct appraisal of ancient Indian chronology is, in fact, possible without an analysis of the Hindu concept of time. The early chapters give a succinct but highly relevant account of the various facets—historical, geographical, and religious—of Indian life. Based as they are on the investigations of a scholar like Alberuni, they reveal the basic aspects of Indian life and thought. The account of the Sultans of Delhi and the account of Buddhism supply two distinct but powerful threads which, from the political and religious points of view, had supreme importance for a scholar viewing the Indian historical landscape from the seat of the Ilkhanid power, some rulers<sup>2</sup> of which had

<sup>1</sup>Karl Jahn, p. xciv.

<sup>2</sup>Arghun (1284-91) and his son Ghazan (1225-04) were at one time ardent adherents of Buddhism.



once belonged to Buddhism and were now exploring avenues of cultural contact with the Sultans of Delhi. In order to appreciate the significance of Rashid-u'd-din's account of Buddhism the more important facts have to be borne in mind: *first*, it is based on the information supplied to him by a Buddhist Lama, Kamalashri who belonged to Kashmir. This was in conformity with Rashid-u'd-din's practice of gathering information from first hand and sympathetic sources. *Secondly*, it attempts to fit Buddhism into the wider context of medieval religious thought and gives us an idea of 'the geographical expansion of Buddhism and its schools in India and in the Mongolian Empire.' The Buddhism of Iran, as Karl Jahn has suggested, stood to a greater extent in the shadow of Kashmir and India than of eastern Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> *Thirdly*, it throws light on the Muslim assessment of Buddhism and attempts to approximate Buddhist concepts to Muslim theological categories (e.g., prophet, angels, Iblis etc.)

Kamalashri's exposition of Buddhist concepts could not but have been influenced by one consideration, however vague and nebulous it might have been in his mind—to win back its lost adherents to the Buddhist fold.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, perfectly intelligible that he concentrated on the broad ethical principles of his creed. Shakamuni is asked: "What is that which does not submit to the influence of the four elements, Earth, Air, Water and fire?" He replies: "That which the elements of nature are not able to change are good works." The way in which the theory of human regeneration is explained reduces its *religious* but increases the *ethical* content. "He who gives bread to the people will after regeneration be granted a long life, health of body and mind, contentment and prosperity." He who builds *ribats*, bridges, reservoirs, canals and roads will after regeneration lead a peaceful life, will be well-to-do and happy, will have no obstacles to overcome and he will also see all his wishes fulfilled."

Before we pass on to Rashid-u'd-din's account of the Delhi Sultans, reference has to be made to two important facts: (1) Some of the Ilkhans were familiar with Indian History and

<sup>1</sup>Rashid-u'd-din's *History of India*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>An Attempt was made in 1309-10 by Buddhist priests to win back Uljaitu to the Buddhist fold. B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran*, p. 180, as cited by Karl Jahn, *Rashid Al-Din's History of India*, p. xxiii.



culture as a large part of the Punjab had been under their control. Ghazan Khan had some knowledge of the Hindivi and the Kashmiri languages<sup>1</sup> and he was fond of Indian herbs and elephants.<sup>2</sup> (2) Rashid-u'd-din traces the genealogy of the Mongol dynasty from the ancient legendary dynasties of India. Both these facts show that historically and culturally India was quite intimately known to the Ilkhans and when Rashid-u'd-din wrote about India he could safely presume on some knowledge of Indian history and culture amongst his readers.

Rashid-u'd-din's account of the Turkish campaigns in northern India and the Turkish Sultans of Delhi is brief but contains some valuable items of information. It appears that besides Minhaj-u's-Siraj's *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, he had some other sources which are not available to us.

In a manuscript of Rashid-u'd-din's *History of India*, preserved at the Raza Library of Rampur, it is stated that Shihab-u'd-din wanted to reinstate Prithvi Raj on the throne of Ajmer. No other historian has referred to this. The discovery of a coin bearing the names of both Shihab-u'd-din and Prithvi Raj<sup>3</sup> lends weight to Rashid-u'd-din's statement. Concerning the assassination of Shihab-u'd-din at Damyak, Rashid-u'd-din gives some interesting details. He also refers to the rumours circulated by certain interested persons who tried to implicate Maulana Fakhr-u'd-din Razi in this assassination.

Concerning Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud, Rashid positively states that he was poisoned by his father-in-law, Balban. Minhaj does not mention this because he had brought his narrative to an end before the last years of the Sultan. Rashid-u'd-din is the earliest historian who refers to this. During the Tughluq period, we find 'Isami<sup>4</sup> and Ibn Battuta<sup>5</sup> confirming Rashid-u'd-din's statement.

It seems that 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji was ruling over Delhi when Rashid-u'd-din wrote his book. These must have been the early years of his reign. Rashid-u'd-din refers to his heinous murder

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Ghazan Khan*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 150, 254.

<sup>3</sup>D. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, p. 87; *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup>*Rehla*, Arabic text, II, p. 22. See also Nizami, *Studies in Medieval Indian History and Culture*, chapter on 'Balban, the Regicide', pp. 41-53.



of his uncle by 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji but certifies to the prosperity of people during his regime.

It was after compiling his *History* that Rashid-u'd-din happened to visit India. In his epistolary collection there are six letters<sup>1</sup> which contain reference to India. In a letter (no. XXIX), written from Multan to a friend in Shiraz, Maulana Qutb-u'd-din Mas'ud,<sup>2</sup> he gives details of his diplomatic mission to the court of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji (695-715/1296-1316). The letter says that he was sent to India by Arghun Khan (683-690/1284-1291), but this is obviously a copyist's error for Uljaitu (703-716/1304-1316). The purpose of this embassy was twofold : First, to impress upon the kings and rulers of India the majesty of the Ilkhans, and secondly to procure certain herbs and drugs which were not found in Iran. He writes :

“So that the attribute of the majesty of Ilkhans and the details of their valour be conveyed to the ears of the rulers of the great cities and districts of that region and they may be brought to the yoke of submission and the path of friendship. (The other purpose was) to procure efficacious medicines and wholesome drinks which are as rare in the lands of Iran as imaginary geometrical drawings and alchemy and the fabulous bird.”<sup>3</sup>

Describing the details of his journey, Rashid-u'd-din says that he came by the sea-route, facing many hazards and hardships. When he reached Kech and Makran, he was given warm reception by the *muluk* of the region. From Makran he again took the sea route and reached the western coast of India. On landing there, he proceeded to Tuhar a place identified by some with Dhar. But it is not clear why the Khwaja took that route. However, when Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji came to know of his arrival, he sent some of his nobles to escort him to Delhi.

Rashid-u'd-din was warmly received at the Delhi court and was treated with a generosity beyond his expectation. He did not, however, approve of the convivial parties at the 'Alai court. Obviously this must have been in the early years of 'Ala-u'd-din's reign. Rashid-u'd-din could not help advising the Sultan about the evils of drunkenness. That this unasked for

<sup>1</sup>Nos. 12, 29, 34, 43, 47, 52.

<sup>2</sup>*Mukatabat*, pp. 159-68.

<sup>3</sup>*Mukatabat-i-Rashidi*, pp. 163-64.



advice did not behove a foreign envoy and could create an unpleasant situation cannot be denied but 'Ala-u'd-din, as Rashid-u'd-din would have us believe, patiently listened to his admonition. We do not know the exact date when the Sultan issued his prohibitory regulations but to the circumstances stated by Zia-u'd-din Barani,<sup>1</sup> 'Isami<sup>2</sup> and Yahya Sirhindi,<sup>3</sup> the *Mukatabat-i-Rashidi* obviously adds one item more. Ala-u'd-din Khalji was the first Sultan of Delhi to enforce rigorously a policy of prohibition and it is not without significance that Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah was also in some measure responsible for this.

Being a seasoned diplomat, Rashid-u'd-din soon succeeded in winning the goodwill and affection of Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji who assigned to him four villages as *suyurghal*. The area of each of these villages, according to Rashid-u'd-din, was greater than the city of Yezd. Some of the details of this grant as supplied by him are interesting from the point of view of the administrative history of the Delhi Sultanate :

1. The grant was perpetual and hereditary (*suyurghal-i-abadi*).
2. The trust deed was endorsed by *qazis* and administrators.
3. The revenue officials (*mutasaddiyan-i mu'amlat-i-Hind*) were instructed to remit regularly the revenues of villages to the Khwaja.
4. The revenues were to be remitted through trustworthy merchants (*tujjar-i-amin*) who would hand them over to the Khwaja's agents in Basra and obtain receipts from them. It may be pointed out that the *Tarikh-i-Ghazan Khan* refers to frequent visits of Indian traders to the land of the Mongols.<sup>4</sup>
5. These receipts of payment were to be submitted to the Sultan.
6. The payment was to be made to the Khwaja's heirs in the same manner.

Over and above this land grant, Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah was to receive an annual stipend (*idrar*) of 5000 *misqals* of gold

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 284 et seq.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 314-15.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>4</sup>*Tarikh-i-Ghazan Khan*, pp. 271-72.



(*zar-i-'Alai*) and something from the revenues of Gujarat was also to be given to him.<sup>1</sup>

A number of problems arise in this connection (1) The use of the term *suyurghal* is unusual. (2) 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji was a close-fisted ruler and such lavish endowments were quite against his policy. (3) The arrangement to remit revenues to the Khwaja outside India also seems extraordinary. Reuben Levy has expressed his doubt about the genuineness of Rashid u'd-din Fazlullah's collection of letters.<sup>2</sup> His arguments do not, however, clinch the point, though he has put his finger on some palpable mistakes. Some of the mistakes pointed out by him may be simply errors of transcription. The standard of scholarship displayed in these letters as well as the style in which they are composed point to Rashid-u'd-din's authorship.<sup>3</sup> Some of the objections raised by Levy lose their weight and validity when one finds that in some other works of Rashid-u'd-din mistakes of identical nature are committed. Further the fact cannot be ignored that the works of Rashid-u'd-din were very often translated from Persian into Arabic and *vice versa* and mistakes of this type could have crept in the process of translation or transcription. Even in his *History of India*, where some material is culled from Alberuni's *Kitab-u'l-Hind*, such mistakes are found.

Levy hazards the remark : "On the evidence, the present collection of letters would seem to be of no earlier date than the fifteenth century and, at a guess, of Indian provenance".<sup>4</sup> But the collection is so deeply soaked in Persian and Central Asian atmosphere that it seems difficult to subscribe to this view. One possibility, however, cannot be ruled out. As in the case of other works of Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah, this collection—then available only in its Arabic version—might have suffered at the hands of the translator who substituted a later terminology to

<sup>1</sup>*Mukatabat*, pp. 166-67.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1946, pp. 74-78.

<sup>3</sup>cf. Levy, *JRAS*, p. 74. He observes: "Not only do they lack the characteristic marks of Rashid-u'd-din's style and language, amply displayed in the *Jami'al-Tawarikh* but they are filled with anachronisms and improbabilities and phrased in the vaguest and most palpably exaggerated fashion."

<sup>4</sup>*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, p. 74.



make himself intelligible to the readers of his day.<sup>1</sup> The possibility of certain interpolations being made in the letters cannot be ruled out. A careful study of the collection leaves upon one's mind the impression of a genuine nucleus, disturbed here and there by ignorant copyists or less cautious translators or even by some interested persons.

Rashid-u'd-din says nothing about the duration of his stay in India and no date of his visit is given in the letter. But after a careful sifting of all available evidence it seems that he must have come sometime after 703/1303 and before 708/1308. First, in his *Tarikh-i-Hind wa Sind*, compiled in 703 AH, he writes about India on the basis of information he was able to gather from 'travellers,'<sup>2</sup> he does not state anything on his own authority or as an eye-witness as he had not visited India till then. Secondly, in a letter written in 708/1308, we find him making arrangements for the management of his Indian grants.

When Rashid-u'd-din embarked on his return journey, Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji gave him a large number of gifts and presents and asked him to send one of his sons to him. "I want," he said, "that you send one of your sons noted for bravery, courage and ingenuity to me so that I may give him the control of the affairs of my country just as the land of Iran is under your control." The Sultan assured him that he would take full care of his son and then he significantly remarked: "In this way affectionate and cordial relations will be established and maintained for ever."

It appears from another letter (no. 43) that Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah sent one Mahmud Sawji to India to look after his property. When Mahmud Sawji started on his journey, Rashid-u'd-din sent a letter to his son, Mahmud, then governor of Kirman, to provide all possible facilities to him on this journey. It appears that this letter was written round about 708 AH/1308 as the wazir has advised his son in this letter to enhance the

<sup>1</sup>We find a translator of Imam Ghazzali's *Ihya-u'l-'Ulum* during the time of Iltutmish similarly changing terms. See British Museum MS of *Kimiya-i Sa'adat* (Or. 11923) wherein the tax realized from the non-Muslims is not referred to as *Jiziya* but as *gazit* (ff 120, ab), the original Persian form. See also, Nizami's article "Some Newly-acquired Persian Manuscripts of the British Museum" in *Dr. Ghulam Yazdani Commemoration Volume*, Hyderabad, 1966, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 5, 51, 97.



stipend of Mahmud Sawji with effect from 708 AH as a reward for the services rendered by him.

In his *Wasiyat Nama*, the Khwaja mentions his Indian property.

The *Mukatabat* contains a letter sent by 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji to Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah in reply to his communication. It appears from this letter that the Khwaja was instrumental in solving some of the complications in his diplomatic relations with the Ilkhans. 'Ala-u'd-din writes: "I was trying to cheer up my heart by having a look at a meadow but my heart was far from being delighted. Quite unexpectedly your messenger arrived, as the sun emerges from the east, and gave me your letter which delighted me and its contents relieved me of my worries." There is something more in these lines than purely formal expression of good wishes on the receipt of a letter. We do not know what the worries of 'Ala-u'd-din were. May be that he was upset on account of some impending Mongol incursion. It may, however, be pointed out that 'Ala-u'd-din's struggle was with the Mongols of Central Asia and not with the Ilkhans. In letter no. XXXIV, written to his son, Khwaja Majd-u'd-din, details about such a situation are given. But the reasons are not given. Wassaf has, however, referred to an incident which is of great significance in this context. Uljaitu, he says, had expressed his surprise mixed with sentiments of displeasure at the silence of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji, who had not felicitated him on his accession. Perhaps the reference to his worries in 'Ala-u'd-din's letter may be due to this.

In this letter 'Ala-u'd-din has hinted at Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah's efforts at maintaining cordial relations between him and the Ilkhanid king. 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji has apologized for delay in replying to his communication. "I felt ashamed," writes 'Ala-u'd-din, "to send a letter which from the point of view of style could not be compared to your consummate and masterly diction."

'Ala-u'd-din sent to him a number of gifts which included cloth, precious stones and rubies, animals and birds, confectionary, herbs and medicines, oils, china-vessels, building wood, bones etc. This list gives a good idea of Indian goods and commodities which had special significance and charm for a foreigner.

'Ala-u'd-din Khalji died in 1316. It appears that Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah's contact with the Delhi court continued even



after that. He came, obviously a second time, to the court of Sultan Qutb-u'd-din Mubarak Khalji (1316-1318). But Abul Fazl is our only authority for this information.<sup>1</sup>

That Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah had relations with Indian saints and scholars becomes clear from his letters. In a letter to his son Amir Ali<sup>2</sup> governor of Baghdad, (Letter no. XIX) he recommends some scholars for stipends and patronage and mentions one Maulana Shams-u'd-din Hindi as a distinguished mathematician of the age and says that he resided at Delhi.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most influential sufi orders in India in those days was the Suhrawardiya and its saints, particularly those belonging to Multan, were held in deep respect. It appears that Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah had relations with them. On the death of a son of Shaikh Sadr-u'd-din 'Arif, son and successor of Shaikh Baha-u'd-din Zakariya, he wrote a letter of condolence which is included in his *Mukatabat*.<sup>4</sup> He refers to Shaikh 'Arif as *Mansur-i-dahr* and *Shibli-i-'Asr*.

Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah's *Aswilah wa Ajwibah*<sup>5</sup>—a monumental work of its nature which helps us in understanding the intellectual climate of the middle ages—refers to an Indian, Maulana 'Alam-u'd-din of Multan who had asked the author's opinion about certain matters. The *Aswilah-wa-Ajwibah* gives an idea of the intellectual conspectus of Rashid-u'd-din Fazl-ullah; the way in which he replied to various queries forwarded to him shows that, had the experimental method been known to Muslim scholars of those days, the researches of Rashid-u'd-din would have assumed new and revolutionary dimensions. But owing to the way in which his ideas were considered, Rashid-u'd-din's encyclopaedic knowledge could not break the tradi-

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, II, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>MSS. Library of Aye Sofia, no. 2180, Persian; Selimiye Library, no. 1930, Persian; National Library Tehran, *Mihr*, VIII, no. 4-5; Palace of Topkapi Ahmad, III, no. 1930, Arabic; Aligarh Muslim University, Etawah Collection. See also Zeki Velidi Togan, 'A Document Concerning Cultural Relations between the Ilkhanide and Byzantiens, *Islam Tetkikleri Enstitusu Dergisi*, III, parts, 3, 1959-60, pp. 9-39; Jafar Sultan al-Qara. i, in *Mihr*, VIII, part 4-5, pp. 200-12, 280-85; Nizami, 'A Unique and unknown Book of Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah, in *Islamic Culture*, XL, no. 3, pp. 144-49.

<sup>2</sup>p. 56 et. seq.

<sup>4</sup>*Mukatabat*, pp. 29-32.



tional grooves of medieval Muslim thought and its pre-suppositions.

His historical works came into prominence in India during the reign of Akbar and if any historian of the Mughal period was influenced by his tradition, it was Abul Fazl, but it is difficult to say if his esteem for him was due to his appreciation of the historical method and conspectus of Rashid-u'd-din or was the result of his interest in the subject-matter of his book.

Very often it is said that Rashid-u'd-din drew his information from standard works which he sometimes copied *verbatim*. With reference to his account of India it is contended that the earlier portion of his work is from Alberuni, its middle portion has been culled from Minhaj, while the last part is based on Kamalashri. Thus Rashid-u'd-din did little except putting three incongruous accounts together. But this assessment is obviously unfair to him and to his work. One writing the history of so many countries, with diverse nationalities, languages, cultural traditions, and religious affiliations could not possibly make independent investigations about everything. He had to rely on standard available works and had to seek collaboration from others also having first-hand knowledge of those regions. That he drew some of his material from other sources does not detract from the value of his work. What is really to be discovered is the reason why he collected data of a particular nature and what pattern he wanted to weave out of this material. Confining to his account of India : His extract from Alberuni was absolutely necessary for putting Kamalashri's account of Buddhism in its proper perspective. Kamalashri had seen India through Buddhist glasses; Alberuni had looked at the Indian social landscape from the Brahmanic angle. By putting these two accounts together Rashid-u'd-din gave a depth and a dimension to his perspective. Similarly, Minhaj's work was no doubt before him but the additional information supplied is of great value and acts as a corrective to some of the impressions created by the author of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*.

The question whether the *Mukatabat*, or for the matter of that any other work of Rashid-u'd-din, is genuine, should be considered with reference to certain basic facts : First, Rashid-u'd-din's multifarious interests and responsibilities must have made secretarial help indispensable for him. Necessarily therefore it is not possible to find any uniformity of style and



diction in his works, but a careful reader can never fail to discern an identity of approach and attitude in his writings. The mind behind the *Aswilah* and the *Mukatabat* seems to be the same. Secondly, since Rashid-u'd-din's works were translated and transcribed on a large scale, mistakes of transcription were bound to creep in. Notwithstanding every criticism of his major historical works, the *Jami'-u't-Tawarikh* is a landmark in medieval historiographical tradition and is unique in its conspectus as well as assortment and coordination of data.



## CHAPTER 4

### 'Isami

#### I

'Isami's *Futuh-u's Salatin*<sup>1</sup> is the only versified history of the medieval Muslim rulers which covers a span of 350 years. It starts with Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznin (999-1030) and comes upto 1350. No other poet thought of undertaking a task so gigantic. Khusrau's *masnavis* dealt with individual rulers or specific events; Badr-i-Chach, Mutahar, Faizi, Kami Shirazi and others worked in more restricted chronological frameworks. Faizi's project of a versified *Akbar Nama* never materialized. 'Isami is, therefore, unique in the history of medieval India for having undertaken a literary job which no one had ever been able to take up.<sup>2</sup>

The inspiration to compose such a comprehensive history came to 'Isami from Firdausi who had painted Mahmud on a broad canvas of Iranian history. Perhaps 'Isami's choice of Mahmud as the starting point for his narrative was inspired by the following considerations : (a) *Shah Nama* being the model which he wanted to emulate in all its details, the idea of linking up his literary effort with the name of Mahmud appealed to his mind. He considered himself a continuator of Firdausi's literary tradition and his patron, the Bahmanid ruler, 'Ala-u'd-din Hasan Shah, was, to him, a continuator of the political traditions of Mahmud. (b) Mahmud was a symbol of kingly authority. As Barthold puts it : "The concept of State was brought to its

<sup>1</sup>Agha Mahdi Husain's edition of *Futuh-u's-Salatin* appeared from Agra in 1938. A.S. Usha's critical edition was published by the University of Madras in 1948. English translation by A. Mahdi Husain was published by the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University in three volumes (1967-77).

<sup>2</sup>Badaoni writes about Badr-i-Chach that he composed a *Shah Nama* in favour of Muhammad bin Tughluq. It ran into several thousand verses. *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, I, p. 241, It is extinct now.



extreme expression under the Ghaznavids, and specially under Mahmud.”<sup>1</sup> In his person the concept of *sultan* which was somewhat vague and nebulous earlier, became a sharp and clear ideal in the subsequent era and the institution of sultanate came to be associated with his name. Barani wove his political thought round him in his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* and ‘Isami found in him an ideal Sultan with whose exploits to start his narrative. (c) ‘Isami saw in his patron all the virtues and qualities of the Iranian heroes presented in *Shah-Nama*. “All the achievements of the Iranians”, he writes, “in the battlefield—the heroic deeds of Afrasiyab in Turan; the justice and liberality of Faridun; the abiding mementoes of Nushirwan in the world; the victories associated with the sword of Ka’us; the magnificence associated with the name of Kamus; all the brave deeds of Rostam in Mazindaran and of Bizhan in the country of Armenia; the message which Sikandar heard from the invisible voice; whatever the talented Kaikhusrau saw in the cup of knowledge; the skill which Siyawush had learnt from Rostam; the marvellous deeds performed by Gudarz and Giv; all the feats of Jamshid; the fame for generosity that Hatam had earned in this world; the victories which Alexander son of Philip had achieved in India, China and Russia; the heart of Bahman and the might of Isfandyar at the time of battle and reprisal—all these are combined in our King of the present age.”<sup>2</sup> All these heroes have been immortalized by Firdausi in his *Shah Nama* written for Mahmud. To highlight the achievements of his own hero, it was psychologically and otherwise necessary to begin the story from Mahmud:

‘As long as the world lasts, the *Shah Nama* will remain together with the names of the Kings it describes. O God, pray, keep the King in full power on the *kiyani* throne as defender of the faith of Ahmad.’

(d) ‘Isami could not have been so naive as to think that Muslim political power in India began with Mahmud.<sup>3</sup> It should have been Muhammad bin Qasim if first Muslim political contact was in view; and Shihab-u’d-din Muhammad Ghuri if real political control in northern India was the main consideration. Perhaps

<sup>1</sup>*Four Studies in the History of Central Asia*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, text p. II; tr. I, pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup>He seems to be impressed by his military exploits, *Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, p. 29.



he thought that as Mahmud had laid the first brick of Muslim political power in northern India, so also his patron 'Ala-u'd-din Bahman Shah had laid the foundation of independent Muslim political power in the south. The process of conquest initiated by Mahmud was eventually completed by 'Ala-u'd-din Bahman Shah. Both of them stood at two ends of history. (e) Mahmud's legendary features had begun to grow in the 13th and the 14th centuries. Stories about his justice, his fondness for Ayaz, his iconoclastic zeal and religious fervour had found expression not only in political works but also in religious literature, like the *malfizat* of saints,<sup>1</sup> the *Mantiq-u't-Tayyar* of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din 'Attar<sup>2</sup> and the *masnavi* of Rumi.<sup>3</sup> To select him as the starting point of his narrative was in keeping with the mood of the times and the exigencies of the situation.

## II

'Isami's aim in versifying the history of medieval India was obviously twofold: (a) to earn recognition as a poet of distinction and satisfy his ego, and (b) to ensure affluent circumstances of life through the patronage of 'Ala-u'd-din Bahman Shah. His genius longed for a patron who would give recognition to his Muse and make sure for him a place of distinction in the assembly of poets. His two *diwans* (collections of poetical works) had fallen flat and had failed to earn any appreciation from the literary circles.<sup>4</sup> Naturally he felt bitter against the time and thought that there was something basically wrong with a society which did not recognize a talented poet like himself. Addressing the Sultan in later life he says:

"O King, if before now this sordid world were as mean as it is today, not a single man of skill would have become renowned in this faithless world. Neither a *Shah Nama* nor a *Khamsa*, nor any poetic collection from ancient poetry would have seen the light of the day. Even if a master mind of skill were to appear, he would have been driven to insanity at the hands of noisy fools. Alas! the whole world has become a

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, ed. M. Latif Malik, Lahore, 1966, p. 281.

<sup>2</sup>Edited by Jawwad Mashkur, Tihiran, pp. 208-9.

<sup>3</sup>Edited by Qazi Sajjad Husain, Delhi, V, p. 372 *et seq*; VI, p. 146, etc.

<sup>4</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 22.



fraud; in its *bazar* truth has become a rare commodity.”<sup>1</sup> As circumstances would have it, ‘Isami was not only not recognized but was ridiculed and caricatured by his contemporaries. This made him frustrated and sad. ‘There was not a single man in the world who could bring solace to his lacerated heart by appreciating his work.’<sup>2</sup>

It was in such moments of frustration and despondency that a ray of hope flickered on the horizon. Qazi Baha-u’d-din Hajib-i-Qissa called him one day. He received him warmly; “took me by the hand and welcomed me and assigned me the honour of a seat.” ‘Isami recited his verses before him. The Qazi was pleased and addressing him as a ‘sweet-voiced nightingale’ said: “There is no tulip bed befitting such a nightingale except the King’s court.”<sup>3</sup> He then took him to the court. ‘Isami saw fortune smiling on him. What he had restlessly longed for years, now seemed within reach.

It was in this background that ‘Isami undertook to compile his *Futuh-u’s-Salatin* and dedicated it to the Bahmanid ruler. In moments of dejection and depression he accomplished a task so magnificent and found avenues to success.

The desire to please his royal master was bound to be the inspiring motive of his narrative. If he looked to Firdausi and Nizami for inspiration and literary guidance, he was always anxious to say things which could please his master. The Bahmani Kingdom was established as a result of rebellion against the authority of Muhammad bin Tughluq. Naturally therefore the ruler could be best pleased if the rebellion was justified and Muhammad bin Tughluq was painted as a tyrant and a renegade. It was against a dark background of Muhammad bin Tughluq’s actions and experiments that a rosy picture of ‘Ala-u’d-din Bahman Shah could be painted. Every invective hurled at the Tughluq Sultan was bound to serve as a justification for the rise of the Bahmani Kingdom. ‘Isami condemned the Tughluq Sultan as a tyrant, a Yezid and a Pharoah and with the artistic deftness of a poet raised the stature of the rebel Sultan. It is not known how the Bahmani Sultan rewarded ‘Isami for this stupendous service which he rendered to legitimize

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, p. 12, tr. p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 24.



and legalize the revolutionary origin of his dynasty. He was, however, afraid of meeting the fate of Firdausi. It is significant that the work was presented not to the Sultan but to his adopted son, Khan-i Azam Sikandar Khan, and that too at the instance of Baha-u'd-din. 'Isami had spent about six months over this *masnavi*. He started composing it from 27 Ramazan 750 (December 10, 1349) and completed it on 6 Rabi'-ul-Awwal, 751 (May 14, 1350).

### III

'Isami had a good family background. His was a family of administrators. Close to the early Turkish Sultans of Delhi, his ancestors had seen the Sultanate of Delhi being founded and consolidated in the north and expanded to the farthest limits in the South. He does not refer in detail to the pre-India history of his family. He says that his ancestors hailed from gulshan-i-Bu 'Isam<sup>1</sup>—it is not known who Bu-'Isam was. However at one place he calls himself *Arabzada-i-Hindi sirisht*<sup>2</sup> (an Indian of Arab descent). At another place in a reference to himself he says :

'(My poetic disposition) said : 'Hindustan is your place—the birth place of your grandfather and forefathers.'<sup>3</sup>

During the time of Iltutmish, Mongol cataclysm had pushed many princely, educated and respectable families of 'Ajam into India and Iltutmish had extended warm welcome to them. 'Isami writes about Delhi where these refugees had found shelter:

"The city wore a bright look. Verily every new thing is a pleasure. Many a Saiyid of correct descent came over there from Arabia. Many tradesmen from the land of Khurasan, many painters from the country of China, many 'ulama of the Bukhara stock and many a devotee and men of piety came from different regions. Craftsmen of every kind and every country as well as beauties from every race and city; many assayers, jewellers and pearl-sellers, philosophers and physicians of the Greek School and learned men from every land—all gathered in that blessed city like moths that gather round the candle light. Delhi became the Ka'ba of the seven continents and the whole region became the home of Islam."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin* p. 448.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, text, pp. 114-15, tr. II, p. 227. These lines give much more specific information than Minhaj's passage on the subject. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, ed. Habibi, I, pp. 440-41.



Perhaps it was with this exodus that Fakhr-u'l-Mulk 'Isami, who was fifth in the line of his ascent, came to India—stayed in Multan for sometime and then proceeded to Delhi. In view of his distinguished family background and rich administrative experience, Iltutmish personally went out to receive him and appointed him as *wazir*. He had served for a *qaran* as *wazir* at Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> He must have been a fairly seasoned administrator when he arrived in Delhi. His son Zahir-u'l-Mulk was appointed as *wakil-i-dar* by Sultan Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud. *Wakil-i-dar* was the chief dignitary of the royal household and, besides general control of the palace, supervised the payment of salaries to the personal staff of the Sultan. The royal kitchen, the *sharab khana*, the stables, and even the royal children were under his care.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, therefore, when our historian writes about the private life of the Sultans and the princes, his information is based on reports of his elders and, unless there is anything patently contrary to known facts, there is no reason to disbelieve him. It was hardly possible for a poet in 1350 to make distortions about his ancestors and assign them a role which they did not actually perform during the period. Daulatabad had within its confines large number of persons who had carried with them memories of the Ilbarite period. Concocted legends about himself or his ancestors would have completely discredited 'Isami. No one would dare fabricate such stories before an audience which was in a position to reject them out of hand on the basis of personal knowledge.

Zahir-u'l-Mulk's son, 'Izz-u'd-din 'Isami, under whose care our historian—his grandson—was brought up, was *sipah salar* in Balban's army.<sup>3</sup> He died during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq when the latter ordered exodus to Daulatabad (13.6-7) Two aspects of 'Isami's family history however remain obscure:

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh u's-Salatin*, p. 122. Nizam-u'd-din, I, p. 63 and Ferishta, I, p. 671 however say that he was *wazir* there for 30 years. No contemporary or even semi-contemporary writer refers to Fakhr-u'l-Mulk 'Isami. But lack of reference to his name among the list of Abbasid Wazirs, does not necessarily mean that 'Isami's statement is wrong.

<sup>2</sup>*Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, 1st ed., p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>'Izz-u'd-din Sipah Salar's name does not occur in the list of Balban's ministers and high officers as given by Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 24. It is, however significant that Barani speaks about one 'Isami as *hajib-i-khas* of Balban, *ibid*, p. 36.



What was ‘Izz-u’d-din’s position during the Khalji and the Tughluq periods? What was the status and position of ‘Isami’s father about whom not a word has been said? Perhaps ‘Isami’s father died early and his grandfather had to look after him and his education.

It is not known how the ‘Isami family lived in Delhi during the time of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. No contact with the Sultan is reported. May be that for obvious reasons ‘Isami did not consider it proper to refer to his family’s relations with the Tughluqs. Such a relationship would not have been palatable to his Bahmani patrons. He tells us only this much that two villages held by his grandfather in *milk* and ‘developed by him into smiling orchards and gardens,’ were resumed by Sultan Ghiyas-u’d-din Tughluq.<sup>1</sup> He does not give us the reasons but mentions it in the context of other confiscations of property and recovery of treasures by Sultan Ghiyas-u’d-din Tughluq.

When Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq ordered the exodus of ‘*ulama*, *mashaikh* and statesmen to Deogir, ‘Izz-u’d-din ‘Isami was one of the persons asked to leave Delhi. It must have been a very tortuous order for the aged ‘Izz-u’d-din who would have preferred to end his days in the town where his ancestors had lived and perhaps died also. But it was not given to any one, however distinguished, aged, ill<sup>2</sup> or infirm he might be, to disobey the Sultan’s orders. And ‘Izz-u’d-din could hardly drag his melancholy existence to the outskirts of Tilpat that he succumbed to the strain. It was not possible for the grandson, for fear of incurring the Sultan’s displeasure, to return to Delhi and bury his body in the family graveyard. ‘Izz-u’d-din’s old and ematiated body was buried in Tilpat and young ‘Isami moved forward with the caravan. No wonder therefore that he describes the lamentations of the caravans moving to Deogir as that of a person “to be burried alive.”<sup>3</sup>

‘Isami’s bereavement seared his soul; he became bitter towards the Sultan. Had he not forced them out of Delhi, perhaps the old man would have lived a little longer and died in comparative peace. As he lifted every step towards the Southern destination,

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, pp. 390-91.

<sup>2</sup>Note for instance the case of Maulana Shams-u’d-din Yahya, *Siyar-u’l-Auliya*, p. 228.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, p. 447.



his hatred for the Sultan went on deepening. It is not without significance that wherever he comes across an uprooted living being his heart goes out to him. He critically refers to Aibek's order for cleansing an area occupied by tanners of hide,<sup>1</sup> and praises Sultan Mahmud because he did not disturb even a sparrow's nest.<sup>2</sup>

'Isami was 16 years of age at the time of exodus to the Deccan. Perhaps he had already completed his education at Delhi which, during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq, was known for its academic atmosphere and had more than one thousand *madrasahs*.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, no reference to his teachers or the institutions that he attended. The *Futuh-u's-Salatin* shows his knowledge of the Persian language and literature and some awareness of the interplay of political and cultural forces but it does not throw any light on his knowledge of the Arabic language or his insight into the religious sciences.

#### IV

The circumstances under which 'Isami had to leave Delhi made him an inveterate enemy of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. When rebellions broke out in the South, his sympathies were, as could be expected, with the rebels. When 'Ala-u'd-din Bahman Shah laid the foundation of the Bahmanid Kingdom, he hailed its rise. A rebel's rise to power could be justified only if the story of the Sultan's perfidy, irreligiousness and brutality was effectively told. The situation provided an ideal opportunity to give expression to feelings of bitterness rankling in his heart against the Sultan, but it deprived him also of any chance of being fair and just to the Tughluq Sultan even where he sincerely felt that he deserved a meed of praise. Any word of commendation for Muhammad bin Tughluq was bound to have the effect of condemnation for 'Ala-u'd-din Bahman Shah. To be faithful to his patron, he had to be consistently critical of Muhammad bin Tughluq. There are places in *Futuh-u's-Salatin* where one feels that perhaps the historian wished to portray the Sultan in

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 105-06.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>*Subh-u'l-A'sha. An Arab Account of India during the fourteenth century*, p. 29.



slightly different colours—but now the options were not in his hand.

'Isami was 39-40 years of age when he composed *Futuh-u's-Salatin*. He had been for 24 years now in Daulatabad—a Deccani by all standards but with a nostalgic memory of Delhi. He loved Daulatabad with its 'ambergris like soil' but the impact of being uprooted from Delhi—which for him meant being cut off from a glorious past—was extremely depressing. His hair turned grey due to grief, change of environment and mental agony. He even thought of migrating to Mecca and spending the rest of his life there. Perhaps he did not marry—or if he did, he had no progeny—and misogynic tendencies further complicated his already perturbed emotional condition. Some of the verses he has written in connection with Razia reveal a despicable state of mind in which he doubts the chastity of every woman. May be that the germination of this tendency in him had something to do with sad personal experiences. Be it as it may, his observations about Razia have a tinge of frustrations in personal life which made him look upon half of the humanity as morally deprave and basically crooked.

For want of data nothing can be said about 'Isami's social and intellectual background and his associations in Daulatabad. His mystic inclination and his contact with sufis is, however, evident from the spiritual genealogy that he has supplied.<sup>1</sup> It appears that he had joined the discipline of Shaikh Zain-u'l-Haq, a *khalifa* of Shaikh Burhan-u'd-din Gharib. Shaikh Burhan-u'd-din Gharib was a distinguished *khalifa* of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. 'Isami had profound respect for Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya whom he considered "the last of the spiritual guides and saints in the same way as Prophet Muhammad was the last of the Prophets."<sup>2</sup> His spiritual eminence was such that

"the kings considered the dust of his threshold more precious than the crown: they sought his blessings for the stability of their rule."<sup>3</sup>

Shaikh Zain-u'd-din had, according to the poet, risen to the eminence of Shaikh Bayazid Bistami and Shaikh Abu Sa'id Abul

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 7-8. This is the first versified genealogy of the Chishti *silsilah* in Persian.

<sup>2</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 456; tr. III, p. 688. <sup>3</sup>*ibid*,



Khair. "His courtesy imparted paradise-like grace to this world and the Chishti order was revived through him."<sup>1</sup>

It is not difficult to discern in 'Isami very powerful mystic tendencies and an other-worldly outlook despite all his hankering after material goods and glory. After referring to the death of Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji, for whom he had nothing but unqualified praise, he talks about the transitory nature of human glory, quotes a verse from Sa'di

"When a beggar gets supper he sleeps as comfortably as the King of Syria."

and then goes on to observe :

"Destiny bestows two kinds of head dresses—one on the poor in the shape of a cap and the other on the King in the form of a crown. But whether it is the royal crown or the dervish's tunic, both will have to be left behind for the heirs to inherit. Different, however, is the honour aimed at by the adorers of God; they are neither for the tunic nor for the crown. They disregard kingship as well as poverty."<sup>2</sup>

At another place he remarks:

"Verily this world is a stage for the wonderful plays which are being enacted in succession, day and night. Sometimes Destiny bestows a great Jamshed—like empire on a boy and sometimes favours an inexperienced person with the crown of glory. It is only children who might be deceived by this player—like deal."<sup>3</sup>

On another occasion he thus refers to the ephemeral, transitory and undependable nature of human glory :

"Out of the gloom of night come the brightness of day and out of the thorns and prickly branches of the tree emerge fresh dates; the carcass of a donkey serves as a repast for the dog and the dead body of a dog is, in its turn, fed upon by the worms. For this reason, no wise man would trust this world even if he were made a ruler with a thousand years of reign."<sup>4</sup>

These observations though based on the frustrations of one's own life, have a didactic touch also and are intended to act indirectly as admonition to the reigning monarch.

<sup>1</sup> *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 462; tr. III, p. 696.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 345; tr. II, p. 525.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 353; tr. II, p. 534.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 431; tr. III, p. 659.



## V

The *Futuh-u's-Salatin* is composed in simple and direct style without any expression of poetic exuberance. 'Isami rarely allows his ideas to wander into unconcerned realms. His poetic imagination is controlled by a sense of responsibility as a historian and he never loads his narrative with poetic imageries, rhetorical expressions or discussion of themes which have little relevance to the main narrative. In respect of adherence to theme and directness of style he is definitely superior to Amir Khusrau whose prolific mind—full of imageries and metaphors, similes, puns and alliterations,—wandered into many realms and, barring *Miftah-u'l-Futuh*, there is no work of his which has a direct or straightforward approach. 'Isami on the other hand picks up a theme and concentrates on it. Once the account of a ruler is taken up in proper sequence, he does not bind himself to any further chronological constraints. Sometimes the events of a reign are so mixed up that it becomes difficult to follow them in their causal relationship. His account of the events of the Ghaznavid period, from 387 AH/997 AD to 416 AH/1025 AD gives the impression as if all these incidents relate to the year 387/997. Obviously his aim is to convey total impression about the performance of a ruler and not to give a chronological diary of the events of his reign. What 'Isami seeks to convey to his reader is an assessment of medieval Indian rulers based on general public impression, occasionally verified from reliable sources.

'Isami displays vigour and imagination in his verses which record military situations,<sup>1</sup> but he is dull and insipid in dealing with romantic episodes.<sup>2</sup> He describes the festivities on the occasion of the birth of a child in the harem of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud,<sup>3</sup> and Amir Khusrau describes similar festivities on the birth of a son of Mubarak Khalji.<sup>4</sup> Khusrau far excels him in both imageries and details.

'Isami's knowledge of military techniques and details seems

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, his account of conflict between Muhammad Ghuri and Rai Pithora and the account of Prince Muhammad's conflict with the Mongols.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, his verses about Khizr Khan's romance, which forms the burthen of Amir Khusrau's *Dawal Rani Khizr Khan*.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 150-51.

<sup>4</sup>*Nuh Sipihr*, p. 320 et seq.



striking. His descriptions of some of the sieges and military manoeuvres are remarkable.

During the course of his narrations 'Isami very often quotes discussions and conversations, even soliloques. It will be wrong to place them in the same category as the *oratio recta* of Barani. With 'Isami these dramatic conversations are a part of the technique he has adopted for making his narration effective and cogent. No historical significance can be attached to these conversations. For instance, when he makes Razia tell Altuniah in private :

“I am the daughter of the world renowned Emperor. For three years and three months I had the crown on my head. The officers of my father's reign distrusted me and tore the crown off my brows. Then they put fetters on my legs and threw me into prison. I was still a prisoner at Tabarhindah when you stormed it and delivered me from imprisonment. Now arise and join hands with me in marching an army upon Delhi. Delhi, the capital, like the whole realm, wishes me well since I have been good to every man and woman. As soon as they will see my standard from a distance they will all join my army. When all the troops will unite with me in my cause, I will undoubtedly recover my kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

there is no reason to accept this conversation as authentic or genuine. On fact, however, cannot be denied. The reference to Razia's popularity in Delhi is correct and is corroborated by the political developments of her reign. The conversation has been woven round this fact.

## VI

Apart from the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq for which it has the significance of a hostile contemporary, the *Futuh-u's-Salatin* is a valuable supplement, at places a corrective, to the two most outstanding historical works of the period—the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* of Minhaj-u's-Siraj and the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* of Zia-u'd-din Barani. Minhaj deliberately avoided writing about the last six years of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud's reign. He further avoided mentioning anything about the progeny of the Sultan. 'Isami helps us in filling this gap. Though 'Isami's approach

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 138; tr. II, p. 259.



and conspectus of history does not come anywhere near Barani whose account of Balban and his successors, the Khalji dynasty and the first two Tughluq Sultans is remarkable for its depth and understanding. 'Isami supplies some interesting bits of informations which help us in understanding the spirit of the age and the general political and cultural atmosphere of the period. To heighten the effect of his narration 'Isami sometimes gives an anecdote which puts light and fire into that description. The story of an old woman who cursed Balban for killing his son heightens the pathos of Prince Muhammad's death.<sup>1</sup> The story of a physician of Baran,<sup>2</sup> gives an atmosphere of gravity and urgency to the reform measures of Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji. The prediction of Tughril's wife,<sup>3</sup> who knew astrology, about the unfavourable day for her husband, adds a superstitious note to the circumstances of Tughril's arrest and execution. Such incidents have a psychological impact on the mind of the reader.

1. Regarding Aibek's death, 'Isami says that his accidental fall from the horse while playing *chaugan* was due to the curses of a saint who did not approve of his order to shift the tanners of hide to some distant locality.<sup>4</sup> The measure was dictated by considerations of hygiene but the idea of segregation underlying it was gall and wormwood to religious-minded people.

2. Iltutmish's relations with mystics were close and cordial but barring one incident of Bukhara,<sup>5</sup> Minhaj refrains from giving details. 'Isami mentions about his contact with mystics in Baghdad,<sup>6</sup> construction of Hauzi Shamsi under religious impulses and pouring of *Zam Zam* water into it<sup>7</sup> and his verdict in favour of *Sama*.<sup>8</sup> These are important incidents which throw light on the cultural milieu of the age.

3. Regarding Razia's character 'Isami makes silly and scandalous remarks<sup>9</sup> which reveal an abnormal and misogynist strain in him. No contemporary or even later writer corroborates these views.

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 105-06.

<sup>5</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, pp. 115-17.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, pp. 117-20.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 134.



4. According to 'Isami, Sultan Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud was not the son, but was the grandson of Iltutmish.<sup>1</sup> The reason for his being known as son is given as follows : When Iltutmish's son Prince Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud died, the Sultan gave to his posthumous child the name of his deceased father and called him his own son. It appears that genealogical investigations fascinated 'Isami. He categorically states that Aram Shah was the son of Qutb-u'd-din Aibek<sup>2</sup> and that Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud had two sons.<sup>3</sup> He gives the genealogy of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji whose father's name Shihab-u'd-din is heard for the first time. He had four sons—'Ali (future 'Ala-u'd-din), Almas Beg, Qutlugh Tigin and Muhammad Shah.<sup>4</sup>

5. 'Isami mentions that the murder of Qutb-u'd-din Hasan Ghuri was committed at the instance of Balban.<sup>5</sup> No other historian gives these details which are confirmed by the cryptic style of Minhaj.

6. 'Isami definitely says that Balban poisoned Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud.<sup>6</sup> While Barani is silent on the point, Ibn Battuta confirms 'Isami and among the later writers, Nur-u'l-Haqq and others corroborate his account of the Sultan's death.

7. 'Isami, it appears, was fully conscious of the role of nobility in political life. During the time of Nasir-u'd-din Mahmud, the contribution of Qutb-u'd-din Hasan, Ulugh Khan, Sher Khan, Zahir-u'l-Mumalik and Balban-i-Zar has been highlighted. Perhaps no other work of the Tughluq period throws so much light on the character and composition of nobility as the *Futuh-u's-Salatin*. The experiments of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq in the political sphere had led to the rise of new nobility—drawn from different religious, regional and linguistic backgrounds. His creation of *amiran-i-sada* had changed the pattern of nobility in the Deccan. 'Isami's account is invaluable for a study of the character, composition and contribution of the nobility during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq. Perhaps no other contemporary work supplies so detailed and interesting information about the role of Hindu nobility during the fourteenth century as the *Futuh-u's-Salatin*.

8. 'Isami supplies some valuable pieces of information about

<sup>1</sup> *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, pp. 159-61.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 163.



social life and conditions during the medieval period. Some incidents recorded by him show that the process of indianization had started among the Ilbarites. For example, Prince Muhammad had married in a Hindu family. After the tragic end of Prince Muhammad in Multan, the Mongols wanted to take away his body. The father-in-law of the Prince, Rai Kalu, paid huge wealth from his *iqta* and recovered the body from the Mongols.<sup>1</sup>

9. 'Isami has introduced to us an interesting *majzub* in the person of Qazi 'Alim Diwana. Incidentally the account throws light on the superstitious attitudes of the medieval people. When it did not rain for two years after the execution of Sayyidi Maula, Qazi Diwana ascended the pulpit and shed tears of remorse and repentance. As a result of his prayers, says 'Isami, it rained and the misery of the people was reduced.<sup>2</sup> According to 'Isami he lived on the upper storey of a house with a window which opened on the *bazar*. Whomsoever he saw with a ring in his finger he shouted at him indignantly, stripped his finger and gave a few lashes. Medieval credulity quietly tolerated all this. One day Prince 'Ala-u'd-din happened to pass by that way. The Qazi called him and contrary to his practice of stripping of the rings of others, gave a ring to him. This was interpreted as a happy augury for the future of 'Ala-u'd-din.

10. Though 'Isami misses no opportunity of condemning Muhammad bin Tughluq, he inadvertently supplies some information which helps us in the assessment of the Sultan's measures in their proper perspective. Referring to the exodus from Delhi, 'Isami says that only a tenth of the population of Delhi had reached Daulatabad<sup>3</sup>, which clearly means that even if casualties on the way are taken into account, the picture of mass exodus is exaggerated. The new colonies and settlements which sprang up at Daulatabad have been graphically described by him:

"Those who were ejected from Delhi formed a rich colony in Deogir where uneven places were levelled and made even. And the whole area of the city and suburbs as well as of the hills and plains was transformed into a series of interesting gardens and mansions."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 180-81.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, pp. 219-20; *ibid*, pp. 225-26.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 458.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 458 ; tr. III, pp. 690-91.



It appears that Daulatabad had started attracting people to its fold from far and near. 'Isami writes :

"Its soil became perfumed like ambergris and its climate became bracing and healthy like that of paradise. People of every sort and from all parts of India flocked there in order to reside; and they came from all directions. The whole city became thickly populated and flourished immensely."<sup>1</sup>

Further, it is from the *Futuh-u's-Salatin* that we know that after his return to Delhi and with the intention to check spread of the epidemic the Sultan had established a *Diwan-i-Ghausi*.<sup>2</sup> Obviously the purpose must have been to help people as the title indicates but 'Isami makes it also an instrument for his tyrannical operations.

## VII

It will be not only futile but irrelevant also to try to find any approach or methodology of history in 'Isami's work. He was a poet with a purpose—to win the patronage and favour of the reigning monarch. He had no pretensions to be a historian.

Isami's sources of information are not clearly indicated. He refers in general terms to 'old and reliable' witnesses, but does not name them. His claim, however, is that he took pains to investigate the truth. It is obvious that most of his information about the early Turkish Sultans was derived from his elders who had held the office of *wazir*, *wakil-i-dar* and *sipah salar* under the Ilbarites.

'Isami completed his work six years before Barani produced his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. Barani does not refer to him, nor does he to Barani. But some differences in their data and evaluation are significant. Both of them refer to Sultan Nasir-u'd-din's interest in scribing the *Qur'an* and earning his livelihood from it.<sup>3</sup> But Barani says nothing about the circumstances of Nasir-u'd-din's death. Both of them praise Balban for having established peaceful conditions and curbed the activities of the tyrants.<sup>4</sup> There is no reference in 'Isami to the Sultan's policy of discrimination between the high-born and the low-born. According to

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 458 ; tr. III, pp. 691.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 472.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 156 ; *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 164 ; *ibid*, p. 28.



'Isami, Jalal-u'd-din belonged to a noble family,<sup>1</sup> but Barani considered the Khaljis to be plebians.<sup>2</sup> Both 'Isami and Barani refer to the Sayyidi Maula incident and both of them attribute scarcity of rains and famine to his execution.<sup>3</sup> The most significant difference of opinion between the two historians is on the assessment of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji. While Barani paints 'Ala-u'd-din as a godless king, 'Isami is all praise for him. 'Isami's assessment<sup>4</sup> is confirmed by Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh,<sup>5</sup> Amir Khusrau<sup>6</sup> and Amir Hasan Sijzi.<sup>7</sup>

The *Futuh-u's-Salatin* may be looked at from one other angle. How a resident of Delhi viewed at the historical landscape of northern India from a distant city in the Deccan? In fact whatever his memory had retained and preserved about the earlier Sultans of Delhi is all that he deemed to be the key and kernel of the history of the Delhi Sultanate. He was anxious to preserve it at a time when the milieu in the north and the south was fast changing. The *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, the *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* and the *Jawami'-u'l-Kalim* have a nostalgic aroma about them.

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, 209.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 175 et seq.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 217 ; *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 300-01.

<sup>5</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, pp. 241-42.

<sup>6</sup>See Nizami, *Salatin-i Dehli Kay Mazhabi Rujhanat*, pp. 259-61.

<sup>7</sup>*Diwan-i-Hasan*, pp. 453, 547, 534, 550, 555 etc. Maulana Sabah-u'd-din 'Abdur Rahman has very carefully listed all those statements of 'Isami where he differs from other historians. *Ma'arif*, August-December, 1939, pp. 107-27, 201-16, 276-98, 344-60, 440-49.



## CHAPTER 5

### Zia-u'd-Din Barani

'This is a work of solid worth,' declares Barani, 'which combines several virtues. If you consider it a history, you will find in it an account of kings and *maliks*. If you search in this book for laws, government regulations and administrative affairs, you will not find it without them. If you want precepts and advice for kings and rulers, you will find them more plentiful and better presented in this book than in any other. And because everything I have written is true and correct, this history is worthy of credence. Also as I have put a lot of meaning in very few words, the example of mine deserve to be followed.'<sup>1</sup> This is Barani's own assessment of his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. A modern writer has, however, to cross-examine him on a number of vital points before the historical value of his work can be objectively determined. What was Barani's idea of history? How far was history a re-enactment of past experience for him? What advantages, if any, did he seek to derive from his historical writings? Barani's place amongst the medieval historians and his contribution to medieval Indian historiography rests on an answer to these questions.

As for Barani's idea of history and the advantages that accrue from its study, a fairly detailed discussion is available in his preface<sup>2</sup> to the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. Like most medieval '*ulama*' he traced the origin of every science to the *Qur'an*. The development of the historical attitude amongst the Musalmans is also traced by him to those Quranic exhortations in which mankind has been asked to draw lessons from the fate of peoples and civilizations that once exercised sway over the world, but have, since long, become tales of the past. The medieval system of Muslim education being theologically orientated, the source of this attitude is not difficult to trace. But its impact on his

<sup>1</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, pp. 1-23.



historical thinking cannot be emphasized beyond a point. The use of religious terminology is merely a literary convention with him and nothing more.

Barani looks upon history as a panorama of human activity unfolded before man to guide his faltering steps in life's journey.<sup>1</sup> Retrospect of the past, according to him, had a definite role to play in rectifying the present. What leads to the rise and fall of empires, dynasties and peoples should be clear to one who studies carefully the processes of historical change. History gives man a rare insight into human affairs and helps him in distinguishing between good and evil, vice and virtue, friend and foe. It makes man realistic in outlook as he learns from the experience of others. A ruler gets from its study the courage required to face difficulties and an insight needed to diagnose and treat the various ailments of the body-politic.<sup>2</sup> He comes to know also how evil follows evil and good comes out of good. When an ordinary suffering individual, writes Barani, comes to know through his study of history that even prophets have not been spared trials and tribulations of life, it gives him immense power of endurance.<sup>3</sup> But unfortunately Barani's own knowledge of history could not come to his rescue during the days of his adversity.

Two other basic ideas of Barani with regard to history deserve to be noted : (1) The foundation of history, he says, rests on 'truthfulness.'<sup>4</sup> A historian should be exact in his statements and should avoid exaggerations or hyperboles which characterize the works of poets.<sup>5</sup> Incorrect statements lower the prestige of a historian and reduce the value of his work. Further, as a punishment for uttering lies, salvation is denied to him in the world hereafter.<sup>6</sup> Thus Barani's sense of responsibility as a historian is conditioned both by pragmatic and religious considerations. (2) Barani considers History and the '*Ilm-i-Hadis* as twins,<sup>7</sup> and remarks that the study of history is necessary also because a scholar of Traditions, who is not an expert of history cannot be a good scholar of his subject. The way Barani finds identity between the '*Ilm-i-Hadis* and the '*Ilm-i-Tarikh* has led Dr. Hardy

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 1. See also p. 48, where, after describing the measures adopted by Balban in order to consolidate his power, he refers to the complete extinction of the family of Balban only 70 years after the latter's death.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, pp. 10-11.



to the conclusion that Barani's historical approach was theologically conditioned. But this is not so. What makes Barani bracket the study of history with the study of *ahadis*<sup>1</sup> is not the theological content of the *ahadis* but its *usul-i-asnad* which, in the words of Hitti, 'meets the most essential requirements of modern historiography.'<sup>2</sup> That an event should be traced to the person who actually participated in it or saw others participate in it, and that the veracity of all those persons who transmit that fact to others should be looked into through an investigation of their conduct, character, circumstances and background. This was the essence of the principles of critique evolved by the scholars of *ahadis*. Barani looks upon history and *hadis* as twins, and considers the principles of criticism applied to be the same in both.

It would, however, be a mistake to think that these abstract principles mentioned in the preface to his work contain all the basic postulates of Barani's thought or that it is possible to analyse the technique and tenor of the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* simply with reference to them. The *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* is a much more complicated study which requires as much an examination of the basic categories of Barani's thought as an analysis of his fluctuating emotions. Here an attempt has been made to investigate the main tendencies of Barani's thought as it developed in a particular social background and the psychological reactions that his sensitive soul registered to different situations as they arose and conditioned his historical thinking and approach.

Barani belonged to an aristocratic family which had served three main dynasties of rulers during the Sultanate period—the Ilbarites, the Khaljis and the Tughluqs. His maternal grandfather Sipah Salar Husam-u'd-din was an important officer of Balban and performed the duties of *Wakil-i-dar Barbak Sultani*.<sup>3</sup> He enjoyed the Sultan's confidence and was, therefore, appointed *Shahna* of Lakhnauti,<sup>4</sup> a very important assignment in view of the Sultan's concern for the consolidation of his power in Bengal after the Tughril revolt. Barani's father, Muwayyid-u'l-Mulk,

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Balazuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, tr. Hitti, New York, 1916, introduction, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 32, 41.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 87.



held the post of the *naib* of Arkali Khan<sup>1</sup> and lived in a palatial house at Kilugarhi,<sup>2</sup> the most aristocratic locality of medieval Delhi. His uncle 'Ala-u'l-Mulk was a confidant of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji from his Kara days. In fact he had helped 'Ala-u'd-din in his conspiracy against Jalal.<sup>3</sup> When 'Ala-u'd-din ascended the throne of Delhi, he first assigned to him Kara and Awadh,<sup>4</sup> and later on entrusted to him one of the most responsible duties of the Empire—the Kotwalship of Delhi<sup>5</sup>—and consulted him on almost every crucial matter—be it his personal religion<sup>6</sup> or a Mongol invasion.<sup>7</sup> Barani's father Muwayyid-u'l-Mulk got the *niyabat* and *khwajgi* of Baran.<sup>8</sup> Barani himself joined the court during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq and remained his *nadim* for more than 17 years<sup>9</sup>—an honour which a man with exceptional qualities of head and heart alone could enjoy. The Sultan consulted him very often and recognized his knowledge of history.<sup>10</sup> When Firoz Shah Tughluq ascended the throne, Barani lost all influence at the court and his political career abruptly came to an end for reasons which will be discussed later. What happened to his family after that nobody can say, as the contemporary and later records are silent on this point. At a time when the complexion of the governing class was changing from dynasty to dynasty, his family had the political wisdom to maintain its position till the rise of Firoz Shah, when a political miscalculation by Barani was exploited by certain elements which had recently appeared in the political life of the country. Barani could never regain his lost prestige.

Contact with the court apart, Barani and his family had occasions to move in the highest academic circles of the country and meet the finest intellects of the age. Some of the 46 scholars of the 'Alai period whom Barani considered as equals of Ghazzali and Razi, were amongst his teachers.<sup>11</sup> Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Sijzi were his close personal friends. 'They could not live without my company and I without theirs', says Barani.<sup>12</sup> In the highest circles of Delhi—both political and academic—Barani was known for his suavity of manners, great

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*,

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 250.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, p. 248.

<sup>11</sup>*ibid*, p. 521.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 222.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 504.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid*, p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 248.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, p. 255.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid*, pp. 509-511, 516-17.



social charm and scintillating wit.<sup>1</sup> Family background and personal position thus made him a man of the higher strata of society. If at any point he came into touch with the common man, it was the *khanqah* of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. But there, too, it was in the closing years of his life—years of frustration and dismay as they were—that he turned in search of that peace of mind which his soul, deeply immersed in longings for material glory, could never attain.

Thus his own position in society conditioned his social outlook. His whole concept of society became coterminous with the life of the royalty and the upper classes. The ideological sustenance for this social attitude he derived from the Iranian ideals of historiography. He was never tired of referring to the Sassanid heroes of Persia as the ideals of kingship.<sup>2</sup> He looked upon the historical landscape from the foot of the royal throne focussing his attention on the royalty and the governing classes. For him history was their history and authority was their exclusive privilege. He failed to see greatness apart from or independent of kingship. Even the Prophet of Islam was *Sultan-i-Paighambaran*<sup>3</sup> in his eyes; and he found the greatness of his spiritual mentor Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya not in his God-conscious existence but in the externalia of his *khanqah*—the multitude of people coming and going.<sup>4</sup> Even in the closing years of his life when he was dragging on his melancholy existence in a corner of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya's *khanqah*, he could not get rid of his aristocratic complexes. It was a hang-over of power which seared his soul. He never reconciled himself to his fate, and so the inner discontent grew apace. Humour changed into sarcasm, and buoyancy gave way to frustration. Had he been able to shake off his aristocratic complexes, he would have never thought of writing a history of the Sultans. He would have, on the other hand, written a history of the Chishti saints, who looked upon political power and authority with non-chalance and gave a wide berth to the government of the day.<sup>5</sup> Instead, he thought of compiling a *Tarikh*, a *Fatawa-i-*

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, pp. 18, 20, etc.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 343-344.

<sup>5</sup>As two other contemporaries of Barani, Mir Khurd and Hamid Qalandar, had done.



*Jahandari* and a *Hasrat-Nama*—all revealing the distress and anguish of a torn and frustrated personality desperately struggling to retrieve its position. He translated into Persian and Arabic account of the Barmekides because he saw in their history an image of his own fate. He wrote a biography of the Prophet—*Sana-i-Muhammadi*<sup>1</sup>—at a time when, in his own words, he ‘was not hopeful of being alive till the morning’—inspired not by any academic reasons but as an atonement for his past sins and in the hope of securing, through its spiritual benediction, his release from the prison of Bhatnir. ‘Owing to the composition of his book,’ he writes, ‘which is the protection, *pusht-wa.panah*, of my religious and worldly affairs, I feel a new strength in myself from time to time.’ But adversity could not change his mentality. He died, as he was born, an aristocrat and continued to look upon humanity throughout his life through the aristocratic glasses.

This class-consciousness ultimately developed into a complex and embittered his attitude towards the lower sections of society. The source of this bitterness was political, not religious or social. When a new class of officers, consisting of men like Laddha, Najba, Manka, Babu Naik, Peera etc.,<sup>2</sup> rose up under Muhammad bin Tughluq, Barani, with his grim political realism, heard the rumblings of a distant storm which in course of time was to sweep all the old families of administrators off their feet. Muhammad bin Tughluq’s love for history, his interest in literature and above all his affection for Barani, guaranteed the latter’s position at the court, but Barani found himself an alien in that atmosphere in which plebians and upstarts rubbed shoulders with the old aristocracy. With the death of Muhammad bin Tughluq the mainstay of Barani’s prestige collapsed, and events so rapidly moved against him that he slept a powerful *amir* but rose up a poverty-stricken pauper. A tactical blunder brought all this misfortune upon him. When Muhammad bin Tughluq died suddenly in Sindh, Khwaja Jahan placed on the throne of Delhi a boy of tender age. He was unaware that in Sindh Shaikh

<sup>1</sup>The only manuscript of this work is preserved in the Raza Library, Rampur.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 505. According to Barani all of them were low born: Najba, who was appointed malik and Gujarat, Multan and Badaon were assigned to him, was the son of a musician; Laddha was a gardener; and Babu Naik was the son of a weaver.



Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh and others had already raised Firoz to the throne. Barani gave his direct or indirect support to Khwaja Jahan's action, and thus cast his lot with an *amir* who was heading for the gallows. On Firoz's arrival in Delhi, the position of Khwaja Jahan and his Delhi group of supporters became extremely precarious. Left to himself Firoz would probably have forgiven these *amirs* who had acted in good faith but the new group, which had in the meantime filled the vacuum and attained pre-eminent position in the new set-up, forced Firoz Shah to deal sternly with them. Khwaja Jahan was killed and with him many others lost their heads, but Barani, despite the efforts of his enemies to the contrary,<sup>1</sup> succeeded in saving his skin. It was Firoz Shah's intervention which saved his life,<sup>2</sup> but he was deprived of his former position, status and property. 'God honoured me at the beginning and disgraced me at the end of my life,' he writes in great distress.<sup>3</sup> It was a most tragic position in which Barani was now placed. An *amir* of three generations, a *nadim* of the previous Sultan reduced to a state of abject penury,<sup>4</sup> disowned by friends,<sup>5</sup> neglected by relatives and despised by enemies. In deep despair he remarks: "Even the birds and fish are happy in their homes but I am not." Gloom and frustration consequently clouded his mind. The person who now dominated the political scene was Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul—an Indian by birth who had risen to high position shouldering out all old and distinguished families from their positions of power and authority. Barani's frustrated mind begins to develop a whole chain of causal connections. Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul would never have attained the position but for the policy of promoting low-born persons followed by some preceding Sultans. Muhammad bin Tughluq was an arch-criminal in this respect. He had broken the monopoly of the old and respectable families by introducing new elements in the aristocracy, primarily from the lower rungs of the society. The philosophers,<sup>5</sup> who were constantly with him, were responsible for putting those ideas in his mind. These philosophers—mischief-mongers, enemies of

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 556-57.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 557.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>5</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 464-65. Barani has particularly named the following philosophers; Sa'd, 'Ubaid, Najm Intishar, Maulana Najm-u'd-din.



stability and respectability—should be rooted out from society and philosophy should be tabooed<sup>1</sup> in the interest of stability. Education should be denied to the low-born because it qualifies them for posts in the administration. They should be kept in a state of perpetual ignorance. Thus, one after the other, prejudices enter the texture of Barani's thought and colour his whole outlook and approach towards life and society. He begins to hate the low-born and the philosophers, and opposes the extension of educational facilities to the common man. The development of this trend of thought was inherent in the situation he was placed in. A closer analysis shows that his prejudices did not emanate from his religious views but evolved out of the complications of his frustrated life. Conscious of the fact that this distinction of the low-born and the high born could not be sustained in the light of Muslim religious concepts, he tries to convert it into a conflict between 'Faith' and 'Infidelity'. But many of these so-called low-born persons whom he was thus condemning under the mask of a principle, were converts to Islam. How could they be called 'infidels'? Here comes Barani's theory that conversion of the low-born is always imperfect and incomplete. They are never genuine in their conversion; they are hypocrites. Then he tries to seek shelter in his theory of contradictions, as propounded in the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, but he never buttresses his point of view by a recourse to any religious authority. In fact he fully realized that distinctions based on birth had a *worldly* rather than a *religious* basis, and he makes this secret out in his estimate of Prince Muhammad.<sup>2</sup>

That much about the circumstances in which the basic categories of Barani's thought developed. Now a word about his approach to history. Barani sought in the history of the period the causes of his own rise and fall, and this search introduced subtle threads of subjectivism in his narrative. He found the tragedy of his own life and its causes writ large in the actions and attitudes of the rulers and the maliks. He is writing about Balban. All of a sudden his mind finds some situation identical or inimical to his own and he starts talking about himself, 'I can', he says, 'compile two volumes regarding the atrocities perpetrated on me by the wretched and cruel sky.'<sup>3</sup> He des-

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 43, 455.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid* p. 69.



cribes the private assemblies of Jalal-u'd-din Khalji and he cannot help lamenting his own fate.<sup>1</sup> Such lamentations recur again and again. The historian seems to carry the weight of his own frustrated life on his shoulders throughout the work, and on the slightest provocation pours forth his heart, bursts into laments and starts questioning the historical data if it could explain the tragedy of his own life. 'The despair that is in my heart,' he writes, 'flows in tears of blood from my eyes; a wave from river of blood pours out of my eyes, drips from my pen and stains the paper.'<sup>2</sup> A book produced in such a mental and emotional climate was bound to be soaked in irremediable subjectivity. It is interesting to trace these subjective threads in his narrative. He condemns Muhammad bin Tughluq for almost every one of his administrative actions and policies but when he comes to describe his death his heart begins to bleed.<sup>3</sup> Why? There were Sultans who died under more tragic circumstances than Muhammad bin Tughluq but he did not express such feelings about them. Moreover, a sigh of relief rather than a mourning cry would have been more appropriate to the general attitude he had taken up towards the Sultan. But in the passing away of Muhammad bin Tughluq he heard the death-knell of his own life of prestige, power and position. He weeps as much for the Sultan as for his own self. His whole account of Muhammad bin Tughluq seems saturated with such vagaries of psychological moods. He showers encomiums on him and gives him a place in the Pantheon of Prophets and saints; and then suddenly assumes another position and starts hurling invectives at him and finds in him the traits of Nimrod and Pharoah. This strange tribute of love and hatred, again, has its roots in Barani's own psychology. It was not so much the Sultan who was 'a mass of inconsistencies' or a 'mixture of opposites' but the historian himself was a miserably torn personality. He projected his own psychological states in his assessment of the Sultan's character. It was due to his policy of throwing offices open to talent, his *kasrat-i-tehkimat i-mujaddid*,<sup>4</sup> his recruitment of the promiscuous mass of people to the 'charmed' circle of nobles, his philosophic interests which led

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 467.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid* !, pp. 525-26.



to the development of sceptic attitude in him towards the 'Revealed Books and the Traditions of the Prophets' (*kutub-i-samavi--wa-ahadis-i-ambia*) which created confusion all around and made the position of the old and respectable families, like his own, absolutely untenable. He, therefore, deserved condemnation in the severest terms. And Barani starts disparaging the Sultan. But this mood does not last long. As soon as the historian returns from his mental incursion into the age of Muhammad bin Tughluq and suddenly becomes conscious of his present miserable plight, the direction of his emotions begins to change. 'I enjoyed status and position during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq.'<sup>1</sup> A patron and benefactor like him deserves to be praised and the historian starts extolling the Sultan to the skies. When Barani is in his *present*, he has love for Muhammad bin Tughluq; when he is in his *past*, he has nothing but hatred for him. Love and hatred thus alternate with fluctuations in moods of the historian. The moment one succeeds in catching this subtle psychological mood of the historian, the entire data supplied by him neatly fits into the proper perspective.

No two persons could be more fundamentally different from one another in thought and outlook than Barani and Muhammad bin Tughluq. They were denizens of two different worlds—the Sultan, a revolutionary in politics and a rationalist in religion; Barani, a hide-bound reactionary in politics and a blind follower of tradition in religious matters. It is to the credit of Barani that in spite of this wide ideological gulf between him and the Sultan, he gives a complete picture of Muhammad bin Tughluq. 'Isami and Ibn Battuta, the other two contemporary historians, supply valuable details about Muhammad bin Tughluq and help us considerably in fixing the chronology of his reign, but none comes up anywhere near Barani in his penetrating, graphic and comprehensive study of the Sultan. Ibn Battuta's Muhammad bin Tughluq is a man of scholarly temperament, generous to a fault but essentially a tyrant; 'Isami's Sultan is an ill-guided,

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi.*

".....I have been promoted and favoured in this world by Sultan Muhammad. I had never before seen the gifts and favours I received from him and after him I cannot see them in my dreams," writes Barani.



irreligious monarch, tyrannical and impulsive. It is in the pages of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* that the real and dynamic personality of the Sultan is revealed to us. Here and there one may find comments—harsh, bitter and uncharitable—but out of all these the thought and personality of the Sultan emerges in all its light and shade. This is due to the fact that Barani does not allow his subjectivity to gear his data to establish any particular hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> This may sound strange but is nevertheless true. A closer study of Barani shows that it is in his assessment of characters, not assortment of facts, that subjective elements play a part in his narrative.

Now, apart from his tendency to read the ups and downs of his own fate in the vicissitudes of history, Barani was, to all intents and purposes, a fairly honest historian. He did not suppress facts or distort them, however unpalatable they might have been to him or his family. He frankly confesses that he had not the courage to speak the truth before Muhammad bin Tughluq, and was, therefore, guilty of hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup> While describing 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji's conspiratorial activities at Kara—which he does not hesitate to condemn—he makes no attempt to withdraw his uncle Ala-u'l-Mulk from the scene.<sup>3</sup> He recorded facts as they appeared on the screen of his mind and did not try to prove or disprove any hypothesis by accordingly selecting or rejecting the data. His senile mind often loses the chronological sequence of events. He records whatever he remembers, and he remembers whatever has left a deep impress on his mind. This is a serious shortcoming of Barani's work. A weak chronological framework is, doubtless, a blemish in a historical

<sup>1</sup>To cite only two instances :

(a) Barani has great respect and admiration for Jalal-u'd-din Khalji whom he calls *Sultan-al-Halim* and is all condemnation for those who brought about his tragic end. But this does not prevent him from giving details which show that it was Jalal himself who rushed into the open jaws of death, ignoring all counsels of caution and preparation.

(b) Barani refers to the episode of Sayyidi Maula and credulously establishes connection between the dust storm and the scarcity that occurred soon afterwards. He refers to his own visit to Sayyidi also. But his account leaves one in no doubt that his *khanqah* had become the refuge of discontented elements.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 516-17.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 222.



work. But what Barani aims at supplying to his readers is not a catalogue of events but a glimpse into the spirit of the age. He recreates the past and gets his reader involved in the life of the period. Barani is a historian whose real worth and value can be appreciated only when the chronological framework is available from other sources. Iltutmish's life and activities have been dealt with in detail by Minhaj in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* but in such a soulless manner that, except for a long and unbroken series of military campaigns, a reader's mind gathers no impression about the character or personality or even the problems of Iltutmish's period. Barani refers to him incidentally in connection with Balban, but the few references that he makes are so vital and significant that they light up the whole epoch. Minhaj describes the campaigns of Iltutmish against his rivals but his account tells us nothing as to how Iltutmish conciliated or crushed the large number of his quondam colleagues, the slave-officers of Muizz-u'd-din and Qutb-u'd-din. When Barani says that Iltutmish used to remark in his court: 'When I see these great nobles standing before me, I feel inclined to come down from the throne and kiss their hands and feet', he tells us more about the situation than any other contemporary historian. It is a brief and incidental remark but shows how Iltutmish had to work in order to gain confidence and cooperation of his *maliks*. Minhaj's account of Iltutmish's patronage of saints and religious men is too general and vague to be of any particular value in understanding the character and personality of the Sultan. Barani's references present the Sultan's personality in the boldest relief. What different religious attitudes and opinions were presented before Iltutmish and how he reacted to them, Barani says more than Minhaj, and whatever he records brings us nearer to the spirit of the age, and we feel as if we have gained an insight into the problems of the age. Barani, in fact had a better sense of history and its spirit than any other Persian chronicler of the early medieval period. Despite all his shortcomings no other historian of the period comes up anywhere near him. Minhaj, who has adhered so closely to the chronological sequence of events, has made history a dull, drab and insipid affair. His accounts are totally unrelated to the social and economic background of the period. No one can gather from the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* what social and cultural forces were at work when one of the greatest empires of the middle ages was being founded. How



did the processes of adjustment and conciliation start and work? How an alien administration succeeded in striking its roots in the soil? These are questions which occur again and again in one's mind but no reply is found in Minhaj's pages. Barani had to deal with another significant development in medieval Indian history—the rise of Khalji Imperialism. He has succeeded in communicating its spirit to us in all its aspects—military, cultural and economic. His details about the actual battles fought by 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji may be inaccurate, but the total impression that he has been able to convey about the Khalji period is historically so significant that even Amir Khusrau does not come up to that level in his *Khaza'in-u'l-Futuh*.

Dr. P. Hardy says that Barani treats history as a branch of theology and sees the past as a battleground between good and evil.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately his view is not borne out by facts. Barani had a keen awareness of the changing phenomena of political life and his analysis of situations is basically and essentially political. One has to look into his accounts of Balban's *wasaya* regarding the consolidation of political authority<sup>2</sup> and his analysis of the characters and activities of Malik Nizam-u'd-din,<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Chap,<sup>4</sup> Almas Beg<sup>5</sup> and Malik Kafur<sup>6</sup> to be convinced of his understanding of the forces which lead to the decline and dismemberment of political authority. His intimate knowledge of administration and its problems extending over a number of years helped him in making a realistic appraisal of the factors and forces that worked in the life of the dynasties that controlled the contemporary political scene. Of all the medieval Muslim writers he alone posed the question whether the laws of *shari'at* could be meticulously enforced? Despite his conservative and orthodox views he did not hesitate to declare that it had now become impossible to enforce the laws of the *shari'at* in administration where the needs of the time necessitated a recourse to state laws (*zawabit*). Only one with a deep historical sense and awareness of the changes that had taken place in the Islamic polity through the centuries could state this opinion. An 'alim, no doubt, he was, but he cannot be bracketted with Sayyid Nur-u'd-din

<sup>1</sup>Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 77 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 132 *et seq.*    <sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 184, 224 etc.    <sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 229 *et seq.*

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 375 *et seq.*



Mubarak or Qazi Mughis because he had a greater sense of realities. One other aspect of the problem also deserves consideration. His *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* in which he has expressed this opinion was written during the reign of Firoz Shah whose administration is generally believed to be religiously oriented. To say at that time that the enforcement of *shari'at* laws had receded from the pale of practical politics is to give very accurate verdict on the actual nature and spirit of Firoz's administration. Professor Habib has correctly remarked that for Barani 'history was not a record or a chronicle or a story; it was very definitely a science—the science of the social order and its basis was not religion or tradition but observation and experience.'<sup>1</sup>

Barani has dealt with nine rulers of Delhi, from Balban to Firoz Shah Tughluq. His account of Balban is based upon what he heard from his maternal grandfather, Sipah Salar Husam-u'd-din. Balban's reports about Sayyid Nur-u'd-din Mubarak Ghaznavi's discourses at the court of Iltutmish have been cited on his authority.<sup>2</sup> From the same source he obtained his information about the *wasaya* of Balban. Husam-u'd-din went to Lakhnauti with Balban who appointed him as *Shahna* of that place after crushing the revolt of Tughril. His vivid account of the Lakhnauti campaign was probably based on his grandfather's reports. Besides, Shams Dabir whom Balban dictated the instructions for Bughra Khan, was a relation of Amir Hasan Sijzi, a friend of Barani. It was from Hasan and Khusrau that he learnt about the life and activities of Prince Muhammad. From the times of Jalal-u'd-din Khalji to the reign of Firoz Tughluq he writes on the basis of personal observation and personal experience. He has referred to very few contemporary authorities.<sup>3</sup> He considered an account of Khalji campaigns redundant as Taj-u'd-din had already covered that ground, and it was not Barani's habit to follow the beaten track. One of the determining factors in his selection of data was, therefore, the availability or otherwise of literature on that topic. If material was available, he would abstain from giving details; if not, he would give the necessary details with interest. He says about

<sup>1</sup>*The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>He refers to Khwaja Zaki, Malik Qara Bek, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan as his sources of information. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 67, 114, 118, 299, 370.



Malik Qutb-u'd-din Hasan, an important member of the *Turkan-i-Chehlgani*, that volumes have been written about him,<sup>1</sup> but his own account of the *malik* is brief, almost to the extent of being tantalizing. Though Barani does not mention this, all this contemporary literature must have been studied by him some time in his earlier days.

Had Barani any records, notes or memoranda when he wrote his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*? Professor Habib thought that he had nothing but his memory and his pen, ink and paper.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be true with regard to the major portion of his work, but there are places in the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* where one is constrained to feel that Barani had some recorded data available to him e.g., the lists of principal officers, governors etc., prefixed to the account of each Sultan.<sup>3</sup> This could not obviously be a feat of his memory. Since these lists are not woven with the text, may be that he subsequently came to lay his hands on them and just put them at the proper places.

Was the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* written before or after the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*?<sup>4</sup> The question is pertinent because on it depends the decision of the question if Barani was a political philosopher who took to history, or was he a historian who turned a philosopher—whether he cast history in the mould of his political thinking or his political ideas emanated from his knowledge of history. Internal evidences—style, structure and content—goes to prove that the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* was compiled after the *Tarikh*.

What were Barani's motives in compiling the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*? He wrote it because his frustrated soul found in it a satisfaction, a sense of self-realization and an opportunity to 'immortalize' his name and fame which seemed deserting him. It does not seem very correct to think that he wrote it in order to win Firoz Shah's favour. He says again and again in the *Tarikh* that it was his desire that Firoz Shah could glance at his *Tarikh*.<sup>5</sup> This was nothing more than a desire which developed when he started writing his book and not the real motive of compilation. Attention may be drawn to a problem in this

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>*The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 24, 126, 174, etc.

<sup>4</sup>Text edited by Mrs. A. Salim Khan, Lahore, 1972.

<sup>5</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 125.



respect. Barani condemns Muhammad bin Tughluq in harsh terms in this work. Firoz Shah, as we know from the *Futuhāt* and other sources, had profound respect for him and used to refer to him as *Khudavand wali ni'amat* and *Makhdum-wa-murabbi-i-man*.<sup>1</sup> How could Barani expect to win Firoz's favour through a work which found in his *makhdum* the traits of Nimrod and Pharoah? Probably Firoz Shah also did not see eye to eye with his distinguished predecessor and, despite his public professions of attachment with Muhammad bin Tughluq, he had no real respect or affection for him.

Here a probability may be considered. Probably the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* is not *one* but *two* books.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the author intended to write two independent histories : one dealing with the early rulers from Balban to Muhammad bin Tughluq, and the other dealing exclusively with Firoz Shah Tughluq. He could not complete the second and decided to put them together under the title *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. Several factors deserve consideration in this connection: (1) Barani, it appears, had different plans of writing history in his mind. At one time he thought of writing a Universal History<sup>3</sup> but gave up the idea on two grounds: regard for a much venerated predecessor Minhaj-u's-Siraj and the general indifference of people towards history. (2) Barani's account of Kaiqubad leaves the impression that probably the historian wanted to write a separate monograph on that Sultan. (3) The two parts of the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, the earlier one and the later one dealing with Firoz, are, structurally and from the point of view of approach, analysis and treatment entirely different. Barani is sharp, incisively critical and at places bitter in the first part; he is a docile sychophant in the second. (4) Barani gives a list of themes which he proposed to deal with in his account of Firoz Shah. This list gives the impression of the planning of an independent work rather than being a chapter in a larger work.

The Barani of the last part of the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* is a

<sup>1</sup>*Futuhāt-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>A critically edited text of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* which takes into consideration the recensions available at Bodleian Library, personal collection of Mr. Simon Digby and at Rampur Library, may throw light on the changes that occurred in the author's attitude under pressure of political circumstances.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 49.



shameless flatterer. He finds divine attributes in the person of Firoz Shah and considers his court as the court of Allah, where *amirs* stand as Gabriel stands before *Arsh*.<sup>1</sup> While he extols Firoz to the skies, he condemns Khwaja Jahan in order to wash the earlier charge of being in league with him against Firoz Shah. Barani is condemned here by the canons he had himself formulated in the preface to his work. His reference to Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul is, however, significant. It is a praise which borders on a warning to Firoz Shah and reminds one of the observations of the author of *Rauzut-u's-Safa* regarding the methods a historian should adopt to convey his real feelings. Barani remarks about him: 'For the last six years the *Wizarat* has been assigned to him. He has plenary and unrestricted authority in the *Diwan-i-Wizarat* and has been made a despot. Whatever concessions the Emperor has been pleased to confer upon him are such that no earlier Sultan of Delhi has ever conferred upon a *Wazir*.'<sup>2</sup> There is praise and there is warning in what he says.

For an understanding of the *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* it is necessary to comprehend the expression and terminology of Barani. Some of the terms used by him have their special connotation which is necessary to understand in order to follow Barani's thought. When he says that the Khaljis were not Turks,<sup>3</sup> he does not use the word Turk in its *racial* sense; when he refers to 'Ala-u'd-din's harsh regulations against the *Hindus*,<sup>4</sup> he does not use the term *Hindu* in a *communal* sense; when he talks about the enhancement of taxation by Muhammad bin Tughluq as an increase from one to ten,<sup>5</sup> he does not use the expression in its *arithmetical* sense.

It is difficult to do justice to Barani in a single chapter. Here attention has been drawn to some of the basic aspects of his thought and personality. Barani is one of those historians who refuse to enlighten a reader unless he has thoroughly familiarized himself with the basic categories of his thought and the chief characteristics of his personality. The *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* is, indeed, for one who knows Zia-u'd-din Barani.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 578.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 578-79.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 287.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 473.



## CHAPTER 6

### Abul Fazl

“I was sick of the learned of my own land,” writes Abul Fazl, “my brother and other relatives then advised me to attend the Court, hoping that I would find in the Emperor a leader to the sublime world of thought. In vain did I at first resist their admonitions. Happy, indeed, am I now that I have found in my sovereign a guide to the world of action and a comforter in lonely retirement; in him meet my longing after faith and my desire to do my appointed work in the world; he is the orient where the light of form and ideal dawns; and it is he who has taught me that the work of the world, multifarious as it is, may yet harmonize with the spiritual unity of truth.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Abul Fazl, the doyen of Persian historians, entered the service of Akbar destined to make his mark on the tradition of historical writing in India.

Abul Fazl’s chief historical works—the *Akbarnama* and its supplement, the *A’in-i-Akbari*—rank amongst some of the finest in the whole range of Persian historical literature. The *A’in-i-Akbari*, in particular, is a unique work of its type. Nothing at all resembling it, remarks V.A. Smith, was ever compiled in Asia and it would be difficult to find an authoritative compilation of this type even in Europe.<sup>2</sup> In fact Abul Fazl may be regarded a pioneer in the field of collection and utilisation of statistical data for purposes of historical study. In 1776, some 13 years before the French Revolution when France was passing through acute financial crisis, Le Pere Tieffentaller published extracts from the rent rolls given in the *A’in*—in his *Description Geographique de l’ Indostan*. Perhaps Abul Fazl was the first Indo-Persian historian to attract the attention of European scholars. An impartial assessment of his works, however, remains

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, as translated by Blochmann in his Biography of Abul Fazl in *A’in-i Akbari*, p. xxv. See also Beveridge, *Akbarnama*, III, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>*Akbar, the Great Mogul*, p. 4.



a desideratum. His works have been carefully studied, but not critically examined; his opinions have either been accepted blindly or rejected categorically, without an attempt to trace them to the subtle psychological moods of the author; his assessment of men, movements and situations have been valued, and rightly so, but no endeavour has been made to investigate the basic categories of Abul Fazl's thought which ultimately determined his treatment of history. Abul Fazl has been either admired or condemned;<sup>1</sup> he has not been understood.

Abul Fazl was something more than a mere conventional official historian. He was the creator of a cult, essentially Rexcentric but having religion also within its orbit. An erudite scholar and an intelligent philosopher as he was, he deftly wove Akbar's "unspoken wishes" into the matrix of a philosophic system. Handling his subject as a literary artist, he put the 'incantation' as well as the 'connotation' of words to their maximum use and where 'plain truth' was found unsavoury, he overawed his reader's intellect by conducting him into a labyrinth of high sounding words. Both the spirit of his writings as well as the style of his expression call for a careful analytical study. He expects from his reader a sharp and ready wit, an intelligence which can pierce through the jugglery of words, and a mind that can reach the depths of his soul. Nearly a century before him, Mir Khwand (ob. 1498), the famous author of *Rauzat-u's-Safa*, had thus advised the official historians: "The official historian should by hints, insinuations, overpraise and such other devices as may come to hand, never fail to express his true opinion, which, while undetected by his illiterate patron, is sure to be understood by the intelligent and the wise." Abul Fazl's patron was exceptionally intelligent and therefore he had to use great ingenuity and skill in applying this device. In a very suggestive and significant sentence he says that when he undertook to compile this history he decided to "treat of the mysteries of truth with a cryptic tongue (*zaban-i-gomago*)."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The tendency had developed in his life time: "Meetings were held to praise and to blame (the *Akbarnama*), and there was a new market-day for approbation and disapprobation." *Akbarnama*, II, p. 555.

<sup>2</sup>*Akbarnama*, II, p. 552. Explaining the phrase *zaban-i-gomago*, Beveridge writes. "...a tongue that speaks and does not speak, i.e., the words are only to be understood by the initiated."



Abul Fazl's thought and personality was conditioned by the circumstances of his life and the mental and emotional climate of the period in which he grew up to manhood.

Abul Fazl was a precocious child, endowed with sharp and penetrating intelligence. At the age of fifteen he completed his education of the rational and traditional sciences (*fanun-i-hikmi wa 'ulum-i-naqli*). Referring to his early education he once remarked: "The beginning of my education came from Arabic. In Persian I was less versed."<sup>1</sup> With a firm background of the Arabic language he turned to a study of religion and philosophy. He reflected for sometime on the 'secrets of the Platonists (*Ishraqiyan*)' 'the wide treasures of the Sufis' and 'the wonderful observations of Peripatetics (*Mashshayan*)'.<sup>2</sup> Then he was drawn towards a comparative study of different creeds, religions and schools of thought. "A while", he writes, "my heart was drawn towards the sages of the country of Cathay, and felt inclined towards the ascetics of Mount Lebanon. Sometimes a desire for conversation with the Lamas of Tibet broke my peace, and sometimes a sympathy with the *Padris* of Portugal pulled at my skirt. Sometimes a conference with the *mubids* of Persia and sometimes a knowledge of the secrets of Zand Avesta robbed me of repose, for my soul was alienated from the society of both the *arbab-i-sahv* and the *ashab-i-sukr* of my own land."<sup>3</sup> It was but inevitable for a man with such an inquisitive and philosophic bent of mind to turn to religious debates and discussions in search of a deeper synthesis of religious attitudes. From the 15th to the 25th year of his life he regularly participated in religious discussions<sup>4</sup> but the quest of his soul grew apace. He got fed up with the whole technique of casuistry as developed by the medieval Muslim theologians. These religious controversies, however, paved the way for the growth of cosmopolitan tendencies in him and he developed a catholic and tolerant attitude in all religious matters.

Another challenge to Abul Fazl's thought came from the circumstances of his family. His father, Shaikh Mubarak, who had lived in the company of scholars like Shaikh Abul Fazl Khatib, Shaikh 'Umar, Shaikh Yusuf and Mir Rafi-u'd-din Safavi Shirazi, was subsequently drawn towards the Mehdavis.

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, II, p. 545.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, III, pp. 117-18.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 566.

<sup>4</sup>*Insha-i-Abul Fazl*, III, p. 264.



The Mehdavi movement embodied a reaction and a revolt against many abuses of the contemporary Muslim society. It stood for the revival of higher values of religion and condemned all materialistic pursuits and theological disputations as negation of the true spirit of religion. Since the concept of Mehdi is connected with both religious and political reform, the Mehdavis could never escape the suspicion of the rulers of the day. This suspicion was fully exploited by the *'ulama* and the Mehdavis were subjected to great hardships during the 16th century. Shaikh Mubarak's sympathy with the Mehdavis landed him in great trouble. Orthodox religious opinion mobilized all its forces against him and Makhdum-u'l-Mulk 'Abdulla Sultanpuri confiscated his grants of land. For 20 years he was hunted from pillar to post. Very naturally these persecutions embittered Abul Fazl against orthodoxy and drove his mind inwards. He became an arrogant egotist.<sup>1</sup> Adoration of students whom his academic reputation had attracted in large numbers deepened the sources of his conceit. He developed a 'superiority complex' and thought of leading a life of retirement as the world appeared to him inhabited by intellectual pygmies. In this state of mind he could criticize anybody with impudence, regardless of the fact that some of this criticism could boomerang on him.<sup>2</sup> He condemned Firdausi as a "seller of words" and once charged Imam Ghazzali of uttering "nonsense". When his father and brother insisted upon his joining the court, he "looked upon external circumstances as destructive of inwardness, and limitation as opposed to absoluteness."<sup>3</sup> This single sentence speaks volumes about his estimate of court life and its impact on one's thought and character. In fact by putting this conflict of his soul in the pages of *Akbar Nama*, he has registered in a subtle manner his

<sup>1</sup>He has very frankly admitted this weakness in *Akbarnama*, III, p. 117, II, p. 566.

<sup>2</sup>One very interesting example of this attitude is Abul Fazl's condemnation of those historians who use ornate language. "Most old authors and many writers of the present day....display a worn-out embroidery. They consider cadences and decorative style as the constituents of eloquence, and think that prose should be tricked out like the words of poets. They make the collocation of words, the art of derivations, the rules of paronomasia, and homonyms their central point. They expend their talents on quotations...., the use of synonyms...., allusions, the inventions of enigmas and the reciting of panegyrics and genealogies." *Akbarnama*, II, pp. 553-54.

<sup>3</sup>*Akbarnama*, III, p. 118.



aversion to the life of a courtier. The source of this aversion lay more in intellectual arrogance than in conscientious objection. His father, however, prevailed upon him and in 1574, a year before the construction of the 'Ibadat Khana, he entered the service of Akbar. He was at this time thoroughly disgusted with the 'ulama but, contrary to the impression that he conveys, he could not at this time find a place in the confidence of Akbar by his critical attitude towards them. The Emperor was fully under their control and Abul Fazl could not even dream of criticising them. In fact he approached the Emperor, not through any philosophic or historical treatise, but by presenting commentary on a portion of the *Qur'an*. He thus describes his mental condition at this time and the extent of his adjustment with the Emperor: "The alchemic glance of the spiritual and temporal lord gave fresh impulse to my energy and a new expansion to my heart. I was cured to some extent from the obstinate malady which my father with all his curative skill had been unable to remedy. . .but there was something hypocritical in my down-sitting, and I was, as it were in ambush."<sup>1</sup> When the discussions of the 'Ibadat Khana became acrimonious in spirit and Akbar's mind was alienated from the 'ulama, it was then that Abul Fazl found a kindred spirit in the person of Akbar and built on this kinship a lasting edifice of love and devotion to the Emperor. He drew closer and closer to him and with his "acuteness of intellect" which, in the words of Father Monserrate, was not easily surpassable by any contemporary, wormed into his confidence as no one else could do. If any contemporary knew Akbar fully—in all his moods, emotions, ambitions, aspirations, ideals and desires—it was Abul Fazl. His sharp and penetrating intelligence succeeded in piercing through the thickest integuments of Akbar's soul, X'rayed its every ambition, and gave a clear form even to his nebulous aspirations.

The most important single factor in the formulation of Abul Fazl's approach to his subject was his master's opinion about the purpose and scope of history and the functions of a historian. Next to philosophy, Akbar's great hobby was history. Historical works were daily read out to him<sup>2</sup> and he understood and assi-

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, II, p. 568.

<sup>2</sup>Naqib Khan, who knew the seven volumes of *Rauzat-u's-Safa* by



milated the facts of history with sharp and critical acumen. The presence of a very large number of distinguished historians at the court considerably raised the level of historical discussions and created in the Emperor a desire to get his name and achievements immortalized by some capable historian. Following Timur's tradition of asking all those who had taken part in political or military affairs to hand over memoranda of what they had seen or heard, Akbar also issued a proclamation to that effect. The accounts prepared by Gulbadan Begum, Bayazid Bayat, Jauhar Aftabchi and 'Abbas, in compliance with this imperial order, were useful so far as they supplied the necessary data for a background of Akbar's reign. A deft hand alone could pick up from this literature pieces of information which could be effectively used in the preparation of a comprehensive history of the Timurids in India.

Constant discussions about the historical works of the past had given Akbar a rare insight into the problems of historical studies and the originality of his thought did not fail him in this field too. When he entrusted the work of compiling the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* to a panel, he instructed it to adopt the *Rihlat* era in preference to the prevalent *Hijri* chronology. The board was further enjoined to avoid artificial literary embellishments. Another important instruction to the compilers was to begin the account of every king with an analysis of the circumstances which led to his assumption of royal power. This last instruction shows Akbar's pragmatic approach towards history.

Some of these ideas of Akbar were modified by the experience he gained of the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*. He realized that a panel of authors could not perform the job he had in mind. When he decided to get a history of his reign compiled, he put Abul Fazl in sole charge of the work. A secretariat was, however, provided to collect and arrange the necessary statistical and other data for him. While several hands were to be associated in the collection of data, only one mind was to interpret it. Thus alone could be ensured the unity of treatment with the maximum of information.

Akbar generally disapproved of the use of the *Hijri* chrono-

heart, very often read out from "works on history, books of story, anecdotes, and legends, both in Persian and Hindi." *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 99.



logy<sup>1</sup> and recommended the application of the *Rihlat* era. But he did not ask Abul Fazl, who was an expert in eras and chronology,<sup>2</sup> to use the *Rihlat* chronology, probably because he realized what confusion could follow from such an experiment. It appears that Akbar's views with regard to presentation also underwent a change and he did not impose any restriction on Abul Fazl in reference to style. It is difficult to explain the reasons for this change in Akbar's view. Probably the feeling had gained ground that a majestic presentation alone could harmonize with his majestic achievements. Further, if the *Akbar-nama* was to find its place in the Mongol and Timurid historical literature, it had to be a piece of literary art.

Apart from all this, Abul Fazl wanted the history of India to answer one question which exercised his mind: What were the causes of misunderstanding and quarrels between various religions in India?<sup>3</sup> In an interesting section on the Ethnography of Hindustan, he has tried to answer this question and has, on ultimate analysis, found the following causes for this: *First*, diversity of tongues which often leads to the misapprehension of mutual purposes; *secondly*, "the distance that separates the learned of Hindustan from scientific men of other nationalities who thus are unable to meet, and if chance should bring them together, the need of an interpreter would preclude any practical

<sup>1</sup>Abul Fazl informs us, "He was likewise averse to the era of the Hijra which was of ominous signification, but because of the number of shortsighted, ignorant men who believe the currency of the era to be inseparable from religion. His Imperial Majesty in his graciousness, dearly regarding the attachment of the hearts of his subjects did not carry out his design of suppressing it". *A'in-i-Akbari*, Jarrett, II, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Abul Fazl's knowledge of different era—e.g. era of the Hindus, the Khatai Era, the Turkish Era, the era of Bakht Nasar, the Coptic Era, the Syro-Macedonian Era, the Christian Era, the Maliki Era—is evident from his discussion on the subject in the *A'in-i-Akbari*, II, pp. 1-30. May be that he was assisted by experts in compiling this section.

<sup>3</sup>He was not fully satisfied with the results achieved during the reign of Akbar. "Even at the present time," he remarks, "when through his Majesty's patronage of learning and his appreciation of merit, the erudite of all countries are assembled, and apply themselves with united effort in the pursuit of truth, so proficient a person is not to be found." *A'in-i-Akbari*, III, p. 3. He refers, in this connection, as his ideals to Buzurjmihir, Barazwaih, Tumtum, and Abu Maashar of Balkh who undertook long journeys in order to acquire knowledge.



result"; *thirdly*, the absorption of mankind in "the delights of corporeal gratification"; *fourthly*, indolence which prevents people from 'profound investigation' and 'deeper insight'; *fifthly*, traditional and inflexible adherence to customs which makes the slightest deviation from 'whatever has been received from father, director, kindred, friend or neighbour' look as sacrilegious; *sixthly*, "the uprising of the whirlwind of animosity and the storms of persecution" which "stayed the few earnest inquirers from uniting to discuss their individual tenets and from meeting in friendly assemblies." Elaborating this point Abul Fazl holds rulers responsible for this apathy. "If temporal rulers had interested themselves in this matter," he remarks, and "assuaged the apprehensions of men, assuredly many enlightened persons would have delivered their real sentiments with calmness of mind and freedom of expression. Through the apathy of princes, each sect is bigoted to its own creed and dissensions have waxed high. Each one regarding his own persuasion as alone true, has set himself to the persecution of other worshippers of God." The *seventh* reason in the opinion of Abul Fazl was "the prosperity of wretches without principle who deceitfully win acceptance by affected virtue and rectitude."<sup>1</sup> This is not merely an analysis of an important sociological problem of India but also an exposition of Abul Fazl's approach towards Indian history. He laid out the plan of his work so as to highlight the achievements of his royal master with reference to all these seven points.

Abul Fazl undertook his assignment of writing a history of Akbar's reign in the same spirit in which one undertakes to build a memorial. "Of mighty monarchs of old," he wrote, "there was no memorial except the historians of their age and no trace of them but in the chronicles of eloquent and judicial annalists which could not be obliterated by the ravages of time."<sup>2</sup> But Abul Fazl was not prepared to follow the beaten track. "An extensive survey," he writes, "showed me that the palace of history was in ruins and that the ample plain of chronicles could be no arena for Truth's cavaliers."<sup>3</sup> Thus when he undertook to write the history of Akbar's reign, he was all along anxious to contribute something original and fascinating to the

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, III, pp. 3-6.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, II, p. 250; III, p. 407.

<sup>3</sup>*Akbarnama*, II, p. 545.



art of history writing. What intensified his desire for originality was a feeling that by writing this work he could partly pay back the debt of gratitude he owed to his imperial master.<sup>1</sup> Thus, desire to build a lasting memorial, consciousness of his own intellectual eminence and an eagerness to present a literary gift as a token of gratitude to his royal master were the main motivation of Abul Fazl in compiling his history.

Abul Fazl worked over the *Akbarnama* for seven long years—day and night, assisted by a secretariat which analysed, indexed and arranged the data for him. “Many a dark night passed into morning and many a long day grew to eve”—remarks Abul Fazl about the arduous labour he had to put in this work. He revised his draft five times which shows his extreme care in the choice of words and presentation of facts. The *Akbarnama* is therefore a most studied performance. Regarding his method of work he says: “Since insinuation and rumour had prejudiced me and I was not sure of my own memory, I made various enquiries of the principal officers of the state, and of the grandees and other well-informed dignitaries; and not contented with humorous oral statements I asked permission to put them in writing and for each event I took the testimony of more than twenty intelligent and cautious persons.”<sup>2</sup> It was a stupendous job. One day a friend told him: “Why do you take such pains and why do you write in such a style? Will one out of thousands come into existence who would read this glorious volume aright, and be instructed by the new magic of its method? From whom do you expect the effectual recognition of the Truth? When shall an exalted sage draw the veil from over your work? ’Twere far better to fold away these new-fangled coverlets and to speak in the language of the age, and to spread a plenteous table for the generality.” Abul Fazl was delighted at this friendly criticism but he silenced the critic by his remark: “What have I to do with a crowd?”<sup>3</sup>—Indeed Abul Fazl was not a man of the masses. He was an aristocrat, intellectually and materially, to his finger-tips and was not prepared to cater to popular taste, by writing in simple and straight forward style.

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, p. 553.

<sup>2</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, II, p. 225; III, p. 413; *Akbarnama*, I, p. 10; Beveridge, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>*Akbarnama*, Beveridge, II, pp. 555-56.



Akbar himself took keen personal interest in the day-to-day progress of the *Akbarnama*. He always checked and scrutinized the data in order to see how his life-story was being told. Abul Fazl says that the Emperor had ordered that "the materials which had been collected, should be faired out and recited in royal hearing."

But if Akbar was anxious to have a particular type of his image projected on the canvas of history, Abul Fazl himself was no less keen to ascertain his master's point of view even on trivial matters. This he did under the innocent pretext of 'correction' of conflicting data with the help of His Majesty's 'perfect memory'.<sup>1</sup> Thus Akbar's likes and dislikes conditioned Abul Fazl's historical approach and determined his selection of data and interpretation of situations even in their minutest details.

Since political background alone could not do justice to Akbar's multi-faced personality, Abul Fazl prepared a broad canvas on which to draw the Emperor's sketch. He blended religion, politics and society in one complex whole and made it rotate around the person of the king. This intertwined pattern which has been woven by Abul Fazl's scholarly genius is thoroughly original but painfully unreal. Abul Fazl had to use his literary whip and spur in order to make the historical data behave in a particular way. He wanted to answer the question about the differences in Indian religious life in terms of Akbar's achievements and this necessitated an overall view of religion, politics and society with king as the unifying force. Consequently Abul Fazl had to supply soul and substance to many simple incidents and attitudes of Akbar's life. His political wisdom had to be traced to divine revelations;<sup>2</sup> his political authority had to be invested with 'spiritual leadership' and the dichotomy between religion and politics was to resolve itself before his all-embracing personality which looked after both the mundane and the spiritual affairs of society. This was an ideal situation which Abul Fazl had visualized for the glorification of his

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, I, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>cf. . . "the wise of the great court well know that this is not to be met with save in the lucid home of the holy heart of a pure spirit who shall have received the light of true knowledge from the Creator without the intervention of human means or earthly aids." *Akbarnama*, II, p. 66.



master and which agreed in all its details with Akbar's own ambitions. By casting the history of Akbar's reign in that mould, Abul Fazl not only rose above the distinction between *ought* and *is*, but made Akbar move on the stage of history as an Emperor-Prophet. An oft recurring discussion in religious works of the period regarding the respective spheres of a Prophet and an Emperor was, in fact, provoked by Abul Fazl's peculiar delineation of Akbar's character. It cannot be said with certainty if Abul Fazl genuinely believed in Akbar's spiritual powers and religious leadership or he was simply playing to the tune of his master and just trying to chime in with his mood. But Abul Fazl was bent upon lifting Akbar to the pedestal of spiritual greatness. The first chapter of the *Akbarnama* which deals with the birth of Akbar and gives an account of 'holy manifestations' preceding his birth reads like a traditional superstitious account of the birth of prophets on which credulous minds are fed. It is strange that Abul Fazl who was criticising religious superstition right and left and was condemning the '*ulama* for their irrational approach, himself indulged in fabricating a paraphernalia of religious grandeur round the person of Akbar which men less lost in ambition would have felt ashamed of.<sup>1</sup> He says that when Maryam Makani was "pregnant with the holy elements of His Majesty", "a strange light was perceptible from her bright brows."<sup>2</sup> The nurse (Aziz Koka's mother) felt as if a great light approached her and entered her bosom.<sup>3</sup> How ridiculous is the story that the astrologer asked Hamida Banu to delay the birth of the child as the time was inauspicious and the impulse passed off!<sup>4</sup>

The superstitious atmosphere does not end here; it pervades all through his work and is a reflection on Abul Fazl as a historian. "His Majesty", writes Abul Fazl, "by virtue of his perfect memory, recollects every occurrence in gross and detail, from the time he was one year old—when the material reason (*aql-i-haiwani*)<sup>5</sup> came into action." No amount of the historian's rhapsodical eloquence can make a reader believe in this psycho-

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, I, pp. 37-39.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 32.



logical absurdity.

In keeping with his basic approach of harmonizing religion with politics, Abul Fazl had to introduce religious and spiritual factors where political or economic considerations alone guided the policies of the Emperor. For instance, with reference to the introduction of the Ilahi era he says: "The splendour of visible sublimity which had its manifestation in the lord of the universe commended itself to this chosen one, especially as it also concentrated the leadership of the world of spirituality, and for its cognition by vassals of auspicious mind, the characteristics of the divine essence were ascribed to it, and the glad tidings of its perpetual adoption proclaimed."<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in connection with the abolition of the Hijri era as desired by Akbar, Abul Fazl had lamented the 'short-sightedness' of the 'ignorant men who believe the currency of the era to be inseparable from religion.'<sup>2</sup> This introduces a contradiction in Abul Fazl's thought which runs throughout the book: he expects a secular approach from others, while he himself presents every measure of the Emperor in a religious garb. He banishes the religious influences from politics with one hand and admits them with the other.

Apart from his master's views, which in any case determine the drift and direction of the historian's mind, Abul Fazl had to fix his approach with reference to certain historical traditions. On the one side there was the central Asian tradition of history writing as represented in the works of the Mongol and the Timurid historians, like Wassaf, Rashid-u'd-din Fazlullah, Mustaufi and Yezdi, and on the other side stood the Indian tradition, as developed by Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, Minhaj, Barani and Yahya Sirhindi. The basic difference between these two traditions lay not in their *spirit* but in their *style* of presentation. With the exception of Sadr-u'd-din Hasan Nizami and Amir Khusrau, all other Indian historians had written in severe and simple prose. Abul Fazl rejected the Indian and adopted the Mongol tradition which considered hyperbolic language and quaint and stiff phraseology to be the very essence of literary perfection. It is strange that Akbar who had insisted on the use of simple prose in the preparation of *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, approved Abul

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, II, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, II, p. 29.



Fazl's highly ornate style which struck the other extreme.

The roots of both these styles of historical writings—Indian and foreign—ultimately lay in the Iranian traditions of historiography. Here Abul Fazl made some very interesting experiments. The historical conspectus of a Persian historian was limited to the court and the camp. Abul Fazl considered this approach to historical writing inadequate and imperfect, as it was unhelpful in dealing with a monarch whose area of activity and influence extended far beyond politics. Consequently he invoked the help of Arab historiography in order to widen the area of his study. He did not, however, abandon the Iranian tradition. He combined the *spirit* of Iranian historiography with the *conspectus* of Arab historiography. But his acceptance of the Arab tradition was partial and limited: the people were admitted into the charmed circle of a historian's study not as a matter of right, as the Arab historians had done, but as a necessity, because without them a discussion of Akbar's multifarious activities would have remained incomplete and insipid. An audience was needed for an oratorical performance, and the people constituted such an audience for a description of Akbar's achievements. Despite its limited implications, Abul Fazl's experiment was very interesting and, of course, in the right direction. Had the successors of Abul Fazl taken the hint from him and developed on those lines, a new school of historical writing, based on a synthesis of the Arab and the Iranian traditions of historiography, would have developed in India. But none after Abul Fazl made such an experiment. The scope of historical writing was slightly extended under his influence—as we find in Abdul Hamid Lahori's *Badshah Nama* and Khwafi Khan's *Muntakhab-u'l-Lubab* but no basic change took place in its character. No historian ever thought of collecting the statistical and other data which Abul Fazl had presented in his book. Shah Jahan was eager to have a historian of Abul Fazl's stature<sup>1</sup> to record the achievements of his reign and the selection of Hamid Lahori was made on that basis but he does not come up to that stature. In fact the use of archival material on such an extensive scale as Abul Fazl had made was not attempted by any other Mughal historian after him.

Abul Fazl's strength lies neither in his approach, which is

<sup>1</sup>*Badshah Nama*, I, pp. 10-11.



unreal, nor in his style, which is cumbersome and artificial, but in his conspectus of history. He included all sorts of information in his work "from the revenues of a province to the cost of a pineapple and from the organization of any army to the shape of a candlestick."<sup>1</sup> He no doubt surveyed the historical landscape from the foot of the royal throne but his ken extended far beyond the court and the camp. This was in keeping with his basic approach of weaving society, religion and politics into a composite pattern.

Another very significant aspect of Abul Fazl's treatment of the subject is his attempt to survey the history of the period in its Indian context. He observes the principle of Unity and Continuity in his treatment of Indian history. Sometimes his vision extends far beyond that and he begins to think in global terms.<sup>2</sup> He often compares conditions in India with those operating in Iran, Mawara-un-Nahr, Turkey and other countries. He sincerely believed that without an understanding of Hindu philosophy and religion, learning and literature, customs and ceremonials, it was not possible to understand the main currents of political and cultural developments in India. In his preface to the *Mahabharat* he has drawn attention to the social necessity of studying the religious thought and tenets of other cults and creeds. It was with this aim in view that he incorporated extensive details about Hinduism in his *A'in-i-Akbari* which, in the words of Jarrett, "crystallizes and records in brief, for all time, the state of Hindu learning, and besides its statistical utility, serves as an admirable treatise of reference on numerous branches of Brahmanical science and on the manners, beliefs, traditions and indigenous lore which for the most part still retain and will long continue their hold on the popular mind."<sup>3</sup>

While due credit should be given to Abul Fazl for his approach which made him include extensive information about Hindu religious thought and institutions in his book, it should also be admitted that he is deeply indebted to Alberuni for these chapters. A comparative study of Alberuni's *Kitab-u'l-Hind* and Abul Fazl's chapters on Hindu thought leads one to the

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, Jarrett, VI.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, his "Description of the Earth" in *A'in-i-Akbari*, III, pp. 29-125.

<sup>3</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, III, p. ix.



conclusion that Abul Fazl borrowed both the substance and the arrangement of this section from his great predecessor. It is surprising that he did not consider it necessary to acknowledge his debt.

Abul Fazl was undoubtedly one of the great masters of Persian prose but his style is not free from serious defects. His endless metaphors, allegories and allusions lose all meaning in translation and have not much sense in the original. To use a Shakespearean phrase 'he draws out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.' His attempt seems to have been to overpower the reader with clever duplication of words rather than to convince him. His rhetoric sometimes gives the impression of being a mask rather than an embellishment.

There were occasions, though few and far between, when he found his own assessment of a situation running in a different channel from the Emperor's, and he very artistically hid himself in a plethora of high sounding words or quietly let out his views in abstract and philosophic language. For instance, he did not like Akbar's connivance at Maham Anaga's putting to death two innocent girls of Baz Bahadur's seraglio while they were in the possession of her son Adham Khan at Malwa, lest they should speak out the truth to the Emperor. Abul Fazl records the fact and immediately afterwards starts praising the high quality of mercy in Akbar. Hidden in this praise is a strong disapproval of the Emperor's action. Similarly one can read between the lines Abul Fazl's disapproval of Husain Mirza's being put to death in Gujarat after his defeat. Sometimes when Abul Fazl pretends the greatest detachment from a situation, his involvement seems deepest. He describes the banishment of 'Abdun Nabi and Makhdum-u'l Mulk "in a calm and statesman-like",<sup>1</sup> manner. There is a studied objectivity in the account; on the face of it, it gives the impression of remarkable control of passions, but it has an air of artificiality about it. It is well known that no love was lost between Abul Fazl and Prince Salim. The latter suspected him of even poisoning the ears of Akbar against him. Abul Fazl's terse reference to Salim's rebellion is another instance of the same attitude.

<sup>1</sup>Blochmann, p. xxxviii.



It is significant that the style of the earlier portion of *Akbar-nama* (i.e., upto the 10th regnal year) is more rhetorical and florid than of the later portion. It may perhaps be due to the fact that Abul Fazl's artificial exuberance of style worked where the achievements of Akbar's reign were not many, or the reason may be that for the earlier portion he had the help of Faizi who scrutinized and revised the draft. Since Faizi was himself writing an *Akbarnama* on the model of Nizami's *Sikandar nama*, his poetic expressions found their way into it. When Faizi died, Abul Fazl was so deeply shaken that he decided to give up the work. It was at the insistence of Akbar that he resumed the work.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor conferred upon him the titles of *Nadir-u'l-Kalam* and *Shams-i-Peshtaq-i-Goyai*.<sup>2</sup>

Assessed as a manual of Mughal administration, the *A'in-i Akbari*, suffers from some very serious defects. The style is absolutely unsuitable to an administrative manual. It gives no idea of the stages of evolution through which different Mughal institutions passed. A chronological background to the development of different institutions would have been of real value to a student of Mughal administration. Besides, Abul Fazl makes no reference to the authors of the various administrative measures. In the pages of the *A'in* and the *Akbarnama* everything good and great emanates from the mind of the Emperor. The real authors of some very important administrative changes and experiments, like Todar Mal, Shah Mansur and others, are deprived of their due meed and their proper niche in the temple of fame and this is a serious drawback of Abul Fazl as a historian.

Over and above all this, Sir Jadunath Sarkar's observation that Abul Fazl gives us an ideal picture "instead of giving us a faithful description of the administration in its actual working,"<sup>3</sup> cannot be ignored.

The *Akbarnama*, it is obvious, has all the inevitable defects of a government publication. It gives one-sided view; it slurs over unpalatable facts; it embellishes the Emperor's character and blackens his enemies. From beginning to end it is full of unmeasured flattery. Abul Fazl's account and estimate of

<sup>1</sup>*Akbarnama*, II, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Mughal Administration*, p. 257.



Akbar's enemies is not only uncharitable but often misleading and incorrect. He even shows similar unfairness towards all opponents of the Mughal rulers. He refers to Timur's invasion<sup>1</sup> but avoids scrupulously all reference to his holocaust. He paints Sher Shah as Sher Khan, the Afghan rebel, and appropriates, or misappropriates, all his achievements to his master. His account of Akbar's Deccan policy is a sorry attempt to justify the imperial action in matters where no justification was possible. His account of the Raushaniya movement and its leaders is partial and meagre. His details of campaigns in which the imperial forces suffered heavy casualties are often misleading. Sometimes he suppressed details available to him, e.g., his account of the death roll of imperial forces when Birbal was sent against the Yusuf Zais is inaccurate. His account of the famine and pestilence of 1595-8 in which, according to Nur-u'l-Haq 'the streets and roads were blocked up with dead bodies, and no assistance could be rendered for their removal,'<sup>2</sup> is 'substantially' false.

Abul Fazl's distinguished contemporary Iranian historian was Eskandar Beg Munshi whose *Tarikh-i-'Alam Ara-ye-'Abbasi*<sup>3</sup> is, as Ehsan Yarshater correctly observes 'perhaps the last in the chain of great Persian medieval histories.' Eskander gives no statistical information like Abul Fazl, but he is far superior to him so far as clarity of expression and sincerity of views is concerned. Eskandar also was no doubt anxious to win the favour of his royal master, but he did not allow himself to submit to cheap and servile minionism. Referring to the events of the year 1596, Eskandar writes :

"Ambassadors came from all parts of the world to the court of Shah Abbas this year: some were received at Qazvin, others at Isfahan, and there was such a throng of envoys, bearing countless gifts as had rarely been seen in previous years. Among them were Mirza Zia al-Din Kasi and Abu Nasr Kafi, ambassadors on behalf of the Mughal emperor Akbar; with them Yadegar Sultan Rumlu, who had been sent as ambassador to India seven years before. . . They had travelled to Iran

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, II, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup>Elliot & Dowson, VI, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup>Persian text edited and published by Iraj Afshar from Tehran; English translation by Roger M. Savory, Colorado, 1978.



via Kuj, Makran and Kerman. They were received by the Shah at Qazvin. The Meydane Sa'adatabad was illuminated and the bazars decorated in their honour, and for several days they were guests at special banquets given in the Meydan. After the usual formalities, the ambassadors delivered letters of friendship from Emperor Akbar, letters written by Shaikh Abul Fazl, the son of Shaikh Mubarak, and replete with elegant conceits. Camels bearing the emperor's gifts were paraded before the Shah in the Meydan."<sup>1</sup>

Abul Fazl's account of the event reads as follows:

"One of the occurrences was the arrival of the Persian ambassadors. It was reported that when Ziya al-Mulk and Abu Nasir arrived there, Shah Abbas behaved like a dutiful child and made the Shahinshah's slippers—which the ambassadors had with them—the diadem of good fortune. He accepted the regulations (*dastur nama*) of the world's commander and gathered bliss by acting in accordance therewith."<sup>2</sup>

The artificiality and cheap minionism in Abul Fazl's narrative is too obvious to need a comment.

In some cases Abul Fazl's observations are nothing more than *ex post facto* deductions or *aposteriori* justifications. His habit of reading back motives, which came into operation later, in earlier episodes of Akbar's reign blurs our historical judgement. Take for instance his statement that the *jiziyah* was abolished in the beginning of the year 1564,<sup>3</sup> and the reasons for this abolition were: "The *jiziyah* was collected from non-Muslims in the past because Muslims and non-Muslims were enemies of each other. Now when the non-Muslims are serving the state and have positive faith in the Emperor and following their own religion is simply outward, it does not behove to collect it. . . . the *jiziyah* was collected in the past because the rulers were poor and in need of money. Today when there are thousands of treasures in the Royal Treasury, the Emperor does not need to collect it."<sup>4</sup> There are a number of historical inaccuracies in this statement.

<sup>1</sup>*History of Shah Abbas the Great, Tarikh-i-Alam Ara-ye-'Abbasi'*, Eng. tr. by R.M. Savory, II, pp. 705-06.

<sup>2</sup>*Akbarnama*, III, p. 1112.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, II, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 204.



*First*, knowing as we do Akbar's religious beliefs in 1564, it is difficult to accept that such motivations could have been there; *secondly*, Akbar's empire in 1564 comprised less than 2 provinces (Punjab and most of the parts of the modern Uttar Pradesh), and financially he was not in a position in which Adul Fazl puts him in 1564. *Thirdly*, the very statement about the abolition of *jiziyah* in 1564 needs explanation. According to 'Abdul Qadir it was abolished in 1579.<sup>1</sup> Abul Fazl says in the events of 1579 that Akbar abolished *baj* this year and adds that the orders to the same effect were issued earlier also, but they had proved ineffective.<sup>2</sup> But Abul Fazl does not refer to the orders of the abolition of *baj* earlier anywhere prior to 1579. The whole problem has been confused by Abul Fazl.

Abul Fazl's account of those policies of Akbar which were calculated to bring about a synthetic approach and a cosmopolitan outlook, though fairly detailed, do not help one in understanding the spirit of the age in all its aspects. He ignores or briefly dismisses the irritants that obstructed or hindered those policies.

Reference has been made earlier to Abul Fazl's attempt to paint a particular picture of Akbar as a religious leader. Apart from the confusion arising out of this account, his description of some of the major religious experiments of Akbar, is sometimes tantalizing in its brevity and often misleading and partial. The *Mahzar* was a document of great significance as it marks a turning point in the life of Akbar, and the part that Abul Fazl's father Shaikh Mubarak played in drafting it is well known, but Abul Fazl does not mention his name at all in this context. It is difficult to understand the reasons for this omission which cannot be inadvertent or casual. There are a number of similar situations in which for some reason or the other, Abul Fazl has refrained from giving full details. But in most cases it will not be difficult to analyse his motives in so doing. Abul Fazl becomes far more interesting and revealing if every situation of psychological complexity in his narrative is traced down to its very roots. It takes time to establish rapport with him, but once it is established Abul Fazl opens his heart to his reader. Notwithstanding his shortcomings—which again are not of an ordinary type—

<sup>1</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, II, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup>*Akbarnama*, III, pp. 295-96.



Abul Fazl remains one of the greatest historians of India. "He was an unwearied worker," rightly observes Beveridge, "and when we blame him and lament his deficiencies we shall do well to consider, what a blank our knowledge of Akbar's reign would have been, had not Abul Fazl exerted himself during years of strenuous effort to chronicle events and institutions. His work has also the imperishable merit of being a record by a contemporary and one who had access to information at first hand."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Preface to the *Akbarnama*, I, p. 1.



**PART II**

**HISTORIES**







## CHAPTER 7

### Historical Significance of the Malfuz Literature of Medieval India

*Malfuz* literally means 'words spoken'; in common parlance the term is used for the conversations or table talks of a mystic teacher. *Malfuz* writing is one of the most important literary achievements of medieval India. Works of similar nature were, no doubt, compiled outside India also e.g., the *Halat-wa-Sukhan-i-Shaikh Abu Sa'id Fazlullah b. Abi'l Khair al-Maihani*<sup>1</sup> by Muhammad b. Abu Rauh Lutf-ullah in about 540/1145-46; *Asrar-u't-Tauhid fi Maqamat Abi Sa'id*<sup>2</sup> by Muhammad b. Munawwar in 574/1178 and *Malfuzat-i-Najm-u'd-din Kubra*<sup>3</sup>—but the credit of giving this art a definite shape and thereby popularising it in the religious circles of the country goes to a disciple of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, Amir Hasan Sijzi.<sup>4</sup>

It was on Sha'ban 3, 707 (January 1307) that Amir Hasan Sijzi, a famous poet of the Khalji period and a friend of Amir Khusrau, decided to write a summary of what he heard from his master, Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. The decision was epoch-making as it marked the beginning of a new type of mystic literature, known as *malfuzat*. Amir Hasan's collection of his spiritual mentor's utterances, the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, was welcomed in mystic circles and it became a guide book (*dastur*) for mystics anxious to traverse the mystic journey.<sup>5</sup> It inspired others to render similar services to their masters.

<sup>1</sup>MS, British Museum, Rieu, I, 342b ii.

<sup>2</sup>Edited by Ahmad Bahmanyar, Tehran, 1934.

<sup>3</sup>MS., Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow, 1250 (3), p. 599.

<sup>4</sup>Besides *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, Amir Hasan left another booklet of mystic aphorisms, *Mukh-u'l-Ma'ani*, MS., Aligarh. His *diwan* has been edited by Mas'ud 'Ali Mahvi and published from Hyderabad, Ibrahimiyah Machine Press, Hyderabad, 1352 AH.

<sup>5</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 360.



The tradition established by Hasan Sijzi was followed by saints of all affiliations—Chishtis, Suhrawardis, Firdausis, Shattaris, Qadiris, Maghribis and Naqshbandis—and enormous *malfuz* literature appeared in India from Uchch to Maner and from Delhi to Deogir. Several disciples of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya emulated Hasan in compiling *malfuzat* of their spiritual teacher. Khwaja Muhammad son of Maulana Badr-u'd-din Ishaq (disciple and son-in-law of Baba Farid of Ajodhan) compiled *Anwar-u'l-Majalis*;<sup>1</sup> Khwaja 'Aziz-u'd-din Sufi prepared *Tuhfat-u'l-Abrar-wa-Karamat-u'l-Akhyar*,<sup>2</sup> while Maulana 'Ali Jandar compiled *Durar-i-Nizamiyah*.<sup>3</sup> A family of three brothers—Hammad, Rukn-u'd-din, Majd-u'd-din, sons of Maulana 'Imad Kashani—which owned spiritual allegiance to Maulana Burhan-u'd-din Gharib (a disciple of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya) prepared several collections of the teachings of their Shaikh. Maulana Hammad named his work as *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal*;<sup>4</sup> Maulana Rukn-u'd-din gave it the title *Nafa'is-u'l-Anfas*;<sup>5</sup> Majd-u'd-din's works were known as *Gharib-u'l-Karamat* and *Baqiyat-u'l-Ghara'ib*.<sup>6</sup> A grandson of Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Sufi of Nagaur collected the sayings of his father and grandfather and produced a very important *malfuz*, *Sarur-u's-Sudur*.<sup>7</sup> The Firdausi saints were not slow to adopt the tradition. Maulana Zain Badr 'Arabi compiled the conversation of his master, Shaikh Sharaf-u'd-din Yahya Maneri, in his *Ma'dan-u'l-Ma'ani*.<sup>8</sup> Salah Mukblis Da'ud Khani compiled the Shaikh's conversations (from Sha'ban 21, 774/February 1373 to Muharram 1, 775/June 1373) in a book entitled *Munis-u'l-Muridin*. Several saints of the Suhrawardi silsilah prepared accounts of their masters' conversations. Shaikh Zia-u'd-din compiled a *malfuz* containing the conversations of Shaikh Sadr-u'd-din and named it as *Kanuz-u'l-Fawa'id*. Three

<sup>1</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 200. The *malfuz* is extinct now.

<sup>2</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 202. It is not available now.

<sup>3</sup>MSS., Personal Collection, Bihar Collection, Calcutta.

<sup>4</sup>MSS., Personal Collection, Aligarh Muslim University Library, Salar Jang Museum.

<sup>5</sup>MS., Library Nadwat-u'l-Ulama, Lucknow.

<sup>6</sup>Bilgrami, *Rauza-i-Auliya*, p. 5. Both titles are extinct.

<sup>7</sup>MSS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Personal Collection.

<sup>8</sup>Sharaf-ul-Akhbar Press, Bihar, 1301 AH.



voluminous collections—*Jami'-u'l-'Ulum*,<sup>1</sup> *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*<sup>2</sup> and *Manaqib-i-Makhdum-i-Jahanian*<sup>3</sup>—were made of the utterances and discourses of Syed Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari Makhdum-i-Jahanian (707-785/1308-1384). Two disciples of Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi known as Shaikh Ahmad Khattu (733-849/1338-1446)—Mahmud Irchi<sup>4</sup> and Muhammad b. Abil Qasim<sup>5</sup>—compiled his conversations. Even the conversations of Khwaja Karak of Kara—a *majzub* during the time of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji—came to be compiled under the title *Asrar-u'l-Makhdumin*. In the provincial kingdoms the same tradition was picked up with zeal and *malfuz* collections were made of eminent saints. The conversations of Syed Muhammad Gisu Daraz of Gulbarga were compiled by his son under the title *Jawami'-u'l-Kalim*. The *malfuzat* of Shaikh Ahmad 'Abdul Haqq compiled under the title *Anwar-u'l-'Ayun*; of Shaikh 'Abdul Quddus Gangohi known as *Lata'if-i-Quddusi*, of Shah Mina Lakhnawi known as *Malfuzat-i-Makhdum Shah Mina* are a mine of information for the religious and cultural history of medieval India. Apart from everything else, no history of the growth of Indian languages, particularly Hindivi and Urdu—can be written without a reference to this literature which has preserved for us samples of the spoken language of those days.

*Malfuz* literature continued to be produced during the Mughal period. In fact it became a tradition with mystics of all *silsilahs* to get their *malfuzat* recorded by some of their learned disciples.

This *malfuz* literature calls for a systematic and careful study with a view to having a glimpse of the life of the common man during the medieval period. A *malfuz*, to be really so, should give a living account of the assemblies of a mystic teacher, nay, even details of his day-to-day life should be reflected in it. If, on the contrary, it creates the dull and placid atmosphere of a scholarly dissertation, wanting in the warmth of human company, it ceases to be a *malfuz*. The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* combines, in a very rare degree, conciseness of expression with fullness of thought. All the meetings have dates and the discussions have

<sup>1</sup>Compiled by Abu 'Abdullah 'Ala-u'd-din 'Ali b. Sa'd al-Hasani in 782/1380. MSS, Rampur.

<sup>2</sup>MS., Rampur, Aligarh, Personal Collection.

<sup>3</sup>MS., Asiatic Society of Bengal.

<sup>4</sup>MS., India Office, Persian Collection, D.P. 979.

<sup>5</sup>MS., Asiatic Society of Bengal, no. 247/E 195.



the genuine feel of an assembly. The *Khair-u'l-Majalis* has no dates but the warmth of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh's assembly is felt even more than that of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya in the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*. A reader of *Khair-u'l-Majalis* meets Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din at different times and in different moods and thus gets an opportunity to see the Shaikh himself and study his reactions to different situations. No other *malfiz* of the period provides such varied, intimate and comprehensive study of a mystic teacher. There are no miracles and no other-worldly atmosphere in the *malfizat* of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya and Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din. If miracles of some earlier mystics are mentioned, the purpose is to bring out some higher and nobler principle of social life, rather than to attract popular imagination to supernatural stories. In the *malfizat* of Makhdum-i-Jahanian, and more so in the *malfiz* of Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi, miraculous and supernatural elements run throughout and give an otherworldly atmosphere to the conversations. The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* and the *Durar-i-Nizamiya* have no chronological framework. Some dates are given during the course of a discussion and then in a subsequent *majlis* the reader is taken to earlier dates or is left completely in the dark about the time of the conversation. Whenever a compiler has attempted to arrange conversations thematically, ignoring the *majlis* and chronological sequence in which they took place, it has resulted in depriving the *malfiz* of the warmth of human company.

In the *Khair-u'l-Majalis*, *majlises* are numbered but the dates of individual meetings are ignored. In *Sarur-u's-Sudur* some dates are given but generally the conversations are collected together without any consideration of chronology or even *majlis*. The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* follows an entirely different method. The conversations are arranged under different heads. The compiler starts with a 'practice' of the Shaikhs of the *silsilah* and then gives 'arguments' in support of the practice. This method is clear and so far as it goes easily intelligible, but it lacks the life and warmth of discussion and falls to the level of dry aphorisms. In depth and scholarship the *Khair-u'l-Majalis* and the *Ma'dan-u'l-Ma'ani* run a close second to the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*.

The method and technique of compilation followed in these *malfiz* collections varies from compiler to compiler. Before one attempts to draw material of historical significance from



these collections, he should first study carefully the life of the Shaikh and the predilections of the compiler. Once the background in which the discussions took place becomes clear, the historical value of the data supplied can be easily evaluated. In fact through these records of conversations we can have a glimpse of the medieval society, in all its fullness, if not in all its perfection—the moods and tensions of the common man, the inner yearnings of his soul, the religious thought at its higher and lower levels, the popular customs and manners and above all the problems of the people. If our history is to be something more than a mere record of political events and governmental changes, the *malfuz* literature of medieval India will have to be utilized both as a corrective of the impressions created by the court chronicles and as a source of information for the religious, cultural and literary movements of the period. No other type of literature gives us such intimate view of the life and problems of the common man. “I have several daughters (to marry) but no means of livelihood.”<sup>1</sup> “The governor is very harsh on me.”<sup>2</sup> “My brother is ill and might have expired since I left him.”<sup>3</sup> “I am poor and so I cannot drink the water of Jumna because it increases appetite”<sup>4</sup>—such problems one comes across only in the *malfuz* literature of medieval India. One meets in the *khanqahs* poor people bent down by hunger and starvation, rich people tormented by flames of mundane ambition, men in search of God and in search of Mammon.

It is well-known that it was through the mystic channel that progressive and dynamic forces entered the social structure of Islam. The *‘ulama-i-zahir* (externalist scholars) were generally conservative, rigid and static in their outlook. The mystics were alive to the exigencies of time and situation. How they behaved

<sup>1</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 232.

<sup>4</sup>One day Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya saw an old woman fetching water from a well while the Jumna flowed nearby. ‘Why do you take all this trouble?’ asked the Shaikh. ‘What can I do? My husband is poor. We have no food. The Jumna water is like an appetizer. To avoid hunger we drink water from the well’, replied the woman. The reply brought tears into the eyes of the Shaikh who arranged regular supply of food to her. *Jawami'-u'l-Kalim*, p. 123.



in the Indian milieu and helped in constructing linguistic and social bridges between the Indian people and the Muslims, can be seen in this literature. In fact the mystics had thrown open their *khanqahs* to all sorts of people—rich and poor, nobles and plebians, citizens and villagers, free born and slaves, young and old, men and woman.<sup>1</sup> The *khanqah* and the *bazar* were the only two places where people of all strata and all walks of life could be found.

Here only a few early collection of Sufi utterances are introduced in order to bring out the nature and significance of these records. The collections chosen for this purpose represent different areas, different *silsilahs* and different traditions. *The Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* represents mainly the Delhi of the Khalji period with all its hope, faith and buoyancy; the *Khair-u'l-Majalis* breathes the atmosphere of the Tughluq period, its pessimism, depression and sadness; the *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* shows the eagerness of the saint to disseminate in the Deccan Chishti mystic principles which were tested in the north; the *Sarur-u's-Sudur* shows the working of the mystic institutions in Rajasthan; the *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya* has its conspectus from Uchch to Delhi and reflects Suhrawardi attitude towards society and government; the *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* throws light on cultural and political developments in Delhi and Gujarat during the 14th century; while the *Asrar-u'l-Makhdumin* reveals the attitude of a saint of Kara towards the Khalji Emperor whose rise to power he had once predicted. Thus the working of mystic ideas and institutions at Delhi, Daulatabad, Nagaur, Uchch and Kara may be read in these collections.

The extent to which *malfuz* literature was considered sacrosanct may be gauged from the fact that people transcribed these works for their spiritual bliss and benediction. The following lines at the end of a manuscript of *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* (in the possession of the writer of these lines) throw light on the faith that both Hindus and the Muslims had in this literature:

“In compliance with an order of . . . Rao Umrao Singh Rais Kutchesar . . . , this sacred book, which is key to the realization of the treasure of the desired objective . . . was copied out in the hope of the fulfilment of ‘a desire’. God Almighty, due to the blessing of this book and of the saints whose

<sup>1</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 343.



account is contained in this work and as a consideration for the Prophet and his Companions and the pious imams, granted the desire of Rao Umrao Singh.”

### 1. The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*

The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*<sup>1</sup> set the tradition of *malfuz* writing in India. It has been planned and prepared in a very systematic manner. Every *majlis* has a date and the conversations are recorded in a very exact, accurate and succinct manner. Every *majlis* has the lively atmosphere of an assembly. The topics of discussion change, with the change of audience and visitors. Amir Hasan Sijzi was an erudite scholar and a poet of distinction, but he avoided all artificialities of language and adhered to the characteristics of the Shaikh's speech. Though the tradition set by Amir Hasan was sought to be emulated by the succeeding generations of *malfuz*-writers, none could come up to his standard of exactness and lucidity.

The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* begins with the conversations of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya in his *majlis* on Sha'ban 3, 707 AH/January 28, 1308; the last assembly proceedings recorded by Amir Hasan is Sha'ban 19, 722/September 2, 1322. This is a record of 188 gatherings of the Shaikh's visitors and covers a period of roughly 15 years with long gaps and intervals. The Shaikh lived in Delhi for more than half a century. The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* is thus a record of very limited number of his *majlises*. However a uniform level of discussions and a succinctness, born of depth and insight, characterizes these conversations and throws considerable light on the moral and spiritual ideals of the Shaikh and his method of instruction and guidance.

The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* is a mine of information for the religious, cultural and literary history of the period and supplies interesting details about the earlier generations of mystics, scholars, poets etc. Since the Shaikh was born at Badaon, had spent more than fifty years of his life at Delhi and had several times visited Ajodhan, his knowledge of the religious and cultural conditions of these areas is intimate and personal. He speaks in a nostalgic strain about Badaon where he had spent his early years. But for

<sup>1</sup>Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1885.



him we would have never known a number of literary and religious figures of Badaon such as Maulana Razi-u'd-din Hasan Saghani, the famous author of *Mashariq-u'l-Anwar*, Maulana 'Ala-u'd-din Usuli, Qazi Kamaluddin Jafri and others. The Shaikh's references to Badaon in his conversations recreate the atmosphere of that town—its saints and swindlers, its *kotwals* and *qazis*, its *imams* of mosques and students, its officers and vagabonds, and last but not the least the peaceful tenor of life in that important centre of culture where every one of those refugees from Central Asia and Iran who did not like the atmosphere of the capital city of Delhi, ran to hide his head.

Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya was the most outstanding saint of the Chishti silsilah and it was through his incessant efforts that the order reached distant parts of the country and thousands of people joined his discipline. How the Shaikh enunciated his moral and ethical principles has been very graphically illustrated here.

Amir Hasan thus records the proceedings of the Shaikh's *majlis* held on 5 Shawwal 707 AH/29 March 1308. This gives some idea of the Shaikh's ideals and the way he communicated them to his audience:

“The prayers being over, I had the felicity of kissing the feet (of the Shaikh). The conversation turned to renunciation and celibacy. During the course (of this conversation) he said: “There was a *durwesh* who was reduced to extreme penury and (lived) under straitened circumstances. Due to extreme hunger, his belly seemed stuck with his back. He was trudging through the road. Khwaja Muhammad Patwa, who is our friend, put a *dang* before him. He said: “Today I have taken the dreg of seeds to my full satisfaction. I am free from care for food. Today I do not need this *dang*.” Subsequently the Khwaja expressed his admiration mixed with surprise at his devotion to truthfulness and said: ‘Excellent was his contentment, strength (of character) and (power of) endurance.’ Later (the Shaikh) narrated in this context, the following story, illustrating contentment and the shedding away of expectations from Non-Absolute. ‘There was a saint, Shaikh, ‘Ali by name. Once he was patching his garment. It was spread over his legs and he was stitching it. Meanwhile they reported that the Khalifa had come (to see him). He did not change his posture, but



remained in the same position and said: "He may come". The Khalifa came in, accosted him and sat down. The Shaikh returned the salutation. *The hajib* who was accompanying the Khalifa, said: "Shaikh fold your legs." The Shaikh paid no heed to what he said. Twice or thrice the *hajib* repeated this. So when the time came for the Khalifa to depart, the Shaikh caught hold in one of his hands the hand of the *hajib* and in the other the hand of the Khalifa and said: "I have drawn back my hands, it is permissible for me to stretch my legs." (What he meant by this was): "I do not expect anything from you and I do not accept anything from you. I do not stretch my hand before anybody. I can therefore stretch my legs."

The conversation then turned round to the essence of *suluk* (spiritual discipline). The quintessence of this discipline he explained thus: 'A man came to Khwaja Ajal Shirazi . . . and became his disciple and expected that the Khwaja would direct him to perform certain supererogatory prayers and spiritual practices. The Khwaja (however) said only this: "Whatever you do not like for your self, do not like for others (also). And desire for yourself what you desire for others'. The man went away. After sometime he came back to Khwaja Ajal Shirazi and submitted: I became your disciple on such and such a day. I expected that you would prescribe for me some (extra) prayers and *aurad*, but you prescribed nothing. I expect that now. The Khwaja replied: "What lesson did I give you that day?" The disciple was puzzled. He did not give any reply. The Khwaja smiled and said: "That day I told you not to like for others what you do not like for yourself, and to desire for yourself what you desire for others also. Have you fully learnt that lesson? So when you have not learnt the first lesson, how can I give you another lesson?"

Later (the Shaikh) mentioned this story. There was a pious saint. He used to say often: 'prayers, fasts and other spiritual practices, counting the rosary and singing the hymns, are like the spices in a pot; the real thing is meat. If there is no meat in a pot, there can be no preparation and these spices are of no use.' They asked the saint: 'What the analogy means? Please explain.' The saint said: "Meat is rejection of the (material pursuits of the) world. Prayers, fasts and other spiritual practices are the spices. One should first reject the



world and have no worldly attachment. Whether he performs (extra) prayers and spiritual penitences or does not, it is immaterial. There should be no love of the world in his heart. (Extra) prayers and *aurad* have no value (in themselves) unless accompanied by rejection of the world. Afterwards (the Shaikh) said: "If oil, pepper, garlic and onion are put in a pot but there is no meat in it, it would be false soup. Real soup is one which is prepared with meat." Afterwards (the Shaikh) spoke about *turk-i-duniya* (rejection of the world): "This is not *turk-i-duniya* that one should strip himself of his clothes, e.g., tie a *langota* round his waist and sit (in a lonely corner). *Turk-i-duniya* means that one should put on dress, take food and whatever came to him he should accept it and should not be inclined to hoard it. He should not bind his heart to anything. This is what is meant by *turk-i-duniya*."<sup>1</sup>

The Shaikh did not believe in spinning fine ideas but expressed in his life the accumulated wisdom of the mystic creed. Valuable information is supplied here about the life and thought of the earlier Chishti saints, particularly Shaikh Qutb-u'd-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Farid, Shaikh Jamal Hansvi; Shaikh Badr-u'd-din Ghaznavi and others. The Shaikh, as a believer in the higher mystic morality, propounds his principles of pacificism, tolerance, non-violence and "love for all" with rare lucidity, candidness and sincerity.

The Shaikh looked upon service of humanity as the *summum bonum* of all mystic efforts and assigned it a place higher than penitences and prayers. He is reported in the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* to have remarked:

"Devotion to God is of two types: *lazmi* (intransitive) and *muta'addi* (transitive). In the *lazmi* devotion, the benefit which accrues is confined to the devotee alone. This type of devotion includes prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, recitation of religious formula, turning the beads of rosary etc. . . . The *muta'addi* devotion, on the other hand, brings advantage and comfort to others; it is performed by spending money on others, showing affection to people and by other means through which a man strives to help his fellow human beings. The reward of *muta'addi* devotion is endless and limitless."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 13-14.



He believed in helping the poor and the downtrodden and looked down upon revenge and retribution as laws of the jungle.

It is not without interest to see the Shaikh propounding his moral and ethical principles in his mystic gatherings which comprised all sorts of people:

“If a man places thorns in your way, and you do the same, it will be thorns plus thorns. Among (worldly) men it is the pattern (of behaviour) —wickedness for wickedness and good-will for good-will. But the practice among the *durweshes* is different. (It is): Good will in return for wickedness and also good-will in return for good-will.”<sup>1</sup>

How the Shaikh influenced the thought of his visitors and inculcated in them respect for moral values may be read in the pages of the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*. The Shaikh was against slavery but the way he worked for its abolition and persuaded people to emancipate their slaves is remarkable for its effectiveness. One day the compiler of *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* took his slave Bashir to the Shaikh and submitted:

This slave says his prayers. For a long time he has been insisting that I should bring him to the Shaikh so that he may have the honour of becoming your disciple. As the kindness of the Shaikh is universal, he acceded to my request. ‘Do you permit him to become my disciple?, the Shaikh asked. ‘Certainly’: I replied. He extended the hand of friendship to Bashir, presented him with a cap and ordered: “Go and say too genuflexions of prayer.”

When the slave withdrew, the Shaikh related the following anecdote:

In olden days a *durwesh* . . . came from Bihar and put up at the house of Shaikh ‘Ali Sijzi . . . . This *durwesh* used to beg for money from all quarters. “If you live in this house do not go about begging, I will give you something to live on”— Shaikh ‘Ali said to him. He gave the *durwesh* five hundred *jitals*. The *durwesh* traded with the money and in a short time increased his capital to thirty *tankas*. Then he re-invested it, increased his capital to hundred *tankas* and purchased slaves with them. “Take your slaves to Ghaznin,” Shaikh ‘Ali

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 86.



advised, "they will fetch a higher price there." The *durwesh* acted on his advice. But he had one trustworthy slave to whom he had said: "You become my disciple." The slave became his disciple. The *durwesh* shaved off the slave's head, placed a cap over it and said: This is the cap of Syed Ahmad.' Perhaps the *durwesh* belonged to his order. In short when he reached Ghaznin and sold his slaves, he made a lot of profit. Some people wanted to purchase this slave also. 'How can I sell him? the *durwesh* said, "He is my disciple." But they insisted on purchasing him till the price rose from one to four. The mind of the *durwesh* changed and he consented to sell the slave. But when the merchants collected to purchase the slave, the slave, his eyes full of tears, said to the *durwesh*: "Khwaja' On the day I became your *murid* (disciple), you placed a cap on my head and said that it was the cap of Syedi Ahmad. Now you are going to sell me. Tomorrow on the Day of Judgement I will have a complaint against you before Syedi Ahmad.' When the slave said this, the *durwesh's* heart was softened. He said to all present: 'You be witness to the fact that I have set this slave free.'

No sooner had the Shaikh finished this anecdote that Amir Hasan set his slave free. The Shaikh was immensely pleased. "You have done well," he remarked, "what you have done was necessary." The Shaikh then took off his cap and placed it very affectionately on the head of Amir Hasan.<sup>1</sup>

Such anecdotes and incidents which abound in large numbers in the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* help us in understanding the spirit of the times and the social and cultural milieu of the period. The Shaikh praises a Brahman for his perseverance and commends his preference for the "sacred thread" to all the wealth of the world.<sup>2</sup> He approvingly quotes Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Nagauri who used to say about a Hindu: "He is a *wali* (saint)."<sup>3</sup>

Reference to *jawaliqs* and *jogis* are helpful in understanding the nature and extent of the Chishti contact with the non-Muslim groups. The principal trends of Muslim religious thought during the medieval period—the Mu'tazalites and the Ash'arites—have

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 70.



been referred to and the Shaikh's preference for the Ash'arites is indicated. The egalitarian principles of mysticism are highlighted by declaring clearly that in the mystic world there was no distinction of slave and master.<sup>1</sup> Unlike some other sections of Muslim society, the eminence, piety and in a way equal status of women was recognized.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from throwing valuable light on the Chishti mystic ideology which made the *silsilah* popular everywhere in India, the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* supplies some other information of value. Minhaj's peculiar portraiture of Nur Turk is rejected by Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya as far from reality.<sup>3</sup> Iltutmish's vigils and penitences,<sup>4</sup> his strong memory,<sup>5</sup> his changing the name of mango from *anba* to *naghzak*,<sup>6</sup> his relations with saints, poets, etc. have been referred to. What is of greater significance is the fact that according to the saint the salvation of Iltutmish was due to his construction of the *Hauz-i-Shamsi*.<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of the Shaikh no other action of the Sultan—neither military campaigns nor mystic practices and penitences—had greater value before God than his anxiety to supply water to the scarcity areas of Delhi.

References to Minhaj's effectiveness as an orator and his interest in mystic music are revealing.<sup>8</sup> The attitude of 'ulama towards different problems is brought out without rancour or malice. Incidentally some remarks are made which throw light on the functions of some government officers. It appears from a discussion that the word *jiziya* was used for land tax.<sup>9</sup> Chingiz Khan's appreciation of a person who distributed food to people has been recorded with approbation.<sup>10</sup>

The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* was looked upon as a manual of guidance by medieval mystics; its main value today lies in its clear exposition of those Chishti mystic principles which made the *silsilah* popular in India.

<sup>1</sup>*Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 198-99.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, pp. 191, 253.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid*, pp. 17-18.



## 2. The *Khair-u'l-Majalis*

The *Khair-u'l-Majalis*<sup>1</sup> is a record of one hundred mystic gatherings of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh-i-Dehli (ob. 1356) made by Maulana Hamid Qalandar.<sup>2</sup> Qalandar was a boy of tender age when his father got him admitted into the discipline of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. Details of his life are not known. He went to the Deccan with other emigrants during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq and attached himself to Maulana Burhan-u'd-din Gharib, a senior disciple of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. Homesickness and a desire to be in the company of the descendants of his master, brought him back to Delhi. Hamid visited the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din in 754/1353 when the saint was celebrating the death anniversary of Maulana Burhan-u'd-din Gharib. He was pleased to find in his *Khanqah* a disciple of his master and embraced him with affection.

Hamid attended the assemblies of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din frequently and decided to record his conversations. Obviously this he did in the very closing years of the Shaikh's life. He met the Shaikh in 1353, three years before he breathed his last. So the conversations relate to the last three years of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh's life. The Shaikh supervised his work and warned against straying into the realm of miracles. "Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din," writes Hamid, "has so broken his *nafs* (ego) that if I call him a Shaikh, he resents it; if I attribute a miracle to him, he gets angry."<sup>3</sup>

The *Khair-u'l-Majalis* is an important source of information for the lives and activities of many Indo-Muslim saints, e.g., Shaikh Qutb-u'd-din Bakhtiyar Kaki, Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Mas'ud, Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, Shaikh Jalal-u'd-din

<sup>1</sup>Edited by K.A. Nizami, published by the Department of History, Aligarh, 1959.

<sup>2</sup>He was a poet also. Some of his poems are found in stray collections of poetic compositions (*bayaz*). See, for instance, a *bayaz* in British Museum. (Supplement, p. 232, no. 374) for 9 qasidas in praise of Firoz Shah Tughluq (ff. 58, 70, 71a, 100b, 101b, 114a, 114b, 183 etc). His panegyrics in praise of the Sultan are inconsistent with the traditions of the Chishti silsilah. Obviously Hamid could not himself live up to the teachings of his spiritual master.

<sup>3</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, Supplement, p. 289.



Tabrizi, Qazi Hamid-u'd-din Nagauri and others. But for this work many important details about the life and activities of the elder Chishti saints would have remained unknown to us. Besides, the *Khair-u'l-Majalis* has a significance of its own in the broader context of mystic developments in the Islamic world in the fourteenth century. The age of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din had thrown a challenge to mystic thought all over the Muslim world and the *Khair-u'l-Majalis* embodies the reaction of Indo-Muslim mysticism to this challenge. The movement initiated by Ibn Taimiyya (661-728/1263-1328) against *khanqah* life and mystic institutions had found a supporter in Muhammad bin Tughluq and he was keen to bind the sufis to the state chariot,<sup>1</sup> something which the Chishtis in particular looked upon as a serious interference in their private life. Imam 'Abdul 'Aziz Ardbeli, a pupil of Ibn Taimiyya, visited the court of the Tughluq Sultan who was so deeply impressed by his oration that he kissed his feet.<sup>2</sup> It was under his influence that Muhammad bin Tughluq adopted a policy of hostility towards the mystics and sought to change their ways of life and ideology completely. The reaction of Indo-Muslim mysticism to this intellectual ferment created by the movement of Ibn Taimiyya may be read in the pages of *Khair-u'l-Majalis*. He stopped the objectionable practices<sup>3</sup> but firmly protected the basic ideals of mysticism. What a long and painful struggle the Shaikh was called upon to carry on in order to save the Chishti silsilah and its ideology may be read in the pages of *Khair-u'l-Majalis*. The extent to which the Shaikh succeeded in bridging the gulf between the jurists and the mystics may be gauged from the fact that he himself came to be considered as 'Abu Hanifa, the second.'<sup>4</sup>

The information supplied by *Khair-u'l-Majalis* about the political and economic conditions of the time is invaluable. It is very often said that the market control of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji was motivated by the militaristic needs of the state. The *Khair-u'l-Majalis* shows that this is not wholly correct and that the Sultan was inspired by altruistic and philanthropic considerations

<sup>1</sup>For details, Nizami, *Salatin-i-Dehli Kay mazhabi Rujhanat*, pp. 333-38; *Comprehensive History of India*, V, pp. 495-96.

<sup>2</sup>Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, text, II, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 157. See also Introduction, pp. 30-31,

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 12, 34,



in enforcing his economic regulations. He was anxious to do something which could benefit all people (*hama khalq*). The Shaikh was once invited in Awadh to a feast by Qazi Hamid-u'd-din Malik-u't-Tujjar. After the meals, he told the Shaikh:

“Once I saw Sultan ‘Ala-u’d-din sitting on a wooden stool, bareheaded and with his feet touching the ground. (He seemed) lost in some thought and was beating his feet. I went near him but he did not notice (my entry). I came back (from the royal chamber). . . (and) told Malik Qara Beg: ‘I have seen the Sultan in such condition. Go and see how he is.’ Malik Qara Beg was also a companion (of his) in the *majalis*. He went in and engaged the Sultan in conversation. Later he submitted: ‘O King of the Mussalmans! I have a request to make.’ ‘Speak out,’ ordered the Sultan. The Qazi went before him and said: ‘I was here (a little while ago) and saw the King bareheaded and lost in some thought. What (thought) was worrying the Sultan? The Sultan said:

“Listen! For sometime my mind in exercised over a problem. I say to myself: O thou! God has placed thee over so many people. Something should be done for the benefit of all mankind. I asked myself as to what should I do: if I distribute all the treasures that I have and even if these are multiplied ten times and are given to the people, it will not suffice for all people; if I distribute land—villages and *vilayats*—it will not reach all. I was brooding over this problem as to what to do for the benefit of all people. This moment an idea has come to my mind. I mention it to you. I told to myself that I should reduce the price of grain which would benefit all people. And how the prices of corn can be brought down? I will issue an order that all those *naiks* who bring corn to the city from all sides be summoned. Some of them bring ten thousand bull-loads and some twenty thousand. I will summon them and give them robes and silver from the treasury and will give them the expenses of their houses and ask them to bring corn and sell it at the price that I fix.” So he gave orders accordingly. Corn came from all sides. Within a few days its price came down to seven *jitals* a maund. Similarly the price of oil, sugar and other things came down. All people benefit-



ted from this. What a (noble) king was Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din! May God bless his soul."<sup>1</sup>

It may be noted that the two persons referred to in this conversation, Qazi Hamid-u'd-din Malik-u'l-Tujjar and Malik Qara Beg, were close to the Sultan<sup>2</sup> and their being able to see the Sultan in that condition is not improbable.

The impression created by Barani that 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji was a godless king is contradicted by *Khair-u'l-Majalis*. In fact 'Isami's assessment of the Sultan is fully confirmed by Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh.<sup>3</sup> The people of Delhi had so great faith in him that after his death they used to visit his grave and tie threads on it in the belief that their prayers would thus be granted by God.<sup>4</sup>

The age of Firoz Shah Tughluq is generally depicted as an age of affluence and plenty for the masses. The *Khair-u'l-Majalis* however leaves a different impression upon the mind of the reader. It appears that economic distress was very acute during the early years of Firoz Shah's reign. The Shaikh contrasts the conditions prevailing during the reign of Firoz Shah with those of the time of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji,<sup>5</sup> when even a beggar had one or two quilts, and then sadly remarks: "What a cheapness it was in those days"? One *maund* of wheat could be had for  $7\frac{1}{2}$  *jitals*; equal quantity of sugar for half a *dirham*, ordinary sugar was available at the rate of one *jital*<sup>6</sup> a *maund*.<sup>7</sup> Cloth and other articles were also cheap. A quilt could be prepared for a few *tankas*. A good feast could be arranged in two to four *tankas*.<sup>8</sup> There were a number of *langars* (free kitchens) in Delhi where food was freely distributed. But all this had disappeared during the time of the reigning Sultan, Firoz Shah.<sup>9</sup> The Shaikh narrates the story of a *wali* who had worked so efficiently for the

<sup>1</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>See Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 352 for Hamid-u'd-din Multani, and Ferishta for Malik Qara Beg, II, p. 394.

<sup>3</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 300-01.

<sup>4</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 241.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 185, 240.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 240.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid.*, p. 185. These rates may be compared with those given by Barani, p. 310 *et. seq.*

<sup>8</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 240.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 240.



prosperity and welfare of the people during the time of the Caliph 'Umar that no fallow land could be found in his territory. The Shaikh remained silent for a while after giving his account, and then remarked: "All efforts of the *former* rulers were directed towards fostering the welfare of the people."<sup>1</sup> The implications of this remark are too obvious to need a comment.

The *Khair-u'l-Majalis* supplies some very interesting pieces of information about the life of the medieval saints—their adverse circumstances and their contact with the poor folk. During the days of his adversity, Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din was helped by Nathu Patwa who came to him and placed two pieces of bread, 'God knew whether of *mash* or barley, with some gravy on them', before him.<sup>2</sup> Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya's teacher at Badaon, Maulana 'Ala-u'd-din Usuli, passed his days under such conditions of poverty that he had nothing to eat except seeds from which oil had been taken out.<sup>3</sup>

The Shaikh condemns those mystics who went to the court and acted as minions. If any ordinary disciple—because higher disciples were forbidden from any involvement in government service—took up any service he was advised to do his job honestly and not to forget God while performing his functions. The Shaikh had a word of advice for all sorts of people—teachers, cultivators, *qazis*, revenue officers etc. The essence of his advice was to 'remember God' under all conditions of life and to lead a life of rectitude and virtue.

### 3. The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal*

*Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* is a collection of the conversations of Shaikh Burhan-u'd-din Gharib<sup>4</sup> (654-741/1256-1340) made by his disciple Maulana Hammad b. 'Ammad Kashani in 738/1337, some twenty years before the death of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh in Delhi. Chronologically the work comes before *Khair-u'l-Majalis* and is the earliest available *malfuz* compiled after *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*. It forms a very valuable link in that chain of

<sup>1</sup>*Khair-u'l-Majalis*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 190

<sup>4</sup>For a brief account of his life, see *Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, pp. 278-82.



*malfuzat* of the Chishti saints of India which begins with the *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya and comes to an end with the *Nafa'-u's-Salikin* of Shah Muhammad Sulaiman of Taunsa (ob. 1850).

Shaikh Burhan-u'd-din Gharib whose teachings have been collected in this book was an eminent disciple of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya. He was a close friend and companion of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh, Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Sijzi. He was specially fond of audition parties (*sama'*) and his disciples danced in a peculiar manner and so they came to be known as *Burhanis*.<sup>1</sup> Long before Muhammad bin Tughluq's so-called transfer of the capital, he went to the Deccan and settled at Deogir – a fact which shows that Deogir had come within the orbit of Chishti mystic activity before the Tughluq Sultan turned his attention towards it. He planted the Chishti *silsilah* in the Deccan and popularised it there. The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* helps us in understanding the principles and practices propagated by him in the distant South. In Delhi the towering personality of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya was himself a beacon's light and an example; in the Deccan his precepts had to be made known in simple and popular idiom to disseminate the teachings of the *silsilah*.

The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* is divided into twenty nine chapters which deal with some specific theme, such as 'the practices and etiquette of the assemblies of saints', 'relationship between disciple and his spiritual teacher,' 'customs and ceremonies associated with the process of initiation in the mystic fold', 'dealings with people,' 'spiritual morality', 'principles governing the acceptance of *futuh*' (unasked for gifts) 'evil consequences of greed and sex', 'principles to be followed with reference to audition parties', and 'prayers and penitences'. There is hardly any aspect of Muslim mystic life during the Sultanate period which has not been referred to here. Taken as a whole, it is a very valuable source of information for the early history of the Chishti *silsilah* and the precepts and practices of the Sufis as well as their principles of organization.

Unlike *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, the arrangement of this book is not chronological. The conversations have been arranged thematically under various heads. While discussing some of the impor-

<sup>1</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 279.



tant themes, he starts with a principle, then quotes a *rawish* (practice) of the saints of his *silsilah* and then gives *burhan* (argument) in support of the practice. His method is clear and effective. The principles of '*Awarif-u'l-Ma'arif*, which as a matter of fact formed the basis of the Chishti mystic thought in the early middle ages, have been briefly indicated but very carefully illustrated in this work.

Some of the anecdotes relating to Shaikh Farid Ganj-i-Shakar and Shaikh Abu Bakr Tusi are interesting and informative. For instance, it is from this book alone that we know that the *Kafirani-Siyah Posh*<sup>1</sup> visited the *khanqah* of Baba Farid.

The book contains absolutely no reference to the political authorities of the day. The general attitude of the Shaikh towards government service is in keeping with the traditions of the Chishti *silsilah*. But like Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh-i-Dehli he made a distinction between government services of different types. Government servants who worked on clerical jobs and had nothing to do with the policy of the administration were entitled to be enrolled as mere disciples. Khwaja Rukn-u'd-din, who was a *dabir*, once expressed his desire to abandon government service but the Shaikh advised him to continue and serve the people. "Doing good to people is better than sitting in a lonely corner," he remarked.

From the linguistic point of view one fact deserves to be noted. There are a number of Hindi words and *duhras* in the *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal*.

The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* has neither the depth of *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* nor the pathos of *Khair-u'l-Majalis*, but it is wonderfully clear—a fact which makes it highly effective for instructing persons not fully conversant with the principles of higher mysticism. The *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad* demands from its reader, not only unflagging attention but also, penetrating intelligence to unravel the atmosphere in which the Shaikh spoke. The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* is so clear and lucid that it can be understood even by an amateur mystic. But it is not an assembly in which one moves while going through the book; it has the atmosphere of a book of aphorisms.

<sup>1</sup>See Rolf Henkl's interesting article, 'The Wooden Sculptures of Kafirstan,' in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XVI, no. 1, 1950, and the authorities referred therein.



Shaikh Farid's curt and brief letter to Balban recommending the case of a poor person, has been quoted by Amir Khurd.<sup>1</sup> The *Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal* quotes a letter which the saint wrote to a Wali of Multan. It began: 'Be it known to Sharaf-u'd-daulah.' The Shaikh did not write: "Sharaf-u'd-daulah-wa'd-din" because he did not know if he was really religious.<sup>2</sup>

It appears from this *malfuz* that the Chishtis and the Suhrawardis used to tie their *dastars* differently and that one could know about the *silsilah* one belonged to by merely looking at the head dress.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. The Sarur-u's-Sudur

The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* is a collection of the *malfuzat* of Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Nagauri, a distinguished disciple of Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti of Ajmer. Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din had settled at Nagaur at the instance of his spiritual master and eked out his meagre subsistence by ploughing a *bigha* of land.<sup>4</sup> He was the first Muslim child to see the light of the day in Delhi after its conquest by the forces of Sultan Mu'izz-u'd-din.<sup>5</sup> He was a typical representative of the Chishti mystic tradition and did not like to associate with the rulers or the bureaucracy. He refused to accept the grant of a village made by Iltutmish. For him the life of *shughl* (government service) was an abominable chain that fettered the soul. In his opinion wealth and sainthood were incompatibles, and he did not spare criticism of Shaikh Baha-u'd-din Zakarriya, the famous saint of Multan, for accumulating wealth.

Unfortunately the name of the compiler of *Sarur-u's-Sudur* is not clear from the text, but it is definite that he was a son of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Mahmud son of Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din. We know from other sources that Shaikh Farid had four sons: Shaikh 'Aziz, Shaikh Auhad, Shaikh Sa'id and Shaikh Najib. *Sarur-u's-Sudur* is the work of one of them. The compiler has

<sup>1</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>*Ahsan-u'l-Aqwal*, MS., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, pp. 156-57. According to Jamali the plot measured ten *jarib* only and was situated near a river, *Siyar-u'l-'Arifin*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, p. 8; *Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar*, p. 29.



mixed the conversations of his father and grandfather.

The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* contains interesting details about the life and thought of Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Nagauri who, as a *khalifa* of Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti of Ajmer, had zealously applied himself to the propagation of the Chishti mystic ideals in the heart of Rajasthan. It illustrates the way in which the Chishti saints identified themselves with the local conditions of life and won the affection and good will of the indigenous population. In the picture of Shaikh Hamid's life at Nagaur we get the earliest glimpse of a Muslim family in the countryside during the 13th century. Notwithstanding his scholarship and vast erudition the Shaikh led the life of a poor peasant. His total property was a small mud house and a *bigha* of land, half of which was cultivated in one season; the other half in the next.<sup>1</sup> There was a cow in the house and the Shaikh himself milked it.<sup>2</sup> His wife—a peasant woman—used to spin and prepare cloth.<sup>3</sup> Thus the family produced whatever it needed and did not extend its needs so as to bring itself into contact with the state machinery. The Shaikh was a strict vegetarian.<sup>4</sup> He believed in *ahimsa* and did not like to disturb even an ant.<sup>5</sup> The family of the Shaikh conversed mostly in Hindivi. We find brother being addressed as *bhai*, and mother as *mai*. The conversations of a saint who thus passed his days in an agricultural milieu but carried on his mystic mission with devotion and sincerity cannot be without interest.

The early mystic records contain very little about the life and thought of Shaikh Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti of Ajmer. The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* gives some interesting pieces of information about his family life, his favourite verses etc.

It appears from this *mal'fuz* that most of the important works on Muslim theology, mysticism and literature were available in India as early as the thirteenth century and the Chishti saints of the first cycle were fully conversant with this literature. The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* is invaluable for understanding the intellectual background of the mystics of the age.

<sup>1</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, pp. 156-57.

<sup>2</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>*Siyar-u's-Auliya*, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 52.



The Shaikh had a very definite and clear concept of mystic objectives—objectives which he persistently though quietly propagated at Nagaur. He used to cite Khwaja ‘Abdulla Ansari to bring home to his audience the principle that ‘bringing solace to human heart’ was a greater act of devotion than offering countless genuflexions of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Sultans, Iltutmish, Balban, Jalal-u’d-din Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughluq have been referred to. Iltutmish for his respectful attitude towards Shaikh Najib-u’d-din Nakhshabi whom he addressed as ‘father’;<sup>2</sup> Balban for his critical assessment of Minhaj-u’s-Siraj;<sup>3</sup> Jalal-u’d-din Khalji has been mentioned in the context of Husam Darvesh. The reference to Muhammad bin Tughluq is not without interest. In fact faint shadow of a contradiction covers this narration. Shaikh Hamid-u’d-din believed in a life of complete aloofness from worldly powers, yet his grandson Shaikh Fathullah had to marry Bibi Rasti, daughter of Muhammad bin Tughluq.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the Nagaur branch of the Chishti *silsilah* is the only branch where Muhammad bin Tughluq is referred to with some consideration and this was perhaps due to his relations with the saints of this branch.

The Shaikh was bitterly critical of people who indulged in *ihதாக* (hoarding and blackmarketing). “Their happiness lies in the misery of others”, he used to say.<sup>5</sup> He narrates a story:

In days gone by famine spread in a city. A pious man came to his house and asked his wife: “Is there any corn in the house?” She replied. ‘Yes, in one bag.’ He then asked his wife to open it and take it to the market and sell it. He further asked her to purchase corn every day from the market at the rate at which others purchase it, so that all may be in the same condition. What to do now when such Mussalmans are no more.<sup>6</sup>

It was through such anecdotes that moral lessons were taught

<sup>1</sup>*Sarur-u’s-Sudur*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>4</sup>For details, see Nizami’s article ‘Some Documents of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq’, *Medieval India—A Miscellany*, I, pp. 301-13.

<sup>5</sup>*Sarur-u’s-Sudur*, pp. 22, 58.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid.*, p. 58.



to the people. He mentions another story. Once a man entrusted to his friend some corn to be sold in the market at the current rate. The friend withheld the corn for some days expecting some rise in the price. When the owner came to know of this, he asked his friend to distribute the entire stock in charity as the whole stock had become batil (*bad*).<sup>1</sup> Having narrated this story the Shaikh laments that in his own days people believe in exploitation.

The Shaikh had totally rejected all materialistic pursuits (*tark-i-duniya*)<sup>2</sup> and was on that account known as *Sultan-u't-Tarikin*<sup>3</sup> but he never permitted anybody to live like a parasite. He exhorted people to be busy in some work and earn their bread with the sweat of their brow.<sup>4</sup>

Shaikh Hamid was an outstanding scholar, having a deep and critical insight into the classical literature. His observations about the works of Zamakhshari,<sup>5</sup> Ghazzali<sup>6</sup> and Fakhr-u'd-din Razi<sup>7</sup> reveal his vast erudition and critical acumen. The Shaikh was a poet also and is reported to have composed poetry in Arabic, Persian and Hindivi.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the stray remarks found in *Sarur-u's-Sudur* illumine the whole milieu. For instance, the Shaikh once told his audience that Sultan Mui'zz-u'd-din bin Sam (Shihab-u'd-din Muhammad Ghuri) had presented 5,000 books to Maulana Fakhr-u'd-din Razi<sup>9</sup> from his collection. This piece of information throws valuable light on the cultural atmosphere of Ghur and the level of academic eminence attained during the time of Shihab-u'd-din.

Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya, it is said, used a blanket (*galim*) of Kashmir.<sup>10</sup>

Incidentally the character of some '*ulama* is also brought to light. Balban's remarks about Minhaj have been referred to

<sup>1</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 1, 41, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, p. 30 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 44, 61.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, pp. 5, 31.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid*, p. 82.



earlier. Husam Darvesh was a very well-known preacher of medieval India. Barani has praised his eloquence, fluency, command of language, ready wit and power of conversation.<sup>1</sup> The *Sarur-u's-Sudur* refers to his greediness, his unbecoming behaviour at the court of Sultan Mui'zz-u'd-din Kaiqubad. During the time of Sultan Jalal-u'd-din Khalji people campaigned for recovering the gold he had accumulated during the regime of Kaiqubad. When Husam came to know of this he ascended the pulpit and said:

“I hear that they want to extort gold from me. Yes, but they should get it back from me in the same manner in which I had acquired it.”<sup>2</sup>

### 5. The *Asrar-u'l-Makhdumin*

The *Asrar-u'l-Makhdumin*<sup>3</sup> is the *malfuz* of Khwaja Karak and contains interesting anecdotes concerning the saint. It was compiled by Karim Yar. Nothing is known about the compiler or the date of compilation.

Khwaja Karak was a saint of Kara. He was held in high esteem by the people. 'Isami, Abul Fazl, Nizam-u'd-din, Ferishta and others refer to him with respect. 'Isami says that when 'Ala-u'd-din was planning to lead his army to Deogir, one morning he rode on a horse and went to the bazar. He found Karak sitting on a prayer-carpet. He proceeded close to him and wanted to get down from his horse, but the *majzub* raised a cry and said:

“O right royal veteran horseman! Do not dismount for God has installed you on the horse of a kingdom.”

'Ala-u'd-din was delighted at this remark which he took as a happy omen.<sup>4</sup> It is said that 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji again sought his benedictions when he was afraid of the Sultan's reaction to his Deogir campaign. The saint prophesied on this occasion:

“Whoever makes war on thee,  
May his head be in boat and body in the Ganges.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>*Sarur-u's-Sudur*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Printed at Nasim-i Hind Press, Fatehpur Hasva, 1893.

<sup>4</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 229; tr. II, p. 396.

<sup>5</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, I, p. 136; Ferishta, I, p. 100.



It appears that Karak generally spoke in rhymed prose or in verse. Some of his verses reveal mature mystic thought. Once some musicians came from Delhi and started reciting Persian verses. Karak got irritated and said: "Leave that. Recite something in Hindivi which is more commonly understood."

Once 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji sent a man to Kara to bring Khwaja Karak to Delhi. He replied: "I have nothing to do with Dehli, Arabia, Bukhara or Iraq," and then recited the following quatrain:

I am contented with dry bread and vegetable. I do not want  
delicious dishes or roasted goat. May Delhi, Samarqand,  
Bukhara and Iraq all four be yours, mine be (only) Kara.

A saintly person from Delhi who was a stipend-holder 'at the khanqah of Sultan Ghiyas-u'd-din left his family behind and came to Kara to meet the Khwaja'.<sup>1</sup> 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji appointed one Malik 'Abdulla to bring under control the *mauza's* of Barauti and Mahva. The Malik sent gifts to the saint and sought his spiritual help in the successful performance of his job.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that *qalandars* did not like Khwaja Karak and once they came even to kill him.<sup>3</sup>

The *malfuz* abounds in innumerable references to wine. A vintner Bholā Khummar is reported to have supplied wine to him. The vintner, it is said, later on got converted to Islam.<sup>4</sup> The Khwaja, it appears, was critical of those superstitious and idolatrous practices which were somehow continued in some Muslim families. The story of a cloth merchant—'Ali Bazaz—is narrated in this context.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. The Siraj-u'l-Hidaya

The *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya* is a collection of the conversations of Syed Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari Makhdum-i-Jahanian<sup>6</sup>, (707-785/

<sup>1</sup>*Asrar-u'l-Makhdumin*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup>For brief accounts of his life, see 'Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 514-16; *Siyar-u'l-'Arifin*, pp. 155 *et seq*; *Akhbar-u'l-Akhyar*, pp. 139-40.



1308-1384) transcribed by Maulana Ahmad Mu'in Siahposh 'Alavi of Iraj on the basis of a copy of the conversations of the saint supplied to him by his son, Makhdumzada 'Abdulla. It appears that this—*malfuz* is the result of the mixing up of two accounts one prepared by Styahposh and the other by 'Abdulla. Some of the passages are loosely woven in the pattern and some detailed discussions seem to have been added subsequently. This compilation was, however, made when the saint visited Delhi for the last time.

The *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*<sup>1</sup> contains considerable information of historical significance—both political and cultural. It has detailed discussions on some mystical and religious themes. The mixing up of different accounts has, however, effected the unity of treatment and the impact of the narrative.

It comprises nine chapters dealing with *ahadis*, problems of *fiqh*, *shari'at* laws, stories of prophets, origin of sects etc. During the course of these discussions the saint referred to more than forty books on *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*. Some of the books referred to are extinct. Some of the *ahadis* (traditions of the Prophet) quoted by him are not found in standard collections. Khan-i-Azam Zafar Khan was all-praise for the Shaikh's knowledge of *fiqh*.<sup>2</sup> The saint refers to a book on sects, *Ma 'rifat-u'l-Mazahib*, written by Imam Abu Hanifa.<sup>3</sup> In his account of sects he refers to *Ibahatis*<sup>4</sup> also. It seems that perhaps he included the *Ibahatis* among those Muslim sects which had gone astray.

The saint had great love for India, and believed that blessings which God had bestowed on India, no other land in the world could claim to possess.<sup>5</sup> According to him Prophet Shis and Prophet Ayyub lie buried in Awadh.<sup>6</sup>

This *malfuz* reflects Suhrawardi attitude towards rulers and the state. Unlike Chishtis, the Suhrawardis mixed with the rulers, accepted government posts, endowments and *jagirs*. The saint exhorts the people to be absolutely loyal to the Sultan.<sup>7</sup> He

<sup>1</sup>MSS., Aligarh Muslim University Library, Etawah Collection, Personal Collection. References here are to the Etawah MS.

<sup>2</sup>*Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*, f. 47b.

<sup>3</sup>ibid, f. 161b.

<sup>4</sup>ibid, ff. 164a-65a.

<sup>5</sup>ibid, f. 4a.

<sup>6</sup>ibid, f. 19b.

<sup>7</sup>ibid, f. 16a.



quotes a fabricated *hadis* of the Prophet to the effect that whoever obeyed the Sultan obeyed God.<sup>1</sup> It is further remarked that people get the government they deserve. 'Their actions determine their rulers.'<sup>2</sup> One day the saint was asked : Is it permitted to show respect to anybody when one is reading the Qur'an ? The saint replied that respect should be shown to mother, father, teacher, spiritual master (*pir*), descendants of Hazrat Ali (i.e. Syeds) and the king.<sup>3</sup>

Firoz Shah, it appears, had offered a grant of villages and stipends to him. The saint accepted it for the benefit of 'the creatures of God'.<sup>4</sup> One day he explained to his audience the purpose of his visit to Delhi. A teacher of the saint died leaving behind a family which comprised seven girls. He came to Delhi for arranging state support for them.<sup>5</sup>

The saint's attitude towards the education of the low-born was the same as that of Zia-u'd-din Barani in his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*. "Do'nt throw pearls before swines".<sup>6</sup> But he approvingly quotes the conduct of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh-i-Dehli in drinking with a leper without any hesitation.<sup>7</sup> The Shaikh quotes with approbation the views of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya and Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh regarding distribution of food without any discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

One day Zafar Khan asked the saint about the real significance of *sharaf* (nobility). The saint replied that nobility was of four types : excellence of qualities, excellence of person, excellence of place and the real excellence. Excellence of qualities meant excellence which is the result of prayers and performance of religious obligations ; excellence of person meant excellence due to scholarship and learning, richness or poverty ; excellence of place meant living at places of religious sanctity, like Mecca and Medina ; the *real* excellence, however, meant having ancestors distinguished for learning and piety.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Siraj-u'l-Hidaya.*

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, f. 19a.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, f. 30a.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, f. 95a.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, ff. 129a-129 b.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, f. 21b.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, f. 11a.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, ff. 35b-36a.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, ff. 20b-21a.



There is strong condemnation of hoarding and black marketing in the *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*. The saint quotes a tradition of the Prophet: "A hoarder is a condemned person", and advocates social boycott of all those who indulge in *ihதாகar*. "Don't eat with them", he advised his followers.<sup>1</sup>

The saint considered the imposition of the following taxes as irreligious:<sup>2</sup>

*Dalalat-i-Bazarha*, tax on brokers.

*Jazari*, tax on butchers for cow slaughter.

*Amir Mutrabi*, amusement tax.

*Jakri Ghalla*, octroi on grains and cereals.

*Hasil-i Kayyalan*, tax realized from weighmen.

*Habba*, (explained on the margin as putting a mark on the forehead and coming to the river).

*Khumaran*, tax on vintners.

*Bagnigaran*, tax on sellers of malt liquor.

*Mahi faroshan*, tax on sale of fish.

*Subzi-wa-tara faroshan*, tax on the sale of vegetables.

*Lahras*, tax on taverns.

*Sabun garan*, tax on soap making.

*Musadara faroshan*, it is perhaps *musadarat*, fines of different kinds.

*Gul faroshan*, tax on sellers of roses.

*Juzi*, literally a part'.

Property of the dead.

Property placed in some body's custody, and

*Nisbat-wa-Qismat* (distribution of inheritance).

It is significant to note that many of these taxes were later remitted by Firoz Shah Tughluq.<sup>3</sup>

It appears that *Shab-i-Barat* was celebrated in those days by cracking fireworks. The Shaikh considered this as *bid'at* (innovation) and disapproved of it.<sup>4</sup> He even criticised some of the royal practices, e.g., the custom of sacrificing animals when the Sultan or any noble returned home. He declared it *haram*<sup>5</sup> (pro-

<sup>1</sup>*Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*, ff. 25b, 26a, 26b.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, ff. 33a, 33b.

<sup>3</sup>For details see, *Futuh-at-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 5-6 ; 'Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 373-79.

<sup>4</sup>*Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*, f. 76a.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, ff. 20b-21a.



hibited). Use of instruments in music (*sama'*) was considered illegal by him.<sup>1</sup> It was objectionable if women appeared before people without *pardah*.<sup>2</sup> The Shaikh did not permit kissing of graves.<sup>3</sup> He used to say that the construction of square graves was an Indian innovation. He did not see graves like that in any country, Khurasan or Arabia.<sup>4</sup> The Shaikh was of the opinion that wages for reciting the *Qu'ran* on the graves were illegal.<sup>5</sup> He believed that after thirty years the *khilafat* turned into an agency of exploitation.<sup>6</sup>

The *Siraj-u'l Hidayah* gives interesting details about the Thatta campaigns of Firoz Shah.<sup>7</sup>

### 7. The Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis

The *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis*<sup>8</sup> is a record of the table-talks of Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi, a distinguished saint of Gujarat, whose name is associated with the foundation of the city of Ahmadabad. One of his disciples Mahmud b. Sa'd b. Sadr Sufi Irij, compiled this *malfuz*.

Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi<sup>9</sup> lived up to the patriarchal age of 111 years (b. 737/1336; d. 849/1447). Born in a noble family of Delhi, he was separated from his parents by a cyclone and was brought up by a saint of the Maghribi order, Baba Ishaq, who happened to find him accidentally. Muhammad bin Tughluq had high esteem for Baba Ishaq. According to Abul Fazl, Baba Ishaq settled at Khattu—a rocky area in Nagaur district—at a

<sup>1</sup>*Siraj-u'l-Hidaya*, f. 49b.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, f. 55a.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, f. 6a.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, f. 16b.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, ff. 143b-44a.

<sup>8</sup>MS., in India Office Library, Persian Collection, D.P. 977. An Urdu translation, based on another manuscript available in the Library of the Dargah of Pir Muhammad Shah of Ahmadabad, no. 8/471, was published by Syed Abu Zafar Nadavi, Ma'arif Press, Azamgarh, 1939. References here are to the India Office manuscript.

<sup>9</sup>For details of his life see *Medieval India—A Miscellany*, III, Nizami's article 'Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi as a great Historical Personality,' pp. 234-59.



spiritual direction from Khwaja Mu'in-u'd-din Chishti.<sup>1</sup> He looked after Shaikh Ahmad with the care and affection of a real father. Shaikh Ahmad received his early education at Delhi. Later he subjected himself to severe penitences. Continuous fasts reduced his body to a skeleton. After Baba Ishaq's death Shaikh Ahmad set out on pilgrimage to Arabia, Iraq and Iran. On his return to India, he made short visits to Sind, Delhi and other places. He was in Delhi when Timur invaded the capital (1398). He met Timur and even accompanied him on his return journey. Later on, at the request of Zafar Khan and his son Tatar Khan, Shaikh Ahmad settled at Sarkhej, six miles south-west of the later city of Ahmadabad. The city of Ahmadabad was founded by Sultan Ahmad Shah (1411-1442) at his instance. Shaikh Ahmad's name is associated with the religious and cultural history of Gujarat during the fifteenth century.

The *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* is a work of inferior quality as a *malfuz* but it contains some very interesting pieces of information regarding Shaikh Ahmad's contact with Timur and the nature of his work at Ahmadabad. Mawlana Mahmud's approach was determined by two considerations: first, to present his spiritual master as a saint with extraordinary powers to work miracles and, secondly, to establish himself as one who was closest to his mentor and enjoyed his confidence more than any other disciple. Both these considerations were bound to have an adverse effect on the treatment of the subject. The *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* consequently appears wrapped all through in a supernatural atmosphere which fascinates one interested in miracles but disappoints a serious student of history anxious to trace the impact of his teachings on contemporary society.

Mawlana Mahmud says in the preface to his work that he had obtained permission from his master for preparing a collection of his conversations. It appears, however, that he did not record the conversations regularly or as they took place but prepared his work on the basis of his reminiscences. Events which took place during a span of several years have been put together in one *majlis* in order to bring out the miracle element in them. The compiler, not the Shaikh, was responsible for this as is evident from the trend of the narrative. This shortcoming of *Tuhfat-*

<sup>1</sup>*A'in-i Akbari*, II, p. 212.



*u'l-Majalis* necessitates a critical effort to separate the chaff from the grain and to cull facts of historical significance from a labyrinth of incredible miracle stories.

All said and done, the *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* supplies some very interesting pieces of information about Timur's invasion of Delhi. Along with other inhabitants of the capital, Shaikh Ahmad was also taken into custody by the soldiers of Timur. The account of his captivity, as narrated by the Shaikh to his audience, is perhaps the only available eye-witness account of Timur's camp of prisoners. After mass arrests of the people of Delhi, the prisoners were divided into groups of 40 and each group was tied with a rope 'like beads in a rosary.' The prisoners were not given anything to eat. Starvation deaths were inevitable. Many prisoners died helplessly. Shaikh Ahmad somehow managed to have a supply of 40 loaves of bread at mid-night. This he distributed to the prisoners of his group and saved their lives. One day a Turkbachcha who was related to Timur, came to inspect the camp. He found that in every *silk* 10 to 15 prisoners had died but the *silk* to which Shaikh Ahmad belonged had not lost a single soul. He enquired about the reasons and the people told him pointing towards Shaikh Ahmad that it was he who gave them bread from some mysterious source. The Shaikh and others of his group would have lost their heads then and there had the source been detected but its mysterious nature excited the superstitious curiosity of the Turkbachcha who rushed to Timur to report the matter. The Shaikh was immediately summoned and interrogated. He replied that it was God who fed the people and kept them alive. "How can I feed anybody?", he submitted to Timur, "it is God the Sustainer who supplies sustenance to people." Timur got the impression that the Shaikh was thereby suggesting obliquely that it was from some miraculous source that he had supplied the bread. "If you have such power," Timur turned to Shaikh Ahmad, "why didn't you come to know about my invasion and manage to escape from Delhi before my forces reached here?" The general bearing of the Shaikh and his saintly ways however attracted Timur's attention. His mood changed and the fury which had taken the toll of several thousand innocent people of Delhi cooled down. Not only the *silk* of Shaikh Ahmad but the entire arrested population was set free. This brought Shaikh Ahmad suddenly into promi-



nence and the people of Delhi, generation after generation, remembered with profound feelings of gratitude his contribution in rescuing them from the wrath of Timur.<sup>1</sup>

When Timur started on his journey back home, Shaikh Ahmad also accompanied him. At a narrow pass where the Mughal soldiers had to cross one by one, Shaikh Ahmad happened to see some of the ladies of Timur's *harem*. These ladies were surrounded by a contingent of eunuchs. Some of them expressed faith in the saint and communicated through the eunuchs, a number of whom had become attached to Shaikh Ahmad. Prince Shah Rukh and his contingent of women, soldiers and servants displayed great respect for the Shaikh and thus he came to be surrounded by hundreds of admirers. One day the Shaikh thought of an interview with Timur. He proceeded towards his tent without first obtaining his permission. Five hundred fully armed Turkbachchas stood there guarding the entrance; another contingent of 500 stood on Timur's left. On a rostrum as high as a man's height sat Timur talking to Shaikh Abdul Awwal, a descendant of the author of *Hidayah*, the famous law book. The Turkbachchas were at first hesitant but later permitted Shaikh Ahmad to enter the *darbar*. He got close to the rostrum. Timur received him with consideration and asked him to take a seat near him. Turning to Shaikh 'Abdul Awwal, Timur said: "You place some academic problems before Shaikh Ahmad for elucidation." Shaikh 'Abdul Awwal and Shaikh Ahmad Maghribi were denizens of two different worlds: one an externalist scholar with a traditional and legalistic approach towards all problems of religion and society; the other, a mystic with a spiritual and otherworldly outlook, interested more in spirit than the letter of the law. It was obvious that the two could never agree, but Timur enjoyed the discussion and when it was on the verge of taking an unpleasant turn, he ordered food to be served.<sup>2</sup> Conscious of the presence of Timur, the two guests took little from the dishes. Timur noticed this and insisted: "Be easy and take freely."<sup>3</sup> Timur recommended

<sup>1</sup>*Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis*, f. 7a.

Badaoni, *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, I, p. 270, refers to the role of the Shaikh in securing the pardon of Timur.

<sup>2</sup>*Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis*, ff. 8a-8b.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*



one dish after another to them. He put a dish of meat soup before Shaikh Ahmad. Timur enjoyed all this and smilingly overlooked every breach of his table manners. This provides an interesting side-light on the character of Timur. During his stay in Samarqand, Shaikh Ahmad was once invited to a feast by Malik Saif in which many *'ulama* and *mashaikh* were also present, and was seated at a central place.<sup>1</sup>

The most important phase of Shaikh Ahmad's life began when he settled at Sarkhej and played a significant role in the foundation and development of the city of Ahmadabad. It appears that when the city was built there cropped up some conflict with Manak Jogi (whom the author of the *malfuz* calls a *dev* demon in order to intensify the mysterious and supernatural atmosphere). The saint intervened and succeeded in settling the matter amicably by naming one of the quarters of the new city after him.<sup>2</sup>

The Khanqah of Shaikh Ahmad developed into one of the biggest religious centres of medieval Gujarat. Thousands of visitors—Hindus and Muslim, rich and poor, government servants and merchants—thronged his hospice. Initially Maulana Mansur, an inmate of the *khanqah*, kept the account of the *futuh* (unasked for presents) that came to him. Later on a *baqqal* was entrusted with the maintenance of accounts. It appears from the *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* that the annual expenditure on his kitchen came to 1,25,000 *tankas*.<sup>3</sup>

The Shaikh was sometimes depressed at the distraction caused in his spiritual work and concentration by the stream of visitors that continuously flowed into his *khanqah*.<sup>4</sup> But he kept contact with the people and fulfilled their needs as best as he could. A man came all the way from Mandu to solicit his help in the marriage of his daughters and the Shaikh gave him more money than he expected. When some of the *Khanqah* people expressed their surprise at the amount of money given to him, the Shaikh remarked: "How can this *durwesh* give anything to anybody. The real Giver is Allah."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis*, ff. 26b-27a; also ff. 7a-9a.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, f. 52a.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, ff. 19a, 19b.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, ff. 24a, 24b.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, f. 25b.



There are references in this *malfuz* to discussions with Hindus about the significance of the concept of *avatar* in Hinduism.<sup>1</sup> What helped the Shaikh in his communication with non-Muslim religious groups was his knowledge of several languages. Besides Persian, he knew and spoke Hindi and Gujarati<sup>2</sup> and recited verses from these languages. He knew music also. Once he said: "During my youth whoever heard my musical tones fell in love with me."<sup>3</sup>

During the days of his adversity a poor old lady Bibi Bhuri of *ghosi* family had helped him by offering milk and pudding. The Shaikh never forgot Bibi Bhuri. When he was at the height of his fame at Sarkhej, a man came to see him and told him that he was the grandson of Bibi Bhuri and had come from Khattu, a world of memories glowed in his mind; he enquired about each and every member of Bibi Bhuri's family and entertained him with profound affection.<sup>4</sup>

The *Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis* needs a critical and careful study. As soon as the crust of miracles is removed – and it is not difficult to take it away—the personality of Shaikh Ahmad emerges with all its charm and nobility. How he kept contact with the ordinary people at a time when his *khanqah* was thronged by princes and merchants and how he became the cynosure of public eyes in Ahmadabad can be read in the pages of this *malfuz*.

<sup>1</sup>*Tuhfat-u'l-Majalis*, f. 66a.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, f. 64b.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, f. 30a.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, ff. 16, a & b.



## CHAPTER 8

### The So-called Autobiography of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq

It was in July 1930 that Prof. Muhammad Habib thus drew the attention of the scholars and students of history to the existence of an Autobiography of Muhammad bin Tughluq : "The great Sultan was not unaware of the misunderstandings and suspicions by which he had been pursued throughout his career, and like many educated Muslim kings, he wrote an account of his reign with his own hand. The invaluable volume, which would have explained the whole mystery to us, has perished, or, as is more likely, it has been intentionally destroyed. But four or five pages have escaped the hand of the despoiler and may be seen appended to a beautiful volume<sup>1</sup> of the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* in the British Museum."<sup>2</sup> Some eight years after this, Dr. Agha Mehdi Husain made a thorough use<sup>3</sup> of this autobiography in his learned monograph on the *Rise and Fall of Muhammad bin Tughluq* and declared : "The Autobiography illumines and explains many of Barani's obscure passages regarding the psychology and character of Sultan Muhammad. It enables the reader to understand the Sultan's attitude towards his predecessors and particularly towards his own father, Ghiyas-u'd-din Tughluq. It also explains the causes of the Sultan's complete surrender to the Abbasid Caliph. Furthermore, the Autobiography brings to light the nature of the difficulties confronting the Sultan as ruler of India, and finally it helps us to form an estimate of the circumstances that led to the break-up of the empire and the troubles that overwhelmed the Emperor."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Add. 25, 758.

<sup>2</sup>*The Intermediate College Magazine*, Aligarh, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>He has published a facsimile of these memoirs along with an English translation of this fragment in his book.

<sup>4</sup>*Rise and Fall of Muhammad bin Tughluq*, p. xi.



It is surprising that the learned writers never thought of putting to themselves the question whether the fragment in their hands was genuine.<sup>1</sup> A closer study of this work and an analysis of its contents leads to the conclusion that it is a fake and should be bracketted with that vast mass of fabricated literature—comprising *malfuzat* (conversations of saints), *diwans* (collections of poetic works), *aurad* (litanies), collections of *wasaya* (precepts) and political treatises—which was produced in medieval India and put into the market as genuine for the consumption of the uncritical and credulous reading public.

The first and by far the most important question that must be asked in this connection is : How was it that a work from the pen of a monarch like Muhammad bin Tughluq remained unnoticed by contemporary and later historians ? The Sultan was, undoubtedly, one of those eminent personalities of his age in whom both the Indians and the foreigners were equally interested. His projects had excited curiosity in every mind to have a glimpse of the working of that heated and enthusiastic imagination which had conjured up a world of its own. Almost every section of the Indian population was anxious to know the enigmatic Sultan's complex psychology and to study his reactions to different situations. In fact a work from his pen could not remain in oblivion. If this work was of a purely private nature and was not intended to be made known to the people, Barani at least could not have remained ignorant of it because he was one of the closest associates of the Sultan and had discussions with him on highly confidential and personal matters.<sup>2</sup> This absence of reference in all contemporary and later works militates against its genuineness. In fact no further argument is needed to establish its spurious character, but since it is not fair to base a positive conclusion on a negative argument, we may proceed to scrutinize its contents.

Muhammad bin Tughluq, as we know him on the authority of contemporary Indian and non-Indian works, was an erudite scholar, well versed in almost every science then known to Orient-

<sup>1</sup>With great diffidence I placed my views about this fragment before Prof. Muhammad Habib who agreed with me and told me that he, too, was now of the opinion that like many other works of similar nature, this fragment also is a fabrication. He further informed me that his attention was first drawn to this fragment by Mr. Shuaib Qureshi.

<sup>2</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 509, 511, 516, 521-22.



tals. He had an invaluable gifts of fluency and, as Barani remarks, no one ever felt tired of listening to his conversations.<sup>1</sup> "He was an adept in the use of similes and metaphors, and his literary discourses, saturated with the influence of Persian classics, extorted admiration from the professed litterateurs of the age. Even the most practised rhetoricians found it difficult to rival the richness of imagination, the elegance of the taste and the ready command over the instrument of language, which he displayed in his literary productions."<sup>2</sup> . . . This fragment does not bear the stamp of this scholarship. There is neither that classic polish nor that imaginative insight which one justly expects from a scholar of Muhammad bin Tughluq's stature. Poor in planning, halting in expression, weak in argumentation, it is definitely a work of an inferior intellect. To attribute its authorship to Muhammad bin Tughluq is to reduce him to a frothy mediocrity, unworthy both of Barani's praises and 'Isami's invectives.

The opinions expressed in this fragment betray horrible ignorance of the men and movements of medieval India. Almost every predecessor of Muhammad bin Tughluq stands condemned here. It is indisputable that Muhammad bin Tughluq, who had a ripe political experience and a thorough knowledge of history, could not thus frame an indictment against a whole era and distort his estimates of some of the leading personalities of medieval India, like Balban and 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji, into meaningless philippics. One feels inclined to repeat here the remark which Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh made with reference to the fabricated *malfuzat*:

"There is much in it which is not worthy of their sayings."<sup>3</sup>

In fact this fragment also contains much which is not worthy of Muhammad bin Tughluq. Whatever one might say against him, he was not a braggart. He could not blacken a whole age in order to create a suitable background for his own glorification.

Here Muhammad bin Tughluq is made to observe about Balban:

"Since the date when the above-mentioned Balban assumed the

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 463.

<sup>2</sup>*History of the Qaraunah Turks*, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup>*Khair-u'l Majalis*, p. 52.



title of Sultan Ghiyas-u'd-din he committed so many outrages and atrocities that religion grew weaker and weaker day by day and the commandments of Islam were not enforced, so that the majority of the people took to committing outrages. Indulgence in this evil they regarded as a source of benefit. Tyranny came to be regarded as a befitting and legitimate title to sovereignty. And so the kingdom passed from one usurper to another and from one rebel to the next rebel. And the recognition (?) of the rightful Imam, which is one of the laws established by the Prophet and the cause of the advancement of the Muslim community along the path of righteousness, became effaced from the hearts (of the people). Whereas whosoever does not show his obedience to the dignity of that saintly person (the Imam), the name of that accursed man must be cancelled from the list of Islam."

There can be no two opinions about the unscrupulous means employed by Balban in order to secure the throne and consolidate his power, but to assert that as a result of his policy "religion grew weaker and weaker day by day" is misleading. Balban was deeply respectful in his attitude towards the religious practices and the religious classes and, in spite of his emphasis on the dignified parts of kingship,<sup>1</sup> he visited the houses of saints and attended their sermons.<sup>2</sup> He was punctilious in offering prayers and very often he kept vigils.<sup>3</sup> His life was, on the whole, simple and austere. It is, therefore, unwarranted to say that he, in any way, exercised an adverse influence on the religious life of his age. Barani has praised the achievements of the age of Balban in the sphere of religion and has called it "the best of all ages."<sup>4</sup> It was the age of such religious celebrities as Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i Shakar, Shaikh Badr-u'd-din Ghaznawi, Shaikh Malik Yar Parran and Sayyidi Maula, every one of whom was a centre of religious and spiritual activity.<sup>5</sup>

The statement that as a result of Balban's policy "the majority of the people took to committing outrages" is, again, incorrect

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>3</sup>See *Fawa'id-u'l-Fu'ad*, pp. 231-32.

<sup>4</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 112.



and misleading. Balban's ideals of equity and justice are too well known to be recapitulated.<sup>1</sup> He was stern and uncompromising no doubt, but his authority was just, enlightened and tolerant. One utterly ignorant of the spirit of Balban's administration could make this statement which flies in the face of all authentic historical facts.

To ascribe to Balban any attempt to ignore the Khalifa is to express an opinion which is strongly contradicted by positive historical evidence. Balban's faith in the final sovereignty of the Khalifa was so deep-rooted that he continued to inscribe on his coins the name of the Khalifa even after the sack of Baghdad by Hulaku.<sup>2</sup> In the 'Garhmukhtesar inscription (dated 682 AH/1283 AD) he takes pride in calling himself Nasir-i Amir-u'l Muminin.<sup>3</sup> It is said that he had even advised his sons to seek recognition of their authority from the Abbasids.<sup>4</sup>

There is an accusation in this fragment that the Sultans of Delhi were generally neglectful of their obligations to the Khalifa. This, again, is wrong. No Sultan of Delhi, with the solitary exception of Sultan Qutb-u d-din Mubarak Khalji,<sup>5</sup> ever adopted an attitude of indifference towards the Khilafat.<sup>6</sup>

The *fragment* gives startling information when it says about Sultan Jalal-u'd-din Khalji:

'And during the five years (of his rule) the Muslims of this country were afflicted with the darkness of his tyranny.'

From what we know about the character and activities of Sultan Jalal-u'd-din, this statement appears to be an absolute lie. If Jalal-u'd-din erred it was on the side of benevolence and leniency. Barani calls him 'the mild Sultan' and says: "It was quite alien to the Sultan's nature to kill or punish human beings or to seize their wealth by compulsion and force. He never confiscated the property and goods of Mussalmans; he

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>*Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, p. 134; *The Sultans of Delhi, their Coinage and Metrology*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>*Chronicles*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup>*Nuh Sipihr*, p. 286; *Chronicles*, pp. 179-82; *Coinage and Metrology*, pp. 96-102.

<sup>6</sup>See *Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, ch. II, The Legal Sovereign.



never degraded a man he had promoted and never disgraced and molested the officers and slaves who had served him loyally.”<sup>1</sup>

The following observations about Sultan ‘Ala-u’-d-din Khalji also deserve to be noted:

“He neither knew anything about the fundamentals of Islam nor had he the slightest conception about the duties of kingship (?) or government. During his reign no trace of Islam remained. What was legitimate was made illegitimate and vice versa.”<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to agree with this estimate of ‘Ala-u’-d-din Khalji and his age. The Khalji Sultan may or may not have known the fundamentals of Islam,<sup>3</sup> but there can be no doubt about it that he was fully conversant with the duties of kingship. To say that “during his reign no trace of Islam remained” is to make a statement against which one can marshal a considerable array of evidence. Accounts of eminent contemporaries like Shaikh Nasir-u’-d-din Chiragh-i-Dehli,<sup>4</sup> Amir Khusrau,<sup>5</sup> Amir Hasan Sijzi<sup>6</sup> and ‘Isami<sup>7</sup> bear eloquent testimony to the flourishing condition of Islamic institutions and the general prosperity of the Muslim society during the ‘Alai period. Even Zia-u’-d-din Barani who had nothing favourable to say about the personal religion of ‘Ala-u’-d-din, thus remarks about the ‘Alai age: “The ninth wonder, which was seen in the last ten years of ‘Ala-u’-d-din’s reign, was that the hearts of most Mussalmans became inclined to rectitude, truthfulness, justice and piety and honesty became common in the dealings of men. . . The hearts of men having turned to virtue

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>2</sup>*Rise and Fall of Muhammad bin Tughluq*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup>As a result of Barani’s peculiar portraiture of the Sultan it has become a common practice with the historians to blame ‘Ala-u’-d-din Khalji for having scant respect towards the *shari‘at*. Moreover he is depicted as a godless king. Four other eminent contemporaries of ‘Ala-u’-d-din Khalji—Shaikh Nasir-u’-d-din Chiragh-i-Dehli, Amir Khusrau, Amir Hasan and ‘Isami—have painted the Sultan in entirely different colours. For a detailed discussion of the problem, see Nizami, *Salatin-i-Dehli kay mazhabi rujhanat*, pp. 259-67.

<sup>4</sup>*Khair-u’l-Majalis*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>5</sup>*Dawal Rani*, pp. 46-47; *Matla’-u’l Anwar*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>*Diwani-i-Amir Hasan*, pp. 453, 455, 467, 472.

<sup>7</sup>*Futuh-u’s-Salatin*, pp. 300-01.



and virtuous acts, the very name of wine, gambling and other sinful things never came to any body's lips; sins and dirty vices appeared to people as bad as infidelity."<sup>1</sup>

The fragment contains a condemnation of the philosophers and a denunciation of the rationalistic approach to life and its problems. We are made to believe that the Sultan's attachment with the philosophers was a passing phase in his life and that very soon his faith in rationalism was shaken and he came back to the path of orthodox religion. As is evident from Barani's account, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq's attachment with the philosophers continued throughout his life. No contemporary or even later writer supports the *fragment*. Had it been a fact, Barani at least would have jubilantly mentioned it.

Is this *fragment* part of an autobiography or is it part of some other document of a political character? It has, no doubt, an autobiographical tinge and an undercurrent of *Apologia Pro-Vita Sua*, but it is too brief and concise to be an autobiography. Dr. Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi's contention that it is "part of a Persian version of the Sultan's application to the Egyptian Caliph for recognition"<sup>2</sup> does not in any way alter the position. Muhammad bin Tughluq could never approach the Caliph with such misleading and false statements. Whether part of an autobiography or part of some of political document, this *fragment* is a ludicrous tissue of falsehoods from beginning to end and to attribute its authorship to Muhammad bin Tughluq is to condemn him to unmerited obloquy.

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 341 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>*Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, p. 16.



## CHAPTER 9

### The Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi as a Medieval Inscription

The *Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi*<sup>1</sup> of Firoz Shah Tughluq has been interpreted by scholars as a memoir, as an autobiography, as a political treatise and as an administrative manual. It has not been studied as an inscription which it originally was and in which lies its real historical significance. In fact, no assessment of its historical value is possible without an appreciation of the fact that it was an inscription and appeared on a mosque. On an octagonal cupola in the Jama' Masjid of Firozabad, Sultan Firoz Shah inscribed an account of his achievements which he had compiled under the title *Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi*. Nizam-u'd-din Ahmad Bakhshi informs us:<sup>2</sup>

There is a brochure in which Firoz Shah has collected an account of the events of his life and which he has named as *Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi*. This king, the refuge of justice, erected a lofty dome on the Jama' Masjid of Firozabad which was octagonal. On the eight sides of this dome, the contents of his book, which has been so planned as to run into eight chapters, have been inscribed on stone.

This was perhaps the longest Persian inscription of the medieval period. Why did Firoz at all think of such an inscription?

<sup>1</sup>The British Museum manuscript of the *Futuhat*, Rieu, III, p. 920 was transcribed for Sir Henry Elliot in July 1853 at Shahjahanabad under the supervision of Nawab Zia-u'd-din Khan Nayyir Rakhshan. No other manuscript of this work is noticed in any known catalogue. In 1302/1882, Syed Mir Hasan published its text from the Rizvi Press, Delhi. All later editions (a) N.B. Roy, *JRASB*, VII, 1941, English translation in *Islamic Culture*, 1941, (b) S.A. Rashid and M.A. Makhdoomi, *Aligarh Muslim University Journal*, and (c) A. Chaghtai, *Kitab Khana-i-Nauras*, Poona, 1941, are based on this edition.

<sup>2</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, Eng. trans I, p. 239.



Firoz Shah was keenly interested in the preservation of Indian monuments and had evinced particular interest in the pillars of Asoka. Perhaps the idea of communicating with the people through inscriptions came to him from the Asokan pillars. The identity or inspiration does not end here.

The Delhi-Topra Pillar which was removed by the orders of Firoz Shah from its original site to its present position in Delhi, is the longest of the pillar edicts of Asoka. It gives a sort of a summary of what Asoka did for "the progress of men by an adequate promotion of *Dharma*" and has consequently been called by Thomas as "the testament of Asoka." The *Futuhāt*, likewise, contains an enunciation of Firoz Shah's policy and achievements. Asoka deals with 'the progress of *Dharma*' promoted in two ways—by restrictions of *Dharma* and by conversion (Section 35). The restrictions of *Dharma*, or *dharma niyama* as Asoka calls them, were both positive and negative: the positive virtues being compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity, obedience to parents etc. and the negative restrictions being the killing of animals, hurting of living beings etc. Firoz speaks at the very outset about extirpation of innovations and persuasion to perform the obligatory duties. Asoka refers, in sections 17, 18 and 19 of his inscription, to planting of trees, mango-groves, digging of wells and construction of rest houses. Almost in the similar strain Firoz speaks about his efforts in repairing the two main tanks of Delhi—*Hauz-i-Shamsi* and the *Hauz-i-'Alai*—and other public works.

In Section 33 of his edict, Asoka refers to "courtesy to the aged, and courtesy to the Brahmans and Sramanas, to the poor and the distressed." Paras 23 and 24 of the *Futuhāt* read as follows:

23. Again, through the grace of God my heart was filled with care for the devout and the poor and the desire to win their hearts. Whenever I found a *faqir* or a recluse I went to see him and asked him to pray for me in order to gain the distinction promised by the saying: "Most excellent is the *amir* (king) who comes to the poor or a *faqir*."

24. Again, when any of the nobles of the state completed the natural term of his (working) life and attained to old age, I provided for his subsistence and relieved him (of his official duties). I advised him to equip himself for the next world.



Another important similarity to which attention may be drawn is that on the western side of the column, as Cunningham points out,<sup>1</sup> there were stumps of two short octagonal granite pillars which seemed to have formed part of a cloister or open gallery around a fourth storey. The cupola on which the *Futuhat* was inscribed was also octagonal and it is just possible that it might have stood very near the Asokan Pillar.

While it would be egregious to suggest that Firoz Shah had deciphered the Asokan Pillars or had any very specific knowledge about them, the fact, however, cannot be gainsaid that there are certain identical elements in both the inscriptions which should be carefully examined. If Firoz's contemporaries could not read Asokan inscriptions,<sup>2</sup> they could at least, guess on the basis of tradition, about its contents, as we have done with reference to Mohenjodaro.

These points of similarity with Asokan inscription apart, the *Futuhat* cannot be considered a complete exposition of Firoz's administrative principles and his cultural and welfare activities. The fact that it was inscribed on a mosque is too significant to be ignored in determining its nature and scope. His personal religious views apart, Firoz Shah had followed a broad and tolerant policy in state matters, based on humanitarian considerations, reducing the rigours of penal regulations, abolishing certain taxes, constructing public works of every variety—canals, bunds, mosques, colleges, houses, wells, inns, towns, reservoirs, hospitals, mausoleums, public baths, minarets, bridges and gardens. His interest in the preservation of Indian monuments and books—some of which he got translated from Sanskrit into Persian—was also great. Considered in the context of this broad policy, his *Futuhat* projects the image of a parochially conditioned mind. This impression will not persist if the fact is kept in mind that it was intended for Muslim public congregating for

<sup>1</sup>*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, I, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>'Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 312.

But it appears from 'Afif that they gave some traditional accounts of what they had heard about the pillars.

The anonymous author of *Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi* also makes the same statement, f. 92b. He records different rumours which he found floating down the stream of time. The method employed by Firoz Shah for the transport of these pillars and also the way these were raised and fixed has been given in detail by the author of *Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi*.



prayers and that, by its very nature, it could only deal with those aspects of his policy which had some religious bearing and could appeal to the religious minds. This aspect of the inscription is further highlighted by the style followed by the author. Wherever Firoz Shah addresses God he refers to himself in the singular form and wherever he addresses the people he uses 'we'. Further, its local character due to its epigraphic position is significantly made clear by dealing with—barring one or two vague references—his activity in Delhi alone. Even religious buildings constructed outside Delhi have not been referred to in this inscription.

The *Futuhāt* opens with the words<sup>1</sup> *ya Fathahu*, on the top—this is more in the form of an inscription than a book. The concluding lines:

Moreover, whoever seeks virtue and spiritual happiness and reads this may know that this is the approved course, sincerity demands that they obtain the grace to follow it. May they gain (future) reward for their deeds, and I for showing the right course, "for he who points out the path of virtue is like him who practices it."

In a book this should have been a prologue.

The Sultan says very explicitly that the purpose of this composition was to express his feelings of gratefulness to God. First of all he refers to his efforts to reform the penal law and customs of the country. All inhuman punishments, such as taking out the eyeballs or the eye-lids, the breaking of bones, burning alive etc. were banned by him. He ordered that the names of the previous Sultans be pronounced from the pulpit on the occasion of the Juma' and the 'Eid prayers. He then gives a list of taxes which were abolished by him as these were not sanctioned by the *shari'at*. Some confusion has arisen in the decipherment and transcription of the names of these taxes as mentioned in the *Futuhāt*. For instance the same word has been read by different scholars as *kitabi*, *kababi* and *kayyali*.

The *Futuhāt* gives an account of the activities of *Mulhids* and *Ibahatis*. An account of punishments given to Ahmad Bihari,

<sup>1</sup>In Burdwan (West Bengal) an inscription commemorating the death of Bahram Saqqa in 1970 H/1562, also begins in this way. *JASB*, NS, XIII, 1917, pp. 117-82.



Rukn, Mehdi and others is also given. Reference to these heterodox trends in imperial inscription forces the conclusion that these movements were fairly powerful to attract royal attention.

Attempts made by Firoz Shah to purify the society of many evil practices have also been described. He stopped women from visiting shrines and placed an interdict on people visiting a *kund* where irreligious Muslims also assembled. Orders forbidding the use of silver and gold vessels, printed and embroidered cloth at the court have also been recorded in the *Futuhat*. Then follows a detailed account of the mosque, *madrasas*, mausoleums and tanks repaired or renovated by him. Referring to the construction work done at the tomb of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya he says:

A new *Jama'at Khana* such as had not existed there before, was built.

This statement resolves a great problem of archaeology. The *Jama'at Khana* near the grave of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya is attributed by the Archaeological Survey of India to 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji's son, Khizr Khan, which means that the building existed during the lifetime of the Shaikh. But the contemporary biographer of the Shaikh, Mir Khurd,<sup>1</sup> says that it was an open space, desert where the Shaikh was buried. Firoz's statement removes a contradiction felt in archaeological assessment and contemporary statement.

Some of the statements in the *Futuhat* which appear perplexing are perhaps due to some mistake in decipherment. For instance,

The mausoleum of Sultan Mu'izz-u'd-din Sam whose western walls and the panels of the doors were old and decayed, were renovated.

Now it is well-known that the coffin of Mu'izz-u'd-din was taken to Ghur<sup>2</sup> after his assassination and his tomb is not in India.

The Sultan refers to a State Hospital where free medicine and food was distributed out of a *waqf* fund. Steps taken to placate people who had suffered at the hands of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq have been mentioned with care. Finally a reference is made to the grant of *manshur* (letter of investiture) received from the Caliph.

<sup>1</sup>*Siyar-u'l-Auliya*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup>*Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, pp. 128-29.



Even a casual glance at the contents of the *Futuhāt* would show that only those measures and activities of the Sultan have been mentioned which had any religious significance. If the data available here is compared with the total political, cultural and other activities of Firoz Shah Tughluq, it would appear that all his activities have not been dealt with in this composition. The reason is obvious. It would have been incongruous to mention in this inscription activities which were devoid of religious implications. It makes no reference to the large number of canals excavated at the instance of the Sultan in different parts of the Empire, the cities founded by him, the gardens laid out at his order, the invention of a clock tower (*ghariyal*), the translation of Sanskrit works on astronomy etc. etc.

It follows therefore that if *Futuhāt* is taken as an inscription which should be studied in relation to the structure on which it originally appeared, an entirely different assessment of Firoz Shah's policy would have to be made. The *Futuhāt* is essentially a religious inscription and should be used as such and not as an exposition of Firoz Shah's administrative policies.



## CHAPTER 10

### The Insha-i-Mahru

#### I

The *Insha-i-Mahru*<sup>1</sup> is a collection of the letters and documents drafted by 'Ain-u'l-Mulk Mahru, a distinguished noble and administrator of the Khalji and the Tughluq periods. He was respected alike for his erudition and learning and his political sagacity and administrative talent. Next to the *I'jaz-i-Khusravi* of Amir Khusrau this is the most valuable collection of documents bearing on the Sultanate period.

'Ain-u'd-din 'Abdulla bin Mahru was an Indian by birth and as such was the leader of the Indian group of nobles during the Tughluq period. Ibn Battuta says : "The Khurasani and foreign *amirs* had great fears from him because he was a Hindi and the *ahl-i-Hind* (Indians) were displeased with the foreigners."<sup>2</sup> At a time when the Tughluq nobility was divided into two distinct groups—Indian and foreign, the leader of the Indian group, despite some handicaps, was bound to exercise great influence over the contemporary political developments. His name first appears in the list of the officers of Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji.<sup>3</sup> However at that time he was not among those favoured few who were honoured with appointment to exalted offices in the administration. But within four or five years he became one of the trusted confidants of the Sultan who began to consult him in his *Majlis-i-Khalwat* (private assembly). In 1301 when the Sultan was at Ranthambhor, four insurrections took place, one after the

<sup>1</sup>The only manuscript of this work, which originally belonged to the Library of Tipu Sultan, is in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Ivanow, pp. 579-80. On the basis of this manuscript two editions of this work were published: (1) from the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1954, (2) Research Society of Pakistan, Lahore, 1965. Both were edited by Prof. S. A. Rashid. References here are to the Aligarh edition. See also *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, I, part II, Oct. 1964, pp. 79-109.

<sup>2</sup>*Rihla*, II, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 214.



other, within the span of a few months. There was something wrong somewhere and the Sultan applied his mind to an analysis of the causes which had created and encouraged recalcitrant tendencies. Malik 'Ain-u'l-Mulk, Malik Hamid-u'd-din and Malik 'Izz-u'd-din were the three young but talented officers who were taken into confidence by the Sultan and who advised him in dealing with the situation. Barani compares these officers to Asaf and Buzurchimehr in their wisdom and sagacity.<sup>1</sup>

'Ain-u'l-Mulk further proved his mettle during the Malwa campaign of 1305. According to Amir Khusrau the Sultan was in search of an experienced (*kardan*) and sagacious (*kar-deeda*) soldier for this job. After careful scrutiny and investigation he selected 'Ain-u'l-Mulk and sent a message to him through his *Hajib-i-Khas* : "Tell 'Ain-u'l-Mulk, I have seen wisdom in him. I am bestowing upon him the title of 'Ain-u'l-Mulk and promoting him to a very high office. I consign to his care the province of Malwa."<sup>2</sup>

'Ain-u'l-Mulk rose up to the occasion and proved his courage, adroitness and sagacity in dealing with the situation. He succeeded in reducing Ujjain, Dharnagri and Chanderi. The Sultan was so pleased with the reports of his success that he bowed down before God in gratitude.<sup>3</sup> For seven days his success was celebrated in the capital and drums were beaten.<sup>4</sup> The territory of Mandu was assigned to him as a token of recognition for his meritorious services. He thus became the first Muslim governor of Malwa.

It is not known as to how long Mahru remained in Malwa. In the closing years of 'Ala-u'd-din's reign he is, however, found in Deogir.<sup>5</sup> As the situation in Gujarat deteriorated Malik Kafur's mind turned to him as the fittest person to set matters right. A

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 282. There is no justification for the opinion that 'Ain-u'l-Mulk Multani of 'Ala-u'd-din's reign and the 'Ain-u'l-Mulk of the Tughluq period are two different personalities. In a letter written during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughluq, Mahru claims his political experience from the days of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji, (*Insha*, p. 42).

Khusrau makes it clear beyond all doubts when he informs us that Ghazi Malik, while persuading him to rebel against Khusrau Khan, reminded him of the bounties of the 'Alai reign and the honour with which he was treated during those days. *Tughluq Nama*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>*Khaza' in-u'l-Futuh*, tr. p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, text 64, tr. 46.

<sup>4</sup>*Ferishta*, I, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 347.



message was sent to him to Devagiri flattering his courage and statesmanship in dealing with the rebels and assigning him the territory of Gujarat.<sup>1</sup> 'Ain-u'l-Mulk complied with the order but he had hardly reached Chittor when he heard about the death of Malik Kafur. He decided not to move further.<sup>2</sup>

On his accession to the throne Mubarak Khalji sent Malik Tughluq to Chittor to deliver his order to 'Ain-u'l-Mulk to proceed to Gujarat and deal with the rebels. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk was not fully aware of the developments at Delhi. He, therefore, discussed the matter with the leaders of the army and sought their advice. Malik Tughluq hurriedly returned to the capital and recommended to the Sultan the grant of robes of honour to every leader of the army as a token of personal recognition of his services. This gesture worked and 'Ain-u'l-Mulk decided to march to Gujarat to deal with the situation which was fast deteriorating.

The rebel leaders, Hyder and Zirak, were in full control of Gujarat. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk resorted to a subterfuge to tide over the critical situation. He wrote secret letters to the soldiers of the rebel force and dissuaded them from their hostile posture. He promised amnesty and rewards if they deserted Hyder and Zirak<sup>3</sup> and joined the imperial force.

The trick worked and created nervousness and panic in the rebel army. Hyder and Zirak fled away and the whole of Gujarat came under the control of 'Ain-u'l-Mulk. Barani has praised his work in Gujarat.<sup>4</sup> Mubarak Khalji rewarded him generously when he returned to the capital after crushing the recalcitrant elements in Gujarat.

The *iqta* of Gujarat was promised to 'Ain-u'l-Mulk in the previous regime and it was expected that Mubarak would honour the commitment, but he assigned it to Zafar Khan. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk naturally felt humiliated and ignored. At the connivance of the Sultan he was ridiculed in the court by the dancing girls and buffons.<sup>5</sup> 'Ain-u'l-Mulk chafed under this humiliation but acted with restraint. After Malik Yaklakhi's rebellion, Mubarak appointed him as the *wazir* of Deogir.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to say how

<sup>1</sup>*Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 348.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 359.

<sup>4</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 388; *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, p. 359.

<sup>5</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 396.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 398.



long he remained at Deogir, but when Khusrau Khan's *coup* took place, he was in Delhi.<sup>1</sup> Khusrau conferred upon him the title of *Alam Khan*.<sup>2</sup> He, however, acted with tact and foresight in that mercurial situation. He did not antagonize Ghazi Malik, while he continued to be with Khusrau Khan.

When Ghazi Malik organized his movement against Khusrau Khan, he addressed a very polite and persuasive letter to 'Ain-u'l-Mulk.<sup>3</sup> 'Ain-u'l-Mulk showed this letter to Khusrau Khan in order to establish his loyalty in the eyes of the pretender. Ghazi Malik sent another messenger to him. This time his pathetic appeal brought tears in the eyes of 'Ain-u'l-Mulk.<sup>4</sup> He assured Ghazi Malik that he would not actively involve himself in any struggle against him. He promised also to join him as soon as the struggle was over. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk stuck to his words and left for Ujjain and Dhar when the forces of Ghazi Malik and Khusrau Khan came face to face.<sup>5</sup>

Barani mentions 'Ain-u'l-Mulk's name in the list of Ghiyas-u'd-din Tughluq's officers,<sup>6</sup> but he does not figure anywhere during his reign. When Muhammad bin Tughluq came to the throne, he appreciated his talent and he became one of his confidants.<sup>7</sup>

Muhammad bin Tughluq appointed 'Ain-u'l-Mulk to the governorship of Awadh and Zafarabad at a time when Doab was passing through acute agrarian crises and famine. He worked there with zeal and devotion and looked after the welfare of the people with genuine concern. He suppressed in 1338 the revolt of Nizam Ma'in at Kara. During the famine 'Ain-u'l-Mulk sent to the imperial camp 50,000 *maunds* of wheat and rice every day.<sup>8</sup> Over and above this, he sent 70 to 80 lac *tankas* for relief purposes in the Doab.<sup>9</sup> His excellent work in Awadh made the Sultan jealously suspicious of him and he even thought of removing him from there.<sup>10</sup> A charge of sheltering some undesirable persons

<sup>1</sup>Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, p. 410 ; *Tughluq Nama*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>*Tughluq Nama*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>ibid, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>ibid.

<sup>6</sup>*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, p. 424.

<sup>7</sup>ibid, p. 489.

<sup>8</sup>*Rehla*, tr. p. 105.

<sup>9</sup>Barani, p. 486.

<sup>10</sup>*Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, p. 109.

Barani (p. 486) gives the impression that the Sultan was sincere in his intentions. There were reports of Qutluq Khan's mismanagement in the Deccan and the Sultan thought that he could set things right, but this, as Barani further states, was interpreted by 'Ain-u'l-Mulk as deception. 'Isami justifies his rebellion. *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, pp. 472-73.



was trumped up against him or was unduly exaggerated and orders were issued for his transfer to the Deccan. 'Ain-u'l-Mulk who was already suspicious of the moves of the Sultan, had no alternative but to defy and rebel.

'Ain-u'l-Mulk's rebellion however failed. He was subjected to many indignities. He was made to ride on an ox and was paraded through the streets. Sons of maliks and amirs spat on his face and abused him.<sup>1</sup> When he was brought before the Sultan in this ignominious condition, he was visibly moved. At his order ordinary clothes were given to him to cover his body. His companions met with Draconian punishments. Some of them were ruthlessly trampled under the feet of elephants and their flesh was thrown on 'Ain-u'l-Mulk. But Muhammad bin Tughluq, who recognized his talent, was reluctant to execute him. He pardoned him and appointed him as the Superintendent of Gardens. When the Sultan breathed his last at Thatta, 'Ain-u'l-Mulk was in Multan.

Firoz Shah fully recognized 'Ain-u'l-Mulk's loyalty, administrative experience and talent. He appointed him as *Mushrif* in 1352. But he could not pull on well with Khan-i-Jahan who used to interfere in his work.<sup>2</sup> Matters came to a crisis and he was dismissed from the office of *Mushrif*.

For three days after his dismissal 'Ain-u'l-Mulk did not come to the palace. When he presented himself on the fourth day, Firoz Shah called him closer and said:

"Khwaja 'Ain-u'd-din! Hearken! Countries are seriously damaged by internecine conflicts, and people, young and old, are driven to despair. As under Divine will differences exist between you and Khan-i-Jahan, the *iqtas* of Multan and Bhakkar and Siwistan are conferred on you. Go there and assume charge."<sup>3</sup>

'Ain-u'l-Mulk submitted that it would not be possible for him to render accounts to the ministry. "I will present them before your Majesty," he submitted. Firoz Shah removed the *iqtas* of Multan and Siwistan from the jurisdiction of the Ministry and told him: "Whatever you have to say about your work in the *iqtas* of Multan (etc.), will be attended to. A note from you will be enough."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rehla, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, pp. 416-17.

<sup>3</sup>Afif, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, pp. 409-10.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.



'Ain-u'l-Mulk did remarkable work in Multan. When he reached there everything was in a mess. He set the administration right, tightened the machinery of law and order, improved the condition of the peasantry,<sup>1</sup> managed properly the *auqaf* property and won the golden opinion of the people. He died sometime after 1362. Documents drafted by a person with such vast and varied political and administrative experience have a value of their own.

## II

The *Insha-i-Mahru* is a collection of 134 documents drafted by 'Ain-u'l-Mulk, some for himself, some on behalf of the government and some for others. These documents are of varying nature—*manshurs*, *misals*, *ahd-namas*, *arzdasts*, personal letters, proclamations etc. Among the addressees are all sorts of people—administrators, governors, revenue officials, scholars, *karkuns*, peasants etc. All the documents do not belong to the reign of Firoz Shah; some of them were obviously drafted during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq.

The *Insha-i-Mahru* is a mine of information for the political, administrative, economic, literary and social history of the period.<sup>2</sup> Since there is no connecting link between one document and the other—except the authorship—the points of interest in some of the letters may be indicated here separately.

1. It gives a very good idea of the instructions given to governors at the time of their appointment. We have some information of similar nature in the *Taj-u'l-Ma'asir*, but the nature of these documents is different. Hasan has merely incorporated the purport, Mahru gives exact documents. When the government of Sind was entrusted to Prince Fath Khan, he was asked to promote agriculture and work for the prosperity of the people and keep the army contented. Loyal servants of the State were to receive special favours from him and the Syeds, the '*ulama* and the sufis were to be treated with consideration and kindness.<sup>3</sup> These documents throw considerable light on the concern of the Tughluq Sultan to improve and develop agriculture. If all the

<sup>1</sup> *Insha*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Mahdi Husain's view that "it is to be regretted that this work is more literary than historical," *Tughluq Dynasty*, p. 576, is hardly correct.

<sup>3</sup> *Insha*, pp. 2-7.



information contained in these documents about the condition of land and the problems of agriculture as also the position of the peasantry is put together it will be helpful in understanding the background to the various measures of the Tughluq Sultan.

When the governorship of Multan was conferred on Mahru, the following royal mandate was issued:

“The conferment of high dignities on and the expressions of kindness towards loyal persons who are the creatures of the court and who have the great Amirs and famous Wazirs who on account of their knowledge and loyalty have attained to positions of trust and who on account of their true faith have secured an honoured position in our confidence and whom because of their brilliant intellect and soundness of judgement, that unravels difficult problems and whom we regard as the means of the management of the affairs of the country and the nation, we consider them as essential for (securing) the good things of religion and this world. We have considered it our foremost duty to train these officers of state, who have illumined by the antimony of their skill the pupil of the country, and made the garden of religion blossom into splendour through their honesty. On account of this we have this day showered our bounties on the Lord of the East, the Wazir ‘Ain-u’l-Mulk, Amin-ud-daulah wad-din, the conqueror of infidelity and infidels, the destroyer of the wicked and the refractory, the mine of greatness, the master of the sword and the pen, possessor of knowledge and fortitude, the commander of the Persians, the grandees of the Universe, ‘Abdulla Mahru, the chosen one of God whose countenance is adorned with greatness and zeal and who excels in the field of bravery and chivalry. And prompted by generosity, we have permitted him to undertake the government of Multan and its affairs and conferred on him to unloosen or to tie, to confiscate or to give away, to appoint or to remove and to bestow and take away from people, so that he may, by his experience and sound judgement, and bright vision, see to the efficient execution of the affairs of the state. And with this/display of these faculties in the building of cities, in the affording of comfort to the public and the welfare of the common people with whose safety and welfare we have entrusted and committed to in this world and about whom we will be addressed and ques-



tioned in the next world. Therefore he should act according to the dictates and requirements of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence and power and make justice, generosity, beneficence and liberality his guiding principles because they constitute pillars of state, and are the strengtheners of the foundations of the Kingdom and are in accordance with the Quranic verse: "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good to others." And the instructions to be followed by Maliks and Amirs of that *iqta* and others, such as the councilors, the clerks and other workers, and the inhabitants of that place are that they should strictly render obedience to the orders contained in this mandate, so that in time they should become contented, by the grace of God and His help."<sup>1</sup>

2. The nature and purpose of some religious assignments—particularly to *khanqahs*—becomes clear from the *Insha*.<sup>2</sup> It appears that distribution of public charity rather than personal comfort of the saints was the main motive of these grants. Read in this light the reaction of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq to the extravagant living of Shaikh Hud, *sajjada nashin* of the *khanqah* of Shaikh Baha-u'd-din Zakariya, becomes clearly intelligible. According to Ibn Battuta the Sultan was peeved at his luxurious style of living and the diversion of money made available to him for public charity, to his own personal use.

3. The *Insha-i-Mahru* throws interesting light on the duties of some functionaries of the government, e.g. the *dadbegs*,<sup>3</sup> *sar-i-lashkars*,<sup>4</sup> *muqaddams*,<sup>5</sup> *qazis*,<sup>6</sup> *muqta's*<sup>7</sup> etc. Though duties of each officer were clearly defined, clash in the exercise of authority sometimes took place and matters had to be tackled at higher levels.

4. A *misal* appointing Bahl son of Lakhan Rai in charge of Talwara shows that Lakhan Rai who had taken part in a local rising was not only pardoned by the Sultan but an appointment was also given to him. Firoz Shah's policy of 'Forgive and forget' worked in the case of small *iqta'* holders also.

<sup>1</sup>Text, Aligarh, edition pp. 10-11; English tr. Lahore ed., pp. 50-51. Was this document also drafted by Mahru?

<sup>2</sup>*Insha*, pp. 15, 16, 40.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 7, 19, 20, 21.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 22, 40.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, 10, 11, 22, 36, 182.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, pp. 19-20.



5. An oath of loyalty (*'ahd-nama*),<sup>1</sup> which the nobles were required to take, shows how the people were bound to a contract by citing religious scriptures and by prescribing religious sanctions against those who wavered in their loyalty. After invoking God Almighty, and His Authority, a noble was expected to swear to 'Naib-i Amir-u'l-Muminin, Khalifa-i Rabbul 'Alamin' i.e., Firoz Shah, and promise that

- (a) he will be enemy of the enemies of the Sultan and friend of his friends;
- (b) under no circumstances will he be against those associated with the Sultan, his army and his officers;
- (c) he will not infringe the orders of the Sultan and will have no contact with his enemies;
- (d) he will not do anything openly, secretly or by suggestion, which may be against (the interests of) the Sultan;
- (e) he will keep his heart and tongue, exterior as well as interior, sincerely attached to the Sultan;
- (f) even if his son or brother turns against the Sultan, he would try to finish him;
- (g) if anything against this agreement is done, he will be deemed to have given up faith in God, angels, prophets etc. and his wives would get automatically divorced and his slaves would get liberated.<sup>2</sup>

This document is a sign of weakness rather than of strength. We do not come across any such 'contract' during the time of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji or for that matter, during the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq. Fear of state was enough to elicit obedience. When state authority weakened, religious props were invoked.

6. Some of the documents are masterpieces of draftsmanship and literary perfection, particularly the one which condoles the death of Sultan Ghiyas-u'd-din and simultaneously felicitates Muhammad bin Tughluq on his accession.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that the wooden pavilion under which the Sultan had been buried, has been referred to as a structure with solid foundations and strong pillars.<sup>4</sup> Is there any attempt to answer any suspicion or popular impressions?

7. In one of the documents Mahru gives details of endow-

<sup>1</sup>*Insha*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 23.



ments in Multan. He mentions two categories of endowments: (a) endowments made for the upkeep of the mausoleums of the former Sultans or princes, and (b) endowments made to 'ulama, saints and those *amirs* who brought fallow land under cultivation. It appears that two villages were given to the Friday Mosque of Multan for blessing the soul of Sultan Muhammad bin Sam. The income of these villages was spent on teachers, students, *muazzins*, prayer carpets etc. Two villages were assigned for blessing the soul of Khan-i-Shahid (Prince Muhammad). Similarly there was endowment for blessing the soul of Sultan-i-Shahid (Ghiyas-u'd-din Tughluq).<sup>1</sup> In this *arzdasht*, Mahru refers to the hardships faced by the people of Multan and the general desolation of the area.<sup>2</sup> This document is dated 763/1361. Though Mahru made great efforts to improve the condition of agriculture during his days, he had a rich legacy of difficulties and was confronted by serious problems of agrarian and other crises.

8. Some of these documents throw valuable light on problems of administration in those days, particularly those arising out of the non-realization of taxes. In an interesting letter on matters of *fiqh* addressed to Maulana Shams-u'd-din Mutawakkil, Mahru says that the taxes permitted by the *shari'at* law were not adequate to meet the state expenditure.<sup>3</sup> He supported the state in (a) price control when exigencies of the situation demanded it, and (b) state purchase and state selling of certain articles. Such a legal assessment of the position was not made even during the time of 'Ala-u'd-din Khalji when the state enforced the most rigorous market control. In a letter to Kamal Taj, Mahru justifies, citing Caliph 'Umar in support of his view, that for repair and construction of canals taxes could be levied from the people if the public treasury was not in a position to meet the expenses.<sup>4</sup> The agrarian problem of the period is further highlighted when a proclamation is issued to the peasants.<sup>5</sup> They are asked to engage themselves in cultivation. "Old cultivators would pay the state demand half in cash and half in kind; the new one will have to pay the tax entirely in kind."

9. A Muqtai' is accused of extracting forced labour and terrorizing people.<sup>6</sup> Government disapproval of the practice is made

<sup>1</sup>*Insha*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 176-77.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 58-62.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, pp. 36.



abundantly clear in this document.

10. The connotation of a number of terms—e.g., *jiziyah*<sup>1</sup> and *kharaj*,<sup>2</sup> *khut*,<sup>3</sup> *dangana*,<sup>4</sup> *shiq*,<sup>5</sup> *'ushri*,<sup>6</sup> *musadara*,<sup>7</sup> *idrar*,<sup>8</sup> *kharaji*,<sup>9</sup>—can be explained in the light of the discussions and references in these documents.

11. Some light is thrown on the condition of the *khanqah* of Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya after his death. It appears that meals were regularly provided to people from the *khanqah*.<sup>10</sup>

12. It appears that Mahru found himself in difficulties to meet the demands of the *'ulama* and the sufis for state help and stipends due to decline in the revenues of Multan.<sup>11</sup> He refers to mal-administration of Multan under 'Imad-u'l-Mulk and the economic crisis that came in its wake.<sup>12</sup> He says that at one time only 500 *tankas* were left in the treasury of Multan.<sup>13</sup> While there was a fall in revenues on one side, the productivity of land decreased on the other.<sup>14</sup> He shows his anxiety and concern about the rehabilitation of *parganas* like Khaikarah, Kanjrut and Jandala.<sup>15</sup> It appears from a letter addressed to Nizam-u'd-din Muqtai' of Ajodhan that the road from Ajodhan to Multan was unsafe due to the revolt of the Khokhars.<sup>16</sup>

Another important factor which further complicated the situation was that Banbhaniya brought the Mongols who were earlier defeated by Mahru, into the Punjab.<sup>17</sup>

Mahru was asked to supply 2,500 cavalry along with boats and equipment.<sup>18</sup> Financial difficulties stood in the way of carrying out the orders.

13. In a letter to the Qazis of Thanesar it is said: *Jiziyah* and the agricultural revenue of a village was assigned to one Zia-u'd-din in lieu of his salary. He was expected to equip himself for the campaign. When he was away in Lakhnauti with the Sultan, the Department of the Qazi misappropriated the *jiziyah*, on the ground that *jiziyah* belonged to the owner of the lands. Mahru censures the conduct of the qazis and argues against their stand.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Insha*, pp. 41, 53, 54.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 11, 109.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup>*ibid*, pp. 62-68.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>17</sup>*ibid*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 5, 47, 63, 143, etc.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 50, 183.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>15</sup>*ibid*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup>*ibid*, p. 91.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid*, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup>*ibid*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup>*ibid*, p. 145.

<sup>19</sup>*ibid*, pp. 52-54.



14. There are references to some problems of *ihtasab* which cropped up during this period. Some people in Multan married women before they were actually divorced by their former husbands. Strict orders were issued to curb this.<sup>1</sup> It shows that the *Ibahati* trend, against which Firoz Shah Tughluq took stern measures as is evident from the *Futuh-i-Firoz Shahi*, had become a factor to be reckoned with.

15. For a study of land grants during the Tughluq period, the *Insha-i-Mahru* supplies very interesting information. The earlier practice of making big land grants had yielded place to petty land grants. This brought about a change in the attitudes and responsibilities of the grantees. Paucity of land and increase in the number of aspirants created difficult problems for the state. Some of the observations throw light on land-relationship during the period. Mahru includes *muqaddams* and *mafruzian* among the group of *zamindars*.<sup>2</sup>

16. Muhammad bin Tughluq's interest in philosophy had given prominence to philosophers in the literary circles—a fact with which Barani could not reconcile himself. It appears that Mahru also felt like Barani and condemned the philosophers, including the Mu'tazalites. Citing a Quranic verse he says that their hearts have been sealed, their ears have been closed and curtains have been drawn over their eyes. They cannot have a vision of Reality.<sup>3</sup>

17. In a letter addressed to Shaikh Razi-u'l-Haqq wa'din, a saint of Uchch, Mahru makes some very interesting revelations about the economic conditions. Shaikh Razi-u'd-din, it appears, had written to him: Badr-u'd-din Qimaz and Kamal Taj came from Multan and started realizing some new taxes. People got shaken at this demand. These taxes were remitted by Muhammad bin Tughluq at a time when the city was really prosperous and people were living under affluent circumstances. Imposing these taxes now, particularly when a kind King was on the throne, and when the conditions, compared to those of the previous times, were not so good, such taxation was unbearable. Twenty five Hindus who were shop-keepers were also effected by these new taxes. For them *jiziyah* itself was a burden; how could these additional taxes be borne by them. To this Mahru replied: 'No instructions for additional or new taxes have been issued. It is

<sup>1</sup>*Insha*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid* pp. 119-20.



not clear as to whose miserable condition you have referred to—the soldiers or artisans. I am clear in my mind that from the days of Sultan 'Ala-u'd-din to this day at no time there has been so such prosperity as these days. In those days daily wages were two or three *jitals*; a weaver charged two *jitals* for weaving a sheet. These days they charge 30 *jitals*. The tailor charged 4 *jitals* then, but now he is not satisfied with 30 *jitals*.<sup>1</sup>

18. Some documents deal with the conquest of Jajnagar,<sup>2</sup> conferment of the office of *Shaikh-u'l-Islam* for the *mamalik* (whole country) on Shaikh Sadr-u'l-Haq-wad-din Muhammad Isma'il<sup>3</sup> etc.

19. Mahru was deeply concerned about flood situation in Uchch which had endangered mosques, *madrasas*, tombs etc.<sup>4</sup>

20. Hoarding and blackmarketing was on the increase in Multan.<sup>5</sup> The condemnation of *ihthakar* in many of the works of Firoz Shah's reign e.g., *Siraj-u'l-Hidaya* of Syed Jalal-u'd-din Bukhari Makhdum-i-Jahanian, shows that it was one of the prevailing vices and not only administrators but mystics and others also were extremely disturbed at this phenomenon.

21. In a letter written to his son 'Imad-u'd-din, Mahru says that it is only high education and not high birth that avails a man in this world as well as in the hereafter. "The genealogical tree does not bear fruit," he observes.<sup>6</sup>

The literary style of all the documents and letters is not the same. Though the scholarly approach of 'Ain-u'l-Mulk is manifest every where, the nature of treatment varies from document to document. The *Insha-i-Mahru*, in fact, ranks with the *Insha* of Rashid-u'd-din Fazlullah so far as the literary style is concerned and with *I'jaz-i-Khusravi* so far as material of historical significance is concerned. While in *I'jaz-i-Khusravi* there is much which is of purely literary and rhetorical value, the *Insha-i-Mahru* is out and out a collection of historical documents having bearing on the actual working of the administration.

<sup>1</sup>*Insha*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, pp. 30-32.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, pp. 60-62.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, pp. 24-30.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 131.



## CHAPTER 11

# HISTORICAL LITERATURE OF AKBAR'S REIGN

The age of Akbar was not only prolific in historical literature, it registered also a definite advance in medieval historiographical traditions. *First*, it studies the historical landscape from different angles and reflects diverse points of view, imperial, sectarian and feminine; *secondly*, it represents Persian language in its various shades and forms—colloquial, simple, laboured and ornate,—prose and verse; *thirdly*, it seeks to weave medieval Indian history in the broad pattern of Indian history and looks upon Indian culture hermitage as a totality and considers Muslim contribution to cultural life as a part and parcel of this historical legacy; *fourthly*, it makes new experiments in chronology by adopting the death of the Prophet (*rihlat*) as the beginning of the Islamic calendar, in preference to the well-established *hijri* era; *fifthly*, it attempts collection of data on the basis of large scale cooperation of different individuals high and low, princes and plebians; *sixthly*, it makes a new attempt at preparation of history on the basis of collaboration by a board of historians; *seventhly*, it seeks to extend the historical perspective by taking into account the role and contribution of mystics, literatures, poets and others; *eighthly*, for the first time in Asian history it makes statistical data a part of historical study; and *ninthly*, due to the influx of scholars from Iran and Central Asia it provides an opportunity for the intermingling of different historical traditions. This richness and variety of the historical literature lends a peculiar charm to the history of the period and provides new perspectives for its study. Akbar's was an age of political stability, cultural efflorescence and intellectual ferment. These trends find expression in the historical literature of the period. But it calls for and needs different tools of analysis and synthesis to handle this literature. The same principles of critique cannot be applied to a study of Abul Fazl and Gulbadan,



nor for that matter, can Nizam-u'd-din Bakhshi and 'Abdul Qadir Badaoni be studied according to a uniform pattern. Each historian has to be understood and interpreted in the background of his own milieu and in the light of his own predilections, motivations and ideals.

Akbar was keenly interested in history. His desire to understand the past sprang from different considerations. On one side, he wanted to follow the course of Islamic History, on the other he was anxious to see medieval Indian history written in its Indian background. He had fully inherited Timurid interest in history and wanted an indelible stamp of the contribution of his family and his own to be put on the canvas of history. It was under him that medieval Indian history established its liaison with ancient India. What Khusrau had attempted on a restricted scale in his *Nuh Sipih*r, was worked out on a larger canvas by the historians of Akbar's court, under inspiration from the Emperor himself. Over and above everything else, Akbar was conscious of the nature and extent of his own impact on contemporary history and so he wanted to know in greater detail about the past so that his own achievements could be delineated in that background. Some of his remarks clearly indicate that he looked upon a retrospect of the past as a means to rectify the present. For him history was not merely a pleasant intellectual excursion into the past but an instrument of pragmatic significance<sup>1</sup> to influence social outlook and political behaviour. Anxious to evolve a national culture and a national outlook, he sought to broaden the vision of his contemporaries and infuse in them the consciousness of belonging to one culture. He wanted history to help him in realizing his objective. Earlier rulers had looked upon history only as a means for self-glorification, Akbar wanted it to serve some broader purpose also.

One of the most distinguished contemporary families of historians was that of Mir 'Abdul Latif Qazwini, a tutor of Akbar. His son Mir Ghiyas-u'd-din Ali, known by his title of Naqib Khan, knew the seven volumes of *Rauzat-u's-Safa* by heart—a stupendous feat of memory. Badaoni who was Naqib's school

<sup>1</sup>Note for instance Akbar's instructions to Ahmad Tattavi, one of the compilers of *Tarikh-i-Alfi* to give "at the beginning of the account of every king, a brief account of his ancestors and the circumstances which led to his assumption of royal power."



fellow says that no man in Arabia or Persia was as proficient in history as Naqib. "He is now strenuously employed," Badaoni informs us, "night and day, in the imperial service, and for a whole generation past has been engaged in reading works on history, books of story, and anecdotes and legends, both in Persian and in Hindi."<sup>1</sup> 'Abdul Latif's brother 'Ala-u'd-daulah wrote a comprehensive account of 350 poets, mainly of the 10th/16th century, arranged alphabetically in 28 *baitis* (one for each letter). He added to his account of the poets a fragment relating to the history of Gujarat in the years 980-5/1572-1577 and three sections dealing with the history of Babur, Humayun and Akbar.

The Qazwini family was singularly free from all sorts of religious prejudices. In fact it was Shah Tahmasp's policy of religious persecution which had forced it to leave Azerbaijan and seek shelter in India.<sup>2</sup> 'Abdul Latif was invited by Humayun but he reached India after his death, in the first year of Akbar's reign.

Qazwini started the compilation of *Nafa'is-u'l-Ma'asir*<sup>3</sup> in 973/1565. The historical portion comes upto 982/1574 which made Rieu think that it was the date of its completion, but internal evidence shows that he continued the work of compilation upto 998/1589. It was dedicated to Akbar.

Qazwini's contribution to the literary history of the period is invaluable. No contemporary writer has supplied so comprehensive and critical an account of the Persian poets of the 16th century as Qazwini. His discussion of the early history of Persian verse and the relation between music and poetry is

<sup>1</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 99; Blochmann, pp. 497-98.

<sup>2</sup>See *Nafa'is-u'l-Ma'asir*, Rotograph of MS. in British Museum, Or. 1761, f. 6b *et seq.*, where he refers to unfavourable circumstances of his homeland. See also *Muntakhab-u't Tawarikh*, III, pp. 97-99.

<sup>3</sup>It is a chronogram which gives the date (973/1565) when the author started compiling this book. Rotograph of MS in British Museum, Or. 1761, f. 9b.

<sup>3</sup>The earliest known MS. of this work is in the Library of the Aligarh Muslim University. It was transcribed in 1085 AH/1674 AD. Dr. Ummihani Fakhruzzaman has prepared a critical edition of *Nafa'is* on the basis of all available manuscripts. See also her article 'Researches of Mir Ala-u'd-Dauleh Qazvini in the *Nafa'is u'l-Ma'athir*' in *Islamic Culture*, January 1979, pp. 21-30.



interesting and scholarly.<sup>1</sup> Badaoni has mainly relied on him for his account of the contemporary poets.<sup>2</sup> 'Arif Qandhari twice quotes his verses from the *Nafa'is*.<sup>3</sup>

The historical part of the *Nafa'is* is interesting but contains very little new information. Referring to the condition of India during the reign of Akbar, he quotes Khusrau's verses about the supremacy of *shari'at* laws and calls Akbar "annihilator of the vestiges of *kufir* and heresy."<sup>4</sup> This title could be given to Akbar only in the early phase of his career. His later experiments in religion were such that even a sympathetic writer could not give that title to him.

Qazwini was a master of Persian prose. His *Nafa'is-u'l-Ma'asir* is a model of clear, polished and unstrained prose. His wide range of learning, his knowledge of Arabic and Persian classics,<sup>5</sup> and his keen and critical faculty has considerably enhanced its literary charm.

Almost simultaneously was written the *Masnawi Fath-i-Gujarat* of Faizi.<sup>6</sup> Akbar's second Gujarat campaign was, in certain respects, one of the most brilliant exploits of his reign. On August 23, 1573 the Emperor left the capital and dashed towards Ahmadabad where the old provincial nobility was reasserting its power and had almost defeated the imperial forces. Within eight days (according to Faizi) he was in Ahmadabad and, after accomplishing his objective, triumphantly returned to the capital on October 5, 1573. "Considering the distances traversed", remarks Smith, "Akbar's second Gujarat exploit

<sup>1</sup>Rotograph of MS. in British Museum, Or. 1761, f. 5 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>*Muntakhab-u's-Tawarikh*, III, p. 170.

Apart from Badaoni, a number of other *tazkira* writers have drawn their material from the *Nafa'is*, e.g., 'Abdul Latif, *But Khana*; anonymous, *Tazkirah-i-Kharabat*; Azad Bilgrami, *Serv-i-Azad*; Ibrahim Khan Khalil, *Khulasat-u'l-Kalam*; Ahmad Ali Sandilawi, *Makhzan-u'l-Ghara'ib*; Ahmad Ali Ahmad, *Haft Asman*; Syed Nur-u'l-Hasan Khan, *Nigaristan-i-Sukhan*.

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Akbari*, pp. 131-32, 164.

<sup>4</sup>Rotograph, f. 7 b.

<sup>5</sup>We find in his work references to *Qur'an* and its various commentaries, books on *fiqh*, history, poetical works of Khusrau, Jami and others.

<sup>6</sup>Edited by K.A. Nizami, see *Medieval India Quarterly*, V, 1963, pp. 133-52.



may be described safely as the quickest campaign on record."<sup>1</sup> 'Ala-u'd-daula also was so impressed by the conquest that he appended a section on it in his *tazkirah*.

Faizi, it is said, had initially planned the writing of a versified *Akbarnama* but he could not finish it. This *masnavi* might well have formed part of that bigger work which could never see the light of the day.

Abul Fazl has described at length the second Gujarat campaign of Akbar in his *Akbarnama*.<sup>2</sup> Faizi's *masnavi* should be read in the light of these details. Of course, Faizi has not packed his verses with factual data. He has picked up a few striking aspects of the campaign and has concentrated upon them. But he has been remarkably successful in recreating the atmosphere in which the campaign was undertaken.

The *Humayun Nama*<sup>3</sup> of Gulbadan Begam (ob. 1011 AH/1603 AD) is a very fascinating piece of historical composition, written as a memoir but significant as a historical treatise. It shows command of the Mughal ladies over the Persian language and their superb felicity in describing situations and ceremonies. Turkish was no doubt the native language of Gulbadan and her husband<sup>4</sup> and it must have been the home speech of her married life, but it is remarkable that she could write Persian with such grace that Mrs. Beveridge began to wonder: "Did she compose in Persian or in Turki."<sup>5</sup>

It was at the request of her nephew, Akbar, that Gulbadan undertook to write about Babur and Humayun.<sup>6</sup> As she was a child of 8 years when Babur died, she had to supplement her recollections from other sources also. Her account of Babur is,

<sup>1</sup> *Akbar, the Great Mogul*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Akbarnama*, tr., III, pp. 59 *et seq.* Nizam-u'd-din Bakhshi, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, II, pp. 264-73, and Mulla 'Abdul Qadir Badaoni, *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, II, pp. 164-65, have also supplied detailed information about this campaign.

<sup>3</sup> Persian text edited with English translation by A.S. Beveridge, Oriental Translation Fund, 1902. For an appreciation of the work see Shibli, *Maqalat*, IV, pp. 54-65.

<sup>4</sup> She was married to Khizr Khwaja Khan, a Chaghtai Mughal, who was Amir-u'l-Umara under Humayun. See Blochmann, *A'in-i-Akbari*, pp. 394-95.

<sup>5</sup> *Humayun Nama*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 3.



therefore, brief, but she gives a sufficiently detailed account of Humayun's chequered career. Probably the original *Humayun Nama* contained an account of Akbar's reign upto his 22nd regnal year, as is clear from the following note on the manuscript in the hand of Shahjahan:

“This history which contains a short account of His Majesty Sahib Qiran Sitan (Timur) and his glorious descendants and the events of the days of *Arsh-Ashiani* (Akbar) down to the twenty second year of his reign, was written in the time of Shah Baba (Akbar).”

How this last portion has disappeared cannot be stated definitely.

Gulbadan's work fills an important gap in our historical knowledge. Here we get a glimpse of the Mughal *harem* in all its fullness, if not in all its perfection—the tastes and tempers of the Mughal ladies, their intellectual and physical attainments, the nature and extent of their interest in political matters and the customs and ceremonies of the seraglio. Gulbadan is sometimes criticised for the brevity of her accounts of wars and conflicts. But this criticism recoils on the critics who seem to disregard the limitations to a lady's knowledge and interests. The real value of Gulbadan's work lies in supplying details which no one except a lady could have supplied. Humayun fell in love with Hamida Banu and offered to marry her. Hamida hesitated to accept the offer. Gulbadan thus describes the incident:

To cut the story short: For forty days the Begam resisted and discussed and disagreed. At last her highness my mother, Dildar Begam, advised her, say: “After all you will marry some one. Better than a king, who is there?” The Begam said: “Oh Yes, I shall marry some one, but he shall be a man whose collar my hand can touch, and not one whose skirt it does not reach.”<sup>1</sup>

No court-historian or chronicler could have supplied this information.

Gulbadan's description of Hindal's marriage is so vivid and graphic that it brings to mind every detail of the Mughal marriage ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> The only other detailed account of marriage

<sup>1</sup>*Humayun Nama*, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 30 *et seq.*



ceremonies that we have is the account of Khizr Khan's marriage as given by Amir Khusrau in *Dawal Rani Khizr Khan*. But Khusrau's account lacks those intimate personal touches which make Gulbadan's narrative superb and graphic.

Though Gulbadan does not give any detailed account of Babur, little bits of information that she supplies are of absorbing interest. She says that after his victory at Panipat, Babur distributed all the treasures of five kings that fell into his hands. "The *amirs* of Hindustan represented," writes Gulbadan, "that in Hindustan it was thought disgraceful to expend the treasure of bygone kings."<sup>1</sup> The city of Agra did not attract Babur. Its neighbourhood appeared to him 'ugly and detestable' and 'repulsive and disgusting.' Mrs. Beveridge rightly observes: "It is difficult to go back in fancy to the city without a Taj, with no Sikandra near and with Sikri uncrowned."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps no other work introduces us to so many ladies of the Mughal *harem* as the *Humayun Nama*. Mughal ladies with their lovely names like Gulrang and Gulchihra, their likes and dislikes, Babur's visit in summer days to his paternal aunts,<sup>3</sup> hopes and frustration of the younger generation—every thing has been beautifully delineated by Gulbadan. Turkish terms, customs and ceremonies find so natural yet graphic description that one cannot help admiring them. Gulbadan's account of Babur's illness and death is most informative. She describes how Babur moved round the bed of ailing Humayun and got the illness transferred to himself by making the prayer: "O God! if a life may be exchanged for a life, I who am Babar, I give my life and my being for Humayun."<sup>4</sup>

The style of *Humayun Nama* is "unaffected and spontaneous." Maulana Shibli considered it superior to *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and *Ruqqat-i-'Alamgiri* in its inimitable spontaneity, short and pithy sentences and colloquial touch.<sup>5</sup>

Haji Muhammad 'Arif's book is another important historical work of this period.<sup>6</sup> 'Arif was the Mir-i-Saman (steward) of

<sup>1</sup>*Humayan Nama*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, tr., pp. 118-23.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid*, tr., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, tr., p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>*Maqalat-i-Shibli*, IV, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup>*Tarikh-i-Akbari*, known as *Tarikh-i-'Arif Qandhari*, edited by Syed Mu'in-u'd din Nadavi, Dr. S. Azhar Ali and Imtiaz Ali Arshi, Rampur, 1962.



Bayram Khan Khan-i-Khanan.<sup>1</sup> He stood by his side when almost all others had deserted him. After his patron's murder he went to Basra, Baghdad, Syria and Hejaz and returned to India after performing the Hajj. Later on he joined the service of Muzaffar Khan Turbati. His attachment with Muzaffar is evident from his work also where he frequently refers to the Emperor as *Zafar ma'ab*, *Muzaffar-Nishan*, *Muzaffar-liva* etc. It appears from the Cambridge manuscript of 'Arif's work that he had named it as *Muzaffar Nama* which means that he desired to present it to Muzaffar Khan. But Muzaffar's death upset his plan and he thought of presenting it to Akbar and named it as *Tarikh-i-Akbari*.<sup>2</sup> A comparison and collation of the Rampur and Cambridge manuscripts reveals the fact that initially the author had included in his work invocations for both the Emperor and Muzaffar Khan, but later on he deleted the name of Muzaffar Khan.

The *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, as the internal evidence shows, was completed in *circa* 988/1580, after the return of Mirza Muhammad Hakim from Kabul.<sup>3</sup> Further, as Muzaffar Khan's death occurred in 988/1580, the compilation would have been revised soon after that.

Though 'Arif was well-acquainted with some of the Persian historical and literary classics of the middle ages<sup>4</sup>—e.g., the *Taj-u'l-Ma'-asir*, *Zafar Nama*, works of Nizami, Firdausi, Sa'di and Khusrau — his own style does not give an impression of felicity or spontaneity. He writes with whip and spur.

Defects of style apart, 'Arif's work is a valuable source of information for the reign of Akbar. According to 'Arif, Akbar had himself marched to quell the rebellion of 'Ali Quli Khan.<sup>5</sup> Recording the events of the conquest of Gujarat, he says that the Farangis presented Portuguese wine to Akbar.<sup>6</sup> When fire broke out in the Farash Khana (store) of Fatehpur Sikri the estimated loss was nearly one crore.<sup>7</sup> 'Arif's account of Akbar's buildings is interesting and informative. He says that in Agra two thousand stone-cutters and two thousand expert masons worked daily.<sup>8</sup> His account of the construction of the Fatehpuri

<sup>1</sup>*Ma'asir-i-Rahimi*, II, p. 1 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Akbari*, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid*, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, II, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, pp. 1-11.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid*, p. 171.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid*, p. 145.



mosque is full of interesting details.<sup>1</sup> His discussions about the activities of his patron, Muzaffar Khan, are revealing and candid. On several points his statements contradict Abul Fazl who seems to have deliberately suppressed facts unpalatable to his master. Regarding Hemu's execution he says that the first blow was given by Akbar with his sword, Bairam Khan finished him subsequently.<sup>2</sup> According to Abul Fazl Bairam Khan was responsible for the execution of Tardi Beg. 'Arif has a different story.<sup>3</sup>

Though 'Arif finished compilation of this work in 998/1580, there is no reference to the religious experiments of Akbar. In fact Akbar's orthodoxy has been highlighted and he is praised for his religious leanings. In a section of his work he has exclusively discussed the rare qualities and achievements of the emperor. He particularly refers to his humility while dealing with the poor, his stern and implacable sense of justice, his anxiety to eradicate immorality and sin from society, his generous treatment of foreign merchants, his interest in religious discussions with the 'ulama, encouragement to manufacture of excellent embroidered cloth and similar other things. It appears from 'Arif's account that *Khutba* in the name of Akbar was read in all the mosques of India in 986/1579.<sup>4</sup> But he says nothing about the reaction of the people to Akbar's innovation of reciting the *Khutba* himself and leading the congregational prayer.

Another work, basically anecdotal but of historical significance, is the *Waqi'at* of Rizqullah Mushtaqi. Mushtaqi was a great scholar, poet and saint of his period, known alike for his knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Hindi. Though he had the requisite knowledge and family background to write an historical account of the period with a firm chronological framework, he preferred to collect historical anecdotes. Storey considers it a "a disorderly collection of narratives and anecdotes"<sup>5</sup> relating to the period of the Lodis, the early Mughal Emperors and some

<sup>1</sup>*Tarikh-i-Akbari*, pp. 239-41.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid*, p. 51. cf. *Akbarnama*, II, p. 41, wherein Abul Fazl says that Bairam Khan begged the Emperor "to slay with his own hand this stock of sedition", but "his lofty spirit did not permit him to slay a captive."

<sup>3</sup>*Tarikh-i-Akbari*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid*, p. 244.

<sup>5</sup>*Persian Literature*, p. 513.



provincial rulers. There is very little literary charm in it. Shaikh Farid Bukhari who was instrumental in getting the *Waqi'at* compiled, later on requested Iahdad Faizi to continue Mushtaqi's work and bring it down to the days of Akbar.

*Waqi'at* is essentially based on Mushtaqi's experiences which he used to narrate to his friends. Later on they requested him to get his reminiscence recorded. Though basically anecdotal, the information supplied by Mushtaqi is very valuable. From him we get information about works of public utility, measures adopted to protect agriculture and steps taken to ensure the welfare of citizens. Besides details about the activities of the Afghan nobles, there are references of significance to scholars and saints of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The author uses laudatory appellations with the names of the Mughal rulers, but not with the Afghan kings. "The description of events", remarks Dr. Hameed-ud-din, "on the other hand, does not betray any political bias or fear."<sup>1</sup>

Another important historical work of this period, is the *Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi*<sup>2</sup> of 'Abbas Khan Sarwani. It was compiled, at the instance of Akbar, soon after 994/1586, a few years before *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*.<sup>3</sup> The author was related to Masnad-i Ala 'Isa Khan Sarwani, one of the most distinguished nobles of the Lodi and the Sur periods, and was therefore, eminently fitted to undertake a work of this nature. But for 'Abbas, Sher Shah would have gone down in history as 'Sher Khan, the rebel'. This work has, correctly observed Dowson, "fortunately preserved the means of forming a judgement of his (Sher Shah's) character and talents."<sup>4</sup> Dowson, however, considers it more a biography than a history properly so called. Notwithstanding Akbar's anxiety to know the correct details about Sher Shah's life and work, it must

<sup>1</sup>*American Oriental Society*, 82, no. 1, January-March, 1962, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>The author himself has given this title to his work, but Ahmad Yadgar calls it *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, E & D, IV, p. 301. The Persian text and its English translation has been published by S.M. Imam-u'd-din under the title *The Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, University of Decca, 1964. Mazhar Ali Wila's Urdu translation has been published by S. Moin-ul Haq, Salman Academy, Karachi, 1963. The Urdu translation was rendered into French by Garcin de Tassy, *Un chapitre de l'histoire de l'Inde musulmane, an Chronique der Scher Schah, Sultan de Delhi*, Paris, 1865.

<sup>3</sup>See Imam-u'd-din, *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, II, p. xv.

<sup>4</sup>Elliot & Dowson, IV, p. 302.



have been a painfully exacting job to write about Sher Shah without any inhibition. 'Abbas however rose up to the occasion. It needed courage to sum up Sher Shah's account with these words:

"And in the time of Sher Shah's rule, a decrepit old woman might place a basket full of gold ornaments on her head and go on a journey, and no thief or robber would come near her, for fear of the punishments which Sher Shah inflicted. "Such a shadow spread over the world, that a decrepit person feared not a Rustam." . . . Sher Shah, in wisdom and experience, was a second Haider. In a very short period he gained the dominion of the country, and provided for the safety of the highways, the administration of the government, and the happiness of the soldiery and people."<sup>1</sup>

It may be added that such an approach and assessment was possible by an author only when there was freedom of expression. The credit for it must go to Akbar.

Referring to 'Abbas's method of putting conversations into the mouths of various persons, Elliot observes: "The various actors are made to describe the scenes which occurred under their observation, and to set forth their own views and opinions."<sup>2</sup> But this technique was of great value under the circumstances. Instead of saying himself 'Abbas made his characters speak, thus shifting to some extent the responsibility for these statements on others, like Muzaffar Khan (son of the brother of Masnad-i Ala Isa Khan), Shaikh Muhammad b. and Shaikh Bayzid Sarwani. But this sort of methodology required a powerful pen and a still more powerful imagination. 'Abbas's literary equipment was meagre and his technique, therefore, could not become very vigorous. However the information that 'Abbas has supplied has been utilised by later writers. Nizam-u'd-din has used it in writing his account of Sher Shah.

The *Tarikh-i-Alfi*<sup>3</sup> is, in certain respects, a bold and novel

<sup>1</sup>Elliot & Dowson, IV, p. 433. In Imam-u'd-din's, tr., II, p. 192, the word "a second Haider" does not occur. It is substituted by "second to none."

<sup>2</sup>Elliot & Dowson, IV, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>For MSS of this work see, *Persian Literature*, pp. 120-21; A. Halim's article, 'Some Indian Collections of *Tarikh-i'-Alfi*,' *Proceedings of the IHR Com.*, pp. 108-13; Mahfuz-ul-Haq's article, 'Discovery of a Portion of the Original Illustrated Manuscript of *Tarikh-e-Alfi*, written for the Emperor Akbar, *Islamic Culture*, July 1930.



experiment of Akbar which failed on account of its innovation and the actual difficulties involved in bringing about a change of chronological framework. It is not so much in its subject-matter as in the conception which lay behind its preparation, that its real significance lies.<sup>1</sup> In 993 AH/1585 AD Akbar gave orders for the compilation of a history of Islam from the death of the Prophet down to his millenium. Mulla Ahmad who was initially entrusted with this work, writes:

“I, Ahmad b. Nasrullah Tattavi, a servant of this court and a well-wisher of undoubted sincerity was assigned by Jalal-u'd-din Akbar Badshah Ghazi-may God perpetuate his country and kingdom—the duty of compiling this history, *Tarikh-i-Alfi*. Some orders which were issued by His Majesty have been kept in mind while compiling this work. One of them was that the text of this history should be free from ornate and artificial literary embellishments and free from Arabic quotations and verses not easily comprehensible. Secondly, at the beginning of the account of every king, a brief account of his ancestors and the circumstances which led to his assumption of royal power should be given.”

Consequently the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* is written in a very simple and straightforward style. But this simplicity has been more than undone by the confusion caused by adopting a new era. Akbar had instructed the compilers to begin this history from the death (*Rihlat*) of the Prophet. About the *Hijri* era, Akbar used to say that it smacked of failure.<sup>2</sup> This substitution of the *Rihlat* era for the *Hijri* era led to many mistakes of omission and commission

<sup>1</sup>For the different ways in which the contemporaries hailed and interpreted the completion of one thousand years of Islam's history, see *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, II, pp. 318-19, 301-06; Elliot and Dowson, IV, p. 150; *Maktubat-i-Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Sani*, II, Letter 4, I, Letter 234.

<sup>2</sup>*A'in-i-Akbari*, ed. Sir Syed, I, p. 221.

In his ignorance Akbar failed to realize that the real significance of the *hijrat* lay in the fact that thereafter the Prophet started building up the religious, political and social structure of Islam and enunciated the principles on which Muslim life was to be organized. During his pre-Hijrat era the Prophet had enunciated broad principles of religion and morality. After his migration to Medina he set about translating those principles into practice. The real history of Islam as a religion with an elaborate *shari 'at* law begins from this date.



by the compilers, the scribes and the modern historians. Dr. A. Halim, who had carefully collated some of the Indian collections of the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* was constrained to remark : "The method of treatment is crude and primitive. Like the ancient Greek and early Arab histories, events are massed serially under each year and the histories of all Mohomedan countries are discussed without a break with only a remark 'and other events of the same year'. It is in fact a descriptive chronological chart in which sometimes important events are omitted".<sup>1</sup>

So far as utilization of earlier source material is concerned, there is hardly any important Arabic or Persian work on the subject which has not been referred to in *Tarikh-i-Alfi*.

The *Tazkirat-ul-Waqi'at*<sup>2</sup> of Jauhar is a work of literary and historical value. Written in the spoken Persian of those days, it draws attention to many details which could not attract the attention of a professional historian of those days. Jauhar did not belong to the class of professional writers (*ahl-i-qalam*). He was Humayun's *afstabchi* (ever-bearer), but in that capacity he had excellent opportunities of studying the character and temperament of Humayun. He has recorded even the most trivial incidents connected with the life of his master whom he had served for nearly twenty-five years. When the idea of writing a history of Humayun struck his mind, he looked into the *Diwan* of Hafiz for augury. Thus encouraged he embarked upon his work. The way Akbar had created public interest in history and had been inviting all persons associated with the regimes of his father and grandfather must have further encouraged him in his project.

"Let no one reprove me", asks Jauhar, "for degrading the importance of history because I write such things. In another case I would not have written them, but since they were done by an Emperor, and I myself saw and heard them, I thought it right to conceal nothing". The real charm of Jauhar's work lies in these trivial details. Even Bayazid was not in a position to study Humayun from the angle Jauhar has approached him. In his

<sup>1</sup>Some Indian Collections of the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, *Pr. of the Ind. His. Records Com.*, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>For MSS, *Persian Literature* p. 537, English translation by Charles Stewart, *The Tezkereh Al Vakiat*, Calcutta, 1904 ; Urdu translation by S. Moin-ul Haque, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1955.



pages we get an opportunity of knowing Humayun more intimately and more closely than in any other work of this period. Besides details of a personal nature, the *Tazkirat-u'l-Waqi'at* abounds in many references to contemporary political events. He is the only historian who tells us about the differences between Humayun and the Shah of Persia. As he had undertaken to write this book 32 years after Humayun's death, some lapses of memory were bound to mar the historical value of his narrative. But taken as a whole, his work is an extremely reliable and authentic record of Humayun's life and activities.

Jauhar being no scholar, wrote in plain and unvarnished colloquial Persian. In the age of Abul Fazl, Zuhuri and Rumlu it would have been presumptuous on the part of Jauhar to present his work in such naked simplicity before the Emperor and so, he approached Illahdad Faizi Sirhindi to clothe his simple and straightforward speech in the garb of ornate and flowery language.<sup>1</sup>

Illahdad Faizi belonged to a family of established literary reputation.<sup>2</sup> He himself possessed a good knowledge of philology.<sup>3</sup> When Jauhar approached him with the request to recast his work, he hesitated at first and apologized but, when Jauhar insisted, he undertook the work. Faizi's recension is known as *Humayun Shahi* and its manuscripts are available in the India Office Library, British Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale. A careful collation of Jauhar's *Tazkirat-u'l-Waqi'at* with Illahdad's recension of this work would throw valuable light on the canons of literary criticism and the differences in the colloquial and written Persian in the sixteenth century.

Next to the *Tazkirat-u'l-Waqi'at* of Jauhar Aftabchi, the *Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*<sup>4</sup> dictated by Bayazid Bayat is a typical illustration of the Persian language as it was written and spoken by persons who had no pretensions to learning.

Since Akbar wanted to preserve the account of his ancestors' achievements in India, he issued the following order :

“Every one of the attendants of our court who is gifted with

<sup>1</sup>See *Humayun Shahi*, Rotograph of MS. in India Office Library, Ethe, 222, ff. 2a, b. For other MSS, Blochet, I, 563, Rieu, II, 972a.

<sup>2</sup>His father 'Ali Sher Sirhindi was known as *Asad-u'l-'Ulama*.

<sup>3</sup>He had compiled a Persian dictionary, *Madar-u'l-Afazil*.

<sup>4</sup>Edited by M. Hidayat Husain, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1941.



the talent for writing history should write one, and if anybody knows something about the reign of His Majesty Humayun Badshah, he should record it and finish it with our illustrious name."<sup>1</sup>

Abul Fazl forwarded a copy of this *parvana* to Bayazid, then *Bakawal Begi* (Superintendent of the Royal Kitchen). Bayazid was an old man at this time.<sup>2</sup> A stroke of paralysis had rendered him incapable of any strenuous mental exercise. Nevertheless, he obeyed the royal command. Abul Fazl provided him with a clerk whom he dictated his reminiscences at Lahore in 999 AH/1591 AD. Though weak and invalid, his powerful memory helped him in recreating the past and he gave a vivid account of all that he had heard or seen.

Nine copies were made of this work and were placed in the Imperial Library and the libraries of Abul Fazl, Gulbadan Begum, and the two princes.<sup>3</sup>

Bayazid's book opens with an account of Humayun's flight to Persia. Though Bayazid had joined his service much earlier, it was in Persia that he first met Humayun. Thereafter he got many opportunities of coming into contact with the Emperor, Mughal nobles and princes. His account is based on personal and intimate knowledge of the events of Humayun's life. He supplies interesting information about Humayun's invasion of Hindustan in 1555-56, the struggle between Humayun and Kamran and the Mughal-Afghan conflict. Besides, his work is replete with interesting information about the social life of the Mughal aristocracy in the sixteenth century. He could not, of course, maintain the sequence of events and his language is often 'shaky and rustic'<sup>4</sup> and his discussions are often rambling and discursive, but the real value of his work lies in the fact that it represents the natural, unaffected and spontaneous expression of a person who was not a scholar and whose paralytic condition had completely deprived him of that mental energy and alertness which was needed to

<sup>1</sup>*Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>For biographical details see Storey, *Persian Literature*, pp. 537-38 ; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, VXX, 1924, no. 7, p. 490. It may be pointed out here that Bahram Saqqa was his brother. For Bayazid's references to his brother, see *Tazkira*, p. 234 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*Tazkira-i-Humayun-wa-Akbar*, p. 377.

<sup>4</sup>*Journal of Indian History*, IV, parts 1-3, Madras, 1926, pp. 43-60.



chisel his phrases before actually dictating them to the scribe.

Though Abul Fazl has not acknowledged his indebtedness to Bayazid, it appears that he made extensive use of his work in the preparation of *Akbarnama*.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this recension of Jauhar's work, Ilahadad Faizi wrote an independent work on Akbar, at the suggestion of Nawab Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid.<sup>2</sup> To this work he gave the title *Akbarnama*. He was fully conscious of his responsibilities as a historian, and looked upon histories as the source of enlightenment for men of wisdom.<sup>3</sup> Major portion of this work seems to have been compiled on the basis of Nizam-u'd-din's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. But Faizi Sirhindi's style is a happy compromise between the two extreme literary tendencies of the period as represented by Abul Fazl and Nizam-u'd-din. He is graceful without being ornate, and simple without being insipid. He writes with singular ease and felicity. There is a remarkable clarity in his thought and expression. Apart from its general historical value, Faizi Sirhindi's *Akbarnama* is a mine of information for reconstructing the life and achievements of Nawab Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid and several other Mughal nobles of the period. He gives a very informative account of Akbar's campaigns against the Raushaniya leader, Jalala.

Nizam-u'd-din's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* is a land mark in medieval Indian historiography. "It is the first that was composed upon a new model in which India alone forms the subject-matter of the work, to the exclusion of the other Asiatic countries."<sup>4</sup> Nizam-u'd-din had no viewpoint and no prejudices. This has enhanced the value of his work from the historical point of view but it has also resulted in making it a dull and dry record of facts. Perhaps his experience of the actual working of the administrative machinery was much more intimate than that of Abul Fazl or 'Abdul Qadir. What factors were responsible for his lack of a point of view? Either it was due to disinterestedness or was a

<sup>1</sup>Abul Fazl mentions Bayazid in *Akbarnama*, II, pp. 238-53. His name occurs in the *A'in-i-Akbari*, under the title of Bayazid Beg Turkman, Blochmann, p. 563.

<sup>2</sup>His name is mentioned with laudatory appellations, one of them being "light of the eyes of the *millat*" Rotograph of MS. in British Museum, f. 5b.

<sup>3</sup>*Akbarnama*, Rotograph of MS. in British Museum, f. 5a.

<sup>4</sup>Elliot and Dowson, V, p. 178.



deliberate attempt to keep out of controversies. However it appears that he had close relations with some of those persons who did not agree with Akbar's religious experiments.<sup>1</sup> Badaoni says that his closeness to him was due to "religious affinity."<sup>2</sup>

The *Muntakhab u't-Tawarikh* of 'Abdul Qadir Badaoni is the only work which was written during the reign of Akbar but not for Akbar. 'Abdul Qadir was one of the most erudite scholars of his age, well versed in Sanskrit, history, literature and music. He had taken prominent part in the literary activities of Akbar's period. Circumstances however divided his personality. Ideologically he disagreed with the situation he was placed in. He had to praise all through what his heart wanted him to condemn. This tyranny of the situation led to feelings of frustration and disgust and deepened the sources of satire and sarcasm in him. Badaoni has criticised Akbar on ideological grounds but he was his ardent supporter in political matters. So long as religion and politics move separately, Badaoni has all respect and admiration for Akbar, but the moment Akbar crosses the Rubicon and starts interfering in religious matters, Badaoni takes up his cudgels against him. He represents the voice of orthodoxy against Akbar's religious experiments and innovations. But in spite of his exclusive and fanatical thinking, his *Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh* has a charm of its own. One may disagree with his point of view, but it is of immense historical value in analysing the factors which defeated Akbar's attempts at a religious synthesis. If contemporary religious literature can provide an index to the ideological tussles of the period, Badaoni must not have been alone in feeling the way he did. But open criticism of Akbar's religious policies could land him into trouble and so he kept his history a secret. When it was published during the reign of Jahangir, the Emperor ordered all copies of the work to be searched and burnt. But the book was destined to survive, and act as a corrective to the panegyricism of Abul Fazl. Where Abul Fazl keeps mum, Badaoni pours out in gushes. He thus fills in the blanks in Abul Fazl's work. On many matters of crucial significance—e.g., *Mahzar*, leading the prayers—Abul Fazl is tantalizing in his brevity. Badaoni is most vocal on such issues. In fact

<sup>1</sup>e.g., Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith, see Nizami, *Hayat-i-Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dihlavi*, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>*Muntakhab-u't-Tawarikh*, III, p. 397.



his account may prove a supplement and an adjunct to Abul Fazl's work in so far as it supplies the point of view of Akbar's critics—something which has been completely ignored by Abul Fazl. What has, however, decimated the value of his work is a feeling of jealousy and vendetta that runs throughout against those who had gone higher in the estimation of the Emperor but were his colleagues or school fellows. His ego could never reconcile itself to the idea that they were more gifted than him. He does not hide his ill-will towards them but feels proud in condemning them. Akbar had put him on the job of translating works from Sanskrit<sup>1</sup> which was part of a broader policy of the Emperor to work out socio-religious accord at all levels. Badaoni was not interested in this work. In fact on one occasion the Emperor scolded him as '*haram khor*' and turnip eater. Apart from this personal handicaps and shortcomings, Badaoni has a place of his own in the historiography of medieval India. He took the most significant step in extending the scope and conspectus of history by including in his history accounts of literary, religious and social activities of the people belonging to different walks of life. Though Qazwini dealt with the poets in great detail, but he did not succeed in weaving this account in a variegated pattern of socio-intellectual life. Badaoni succeeds considerably in this. Notwithstanding his fanatical views, his work is invaluable for a study of the religious and intellectual history of medieval India. He did not confine his vision to the court or the camp alone. He turned to the *khanqahs* and the *madrasahs* in order to have a total view of life.

Of all the political chroniclers of Akbar's period, Badaoni alone had a *point of view of his own*. Abul Fazl looked at men and movements from the imperial point of view and represented a panegyrist's approach; Nizam-u'd-din was a bare chronicler; Faizi Sirhindi, Bayazid Bayat, 'Abbas and 'Arif lacked that vision which gives birth to perspective. Besides, while all others

<sup>1</sup>His name is associated with the following works :

(i) *Nama-i-Khirad Afza*; (ii) *Razm Nama*; (iii) *Tarjama-i Kitab-i Ramayana*; (iv) *Bahr-u'l-asmar* (Hindi)

Besides he compiled a book *Kitab-u'l-Ahadis* on traditions of the Prophet and prepared *Tarjama-i-Mu'jam-ul-Buldan*, *Tarjama-i Tarikh-i-Kashmir* and *Intikhab-i Jami'-i Rashidi*.



expected some reward or recognition for their work, Badaoni looked for 'salvation' as a reward in the world hereafter. Notwithstanding every thing else, it cannot be ignored that Badaoni did not have the remotest of sympathy with the enemies of Akbar's throne.

His *Najat-u'r-Rashid*<sup>1</sup> shows that he could try his hand with commendable success at the ornate and florid style which was so popular in his day. But in his *Muntakhab* he has followed a style which is, on the whole, very plain and simple but piquant and with an inimitable touch of ridicule and satire.

In the historical literature of medieval India, Abul Fazl stands out pre-eminently for his contribution to historiography.<sup>2</sup>

Besides these works which rank very high in the historical literature of medieval India, the following works which were also compiled during the reign of Akbar deserve to be mentioned :

1. *Zikr-u'l-Muluk*<sup>3</sup> by Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi (ob. 1052/1642). It is concise history of India from Shihab-u'd-din Muhammad Ghuri to Akbar. As the author had some other literary works in hand, he could not bring the work up-to-date. Nawab Murtaza Khan Shaikh Farid requested Shaikh Nur-u'l-Haqq (son of Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq) to complete his father's work. Nur-u'l-Haqq's *Zubdat-u't-Tawarikh*<sup>4</sup> which was completed during the reign of Jahangir, is in a way, a continuation of Shaikh 'Abdul Haqq's work. A pupil of Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Haji Rafi'u'd-din Muradabadi, also wrote a supplement to *Zikr-u'l-Muluk*.

2. *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuriya* an illustrated history of Timur and his successors to the 22nd regnal year of Akbar. A beautifully illustrated MS of this work is preserved at the Bankipur Library.<sup>5</sup> Sri Ram Sharma says : "So far its illustrations have

<sup>1</sup>It is a general ethical and Sufi treatise containing interesting discussions and anecdotes. Some theological controversies have also been referred to. His account of the Mehdavis is informative. MS Aligarh Muslim University Library. Text edited by S. Moinul Haq, Indira Tahqiqat-i Pakistan, Lahore, 1972.

<sup>2</sup>For his assessment as a historian, see *supra*, Ch. VI.

<sup>3</sup>For MS of this work, see *Persian Literature*, p. 441. Next to Bankipur MS is the Aligarh MS which is dated 1030 AH.

<sup>4</sup>For MSS, Storey, pp. 441-42.

<sup>5</sup>*Catalogue*, VII, p. 551.



received more attention than the text. It is the earliest written account of Akbar's reign and as such a very valuable commentary thereon."<sup>1</sup>

If the scope of historical literature is slightly extended it may include considerable *insha* literature, poetic works, religious treatises and translations etc., but here only works of political nature have been noticed. Perhaps under no ruler of medieval India so varied and voluminous literature on political history was produced as during the reign of Akbar.

Another valuable work of the period which should be noticed is *Ahwal-i-Asad Beg*.<sup>2</sup> The author, Asad Beg Qazwini, was in the service of Abul Fazl for seventeen years. After his death in 1602 he joined the court of Akbar. He was sent to Ibrahim 'Adil Shah with a proposal of marriage for Daniyal. Subsequently he acted as an envoy to the Deccan states. On Akbar's death Jahangir recalled him. Later he was admitted into service and the title of Peshrau Khan was given to him. The *Ahwal* is a memoir which deals with incidents in his life from the murder of Abul Fazl to the accession of Jahangir, roughly a period of three or four years. These years constitute a period of great importance from the point of view of Akbar's religious policy and its impact. Abul Fazl's murder was a turning point indicating the extent of resentment against Akbar's religious experiments. During this later period, the faith of the nobles, says Jahangir, was shaken in Akbar.<sup>3</sup> One can legitimately expect from one close to Abul Fazl that he would provide details for an assessment of the situation.

Asad gives details of events connected with the murder of Abul Fazl. It appears that Akbar was at first incensed at him for not protecting Abul Fazl properly. "Bring Asad into the bath room so that I may cut him into pieces with my own hand," Akbar is reported to have remarked under the impression that he did not take proper care for the protection of Abul Fazl. Later on his anger subsided and he was appointed as an officer in the Emperor's body-guard.

<sup>1</sup>*A Bibliography of Mughal India*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>For MSS, Rieu, III, 979b; *Asafiya*, II, p. 848, no. 41. English translation by B.W. Chapman is available in British Museum, Add. 30, 776,

<sup>3</sup>*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, text, p. 9; tr. I, p. 22,



Asad gives some interesting details about the ruler of Bijapur to whom he was sent by Akbar. 'Adil Shah spoke in Marathi as he could not speak in Persian fluently.

Though Asad belonged to Akbar's Din Elahi, he does not supply any interesting information about the Emperor's religious views and innovations.

Asad was, it appears, responsible for introducing tobacco at the court. He saw it at Bijapur and brought it to Agra. The Emperor, ignoring the advice of his physician, had some puffs from the pipe. "He then sent for his druggist, and asked what were its peculiar qualities." Asad further states :

"As I had brought a large supply of tobacco and pipes, I sent some to several of the nobles, while others sent to ask for some; indeed, all, without exception, wanted some, and the practice was introduced. After that the merchants began to sell it, so the custom of smoking spread rapidly. His Majesty, however, did not adopt it."<sup>1</sup>

No period of Indian history can match with the reign of Akbar so far as the production of historical literature goes. Akbar's own interest in history went a long way in inspiring others to undertake compilation of historical works.

<sup>1</sup>Elliot & Dowson, VI, p. 167.



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